



**Coordinated Enrollment Framework:
Proposed Revisions, Fall 2016**

Today's Goal

Over the course of three meetings, representatives from each public funding source joined a working group, with AFC and EnrollNOLA, charged with developing a series of policy amendments to the NOEEN Coordinated Enrollment Framework.

Today's Goal: Ask the NOEEN Steering Committee to approve policy changes to the NOEEN Coordinated Enrollment Framework for the 2017-18 school year.

Policies suggested for revision include the following:

- Application timeline
- Verification procedures
- Waitlist selections and management
- Number of application choices
- Coordinated recruitment strategies



Application Timeline

Problem Statement: The poverty guidelines that establish Head Start eligibility are not released until late January (best case scenario), effectively changing the eligibility requirements in the middle of Main Round.

Proposed Solution: Change language / procedures but maintain timeline.

In all materials, explicitly state that final eligibility to Head Start will be determined based on the updated poverty guidelines upon enrollment. Head Start placements will be noted as “provisional” prior to confirmation of eligibility.

Why the working group supports this approach:

- There is always some uncertainty about whether or not the new poverty guidelines will be released on time, which makes it hard to envision a process timeline that won't be impacted by a late release.
- While some families with income levels on the margins may be deemed preliminarily eligible or ineligible based on inaccurate information, these families are those at the upper end of the income threshold. EnrollNOLA can conduct outreach to impacted applicants upon receipt of the updated guidelines.
- Upon enrollment, Head Start centers will always seek to confirm eligibility (income and residence). Aligning language with this step of the process removes ambiguity for families.

Application Timeline & Waitlist Management

Problem Statement: Waitlist calls did not start until June, and it took too long to fill available seats.

Proposed Solution: Eliminate Round 2 for the Early Childhood Process and immediately begin filling seats from waitlists as they become available.

Further, ensure that both Head Start and State waitlist expectations are met by sharing some waitlist information with Head Start programs while still ensuring offers are centralized.

Why the working group supports this approach:

- Beginning waitlist placements in April, as soon as seats become available, further ensures that seats will be full by the start of the school year.
- Head Start centers will be able to contact waitlisted families to complete the registration process, resulting in a family being ready to begin immediately upon a seat being available.
- Per State law, students would continue to get their best possible waitlist offer because waitlist options would to be made centrally, offering the student's best possible option.
- Because the waitlist process would start 3 months earlier (April instead of July), we expect this will result in more families accepting their waitlist offer.

Number of Application Choices

Problem Statement: Twenty choices on the application is likely too many for families to reasonably consider when choosing quality childcare. In practice, we found that families who chose up to 20 centers listed programs with which they were unfamiliar, resulting in those placements being declined and parent dissatisfaction with the process.

Proposed Solution: Reduce early childhood options from 20 to 8 (based on year 1 data showing that the average number of choices across all age groups was 5-6).

Why the working group supports this approach:

- If families apply to a smaller number of programs with which they are more familiar, it will result in greater roster stability.

Waitlist Selections & Management

Problem Statement: Families are currently able to be on up to 20 waitlists. Our experience suggests that families are not likely to accept offers to programs that are low on their list of preferred programs.

Proposed Solution: Reduce waitlist offer choices to an applicant's top choices (number of choices will be based on data from year 1).

Why the working group supports this approach:

- Families may be more likely to accept and remain enrolled if offered a placement to a highly preferred center.



Verification Process

Problem Statement: Coordinating verification amongst Head Start centers has eliminated the need for a family to visit each Head Start they are applying to, which is a central goal of coordinating enrollment. Now we must ensure that all Head Starts and FRCs are conducting verification in the same way for applicants.

Proposed Solution: Ask Head Start grantees to develop a unified approach to verification that ensures that different types of documents are being considered for eligibility in the same way across all centers and that special or unusual family circumstances are addressed in the same way.

