

The Eligibility Process for Oak Ridge Schools' Preschool/Head Start

Head Start, Voluntary Preschool (VPK), and Title 1 fund Oak Ridge Schools' Preschool with additional support from IDEA (Special Education) and Oak Ridge City Schools.

There are a few ways to determine eligibility for the preschool, based on the requirements of our grants. The preschool must honor all requirements of the grants to ensure priority of enrollment for students and families most at risk.

The first step to determining eligibility is income. The "Poverty Income Guidelines" are updated annually for both the federal and state. Head Start income guidelines are determined by the federal income guidelines. VPK and Title 1 are determined by the state income guidelines. The majority of our 3-year-old students are served under the Head Start/federal income guidelines. The VPK (4-year olds only) and Title 1 are served under the state income guidelines. Below you will find an example income guideline by funding source for a family of 4.

Head Start/Federal – Family Size of 4 – A max income of \$26,200

VPK/Title 1/State – Family Size of 4 – A max income of \$48,470

The second step to determining eligibility for the preschool is the required Selection Criteria. This is required by all funding sources. The Selection Criteria has a variety of questions to assist our school in determining a family's need. Points are assigned to each risk factor on the Selection Criteria. Based on a family's responses on the application, points may be assigned on the Selection Criteria. Risk factors for a child such as receipt of SSI, Families First, Foster Child, Homeless or Relative Care, and/or referrals from medical professionals and community agencies are indicated on the Selection Criteria. The points assigned to each risk factor ensure that a child and family are served based on need, even if they do not qualify by the income guidelines. The questions on the Selection Criteria are a combination of required factors per the funding sources, Anderson County Community Assessment and the Head Start Parent Policy Committee and VPK Parent Committee. The Selection Criteria is determined by the Head Start Parent Policy Committee and VPK Parent Committee and updated annually.

For an application to be considered complete and reviewed for enrollment, the following items must be included with the completed application:

- Income verification (tax return, w2)
- if applicable, and in addition to the income documentation:
 - child support statement
 - Families First Letter
 - SNAP Letter
 - SSI
- The certified birth certificate

- Proof of residency (lease/mortgage statement or utilities bill). Our grants require that only students of the City of Oak Ridge be served by Oak Ridge Schools' Preschool.

The Family Services Department is always available to assist families with the application process.

The funding sources also require that the Preschool continually recruit students, even if the school is fully enrolled. It is critical to maintain a robust wait list in order to ensure that we can quickly fill a vacancy at any time throughout the year. We must remain fully enrolled at all times. Through continued recruiting, we are able to inform the community about our school and locate students who are in need of services.