

**HEAD START
TRIBAL CONSULTATION**

**October 17, 2012
Anchorage, Alaska
Region X**

FINAL REPORT

Presented by:
Yvette Sanchez Fuentes, Director
Office of Head Start

Introduction

Pursuant to the Department of Health and Human Services Tribal Consultation Policy and Section 640 (1)(4) of the Head Start Act, in 2012, the Office of Head Start (OHS) convened six Tribal Consultation sessions for the purpose of better meeting the needs of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) children and families, taking into consideration funding allocations, distribution formulas, and other issues affecting the delivery of Head Start services in their geographic locations.

OHS is committed to meaningful consultation with Tribes through which elected officials and other authorized representatives of the tribal governments have the opportunity to provide meaningful and timely input prior to the development of policies or regulations, the interpretation of existing regulations, or other policies or procedures that affect Indian Tribes. OHS is committed to seeking input from AI/AN governing bodies, leaders, and individuals designated by tribal leaders and incorporating such input into its decision-making process related to all matters that significantly affect Tribes and AI/AN children and families.

The 2012 schedule is as follows:

February 15, 2012	Petoskey, Michigan
March 22, 2012	Phoenix, Arizona
April 3, 2012	Billings, Montana
May 4, 2012	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
October 15, 2012	Portland, Oregon
October 17, 2012	Anchorage, Alaska

By Notice in the Federal Register, dated August 13, 2012, OHS notified AI/AN leaders of a Tribal Consultation for Tribes in Region X on October 17, 2012, in Anchorage, Alaska, immediately prior to the annual convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives. The following Report reflects comments and recommendations raised by AI/AN leaders and representatives; comments and responses from OHS; and areas identified as requiring additional follow-up as discussed at the Tribal Consultation. (Separate reports for each Tribal Consultation were issued following each of the dates listed above.)

Participants

Office of Head Start: Ross Weaver, Director, Quality Assurance Division; Fran Majestic, Data and Information Technology Lead; Nancy Hutchins, Regional Program Manager, Region X; Trevondia Boykin, Program Specialist, Region XI; and Belinda Rinker, Senior Advisor to the Office of Head Start.

Tribal leaders and Tribal representatives: (See Appendix for detailed listing.)

Introductory Remarks

Ross Weaver, Director, Quality Assurance Division, OHS, and Fran Majestic, Data and Information Technology Lead, OHS, opened the session with introductions of all participants. A video greeting from Director Yvette Sanchez Fuentes was shown.

Discussion/Comments of AI/AN and OHS Participants

Mr. Weaver and Ms. Majestic extended Director Sanchez Fuentes' regrets for being unable to attend in person. They also affirmed the Director's goal that Tribal Consultations will improve communication and relationships with AI/AN grantees and support programs in providing improved services to Native children and families.

A. Tribal Challenges – AI/AN Participant Comments

- All costs are going up unilaterally. Fuel costs in Alaska are extremely high. It is difficult to change processes to cover expenses such as fuel. It can cost \$15,000-\$18,000 to heat a building. The costs to fly to remote areas also can be exorbitant. In some areas, prices have increased 300 percent. Some Tribes subsidize fuel costs, but it is hard to make ends meet.
- New facilities are needed for classrooms, but costs are prohibitive.
- Costs per child are high due to heating and operating costs in all areas, especially in remote locations. Alaska is a big state, and living is often on a survival basis. If Tribes cannot afford to pay for heat, they cannot open classroom doors.
- Tribes are stretched to the limit and are spending more than local school districts per child. In some areas, Tribes are spending \$3,000-\$11,000 more per child. One Tribe requested a reduction of enrollment due to the high cost per child.
- Non-Federal matches are not available. Businesses, parents, and families do not have the time or resources to give as they have in the past. It is hard to generate the required match for that reason. The true cost per child should reflect operating costs for programs.
- There are not enough applicants for key positions due to remoteness and credentialing requirements.
- Enrollment mandates are challenging.
- Getting water into a building can involve a teacher, if no one else is available.
- Some areas are without roads, and that raises transportation costs. It can take four to five hours to reach programs in the interior. It costs less to travel to Hawaii and Europe than to visit Alaska. When visiting programs, weather conditions can cause people to be stuck for days. This impacts the program and health services.
- It can cost \$20,000-\$40,000 to fly a sick person to a hospital.
- One program in the interior faced the cost of a lease agreement doubling due to utilities and heating oil. The program was told to obtain a separate meter for its building; it has three classes meeting five days each week.
- One Tribe serving 22 children at three locations had to cut staff hours to offer benefits. The Tribe may have to close one site, since it is having trouble paying staff.
- There should be recognition of the differences between urban and rural sites. The income guidelines are the same for these very different locations. Milk can cost \$12 per gallon in a rural site if you can find it.
- There is a high rate of homelessness in urban areas due to migration from rural areas. Migration is occurring due to high fuel costs. More than 21 percent of the children are homeless.

