

ACF Administration for Children and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES	
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PROGRAM INSTRUCTION

TO: All Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees

SUBJECT: Enrollment and Re-enrollment of Migrant Children

INSTRUCTION:

Background

The children and families served by Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Programs have certain unique characteristics which distinguish them from other Head Start families. The children of migrant farmworkers change their residence and geographic location as their parents follow the agricultural work opportunities, which vary greatly across the nation. Based on Program Information Reports (PIR) data, the native or home language of approximately 90 percent of migrant children is Spanish or another language other than English. Migrant families are frequently required to work long hours, and a six-day work week is not uncommon. In the absence of Head Start, migrant children may be exposed to the dangers of farm equipment, and pesticides when they accompany their parents to the farms. In order to meet the needs of the migrant farm worker families, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs may operate 8-10 hours per day and weekends to provide an alternative to exposing the children to the dangers of the farm environment. In order to assist the children to learn to speak and understand the English language, necessary for achieving school readiness, the programs try to hire bilingual staff in a competitive employment market. Because the families change geographic locations many of the programs must provide staff, equipment, and facilities in multiple locations and re-enroll the children when they arrive at the new locations.

The unique characteristics of the programs and the populations that they serve pose many challenges. The slot vacated by the child that has changed geographic locations may be filled by a new enrollee requiring services similar to those previously provided to the child who has departed. Each re-enrollment of a child who has changed geographic location means that a program must meet the costs of providing services to the same child in different facilities with different staff and equipment. In order to provide the migrant family with an alternative to taking their child to the fields, the program must try to re-enroll the child, sometimes facing competition with other children in need for a limited number of vacancies. These challenges make counting the number of children served and accurately computing the costs of Migrant and Seasonal programs very difficult.

Are Migrant and Seasonal Programs grantees permitted to count children more than once when they change geographic location and re-enroll at another center or delegate agency of the grantee?

No. The Office of Head Start (OHS) is required to report the actual number of migrant and seasonal children served to Congress each year. If grantees count some children more than once during the grantee's budget year, the result will be an inaccurate annual report on the number of migrant and seasonal children served by Head Start. OHS expects the annual funded enrollment figure to reflect an unduplicated count of the number of children served by a grantee during their budget year.

How can Migrant and Seasonal grantees ensure that the number of children they report is an unduplicated count?

In order for Migrant and Seasonal grantees to accurately report their funded enrollment, without counting children more than once during a budget year, OHS recommends that those grantees that do not already assign unique identifiers to enrolled children do so beginning with their Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 grants. OHS believes this will be necessary to prevent counting children more than once when families re-locate and their children are served by other centers or delegates funded by the grantee, including centers and delegates in other States. The tracking of children to avoid counting them more than once requires efficient and effective procedures, computer equipment and software, and well-trained staff who can interview families skillfully and recognize identifying information. Many programs already have these tracking systems in place. OHS believes all Migrant and Seasonal grantees should have tracking systems in place when the FY 2011 cycle begins.

Please direct any questions on this Instruction to your OHS Regional Office.

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