

Registration and Enrollment of Head Start Students

As you implement your State-funded preschool program, we encourage you to provide the programs to families using the blended model of district-operated, Head Start, and licensed childcare programs to be able to meet the needs of New Jersey’s youngest learners. Districts should be contracting with all willing and able Head Start programs that serve your community. Head Start programs receive federal funding to provide comprehensive services to children and families; thus, you are encouraged to partner whenever possible to allow your eligible families to access these critical services, including but limited to dental care, mental health services, and employment training and positions to parents. Head Start offers services above what the State-funded preschool programs are required to offer, and as such, it supports families to ensure their needs are met, and their preschool students are provided a framework for success.

Head Start programs are required to serve low-income families, homeless families, and foster care children, as well as children with Individual Education Plans (IEP’S). The Federal government mandates that Head Start programs review necessary documents to determine eligibility. It is critical that you are partnering with your Head Start programs to ensure that families meet all eligibility requirements for placement, and to avoid transfer of ineligible families after placement.

School districts receiving Preschool Education Aid are charged with providing quality preschool programs to all eligible three and four-year-olds who reside in your district. Districts should understand their community needs and students should be placed in programs meeting those needs.

The chart below offers two processes that can be followed for the enrollment/registration process.

Option A Head Start Coordinates Enrollment/ Registration	Option B District Coordinates Enrollment/Registration
Head Start programs recruit families and determine eligibility to enroll in the program. District enrollment forms will be available at the Head Start programs so families can	The school district coordinates registration at the registration office. The districts meet and attend eligibility orientation with Head Start to understand the eligibility guidelines and

Option A Head Start Coordinates Enrollment/ Registration	Option B District Coordinates Enrollment/Registration
complete them during the Head Start enrollment process.	collect income verification for all students to determine which students can be placed.
Head Start programs will submit all required paperwork to the district on behalf of families. The goal is to remove potential barriers for families (transportation, time off from work for, multiple appointments in different locations).	Before notifying parents of their child's placement in a Head Start program, districts must submit all income verification documents to Head Start programs for review and conduct an in-person interview with parents, per federal requirements. After this process is completed, parents can be notified of placement. Head Start programs will notify the district of the child's acceptance.

If you have any further questions, please contact Suzanne Burnette, Suzanne.burnette@doe.nj.gov, or your district liaison.