- There is a high rate of children with disabilities; identifying and serving them is expensive. In one Tribe, 25 percent of the children have documented disabilities. There are other children who have problems that are not documented. This is challenging to fund.
- One Tribe reported that due to the indirect rate, the Tribe subsidizes Head Start. The cost is more than \$200,000 per year. There is no gambling income, and a trust established years ago is declining due to high expenses. Some Tribes may not be able to continue subsidizing Head Start.
- Alaska has the nation's highest domestic abuse rate. Tribes need to help children in those circumstances.
- Health insurance for staff is expensive. Not all workers request insurance; the Tribe might not be able to pay for that if they did.
- Health services are an issue. Screenings are hard to obtain, as are well child examinations. Some families do not have access to the Indian Health Service, and not all communities have health aides. Some only get emergency health services, not screenings for hearing and vision.
- It can be a three-day trip to obtain health services. Remote areas have needs for dentists and nurses. Some public health nurses do not see children who have access to services by plane.
- The Head Start Act and regulations are not appropriate for Alaska. Programs in this state should have more flexibility.
- Kenaitze Indian Tribe has a plan that by 2025 they will offer education from preschool through college.

Tribal Challenges – AI/AN Recommendations to OHS

- Reevaluate the cost per child for Alaska rural programs and consider including fuel and electricity costs as a subsidy based on actual costs on an annual basis.
- Take into consideration the remoteness of this large state when issuing requirements. Work with AI/AN grantees to address issues raised at this Consultation and to help grantees be successful in serving more children. The issues raised by AI/AN grantees cannot be changed by them alone.
- Encourage rural Tribes to think outside the box about health. There should be consideration of a realistic time frame for health screenings.
- Create a Tribal/Federal partnership to resolve problems for Alaska programs. Congress and the White House need to be involved.

Tribal Challenges – OHS Responses

- OHS recognizes that programs in Alaska are unique.
- OHS wishes to work toward continuous improvement to support services. Knowledge and trust are important.

B. Tribal Consultations – AI/AN Participant Comments

- Participants stated that they want the OHS Director or Deputy Director to attend in person.
- Last year's Consultation was wonderful, but the report could not be found on the Web site.

Tribal Consultations – AI/AN Recommendations to OHS

- Assemble a focus group of Region X and XI Alaska grantees to discuss challenges and to develop an agenda to discuss with OHS. This group could focus on facilities, training, problem solving, and recommendations. There is a need to be creative and to focus on one topic at a time. The group should discuss other unique problems including utility costs, qualified staff, and health screenings. This should not be a consultation.

Tribal Consultations – OHS Responses

- Those representing OHS at this meeting are on the senior team at OHS.
- The focus group concept will be shared with the Director's office to see if they will commit to moving forward.
- If a focus group is formed, it could serve as a committee for working through items raised at Tribal Consultations.
- If the Director agrees, there will be further contact with one representative (Mary Willey, Fairbanks Native Association Head Start/Early Head Start) and possibly subsequent calls involving Head Start directors.
- Reports on consultations will be released within 45 days and be posted on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) at <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc>.

C. Monitoring Reviews – AI/AN Participant Comments

- Reviewers who visit in February or March can get stuck in a village for seven to ten days.
- Reviewers lack cultural sensitivity. One team left without saying goodbye and did not discuss observed strengths with the program.
- Due to a death in the community, one EHS program was unable to accommodate a review team visit. Instead, the team went to the Head Start program for the whole week. This upset the Head Start program since the visit was long and unexpected.

