

HIDALGO COUNTY HEAD START PROGRAM
P.O. BOX 0117
EDINBURG, TEXAS 78540
956-383-0706

MEMORANDUM

TO: Policy Council Members

FROM: Sonia Balderas, Family Services Director *S Balderas*

THRU: Elma P. Carrera, Assistant Program Director for Fiscal Operations *ECarrera*

CC: Irma E. Pena, Executive Director

DATE: February 14, 2025

RE: 2025-2026 U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines for Eligibility for Head Start Programs
2025-2026 Priority Guidelines for Selection and Enrollment
2025-2026 Definitions

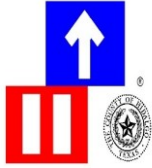
Every program year, there are updates to the U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines for Eligibility (§1302.12), Priority Guidelines for Selection and Enrollment (§1302.14), and Definitions (§1305). These items are used to ensure that eligible children enter the program.

The Head Start Program has received, from the Department of Health and Human Services, the most current poverty guidelines to be used to determine eligibility for the 2025-2026 program year. Alongside that, a systematic approach is used to review all applications for Head Start services. The priority guidelines will help the program to identify and prioritize those children most in need. The program has developed Priority Guidelines for Selection and Enrollment for the 2025-2026 program year.

At this time, we are respectfully requesting your approval for all three items as the application process for the upcoming school year is now underway.

Thank you for your unwavering support for our children and families.

Attachments.



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Priority Guidelines for Selection and Enrollment
Program Year: 2025-2026

Priority Ranking	
1	Families who are homeless. Head Start children who are 3 or 4 years of age; Early Head Start children who are 0-3 years of age or pregnant women. §1302.12
2	Children who are in foster care. Head Start children who are 3 or 4 years of age; Early Head Start children who are 0-3 years of age or pregnant women. §1302.12
3	Children of families that receive SNAP, TANF or SSI benefits. Head Start children who are 3 or 4 years of age; Early Head Start children who are 0-3 years of age or pregnant women. §1302.12
4	Children who are disabled. Must be income eligible and 10% of enrollment opportunities are available to children eligible for services under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Early Childhood Intervention program (ECI). Once the program has met the 10% enrollment quota, children with disabilities and non-disabled children will compete equally based on need as described in Priority Rankings. §1302.14(b)
5	Children from Head Start or Early Head Start wait list from previous year.
6	Children previously enrolled in Early Head Start. Must be income eligible.
7	Children whose parent(s) are active in the "Uniformed Services" of the United States. Uniformed Services are Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard-Head Start. Must be income eligible. Head Start children who are 3 or 4 years of age; Early Head Start children who are 0-3 years of age or pregnant women. §1302.12, §645(3)(A) of the Head Start Act; 37 USC 101; 37 USC 310; USC 403; 10 USC 2871-2872 and 2882
8	Children whose parent(s) are disabled or elderly (60+ years). Must be income eligible. Head Start children who are 3 or 4 years of age; Early Head Start children who are 0-3 years of age or pregnant women. §1302.12
9	Children single parents who work full time or are full time students or are in training for 30+ hours. Must be income eligible. Head Start children who are 3 or 4 years of age; Early Head Start children who are 0-3 years of age or pregnant women. §1302.12
10	Children of a two-parent household, who both work full time, or full-time students or are in training for 30+ hours. Must be income eligible. Head Start children who are 3 or 4 years of age; Early Head Start children who are 0-3 years of age or pregnant women. §1302.12
11	Children of single parents who are unemployed. Must be income eligible. Head Start children who are 3 or 4 years of age; Early Head Start children who are 0-3 years of age or pregnant women. §1302.12
12	Children in a two-parent household where one parent is employed, in school, or in training and the other is unemployed. Must be income eligible. Head Start children who are 3 or 4 years of age; Early Head Start children who are 0-3 years of age or pregnant women. §1302.12
13	Children of two-parent household, where both parents are unemployed. Must be income eligible. Head Start children who are 3 or 4 years of age; Early Head Start children who are 0-3 years of age or pregnant women. §1302.12
14	Children whose parent is employed by Hidalgo County Head Start Program. Must be income eligible. §1302.14(a) Head Start children who are 3 or 4 years of age; Early Head Start children who are 0-3 years of age or pregnant women. §1302.12
15	Children whose families' income is between 100% thru 130% of the poverty guidelines. (Note: No children who fall within this ranking will be enrolled until all other rankings are exhausted.) Priority 14 must not exceed 35% of the funded enrollment. §1302.12(d) Head Start children who are 3 or 4 years of age; Early Head Start children who are 0-3 years of age or pregnant women. §1302.12
16	Children who are disabled and whose families' income is above 130% of the Priority Guidelines. (Note: No children who fall within this ranking will be enrolled until all other rankings are exhausted.) Eligible children above 130% must not exceed 10% of the funded enrollment. Head Start children who are 3 or 4 years of age; Early Head Start children who are 0-3 years of age or pregnant women. §1302.129d)
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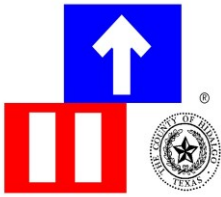


