



## Changes in Head Start Eligibility Requirements Over Time

### *Broadening the Criteria for a More Inclusive Program*

1960s	<b>Income eligibility:</b> At least 90% of Head Start participants served at each program site must be children from families with incomes below the federal poverty line (FPL).
1966	<b>Age eligibility:</b> Children are to be below the age of compulsory school attendance.
1969	<b>Over-income eligibility:</b> Over-income (above 100% FPL) children allowed to participate in Head Start as long as families pay for the services provided.
1972	<b>Disabilities:</b> 10% of national Head Start enrollment opportunities must be for children with disabilities.
1974	<b>Income eligibility:</b> Income eligible children defined as – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children in families with income below the poverty line.</li> <li>• Children in families who are receiving public assistance.</li> <li>• Children in families who would potentially be eligible for public assistance in the absence of child care.</li> </ul>
	<b>Over-income eligibility:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over-income children allowed to participate in Head Start without paying for services received.</li> <li>• Participation allowed "to a reasonable extent" for children who are over-income.</li> </ul>
	<b>Disabilities:</b> 10% of Head Start enrollment opportunities in each State must be for children with disabilities.
1978	<b>Geographic access:</b> Head Start programs in very small low-income communities with no access to childcare or medical services may determine their own eligibility requirements.
	<b>Age eligibility</b> Children are to be between the age of three years old and the age of mandatory school attendance.
1992	<b>Over-income eligibility:</b> Participation of over-income children is capped at 10% per Head Start program. <sup>1</sup>
	<b>Foster children</b> are categorically eligible (previously subject to income requirements). <sup>2</sup>
1994	<b>Over-income eligibility &amp; geographic access:</b> American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start programs that enroll all income-eligible children in the community served by the tribe and still have remaining project funds may use the excess to enroll children who are over-income, as long as the programs predominantly serve income-eligible children.
	<b>Duration of eligibility:</b> Head Start programs are allowed to provide more than 1 year of services to eligible children ages three to five.
	<b>Early Head Start program is created.</b>
	<b>Early Head Start age eligibility:</b> Limited to pregnant women and children under three. <b>Early Head Start income eligibility:</b> Income-eligible pregnant women and children defined as – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living in a family with an income below the poverty line.</li> <li>• Living in a family accepting public assistance.</li> <li>• Living in a family that would potentially be eligible for public assistance in the absence of child care.</li> </ul>

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<p>1998</p>	<p><b>Income eligibility:</b> Income eligibility may be determined by either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using the 12 months of family income preceding the month of application, or</li> <li>Using family annual income in the year preceding the year of application.</li> </ul> <p>Programs may use whichever measure is thought to better reflect the family’s need.</p>
	<p><b>Duration of eligibility:</b> An income-eligible child participating in Head Start is considered eligible through the end of the succeeding program year.</p>
	<p><b>Immigration status:</b> Head Start programs are not required to verify child immigration status.<sup>3</sup></p>
<p>2007</p>	<p><b>Disabilities:</b> 10% of children currently enrolled under each Head Start agency must be children with disabilities. Since each agency can oversee multiple centers, some centers may have more or less than 10% enrollment as long as children with disabilities continue to comprise at least 10% of overall agency enrollment.<sup>4</sup></p>
	<p><b>Near-poor eligibility:</b> Up to 35% of children participating in a Head Start program may be from families with incomes between 100% and 130% of the poverty line, as long as the program prioritizes children meeting the basic income eligibility requirements.</p>
	<p><b>Duration of eligibility:</b> Any child participating in Head Start is considered eligible through the end of the succeeding program year.</p>
	<p><b>Homelessness:</b> Homeless children are categorically eligible.</p>

Source & notes:

- Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, Pub. L. No. 88-452, § 202, 78 Stat. 508 (1964).
- Economic Opportunity Amendments of 1966, 42 U.S.C. § 2781 et. seq. (1966).
- Economic Opportunity Amendments of 1969, Pub. L. No. 91-177, § 103, 83 Stat. 828 (1969).
- Economic Opportunity Amendments of 1972, Pub. L. No. 92-424, § 3, 86 Stat. 688 (1972).
- Headstart, Economic Opportunity, and Community Partnership Act of 1974, Pub. L. No. 93-644 §§ 513 & 518, 88 Stat. 2301 & 2304 (1975).
- Economic Opportunity Amendments of 1978, 42 U.S.C. § 254 (1978).
- Human Services Amendments of 1994, Pub. L. No. 103-252, §§ 111-112, 108 Stat. 637 -638 (1994).
- The Community Opportunities, Accountability, and Training and Educational Services Act of 1998, Pub. L. No. 150-285, § 112, 112 Stat. 2718 (1998).
- The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, 42 U.S.C. §9801 et. seq. (2007).
- <sup>1</sup> Part 1305 – Eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment and attendance in Head Start. 57 Fed. Reg. (1992), 46725 (Oct. 9, 1992).
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> Clarification of Interpretation of "Federal Public Benefit" Regarding Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Services (Program Instruction: Log No. ACYF-PI-CC-98-08). (Nov 25, 1998). Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/pi-cc-98-08>.
- <sup>4</sup> Office of Head Start, personal communication, August 23, 2013.