

## Introducing the New Head Start Program Performance Standards

### Overview: Human Resources and Professional Development

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Dr. Blanca Enriquez: Welcome to this overview on how the new Performance Standards address human resources and professional development. I want to introduce Sarah Merrill and Jamie Sheehan as they discuss the standards that will support effective teaching and learning for every child.

Jamie Sheehan: Hi, and welcome. We're happy to be with you today to talk about human resource management and Subpart I.

Sarah Merrill: And it's great because we know the key to high quality services is really ensuring that programs have high quality staff. And that's really what encompasses this whole subpart. We know staff need to be safe and healthy to be around children and family, and so programs really need to ensure that they are those things as well as that they have sufficient knowledge, experience, and competencies to fulfill their roles. And programs can continue that growth and development by providing ongoing and intentional training and professional development opportunities.

So Subpart I is broken down into five sections. One high level, overarching thing to know is that the standards really codify what's listed in the Head Start Act of 2007. And they also help to align with the pending Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) regulations, which will be coming out soon.

Jamie: Right. Thanks, Sarah. So some key themes in this Subpart are more comprehensive requirements for background checks; as well as a focus on staff qualifications and competencies, which is new; a stronger system of professional development, including a coordinated coaching strategy, which is pretty exciting. And what's also important is that there's some delayed compliances for some of the requirements in this section.

So now we're going to talk a little bit more about some of the requirements in each of the sections, but we encourage you to really give them a read through. So one thing that's really new in this section is around background checks. But one of the other things that's also new is staff performance appraisals. So they're no longer a requirement in the regulation, but grantees and programs do need to assess their staff need.

Sarah: And I think it's also important to know that the regulations are written to allow for program thoughtfulness. So if they're finding appraisals to be helpful and really help meaningful, they can still use them, but they're not required.

Jamie: Right, right. But we are requiring written personnel policies as well as standards of conduct to be a part of their personnel policies. So I'm going to break down some of the background – all of the background checks, and hopefully in a way that is very intentional. So the background checks that are needed prior to employment for all employees, consultants, and contractors, including those who are providing transportation, the first background check that needs to be done is a Sex Offender Registry check. And then another check needs to be done which requires either a state or tribal criminal background check with fingerprinting or an FBI check that also requires fingerprinting. So those – one or the other of the fingerprinting needs to be done along with the Sex Offender Registry check.

Sarah: So, there's two.

Jamie: So those are the two prior to employment. So until those background checks are completed, no one should be starting. After those results are back, someone could start but couldn't be left alone with children at all, could have no unsupervised access to children. Then there's two more that need to be done, which can all be started at the same time. But the other two are whichever fingerprinting wasn't done. That one needs to be done. So whether you did the FBI first, then you need to do the state second. And then also a state background check for child abuse and neglect.

Sarah: And is there a timeframe to get all of them?

Jamie: I'm so glad you asked, Sarah. There is. There's actually a 90-day timeframe for those to be completed. So there are four background checks all together, and there's also a requirement that programs use the disqualification factors that are in the CCDF regulation and that all background checks be conducted every five years for all employees, consultants, and contractors.

In this section, we also talk about standards of conduct. It's a list in the regulation and it's not exhaustive at all. Grantees could certainly add additional items that they find that are relevant for their community. And those standards of conduct apply to all staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers. Personnel policies should also include the procedures for what happens if someone violates the standards of conduct.

Sarah: That makes sense. Well, thanks, Jamie. I'll go ahead and take the next section, which outlines the educational qualifications and the competency requirements. And this, again is for staff and consultants and contractors who manage or deliver the services to children and families. And again, you had mentioned the rationale, but it's about having educated and competent staff who deliver these high quality services.

So this section is broken down into three parts – I should say six parts, and it outlines the requirements for directors, fiscal officers, child and family service management staff, and child and family services staff, as well as coaches. So let me try to do this highlights as organized as I possibly can. So for directors, fiscal officers, and the management staff of the family, health,

and disability services, they have provisions for staff who are hired after this effective rule. So anyone who's newly hired will have to follow these qualifications.

And it's also been written so that it allows for program flexibility and just understanding that there are various program structures. So, we'll talk about that a little bit. So directors need at least a bachelor's degree, and they also need experience in supervision, fiscal management, and administration. But programs really get a chance to unpack what that means for them in delivering high quality services.

When it comes down to fiscal officers, programs need to assess their staffing needs and figure out how securing regularly scheduled and ongoing services with a fiscal officer who has sufficient knowledge and experience best meets their program needs; but that fiscal officer needs to be a certified public accountant or have a bachelor's degree in accounting, business management, fiscal management, or a related field. And again, programs need to sort of address that.

Now we're onto management of the health, disabilities, and family services. They need bachelor's degrees or advanced degrees related to one or more of the disciplines in which they provide oversight. So we know some programs may hire three different managers, other programs may hire one manager who does two of those disciplines. So there's some program flexibility, but we still want these staff to be obviously qualified and educated.

There are no changes for education management. It just codifies what's written in the Act. So I think that will be familiar with programs. Also in line with management and oversight are some new qualifications for the child development specialists who support family child care providers. They, too, need a bachelor's or advanced degree in child development or early childhood education. And there's a timeframe with this, so they have about a year to get that staff up to requirements.

Jamie: Great.

Sarah: And also coaches, especially those who are related to what you're going to talk about in a few minutes, the coordinated coaching strategy. They will need a bachelor's or advanced degree in early childhood education. And again, it's really so that they have the knowledge and experience that helps them better support the staff that they're providing oversight with.