Monitoring Reviews– AI/AN Recommendations to OHS

- Make review teams aware of issues facing Alaskan Tribes before they arrive.
- Examine the process and put Native Americans on teams.
- It is important to tell tribal leaders when reviews are scheduled. Short notice is unacceptable. Notifying all leaders that there is a possibility is not acceptable.
- All Alaska Head Start programs that serve tribal children want AI/AN members on monitoring teams.

Monitoring Reviews – OHS Responses

- For 2013, the protocol remains the same as 2012 with a few changes in school readiness, fiscal, and systems.
- The teams going to AI/AN programs will be comprised of all Native people plus a Federal team lead, if possible.
- The first 1½ hours will be set aside to talk to Tribes about their culture and uniqueness and how the language may impact what the reviewers see during the review. Any cultural norms, such as children not speaking to adults, should be raised at this time.
- Review teams should explain strengths and non-compliances before they leave a program and provide explanations. If a program makes comments, that should be in the report.
- OHS will try to accommodate needs and be flexible.

D. Designation Renewal System (DRS) – AI/AN Participant Comments

- A Tribe noted that it must be reviewed (including CLASS) to determine if it is qualified for a five-year grant. The Tribe did not see why OHS could not use a past review during which it was successful on CLASS.
- Tribes do not want to be forced to re-compete based on monitoring findings that are out of their control, such as lack of resources in the community.

Designation Renewal System (DRS) – AI/AN Recommendations to OHS

- Ensure that a document exists that trains reviewers for Alaska.
- If a Tribe faces re-competition, the Collaboration Director should be involved with a committee to assess the need. Re-competition for Tribes will be sensitive. A sovereign nation should not lose capacity to serve children.

Designation Renewal System (DRS) – OHS Responses

- OHS presented an overview of the DRS process for AI/AN programs on PowerPoint.
- The Head Start Act provided for a system of designation renewal and noncompetitive grants for high quality services. There are special provisions for AI/AN programs compared to regional programs.
- There are issues concerning entities serving tribal children that are not Tribes. There is no resolution about this yet, but there are discussions. RurAL CAP has permission of the Tribe to be on tribal lands.
- The Act requires consultation with Tribes to establish a plan for quality.
- There are four steps in designation renewal:
 1. Determination
 2. Government-to-government consultation
 3. Implementation
 4. Re-evaluation
- Regulations at 45 CFR 1307 establish rules implementing the OHS Designation Renewal System. Section 1307.3 describes seven DRS conditions that make a Head Start/EHS agency ineligible for an automatic five-year grant:
 1. One or more deficiencies on a single monitoring review starting June 12, 2009.
 2. Average scores falling below established thresholds on any of the three CLASS pre-k domains OR a score on any of the three CLASS pre-k domains is in the lowest 10 percent nationally. The 10 percent of grantees with the lowest average scores in each domain will be required to compete.

3. Lack of established School Readiness goals as demonstrated by the requirements at 45 CFR 1307.3 (b)(1). There is no minimum amount of progress.
 4. Revocation of a license to operate by a State or local licensing agency since June 12, 2009, where the revocation has not been overturned or withdrawn prior to issuance of a relevant Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA).
 5. A final determination of suspension by OHS since June 12, 2009.
 6. Debarment by other Federal/State agency or disqualification from Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). This applies to Head Start not to all programs a Tribe may be running.
 7. Determination by the responsible HHS Official that the agency is at risk of failing to continue functioning as a going concern based on reviews of agency audits. (Going concern means it may not be solvent for 12 months.)
- If there is a deficiency in one or more of the areas, the program will be in designation renewal and must correct in the required timeframe. It will move to termination if not corrected.
 - The determination process involves a letter sent to the tribal government explaining the consultation. Key persons involved will include tribal leaders, a DRS AI/AN liaison, a training and technical assistance (T/TA) manager, a program and grantee specialist, and a liaison from the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning.
 - There will be an onsite visit to set goals and to introduce the Head Start Enterprise System for tracking tribal progress. The outcome will be the drafted plan followed by a consensus to begin implementation.
 - The close of the re-evaluation consultation process will be a conference call by the OHS Director with the tribal chair. This closes what may be up to six months of consultation.
 - There are a variety of ways to obtain T/TA to prepare for the reevaluation.
 - During the reevaluation, OHS will determine if there is a deficiency. This is not a triennial review. It is a redetermination review and will look at the seven criteria. If the Tribe satisfies the reviewers, it will be awarded a five-year grant. If not, re-competition occurs. The review team will be tailored to the review and may include a fiscal person, a CLASS specialist, and a few others.
 - The Head Start Enterprise System (HSES) will add information so that all stages of the process are visible. This includes the initial letter, consultation information, the plan as formulated and formalized, and any training. The information can be shared with the Tribal Council.

