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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

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

SUBJECT: Improving Father Engagement in Head Start and Early Head Start

INFORMATION:

Head Start has a long history of focusing on fathers and father figures as important contributors to the school readiness of children and the well-being of families. Since 2004, when the Office of Head Start (OHS) introduced *Building Blocks for Father Involvement* to the Head Start community, many programs have continued to make their program environments more father-friendly and support fathers' strengths, needs, and aspirations for themselves and their children.

Father engagement is not a stand-alone initiative, but rather a vital and integrated aspect of parent, family, and community engagement efforts in Head Start and Early Head Start. The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 identifies the importance of father engagement in particular for those communities participating in the designation renewal process. The Act refers to outreach to fathers and father figures and the inclusion of fathers in home visits and parent-teacher conferences. Section 641(d)(2)(J) [42 USC 9836] of the Act also refers to male participation in the program and to partnerships with male family members that strengthen their roles as parents and as educators of their children.

In order to support Head Start programs in achieving effective father engagement, OHS is introducing a new technical assistance resource, *Head Start Father Engagement Birth to Five Programming Guide*. This resource aligns with the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework. It offers many ideas for implementing father engagement strategies across program systems and services.

The *Programming Guide* is designed for all Head Start staff, starting with program and parent leaders and managers who develop program policies and procedures. It is also designed for teachers, family service workers, home visitors, and health and transportation specialists. The guide provides information about working with expectant fathers and fathers of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, as well as other men who play a significant role in the lives of young children. Because children benefit from positive, strong, and cooperative relationships between their parents or caregivers, the guide also provides information to support co-parenting.

We hope that you will find this new resource useful in building upon the collaborations you have already established with fathers and father figures, families, and community partners. Please direct any questions on this Information Memorandum to:

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