Why the working group supports this approach:

- EnrollNOLA materials can more clearly communicate verification requirements.
- This unified approach allows for a family to go to any Head Start site or FRC site to confirm initial eligibility for all program types and would ensure that required documents are viewed the same way at all Head Start centers and all FRCs. Families applying to Head Start will still have to complete HS verification at a HS center.

Verification Process

Problem Statement: Head Start staff have been inundated with families needing verification and EPC scores with few interruptions since the EC application process first began and at times it has interrupted staffs daily responsibilities.

Proposed Solution: Advertise Head Start verification days, times, and places on website and in the FRCs. Advise families who cannot make those times to call the Head Start center to make an appointment.

Why the working group supports this approach:

- Head Start staff have always completed verifications and entered EPC scores throughout the year, however the volume was greater this year due to coordinated enrollment.
- Head Start verification can be a lengthy process. Ensuring that all partners are advertising the verification days and times should help center staff better manage the flow of verifications.
- Families who indicate they cannot make the assigned times will be encouraged to call the center to make an appointment.
- During the application cycle, EnrollNOLA and Head Starts can hold Saturday verification events if needed.

Verification Process (Late Enrollment)

Problem Statement: Currently, families completing the Late Enrollment verification process at a Head Start center must go to a Family Resource Center to be added to waitlists of their choice. This additional step can be a burden for families.

Proposed Solution: Enable Head Start staff to add students to their preferred waitlists. This would lessen traffic at the FRC's and streamline the process for families.

Why the working group supports this approach:

- Families would finish the Late Enrollment verification process in one place without the need for an additional trip to a Family Resource Center.

Note: This solution requires an update to SchoolForce. The EnrollNOLA team is working with their developers to explore whether this update is possible. If it's not possible, EnrollNOLA will develop a lower-tech solution (i.e. allow parents to email waitlist choices).



Coordinated Recruitment Strategies

Problem Statement: Recruitment is costly and time intensive for individual early childhood centers. It is time intensive for families to visit and learn about their many options.

Proposed Solution: Hold an early childhood recruitment fair, or series of events, to raise awareness about the process and the participating programs.

Why the working group supports this approach:

- Even though programs are included in the single application recruitment is still an essential step in filling seats and possibly more important now that families see all programs side by side.
- Coordinated recruitment events could help to increase exposure to the process and to individual programs.

Additional considerations:

- Recruitment events are only successful when they are well attended, and it can be difficult to get families out to a single large event. The working group wants to explore the possibility of hosting smaller, neighborhood events as well to increase local awareness of programs.
- The group will need to figure out the logistics: funding, location, timing, staffing of the event, etc.

Exciting Changes Underway

Website Overhaul

EnrollNOLA, Agenda for Children, Urban League, and Parent's Guide have partnered to overhaul EnrollNOLA.org! Starting in November, the site will allow parents to:

- Determine their initial eligibility and filter by eligible programs, as well as by important choice factors like neighborhood and cost (free or tuition).
- Browse robust school and center profiles and save a printable list of their top choices.
- View program information for all programs, not just those in OneApp. CCAP programs will be included!
- View up-to-date program changes, such as new programs.

Application Updates

Please note that the website changes are separate from the application. The application portal will remain a familiar site for families, with a few improvements:

- Making the application more mobile friendly.
- Adding some clarifying questions to the EC questions to make it easier for parents.
- With the improvements to the school-chooser functionality on the site, we will be printing a smaller batch of catalogs, available only at FRCs.

Next Steps

9/27 NOEEN Steering Committee Meeting

- Review and discuss these proposed changes as a group
- If members agree with these changes, then members can vote to approve these changes for inclusion in the revised Coordinated Enrollment Framework
- If members do not agree with the changes, and/or need more time to consider the changes, members can vote to call a special meeting in early October to approve changes (changes must be approved no later than October 14th in order to be incorporated into Main Round)

October

- EnrollNOLA will incorporate approved changes into the Coordinated Enrollment Framework and share the document with all providers
- Applications and catalog finalized

November

- Main Round application released on (or around) November 1.