E. CLASS – AI/AN Participant Comments

- Native American children have verbal capacity issues. In Native homes, children do not speak to adults, and this cultural feature may be penalized in CLASS. Tribes teach children to listen to their elders; CLASS reviewers are looking for dialogue between children and adults.
- CLASS research is conducted in western settings, not in Alaska.
- It is costly to send staff for professional development on CLASS – \$5,000 per person.
- CLASS reviewers should be aware of cultural issues. The third domain is a challenge for AI/AN. A one-hour orientation will not resolve this issue. Reviewers must understand the culture to use the CLASS tool appropriately.
- Originally CLASS was introduced as helpful for staff development. The Tribes did not understand that it would trigger designation renewal.

- When one Tribe had a CLASS review in April, staff did not have the opportunity to meet the CLASS reviewers.
- If a teacher is working and a waiver is in place to allow this person to work though not qualified under existing regulations, is CLASS to be used in that classroom?

CLASS – AI/AN Recommendations to OHS

- Re-examine the CLASS tool, since it was not developed for Alaskan Tribes.
- Consider having the University of Virginia conduct research on the instrument in a setting where people use body language and nonverbal cues. There are non-western behaviors. This practice may not be communicated well to reviewers in a one-hour meeting.
- Advise the Alaskan Tribes about what research will be conducted to make the CLASS instrument appropriate for use in Alaska.
- If the area of language development is a problem in CLASS, the Tribe would like to discuss this with the Tribal Council and have time to work on addressing the problem.

CLASS – OHS Responses

- Ten percent of the grantees with the lowest average scores in each domain will be required to compete for a grant. The outcome is that if 90 percent of programs perform better, those in the lowest 10 percent will be required to compete. The minimums were set to ensure that high quality programs do not have to re-compete.
- CLASS reviews conducted after the consultation and implementation during the re-evaluation will be in classrooms selected randomly. This is because there may not be the same teachers or children in the classrooms reviewed previously.
- OHS will note concerns about the cultural validity of the instrument for further discussions. At this point the plan is to re-evaluate using the existing instrument and to look at all seven areas for compliance.
- Regarding waivers for teachers and the use of the CLASS instrument in those classrooms, unless the teacher has been in the classroom less than 30 days, the waiver is not a condition for excusing that classroom. Random assignment will be used. Classrooms with substitute teachers will not be assessed.
- OHS is working with the University of Virginia to closely monitor the use of the CLASS instrument. Reviewers are checked on reliability annually.

F. Five-Year Grant – OHS Comments

- OHS is interested in the impact that programs have on children, families, and the community. This is considered a cycle, and the program must explain the goals and how it plans to achieve the goals for the five-year period, year by year. This is designed to reflect the philosophy and goals of Head Start by involving parents, families, and communities to strengthen the gains for children.
- The goal is to help programs succeed and to offer training and resources.
- Year 1 – the application is fundable, and the Program Specialist will visit the program in the first year and annually thereafter.
 - The Program Specialist will develop an understanding of the program, learn the strengths, and what has been accomplished.

