

RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT

Residency

All children who attend a state-funded Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) must live in Michigan and must be eligible to attend Michigan public schools. This includes migrant children during the times they are living in Michigan. Children who live in bordering states, even if their parents/guardians work in Michigan, are not eligible for GSRP.

Intermediate School District as Fiscal Agent

PA 62 of 2011 shifted all revenues to the School Aid Fund and distributed funding to Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) and ISD consortia which will act as fiduciaries to distribute funds to programs.

Formula (school district/public school academy) Programs

For FY12 this means that all Formula Grantees (district/Public School Academy (PSA)) will become members of a consortium with an ISD as the fiscal agent. Funding goes from MDE to the ISDs through State Aid Payments and then to each consortium member. Each consortium must choose from one of the two consortium options available.

Option 1 serves children based on the allocation to each district/PSA. Consortia choosing to serve children based on Option One must enroll children who reside in the geographic boundaries of the school district/PSA. Children who attend a PSA (charter school) GSRP must follow the same guidelines as older children who attend the academy.

Option 2 serves children based on the allocation to the entire consortium. Consortia choosing to serve children based on the allocation to the entire consortium may allow children residing in any district in the consortium to be enrolled and served by the consortium at any location.

Competitive (agency) Programs

The ISD will be the applicant in MEGS and subcontract the awarded slots to each Competitive program. Funding goes from MDE to the ISDs through the State Aid Payment system and then to each subcontracting agency. Competitive programs will no longer use the Cash Management System (CMS).

An agency preschool program must enroll children from the "catchment" area as identified by the agency in the grant application. A catchment area might include a single zip code in a large city, an entire county, or may be defined by the families associated with an institution (i.e., all enrolled students of a university or training program). If the family moves after the child has enrolled, the program may continue to serve the child for the remainder of the program year, with the family providing transportation.

Interagency Collaboration

Communities in Michigan are required to collaborate in preschool recruitment and enrollment activities, present to families one preschool application for all programs, and share one waiting list. If a program enrolls a child who is *eligible for or dually-enrolled in*

another funded preschool program, it prohibits another child from participating in the GSRP who only may be eligible for GSRP.

The recruitment process should begin in the spring of the year preceding the start of the program. The availability of Formula and Competitive GSRPs and Head Start in one area offers parental choice regarding enrollment in high-quality preschool. An effective process includes opportunities for families to meet with and learn about each program for which their children are eligible.

Although GSRP and Head Start are designed to serve two different populations of children/families, both programs share a common goal: to ensure as many at-risk children as possible are able to benefit from high-quality preschool programs. Therefore, each interagency Advisory Committee must establish local protocol for assisting parents in selecting the program best suited to their needs. Local protocol should include mutual referrals among all available programs. Local protocol should also be reviewed annually to assure the goal of serving the greatest number of children is met.

Guidelines for Developing a Local Protocol

Provide contact information for each program, including name of person(s) having responsibility for recruitment, title(s), telephone number(s), e-mail address(s), and preferred mode of communication.

Develop a plan to collect the required information from parents/guardians of each child:

- Age of child as verified by birth certificate
- School district/county of residence
- Documented annual income
- Potential risk factors
- Health information/proof of immunizations
- Parent permission to share information among programs in order to determine proper placement

Utilizing the *GSRP Participant Eligibility and Prioritization Guidelines*, create written guidance on GSRP recruitment and enrollment policies. An effective process includes opportunities for families to meet with and learn about each program for which their children are eligible. A child who is income-eligible for Head Start must be referred to Head Start. Local protocol identifies which program is responsible to contact families and describe Head Start services.

It is not recommended that families be responsible for the completion of a referral form and/or returning a referral form to GSRP. Families should be guided to make the program choice best suited to their needs.

A referral form from GSRP to Head Start should include:

- Date of referral and date forwarded to Head Start
- Family contact information: parent and child names, mailing address, phone number, e-mail address
- Explanation of family program preference (preferably written by parent)
- Parent signature acknowledging parental interest in GSRP and understanding their child will be included on a GSRP waiting list until the referral process with Head Start is completed
- Signatures of sending and receiving program representatives
- Program placement decision

GSRP enrollment is deferred while the referral to Head Start is completed. The completed referral form is documentation that agreed-upon procedures have been followed and also reports the placement outcome for each family that has been referred. The completed referral may document acknowledgement from program representatives and parents that the family is income-eligible for one program and will be enrolled in another. If Head Start does not return the referral form, the GSRP grantee need only retain on file the original dated referral form to meet program requirements.