Alright, so now we're going to talk a little bit about the direct service staff. There are no new education requirements for infant/toddler teachers, preschool teachers, preschool assistant teachers. The regs just codifies what the Act already spells out. And it also clarifies when state awarded or comparable credentials are also – when they meet the requirements. I think we've been a little fuzzy about that in the past and now it's clearer.

For family child care providers, they need to not only have early childhood experience, but they at a minimum need to be enrolled in a family child care CDA or an equivalent program. And

they need to have that credential attained within 18 months of providing services. Providers could also be enrolled in a degree program, as well. That's another option for programs to consider.

Home visitors have a new requirement. They have to have a minimum of a home visitor CDA or a comparable credential, or they can have course work that's equivalent within a degree program. And again this has a timeframe. I think it's a year. Two-thousand eighteen, programs need to keep this in their planning.

New to all of those roles, so it's the teachers, the assistant teachers, the family child care providers, and the home visitors, programs must ensure they have competencies that are related to their job and role. And the regs spell those out. But it's really to help ensure that they are able to help children progress across the developmental spectrum and meet developmental goals as outlined in the Early Learning Outcomes Framework.

We have some new qualifications for family service staff, and those are the staff who help families, the family partnership process. So these are for staff who are hired after this rule goes into effect. And at a minimum, they need a credential or a certificate in social work, human services, family services, counseling, or a related field. And they have 18 months to get that credential.

And we also spell out some health qualifications – health professional qualifications, and that's broken down into three parts. So staff who perform health procedures, they need to be licensed or certified health professionals. Mental health consultants need to be licensed or certified mental health consultants that are professionals, and when available in the community, have experience working with young children and families. And then staff and consultants who support nutrition services, they either need to be a registered dietician or be nutritionists with appropriate qualifications.

And what I didn't start off with is the general paragraph, and that makes sure that programs ensure that their staff meet these qualifications, but it also ties into ensuring that they have ongoing training and professional development so that staff are able to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. And I just thought I'd put that at the end because it segues to what you're going to be talking about.

Jamie: Right, something near and dear to both of our hearts is staff professional development. So in 1303.92 is Training and Professional Development, which includes areas of orientation so that all staff – new staff, consultants, volunteers, all have to be at some type of orientation to the program. And that we're also still looking for 15 clock hours for all staff for training, which includes training on child abuse and neglect. And more specifically, we're going to talk a little bit more about coaching, but the coaching hours can also count towards those 15 hours, as well.

Sarah: And that's a minimum.

Jamie: That is a minimum. So they'll certainly – can probably get a lot more hours with the coaching component that we'll talk about. So we're really looking at a systematic way to approach staff training and professional development, which is what we love. [Laughter]

Sarah: I think staff appreciate that, too.

Jamie. Right. So we talk about staff qualifications and competencies, but then it's also building on that is to increase staff knowledge and skills in new areas, and to continue to grow professionally. And then also in this area, we'll talk about a research-based coaching strategy for all education staff. As you mentioned, a part of that – the coaching requirement is to have a coach with a BA. But there's also a delay in this as well for Aug. 1, 2017.

So what we're really looking for in the coaching – coordinate the coaching strategy is that programs have the flexibility to design the coaching program that fits for them, fits their professional needs of their staff. And programs have the flexibility, again, to decide how their coaching design will be implemented. But what we are requiring is that all education staff are assessed so programs can figure out which assessment, how they'll assess the staffing need, and that they'll also be provided intentional coaching to those education staff who are determined who would both benefit from coaching, but certainly all staff could probably benefit from coaching; but what we really want to focus on is those staff who would really best benefit from coaching.

Also in the regulation is that the coaching strategy uses the assessment data to apply to their coaching strategies and that the coaching utilizes the assessment to drive their school readiness goals; that everything's sort of connected between school readiness goals, their curriculum, their teaching practices, and so everything is sort of coordinated within this coaching strategy. We'll also want coaching strategies that establishes policies and communication procedures. And that we want the coaching strategy to be strength-based; and that includes opportunities for staff to be observed, receive feedback, and see effective modeling of effective teaching practices that are all tied together.

Sarah: That makes sense.

Jamie: So not everyone, maybe, that have program designs would be needing coaching, but that we still want a professional development system to support all education staff. So if they're not receiving coaching, what other systems are in place?

Sarah: Well, the next section speaks to staff health and wellness. And I alluded to that in the beginning that we want staff who – who are well. So there are two parts to that. And so, programs need to do an initial screen for staff, which may include screeners or tests for communicable diseases as appropriate by state or local laws, and then they need to do periodic re-examinations. We don't speak to the timeframes, so programs need to figure that out.

But again, we don't want to – I should say it's strength-based; we want programs to really ensure that staff don't pose any significant risk to the health and safety of – of the children and the families who are in that program. What's new is that programs also must make mental health and wellness information available to staff. And again, it's related to issues that may affect their job performance; and again, provide staff with opportunities to learn about these types of activities. And again, a well-balanced, healthy staff makes for high quality services.

Jamie: It sure does. And what also makes for great services is the added benefit of volunteers. So in 1302.94 is about volunteers. And so, we're still looking for screened – for volunteers to be screened for appropriate communicable diseases as appropriate by the state, tribal, and local laws. And if those aren't available for volunteers, we're asking programs to use their HSAC to sort of determine what needs to be done.

One key element of the use of our volunteers is that they're never to be left alone with children; so within our reg, we're not requiring any volunteers to have background checks for parents or volunteers. However, if a program within your state or local child care licensing authority may have more stringent requirements, so the program would need to follow that. We're also looking for volunteers to have an orientation and abide by the standards of conduct.

Sarah: That makes sense.

Jamie: Yeah, so that's actually the very last piece of Human Resource Management.

Sarah: Well, thanks for joining with us.

Jamie: Thank you.

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