- Data will be examined. There will be discussions of barriers to accomplishing requirements. If there are problems, such as accomplishing screenings on time, assistance can be provided.
- Systems and procedures will be discussed to see if areas of risk are handled and if the program is meeting fiscal requirements. The emphasis will be on developing efficiency and effectiveness and determining if management has systems in place that ensure risks are handled.
- Communication will be discussed to determine how information flows to management, the Tribal Council, and the Policy Council.
- School readiness will be discussed to determine goals, plans to make progress, plans for data aggregation and analysis, and any suggested changes. How programs engage families in the process will be discussed, as well.
- Family engagement will be addressed.
- Support will be offered, if needed.
- Year 2 – discuss the data from Year 1, progress, and support needed.
- Year 3 – the onsite review will occur. The Program Specialist will provide information to the review team about areas that may be dropped due to strengths. This will enable reviewers to target and focus the review.
- Year 4 – OHS will make a determination when looking at the seven criteria.
- Year 5 – issue a letter about eligibility for a five-year grant or begin a designation renewal re-competition.

G. Teacher Qualifications – AI/AN Participant Comments

- Credentialing is affecting AI/AN grantees that are not getting applicants for key teaching positions.
- Programs do not have funds to pay qualified teachers the salaries they deserve. There are no resources to find qualified staff.
- It is difficult to hire parents, since many do not have a high school diploma.
- Teacher assistants will have to have CDAs soon; parents on staff are not qualified. In one Tribe, the percentage of parents in classrooms has dropped to 40 percent from 70 percent due to lack of qualifications.
- Many parents need remedial classes. One parent has struggled with math and the Tribe may lose her due to this problem.
- Teleconference classes that are three hours are difficult for staff. Only one-third of those attending pass. When staff members attend classes in person, more are successful. Evening classes are difficult for single mothers.
- Programs do not have funds for tuition and have asked nonprofits to assist but they do not have funds for Head Start. The choice is diapers or funding tuition.

Teacher Qualifications – AI/AN Recommendations to OHS

- Acknowledge that it is difficult for programs to hire parents since they are not prepared for college classes and must have an AA or BA to continue working in programs.
- Have more staff intensives like the one that was held last summer. *[Editor's Note: In 2011, OHS conducted a four-week intensive CDA academy September 12–16 in Anchorage.]*

Teacher Qualifications – OHS Responses

- Last year, Director Sanchez Fuentes said that programs will not close in Alaska due to teachers not having qualifications. OHS has not changed that position.
- The review team will determine if Tribes have attempted to find qualified individuals and will see if there is a professional development plan to help staff obtain the knowledge and skills they need. If there is no plan, the program will be identified as having a potential area of non-compliance. It is important to tell the review team what has occurred and what is planned. This should be satisfactory.
- There is no answer for training people who leave for higher salaries. But not offering training is unacceptable. Staff must become knowledgeable and obtain skills.
- Parents are valuable and play a pivotal role in the program as prime educators and on Policy Councils. The programs must plan to support parents to obtain needed skills and knowledge so they become more competent.

H. Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) – AI/AN Participant Comments

- There have been three T/TA contracts in the last 12 years. There is a need for consistency.
- The AI/AN Regional Office Program Specialist is an excellent communicator, and Tribes appreciate her efforts.
- Webinar training is time-consuming. since software must be downloaded and buffering may slow things down.

Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) – AI/AN Recommendations to OHS

- OHS combined tribal programs with migrant programs for T/TA to save funds. Tribes believe that conventional regional programs and tribal programs should have been combined instead. This should be examined for the future.

Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) –OHS Responses

- The last 1½ years have been difficult. Contract models are not under OHS control, and OHS concurs that a stable mechanism for T/TA is important.

I. Language and Culture – AI/AN Participant Comments

- The Kenaitze Indian Tribe is planning for 2025 and will work on language revitalization and culture as part of its education plan.
- One participant asked about best practices for language immersion and examples of who does this well.

J. Budget – AI/AN Participant Comments

- When discretionary funds are available, how are Tribes notified, who makes decisions, and how can Tribes get a list of procedures?
- There is a need for more information on sequestration.

Budget – OHS Comments

- To resolve the issues concerning the Federal budget, Congress needs to pass a Continuing Resolution or a budget prior to March 1, 2013.
- The election in November 2012, and the January 1, 2013, deadline for sequestration to reduce the deficit complicates the budget picture.

