

Office of Head Start Conference Call: Fiscal Year 2011 Budget

Air Date: April 25, 2011

OPERATOR: Good afternoon, and thank you for standing by. All lines will be in a listen-only mode for the duration of today's conference. Today's call is being recorded; if any one has any objections, you may disconnect at this time. Now I'll turn the meeting over to Ms. Joan Lombardi. You may begin.

JOAN LOMBARDI: Thank you. Good afternoon to all of you in the Head Start community. It's a pleasure and an honor to be opening this call today, to be speaking to so many people who are working on behalf of young children and families. Today you'll hear the details of the fiscal year '11 budget, and there'll be some follow-up calls after this. But before that, I wanted to say thank you.

Thank you for your incredible work over the past year. Thank you for your patience over the last six months. But most of all, thank you for believing in the idea that we must do everything we can to help get children off to a good start, for respecting and supporting families, and for connecting with others in the community. It's your dedication and the innovations that we've seen emerge in Head Start programs across the country that have sustained all of us here as we work on behalf of the children and families you serve.

It's been an important few years for Head Start. We're all very proud of your work to expand to very young children, to improve quality, and to assure integrity and accountability. The early childhood team here has been working to improve P.A., working with you to find new ways to support families, to ensure a strong bond between parents and children, a commitment to learning, and a strong family. We've been spending time thinking about new ways we can improve classroom practice, from learning more about how to mentor staff to improving nutrition and physical activities, from renewing the focus on outcomes to promoting a strong social-emotional climate and instructional supports in every Head – Head Start classroom.

And with you, we continue to assure stronger partnerships with Child Care, with the new Maternal and Child – and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program, and with the Department of Ed. And just last week we renewed our commitment to assuring that all children in foster care can participate in a high-quality early childhood development program. We hope you will join us in continuing to strengthen those linkages with state and local child welfare agencies.

Every day we also see new partnerships emerging between Head Start and the schools to assure continuity of quality services. We think these partnerships are essential to the long-term success of Head Start. So the bottom line for us is that we all work to create a culture of learning, so that we all ask ourselves – whether we're here in a central office or in the regions, in the TA network, or you in the programs – what else can we do to strengthen Head Start so that it becomes all it can be for children and families.

In one of my visits to a program a few months ago, a director told me about a grandmother who came into the program that morning and said, you know, the Early Head Start program was the best hope she had for her grandchild's future. As we move forward, let's keep that hope shining bright by making sure that every program is high quality. Thank you for your dedication to this goal and to your continued service on behalf of children and families. A big thank you from my heart to all of yours. And now I'm going to turn it over to Yvette.

YVETTE SANCHEZ FUENTES: Hello, everyone, this is Yvette Sanchez Fuentes. I'm the director for the Office of Head Start, and I want to thank everyone for joining this important phone call on such short notice. We're going to take you briefly through the facts, through how some of this works. We'll be answering some questions that we received from the field and then we'll be having some closing thoughts, and also let you know what some next steps are in case that you may have any additional questions.

So just to start off, most of you are fully aware that fiscal year 2011 funding is at \$7.56 billion for Head Start. This includes \$340 million to continue operations for the expansion programs funded under ARRA. The \$340 million increase represents 50 percent of the \$678 million needed to sustain the enrollment of slots funded under ARRA. We know that these funds represent 50 percent of the FY 2010 expansion funding levels for ARRA Head Start and Early Head Start grantees.

So a little bit about how this is going to work. All ARRA expansion grantees will receive FY 2011 funding by September 2011 for six months for continued services, so half of the annual cost. Grantees will then receive another six months of funding in FY 2012 to maintain – and I want to put some emphasis on this – to maintain their full enrollment through the 2011-2012 school year. Therefore, programs should plan to operate for a full school year, September 2011 through September 2012, ensuring continuity through at least September 2012. Early Head Start and full-year Head Start programs should plan to continue summer operations as already planned.

So, ARRA grants end in September 2011. New grantees will receive a new grant for six months of funding in September 2011. Existing grantees will receive a supplement for six months of funding to their FY 2011 base grant in September 2011. And in FY 2012, grantees will receive an additional six months to continue expansion services through September 2012. One important note to make is so long as the FY 2012 budget is not less than the FY 2011 level...