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Program Year 2025-2026 Definitions

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program does not deny anyone the right to apply regardless of race, sex, creed, color, national origin or disabling condition. The families of children applying for admittance to the Hidalgo County Head Start Program must meet income and age eligibility. People wishing to contest a denial for enrollment may do so by submitting their grievances or concerns in writing to the Hidalgo County Head Start Program Policy Council, at P.O. Box 0117, Edinburg, Texas 78540.

Early Head Start (EHS)	A program that serves pregnant women and children from birth to age three, pursuant to section 645A(e) of the Head Start Act.
Head Start (HS)	Any program authorized under the Head Start Act.
Age Requirement for Early Head Start (EHS)	A child must be younger than 3 years of age prior to September 1 st or pregnant women.
Age Requirement for Head Start (HS)	A child must be at least (3) years old by September 1 of the current year and is eligible until the child meets eligibility to enter kindergarten. §1302.12(b)(2)
Enrollment	Children remain eligible for the succeeding enrollment year, if they did not drop prior to the last day of school. The program may choose not to enroll a child when there is a change in the child’s family income and there is a child with a greater need for Head Start services. §1302.15
Family	All people living in the same household who are supported by the child’s parent(s) or guardian’s income; and are related to the child’s parent(s) or guardian(s) by blood, marriage, or adoption; or are the child’s authorized caregiver or legally responsible party. §1305.2
Full Day	Children who meet the applicable criteria and qualify for Head Start or Early Head Start services will be provided with full day services. §1302.21(c)(2)
Housing Costs	The total annual applicable expenses on housing may include rent or mortgage payments, homeowner’s or renter’s insurance, utilities, interest, and taxes on the home. Utilities include electricity, gas, water, sewer, and trash.
Income	Gross income and only includes wages, business income, unemployment compensation, pension-or annuity payments, gifts that exceed the threshold for taxable income, and military income (excluding special pay for a member subject to fire or imminent danger under 37 U.S.C.310 or any basic allowance for housing under 37 U.S.C. 403 acquired under housing under the alternative authority under 10 U.S.C. 169 or any related provision of law). Gross income only includes sources of income provided in this definition; it does not include refundable tax credits nor any forms of public assistance. §1305.2 To be eligible for Head Start services, a family must be income eligible within 100% of the poverty guidelines. Families may be eligible if their income is between 100% through 130% of the poverty guidelines. Ref: https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines
Selection	A systematic process is used to review all applications for Head Start and Early Head Start services. The Priority Guidelines will identify those children most in need. §1302.14
Wait List	A program must develop at the beginning of each enrollment year and maintain during the year a waiting list that ranks children according to the program’s selection. This will ensure that eligible children enter the program as vacancies occur and children are placed in age-appropriate classrooms. §1302.14(c)

Applicable documentation required to apply for the Early Head Start and/or Head Start Program:

- Child’s Birth Certificate or Baptismal Certificate and Social Security Number
- 2024 Income Tax Return, Payroll Stubs, TANF, SNAP, SSI, Homeless Verification, or Foster Care Verification
- Medical insurance information, such as Medicaid, CHIP, or Private Insurance
- All appropriate medical information regarding children with health concerns or special needs
- Individual Educational Plan (IEP) for those children eligible for services under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Individualized Family Service Plan for those children eligible for services under Early Childhood Intervention (ECI)

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