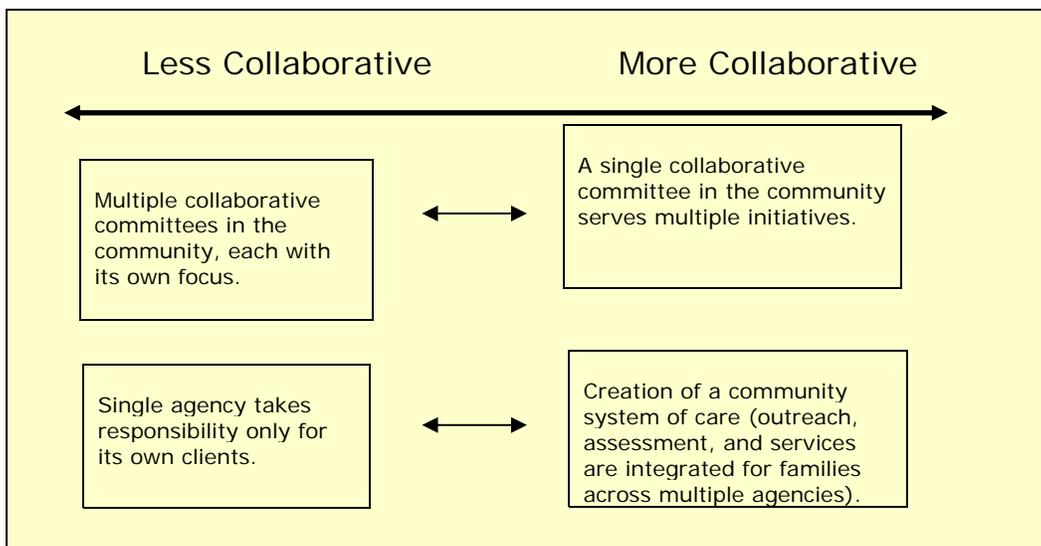
Local protocol should detail the referral turn-around timeframe before a family is removed from the GSRP waiting list and enrolled into GSRP. This critical portion of written protocol helps to ensure common understanding among programs and service to the highest number of eligible children/families.

The following (Collaboration Defined) is adapted from: *2003 Statewide Evaluation of The ASAP-PIE Program, Report 2*. Institute for Children, Youth, and Families; and University Outreach Michigan State University:

Collaboration Defined

Federal and state agencies and foundations have increasingly required collaboration in the specifications for agencies applying for grants, generally without the recognition that collaborating is a complex process that develops over time. Community agencies working together function on four levels that represent different types of activities and require increasingly more complex relationships. While each of these sets of strategies may sometimes be referred to as "collaboration," only those that cause relationships to change the partners themselves meet the test of these definitions.

Continuum of Collaborative Approaches in a Community



NETWORKING

The Networking level of working together is evidenced in such activities as:

- Signing off on each other's grant proposals.
- Sharing information about services.
- Becoming acquainted with each other.
- Sending and receiving referrals.

COORDINATING

The Coordinating level of working together adds:

- Sharing information about clients and services provided to them (with consent).
- Agreeing upon a plan of services for a mutual client.
- With the exception of the first item under Networking, these activities involve informal relationships between front-line service providers.

COOPERATING

The Cooperating level of working together reflects a more planned interface of activities. It involves executive decision making in the context of an agreed upon focus. Cooperation is “operationalized” through such activities as:

- Sharing of resources with or without reimbursement (e.g., space, vehicles, etc.).
- Provision of services to the clients of another agency in that agency’s setting (as in services delivered in a school).
- Co-location of staff of two or more agencies.
- Cross-agency training directed at information.
- Agency executives recognize that they have responsibilities for a common population and engage in decision making to plan and deliver services, but services remain discrete and essentially unchanged. Decisions to provide and maintain services essentially remain within each agency.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration is substantively different from the other three levels. Inter-agency action at this level requires executives to make major change in their own organizations, operations, and service delivery models. Collaboration substantially changes the service system.

Collaboration involves some or all of the following:

- A shared vision that incorporates responsibility for a shared population.
- Agreed-upon outcomes.
- Commitment to shared initiatives.
- Development of community plans.
- Shared decision making with respect to inter-agency development of services and grant applications.
- Pooled resources: cash, staff, as well as space, supplies, materials, etc.
- Assigned responsibility for joint ventures.
- Shared decision making with respect to inter-agency oversight of shared initiatives.
- Cross-agency training directed at changing service delivery.
- Reconfiguration of service delivery.
- Cross-agency teams.
- Common forms.
- Common evaluation/information system.

In order to be sustained over time, a collaborative enterprise needs written agreements among the collaborative body and each agency assigned primary responsibility, concerning their respective roles.

The agency assigned primary responsibility and agencies receiving or providing resources. Written changes in the policies and procedures of participating agencies also institutionalize the collaborative approach to service delivery.

Recruitment

Many businesses and places in the community that draw young families make good recruitment partners who would be willing to share information about the preschool programs available to local children. Efforts to connect with families might also include:

- Information given to home visit specialists through the local ISD and community mental health agencies;
- posters displayed at local health departments, doctors' offices, libraries, post offices, hospitals, and local businesses such as laundromats, and grocery stores;
- flyers sent home with children enrolled in elementary school;
- informational articles in the local newspaper;
- door to door census;
- recruitment tables at local area fairs and festivals;
- electronic community bulletin boards
- information on local cable stations
- displays at kindergarten orientation.

