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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

TO: All Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees and Delegate Agencies

SUBJECT: Five Year Head Start Project Periods

INFORMATION

The Office of Head Start (OHS) is moving from indefinite project periods to five year project periods for all Head Start grantees. This requires changes in OHS funding practices and oversight of Head Start programs. Changes in oversight will include improved communication between federal staff and grantees, as well as ongoing analysis of data to determine the type of support needed by grantees. The main purpose of improved oversight is to assure the quality of program services, the effectiveness of management systems, and the achievement of outcomes for children, families, and communities.

Key elements of the five year Head Start project periods are described below.

Funding Guidance

Grantees who are eligible for a non-competitive five year grant will receive a detailed funding guidance letter issued by their Regional Office six months prior to their refunding date. Grant applications will be due to the Regional Office three months prior to the start of the new project period. Grantees will be required to describe the program approach, define anticipated outcomes, and include measures of program progress throughout the five year period. Proposed changes in scope (i.e., program approach, service options, funded enrollment) should be discussed in advance with your assigned program specialist to ensure your application is complete.

Application criteria in years two through five of the project period will focus on grantee progress toward goals, outcomes, and intended impacts defined in either the year one or the competitive application. Grantees will be expected to use program data to analyze and report on their progress. Grantee requests to change or update their program approach must be supported by program data. Throughout the five year project period and at the end of a five year project period, grantees will be expected to provide evidence of the program's cumulative impact on the children, families, and communities served.

Additional Post-Award Requirements

The following requirements will be conditions for all five year grants on the Notice of Award (NoA). Each grantee will complete the activities outlined below and, where required, submit the results to their Regional Office within the identified timeframes. Regional Office staff will discuss and validate these conditions/certifications during annual site visits.

Governance

- The grantee governing body must conduct a governance and leadership capacity screening within 60 calendar days of the start of the project period.
- The governing body must certify that the governance and leadership capacity screening was conducted and a training plan was developed. The certification must be submitted to OHS in the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES) within 75 calendar days of the start of the project period.

Health and Safety

- Each grantee must complete a screening of the health and safety environment of each center and/or family child care home where services are provided within 45 calendar days of the start of the program/school year, or within 45 calendar days of the start of the five year project period when the five year project period begins during the program/school year.
- The grantee governing body must submit to OHS the signed certification of compliance with all applicable health and safety requirements within 75 calendar days of the start of the program or school year, or within 75 calendar days of the start of the five year project period when the five year project period begins during the program or school year. The form must be submitted to OHS in HSES immediately thereafter.

School Readiness

- Grantee must participate in individual school readiness progress meetings with the OHS Regional Office.

Audit Webinar

- Grantee must participate in an OHS-sponsored single audit webinar within six months of the start of the project period.

OHS expects grantees to provide high-quality, comprehensive services to children and families. The OHS training and technical assistance (T/TA) network is available to help programs succeed in achieving these outcomes.

Grantees are reminded that OHS retains the authority to determine whether Head Start agencies meet standards with respect to program, administrative, financial management, and other requirements. Serious violations by any grantee of these requirements can result in a suspension or termination of a grant.

OHS believes that the five year awards and the conditions, oversight, and training and technical assistance described above will strengthen the quality of services. OHS fully expects grantees to achieve the greatest outcomes through the provision of high quality, comprehensive services to children and families. High quality begins with assuring that every child receives services in an environment that is healthy and safe. It is incumbent on the governing body to assure that systems are in place and ongoing monitoring occurs so that the health and safety of children are never compromised.

Please direct any questions on this Information Memorandum to your Office of Head Start Regional Office.

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