

EARLY HEAD START TIP SHEET

No. 11

Daily Attendance Rate for EHS, April 2003

Does the 85% monthly average daily attendance rate rule apply to Early Head Start programs?

Response:

Yes, if the monthly average daily attendance rate falls below 85 percent, an Early Head Start (EHS) program operating a center-based option must assess the cause of the absenteeism. If the absenteeism is due to illness or other well-documented reasons, then the program does not need to take any special action. When children are receiving part-time center-based services through a combination model, the average daily attendance rate applies to the time that those children are scheduled to be in the center.

Unexplained excessive absenteeism

Unexplained excessive absenteeism for an individual child still requires assessment even if the program's daily attendance rate remains above 85%. If a child is inexplicably and chronically absent nor does attendance improve when family support is offered, the slot must be considered an enrollment vacancy as cited in 45CFR 1305.8 (c).

Increased illnesses for infants & toddlers in group care

It must be remembered that infants and toddlers in group settings are more frequently exposed to mild illnesses such as colds, ear infections, and stomach viruses than children who are not in this type of setting. Therefore, absenteeism may be higher in infant and toddler centers than in preschool Head Start centers.

Calculating average daily attendance

Average daily attendance is calculated by dividing the number of children attending the program on any given day by the number of children enrolled (excluding vacancies) in the program on that same day.

Questions to Consider for Planning and Programming:

- How is the program tracking the average daily attendance records?
- Does the gathered information include such data as the pattern of absences for each child, the reasons for absences, and the number of absences that occur on consecutive days?
- What does the program do with the collected information? How is it used?
- When attendance for an individual child, classroom, or program falls below 85%, does the program learn and understand the underlying cause(s) and address them?
- How is the program's Health Services Advisory Committee involved?

Performance Standards, Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations:

- 1305.8(a) When the monthly average daily attendance rate in a center-based program falls below 85 percent, a Head Start program must analyze the causes of absenteeism. The

analysis must include a study of the pattern of absences for each child, including the reasons for absences as well as the number of absences that occur on consecutive days

- 1305.8(b) If the absences are a result of illness or if they are well-documented absences for other reasons, no special action is required.
- 1305.8(c) In circumstances where chronic absenteeism persists and it does not seem feasible to include the child in either the same or a different program option, the child's slot must be considered an enrollment vacancy.

Resources:

American Academy of Pediatrics. **Caring for Out Children: National Health and Safety Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs, 2nd Ed.** Maternal and Child Health Bureau. 2002.

Early Head Start National Resource Center. **Technical Assistance Paper, 7: A Holistic Approach to Health and Safety.** DHHS/ACF/ACYF/HSB. 2004.

Health Services Advisory Committee of local program.

Policy Clarifications, OHS-PC-I-064: In Calculating Average Daily Attendance Does a Program Use Funded or Actual Enrollment? *The Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center.* DHHS/ACF/OHS. September 17, 2007.

Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community: Health and Safety. DHHS/ACF/OHS. 2007.

- Caring for Children with Chronic Conditions.
- Enhancing Health in the Head Start Workplace.
- Preventing and Managing Communicable Diseases.
- Sustaining a Healthy Environment.

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This Tip Sheet is not a regulatory document. Its intent is to provide a basis for dialogue, clarification, and problem solving among Office of Head Start, Regional Offices, TA consultants, and grantees. If you need further clarification on Head Start Policies and regulations, please contact your Regional Program Specialist.