

EARLY HEAD START TIP SHEET

No. 2

EHS Teacher Qualification, November 2010

Why do both staff members in an Early Head Start classroom with eight children need to be teacher qualified?

Response:

In every Early Head Start (EHS) classroom, the maximum group size is eight children. To meet the 4:1 child to teacher ratio, the classroom is considered two clusters of four children. Since each teacher is responsible for the direct care and well being of the children, both staff members need to be teacher qualified.

What does it mean to be teacher qualified?

Currently, per the Head Start Act of 2007, all EHS teachers must:

- Have, at a minimum, a CDA credential, and have been trained (or have equivalent coursework) in early childhood development.
- By September 30, 2012, be trained (or have equivalent coursework) in early childhood development with a focus on infant and toddler development.

The EHS teacher qualification regulations stated in the Head Start Act of 2007 supersede previous requirements; therefore, center-based teachers working with infants and toddlers no longer have a year from their date of hire to receive their infant/toddler credential [1304.52(f)].

The Office of Head Start (OHS) understands that meeting these requirements can be challenging, especially with the need to hire so many qualified EHS staff to serve the unprecedented expansion of EHS.¹ Ensuring that skilled and knowledgeable teachers are hired and are working effectively with EHS infants, toddlers, and families requires an ongoing commitment from EHS programs to support their teachers in meeting these requirements. Many programs are working with community colleges and other educational institutions to access coursework that will lead to CDA or equivalent credentials in Early Childhood Education focusing on infant/toddler development.

The quality of care provided by EHS teachers has a great impact on the healthy growth and development of the children in their care. Therefore, the training and education of EHS teachers should appropriately and specifically address infant and toddler development.

In addition to infant and toddler development, EHS teachers need training that includes a focus on health and safety issues in infant and toddler care; the importance of relationship building with infants and toddlers; communicating effectively with families and colleagues; and working in partnership with parents of infants and toddlers.

Questions to Consider for Planning and Programming:

- How does the program ensure that its EHS teachers are qualified?

¹ ACF-IM-HS-10-06, 2010.

- How does the program track and document teachers' qualifications, experiences and knowledge pertinent to working with infants and toddlers and their families? How does the program ensure individualized professional development plans to include training and learning opportunities to enhance existing knowledge, skill, and experience?
- How does the program support staff in gaining their CDA, AA, or BA degrees?
- How does the program partner with local educational agencies to form CDA credentialing and/or college programs that focus on infant/toddler development?
- How does the program ensure that EHS staff members receive training and/or gain coursework that focuses on infant and toddler development and needs?

Performance Standards, Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations:

- 1304.52(f) Early Head Start and Head Start staff working as teachers with infants and toddlers must obtain a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential for Infant and Toddler Caregivers or an equivalent credential within one year of hire as a teacher of infants and toddlers.* In addition, infant and toddler teachers must have the training and experience necessary to develop consistent, stable, and supportive relationships with very young children. The training must develop knowledge of infant and toddler development, safety issues in infant and toddler care, and methods for communicating effectively with infants and toddlers, their parents, and other staff members.

* This is now superseded by Sec. 645A(h)(1)&(2) of the Head Start Act of 2007. See Resources below.

- 1304.52(g)(4) Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that each teacher working exclusively with infants and toddlers has responsibility for no more than four infants and toddlers and that no more than eight infants and toddlers are placed in any one group.

Resources:

Child Development Associate (CDA). <http://www.cdacouncil.org/>

Early Head Start National Resource Center. **Early Head Start Program Strategies: Staff Development.** DHHS/ACF/ACYF/HSB. 1999.

Head Start Act as amended December 12, 2007

- Sec. 645A(h)(1)&(2) No later than September 30, 2010, all teachers providing direct services to children and families participating in Early Head Start programs located in Early Head Start centers, have a minimum of a child development associate credential, and have been trained (or have equivalent coursework) in early childhood development; and the secretary will establish staff qualification goals to ensure that not later than September 30, 2012, all such teachers have been trained (or have equivalent coursework) in early childhood development with a focus on infant and toddler development.

Information Memorandum. DHHS/ACF/OHS.

- **ACF-IM-HS-10-06: Qualifications for Early Head Start Infant and Toddler Center-based Staff.** 2010.
- **ACF-IM-HS-08-12: Statutory Degree and Credentialing Requirements for Head Start Teaching Staff.** 2008.

National Head Start Association. **Head's Up! Network.**

http://my.nhsa.org/about/partner/about_partner_uc.htm Offers credit-bearing courses.

Policy Clarifications: J – Staffing Requirements and Program Options. *The Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center.* DHHS/ACF/OHS.

University of Cincinnati. <http://www.eclc.uc.edu/news.php>.

Offers an online Associate Degree with an Infant and Toddler Focus. Call 1-888-325-2669 for more information.

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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.