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BrainGain@PEC provides brief summaries of research or publications on family homelessness and related issues. Previous issues of BrainGain@PEC can be found at <http://bit.ly/29MhFEx>.

New Head Start Regulations To Assist Young Children Who Experience Homelessness

The U.S. Department of Health And Human Services issued the first comprehensive revision of the **Head Start Performance Standards** since their original release in 1975 and includes new provision addressing homelessness.

These final regulations apply to **Head Start** and **Early Head Start** programs. The performance standards related to homelessness are summarized below and take effect on November 7, 2016.

Selected highlights from the Performance Standards that apply to both Head Start and Early Head Start programs include:

- Homeless children (defined by the McKinney-Vento education subtitle definition) are categorically eligible for Head Start and do not need to prove income. Head Start program staff are allowed to confirm homelessness through many **alternative** means, thus streamlining the process for both staff and parents.
- Head Start programs are permitted to reserve enrollment slots for children who experience homelessness. Lack of available slots during the program year is one of the most common barriers to Early/Head Start enrollment for children experiencing homelessness. Allowing programs to reserve slots for homeless children gives programs an opportunity to plan better for predictable mobility and ensure that waitlists do not prevent homeless children from accessing Head Start programs.
- Head Start programs are required to make efforts to maintain the enrollment of homeless children, regardless of whether the family or child moves to a different service area, or transition the child to a program in a different service area, according to the family's needs. This requirement is consistent with preK-12 school stability policies that have proven effective in improving school participation and success for homeless

children, and represents further alignment with the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

- Head Start programs are required to allow homeless children to attend for up to 90 days or as long as allowed under state licensing requirements, without immunization and other records, to give the family reasonable time to present these documents.
- Head Start policies and procedures cannot require families to provide documents that confirm a child's age, if doing so creates a barrier for the family to enroll the child.
- Head Start programs are required to utilize community resources, where possible, to provide transportation, if a child experiencing homelessness is unable to attend classes regularly because the family does not have transportation to and from the program facility.
- Head Start programs must report how they are meeting the needs of homeless, foster, and other children, if they are proposing to serve children who are not categorically eligible, and who are between 100 and 130 percent of the poverty line.

Read the new regulations specific to homelessness at:

<http://www.naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/legis/Summary%20of%20Final%20Head%20Start%20Regulations%20Related%20to%20Homelessness%20FINAL.pdf>

Thanks to National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth for the information on this fact sheet and for their advocacy for these changes.