Enrollment of Children

While the recruitment process begins in the spring of each year preceding the start of the program, prospective grantees are cautioned to delay enrollment until the State School Aid Bill has been signed and allocations have been announced. Parents may be told they are on a waiting list and will be formally enrolled once the funding of the program has been finalized. The following records and documents are required to enroll each eligible child.

Age documentation- Children are eligible for the GSRP the year before they are eligible for kindergarten. Children are entitled to enroll in kindergarten when they are five on or before December 1; children enrolled in GSRP must be at least four, but not five, on or before December 1, of the year in which they enroll in GSRP.

A copy of a legal birth certificate, passport, hospital record, baptismal record, or other governmental form, such as a Medicaid card, may document a child's age eligibility. The age record must be kept in the child's file for audit purposes. Because a birth certificate is required for kindergarten entry, GSRP may accept the other verification, but help families to acquire proper documentation so that future eligibility for educational programs is easy to establish.

Health and immunization record- In a Center-Based program, each child must have a record of immunizations, as required by the Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing, at the time of enrollment. Children whose immunizations are not up to date must be in the process and completed within four months of enrollment. Each child must also have a health form on file within 30 days of enrollment. The health form must be signed by a health care professional indicating that the child has been examined and may participate in a preschool program.

Because Home-Based programs do not need to follow the licensing rules for child care and children do not attend without their parents, they can participate before the health and immunization records are complete.

Several other pieces are required to be on file including documentation of a minimum of two of the eight risk factors found in the section on Eligibility, income verification for each family and the parent/guardian's name, address and telephone number.

Combining Eligible and Non-Eligible Children in Preschool Classrooms

Many areas in Michigan do not have sufficient numbers of children eligible to offer individual program classrooms, but do have enough children in total to offer high-quality preschool programs. Some programs have combined Head Start, Title I, and other funding streams to provide viable classrooms. Other programs have accepted tuition-paying children through their community education programs to serve children who are not at risk. The following issues must be addressed in administering combined programs:

- When even one child in a classroom is funded through GSRP, all GSRP guidelines must be followed: staff credentialing, curriculum, assessment, parent involvement, etc.
- The funding for each enrolled child should be clear: Title I funds can be used to supplement GSRP funds, but a child cannot be enrolled in two such programs within the same program year.
- Additional at risk children who meet the GSRP guidelines for eligibility may be enrolled beyond the funded number if the program can accommodate them, but additional funding is not available through MDE grants.
- Additional children, whether at risk or not eligible, can be enrolled in a GSRP classroom, thus rendering it a braided-funding classroom. However, GSRP funding cannot be used for the children who are not at risk. There must be documentation that the tuition charged and other sources of cash and in-kind funding are equivalent to the amount of state funding which supports each GSRP child. Programs where administration and facilities are provided by the School District/PSA or subcontractor Agency as in-kind must maintain careful documentation clarifying cost share.
- When braiding to provide an inclusive setting, each classroom would optimally include children who are not at-risk along with the targeted and at-risk populations of GSRP and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). When braiding GSRP and ECSE, an issue for discussion may be whether or not the School District would qualify for State Aid; the interface between the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education and the State Aid Act needs consideration. Each child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) must document services only (Rule 55) and placement into a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) such as the GSRP. Language in each IEP must concur with the ISD plan for Special Education.
- Over-age children (eligible for kindergarten, five or older on or before December 1 of the program year) cannot be enrolled in GSRP, no matter what their individual levels of development might be. This is explicit in the legislation and will require return of the state funding for each over-age child served. "Holding out" or "redshirting" of children has not been effective in increasing children's academic performance; children who are "over-age" for their grade, no matter the circumstances, tend to do more poorly in school.

Special Education Eligible Children

Local districts may determine, through the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Team that the GSRP is the least restrictive environment for children who qualify for special education services.

The IEP Team should have representation of parents and the regular educator as it considers the following questions:

- Do all parties feel that the IEP fully meets the child's needs?
- Does the IEP declare the GSRP as the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)?
- Was the regular educator a part of the IEP Team? Are consultation meetings between special education staff and the GSRP teaching team written into the IEP?
- Can the child's needs for special services be met in the context of GSRP?
- What additional support or accommodations will be necessary so the child can participate fully in the activities and environment of GSRP?

If there is discussion of the child attending both part-day GSRP and part-day Early Childhood Special Education, there are many additional considerations. Transition between programs is critical to consider. Is it in the child's best interests to participate in two programs, possibly with different facilities, staff, peers, routines, behavior, and academic expectations? Could the child's needs be met with placement into GSRP and special

education services occurring in a play-based setting, within the GSRP classroom? If the child transfers each day between programs, how are his/her lunch and rest period accomplished?

While an IEP Team may recommend a GSRP placement, grantees must balance the needs of all children when considering placement/programs. The GSRP policies must always be followed; a child must have two documented risk factors and be age-eligible. If the program retains a child in the GSRP who is dually enrolled in another preschool program, it prohibits another child from participating in the GSRP which may be the other child's only opportunity to participate in a quality preschool program.