Finding the Keys to ERSEA

Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance

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The Master Key

The Head Start parent/family is our customer and partner. We know that it takes the right key to motivate, inspire and unlock the door to successful partnerships. The same is true for staff as we try to understand regulations, rules, and sometimes “Head Start folklore.”

Finding the Keys to ERSEA is designed to unlock the mystery and open up new doors that can lead to better practices grounded in regulation. It is essential that staff have access to accurate and easily readable information, so we’ve designed this document around specific keys for success. One of the difficulties in the area of Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance (ERSEA) is that there are many keys (regulations) that govern our approach to the topic. In Finding the Keys to ERSEA, we have brought the relevant regulations together for you in one place. We also provide some basic questions for you to ask while looking for the key in your program.

The keys are organized according to each section of ERSEA - Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance. The first section of each key provides you with thoughts that should be considered in the management of your program. The last section contains a brief discussion of other keys needed to effectively implement the area.

A Master Key is the one everybody wants because it opens all the doors. Understanding Head Start and Early Head Start management systems is the Master Key to opening the ERSEA doors. The objective of the Master Key is to establish cohesive management systems that support continuous improvement and foster commitment to providing the highest level of services to children and families. The Master Key is connected and interrelated with all program services. ERSEA impacts every system and every service.

Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance (ERSEA) is a system and it interfaces with the other eight management systems – Program Governance System, Program Planning System, Communication System, Record-Keeping and Reporting System, On-Going Monitoring System, Self-Assessment System, Human Resources System, and Fiscal Management System and the services. The term “interface” is defined as the place at which independent and often unrelated systems meet and act on or communicate with each other. The Master Key focuses on how management systems support the requirements of ERSEA. To unlock this door, we need to review a series of key questions in each system relating to ERSEA. The questions provide the rationale and guidance on what activities must occur in each of the management systems to ensure the successful implementation of ERSEA.
### I. Program Governance System

How do policy making groups participate in recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance?

**Rationale:** The Parent Committee must be consulted in the implementation of local policies activities and services. Therefore, the grantee/delegate should identify specific roles for the Parent Committee in the recruitment activities. The activities can range from informing the Parent Committee of the recruitment activities, solicitation of the members in recruiting door to door, assisting the program staff in distributing fliers and posters, etc.

The Parent Committee should be informed of the program’s enrollment results and attendance data on a regular basis. As far as attendance is concerned, the parent committee could play an important role if the program has issues with attendance. This is a great place to get parents to dialogue with each other and staff.

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The Policy Council and Governing Body must participate in the development, review, and approval or disapproval of the criteria for defining recruitment, selection and enrollment priorities. In addition, information regarding the progress and status of the recruitment, selection and enrollment activities should periodically be provided to both bodies. The Governing Body should be especially interested in the determination of eligibility enrollment and attendance since those issues are related directly to funding.

II. Program Planning System

How does the planning system support recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance activities? How is the Communitywide Strategic Plan and Needs Assessment (also known as the community assessment) used for planning?

Rationale: In order for the program to develop an effective and efficient recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance system, a level of planning must be demonstrated. For instance, the development of the selection criteria must involve essential data from the communitywide strategic plan and needs assessment. In recruitment, planning in the target or focus areas must be evident. Staff involved in recruitment must show the progress made toward meeting the objective of maintaining a number of eligible children greater than the number of enrollment opportunities. In addition, planning must identify the geographic location and program option(s) to be implemented.

Planning also addresses issues of under-enrollment; erroneous payments, and attendance concerns. Planning must be evident in the provision of services to pregnant women and their families such as: evidence of a smooth transition of the infant into the Early Head Start program after birth. Head Start and Early Head Start should also plan for the transition of the child from Early Head Start to the Head Start program.

Finally, with the emphasis on maintaining funded enrollment, programs must demonstrate how, through planning, they meet their funded enrollment the first day of services and maintain their funded enrollment throughout the enrollment year. When Head Start/Early Head Start programs are providing services utilizing multiple funding streams, programs should plan for issues such as how and when to collect co-payment from parents when required.

III. Communication System

How effective is the grantee’s or delegate’s communication system in supporting the requirements of the eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance?

Rationale: Communication is one of the most important activities in implementing ERSEA. Without communication the following would be difficult, if not impossible, to implement:

- Recruiting children and families
- Parents knowing the status of their child’s enrollment
• Number of children with diagnosed disabilities
• Attendance and attendance follow-up
• Policy making groups getting information on enrollment status

Communication is a major key on all levels of the program.

IV. Record-Keeping and Reporting System

How efficient and effective are the record-keeping and reporting systems in providing accurate, confidential, and timely information regarding the Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance system?

Rationale: The record-keeping and reporting system should provide data to the governing bodies, policy making group members, and staff to ensure the ERSEA system provides quality services according to the federal regulations and agency policies and procedures.

The system must address issues of confidentiality from the application process for enrollment until the child and family transitions out of the program. Through specifically designed technology, the reporting and record-keeping system must provide the program with records and reports regarding ERSEA activities in a timely and efficient matter. Technology is essential for providing the program with data on the number of children and families recruited; on funded versus actual enrollment; and on tracking attendance (with follow-up on unexcused absences).

V. On-Going Monitoring System

How effective is the grantee’s ongoing monitoring system in supporting the implementation of requirements for Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance?

Rationale: Monitoring procedures must be developed and implemented to ensure systems and services meet federal and program requirements. Monitoring procedures should address the following activities relating to the ERSEA system:

• Recruitment progress to ensure a number of eligible children are identified and recruited;
• Selection activities to ensure that the selection criteria is implemented according to requirements;
• No more than 10% of the children selected are from families above the 100% income guidelines, no more than 35% of the children are selected from families from the 101%-130% poverty guideline;