So between now and September 30, 2011, this administration expects that all of our ARRA-funded programs will continue with and plan for full steam ahead. Keep your services going. You're going to inform and seek input from key players – parents, staff, community partners – and you're going to develop your funding applications, which will be due July 1, 2011. In addition, you'll be getting additional guidance with – with regards to the closeout of your ARRA grant. And of course, remember you must obtain required approvals from your governing body and your Policy Council.

We really want to stress that what is important is to continue to provide high-quality services to infants, toddlers, and pregnant women and families. This commitment, this funding, represents a full commitment to making sure that we provide this opportunity to the families that we were able to serve

through ARRA funding. Make sure that you incorporate what you learn this year and, if necessary, make changes to improve your services and your options in order to ensure that you are providing children and families with the highest quality services that they deserve. And also, make sure that you are supporting your staff in their professional development.

A couple of important notes... First, remember 50 percent of the funds necessary for expansion slots are part of the base effective September 2011. Remember, these slots are no longer ARRA slots; they are part of the whole – they are part of the whole base. And also remember that funding has always been dependent on annual appropriations. Please note that 12 months of high-quality services matter in the lives of infants and toddlers, and so please remember what we've mentioned. This is for funding for a full school year. For those Early Head Start and Head Start programs, please continue to operate during your summer months as you've already planned.

We received some questions from the field, many of which I hope we've already addressed through this presentation. But we'll address several of them now and then post others on the ECLKC. So one question that we received: "For the purposes of reporting, what are the expectations for PIR and other outcomes pro-rated for the six month period?" Grantees should plan to continue services for expansion slots through FY 2012. Therefore, the same reporting requirement – therefore, the reporting requirements remain the same.

Question: "If we stay at this funding level for the future will we eventually have to cut a certain amount of kids?" If the Head Start program continues to receive this funding level after the 2011-2012 school year, there will be a point when we will not be able to support the same number of children currently enrolled. But please, please note that Congress has specifically appropriated these funds now to maintain these slots for this school year, and the President's FY 2012 budget request is \$8.1 billion and includes the additional \$340 million to fully fund these ARRA expansion slots. Please note: if FY 2012 funding is less than FY 2011, the \$7.6 billion levels we have received, OHS will communicate and provide guidance to grantees as the enactment of the FY '12 appropriation budget progresses.

One last question: "What and when will OHS give guidance to the field?" Please note that regional offices will be sending funding guidance letters to all grantees by mid-May. This letter will provide additional information on the application requirements, the funding available, and the funded enrollment.

In addition, we know that many of you – all of you have been invited to the Early Head Start cluster trainings, which will be taking place across the country. I fully encourage you to register and attend these cluster trainings, as they will be an opportunity for grantees to fully understand the issues, challenges, and timeframes related to the FY '11 funding. Please note that the EHS cluster trainings will be very specific to ARRA Early Head Start programs.

If you have not received any information with regards to the Early Head Start cluster trainings, please contact your regional office so that you can find out about them as soon as possible. And also, as Joan mentioned, each regional office will be holding additional conference calls as necessary to answer any lingering, outstanding, or specific questions to your region that they can provide. In addition, please also

feel free to contact your program specialist for any questions that are specifically related to your program or your grant.

So with that, we just want to have – share some closing thoughts that we hope that each of you will plan to deliberately keep the needs of children and families first as you move forward through this process. Please know that we are here to support you. We don't have all the answers, but we will find them and we will support you in the best way that we can. Constantly continue to embrace strategic planning, even in the face of uncertainty. As Joan mentioned, it has been an up-and-down climb, and we know that programs have continued to move forward through all of these uncertainties. Know that we will continue to support you through the regional offices and through T/TA providers.

And as always, please keep in mind that quality matters. We have set out over these last two years on a robust quality agenda to increase the level of services that children and families are receiving at the local level. And know that with this commitment from Congress and from the administration comes great responsibility to ensure that we are keeping the promise of making sure that every child and every family is successful in our program.

So with that, I just want to remind everyone to please keep an eye out for information from your regional offices with any additional guidance. If you have any questions please feel free to call your local regional office, and keep in mind that regional offices will be hosting call in the next couple of weeks to answer any outstanding or lingering questions.

With that, I want to thank all of you for taking the time to join us today. We appreciate the work that you do at the local level. We know that what you do every day changes the lives of vulnerable children and families across this country and we are honored to work with you. We are honored to serve you, and we will be here to answer your questions and support you as you move forward over the next year and beyond. So with that, thank you very much and everyone have a good day.