- Sequestration is projected to cut across all programs at a rate of 8.2 or 8.5 percent. Congress may not approve the cut to Defense, which could mean larger cuts elsewhere. Or Congress could hold to 8.5 percent for all but Defense. OHS is not sure what is more likely. This information is provided as an example that even the projections may not be accurate and no one, including OHS, knows exactly what will occur.
- There is a lame duck Congress until the new Congress arrives in early 2013, and it is uncertain if the current Congress will address sequestration.
- If the budget is passed as the President proposed, there will be a slight increase in COLA (cost of living allowance) plus some funds for transition of programs that are not successful in the competition process.
- Those programs due for refunding between October and January, will be funded at 80 percent.

K. Waivers/Other – AI/AN Participant Comments

- Tribes want to see a written process for how waivers are to be handled.
- The waiver process is convoluted and time consuming. Problems with the process lead to difficult conversations for tribal program management teams and tribal accounting offices.
- There is migration to urban areas, and this causes under enrollment.
- Tribes want to be in many more communities serving children.
- There should be waivers on CDA requirements. This will help Tribes reach more children.
- Revealing the pain that Tribes are experiencing due to domestic abuse and other issues is uncomfortable. It is shameful that the same information is shared each year and nothing happens as a result. The Tribes would like to see change in OHS based on the issues discussed.

Waivers/Other – OHS Comments

- There will be a new Regional Program Manager for AI/AN in the near future, and this will expedite the waiver process. *[Editor's Note: Captain Robert Bialas was named Regional Program Manager for Region XI on November 8, 2012.]*
- The HSES also will track waivers and make the process visible. Grants will be submitted in HSES, monitoring reviews will be posted, and there will be other shared documents. HSES will be the central place to share communications and information, will lower confusion, and will enable staff to view important documents. All are welcome to submit suggestions. Systems never substitute for people. Sending email to relevant staff regarding waivers is suggested.
- The Tribal Consultation reports will be released in 45 days and will be posted on the ECLKC. Reports will be available for every Consultation in 2012.
- OHS wants programs to succeed and values parents and staff and the critical role they play in the success of Head Start. It is a difficult job, and Tribes are making a tremendous effort.

APPENDIX

Tribal Consultation Participants

Federal Staff

First Name	Last Name	Position	Organization
Trevondia	Boykin	Program Specialist	Office of Head Start
Nancy	Hutchins	Regional Program Manager, RO X	Office of Head Start
Fran	Majestic	Data and Information Systems Lead	Office of Head Start
Belinda	Rinker	Senior Advisor to OHS (Contractor)	Office of Head Start
Ross	Weaver	Quality Assurance Division Director	Office of Head Start
Jarma	Wrighten	Regional Field Specialist	Head Start National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning

Tribal Leaders and Representatives

First Name	Last Name	Position	Organization
Jacqueline	Archer	Head Start Director	Chugachmiut Head Start
Leonora	Atienza	Finance Director	Council of Athabascan Tribal Government EHS
Melanie	Bahnke	President	Kawerak, Inc.
Bruce	Baltar	General Council	Bristol Bay Native Association
Donna	Barr	Executive Committee Member	Kawerak, Inc.
Theo	Bayou	Deputy Director	RurAL CAP
Sheila	Beaver	Director	Association of Village Council Presidents
Malinda	Besett	Head Start/EHS Director	Kawerak, Inc.
Tara	Bourdukofsky	Human Services Director	Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association
Kim	Burnett	Director	Cook Inlet Native Head Start
Jamie	Chinuhuk	Program Director	Metlakatla Indian Head Start
Mary	David	Executive Vice President	Kawerak, Inc.
Danielle	Fenton	Tribal Representative	Fairbanks Native Association

First Name	Last Name	Position	Organization
Jean	Frank-Tritt	Family Advocate	Council of Athabascan Tribal Government EHS
MaryEllen	Fritz	Treasurer	Cook Inlet Native Head Start
Melora	Gaber	Education Specialist	Alaska Department of Education and Early Education
Chase	Gray	Tribal Representative	Kawerak, Inc.
Patrice	Griffin	Head Start Director	RurAL CAP
Michael	Hardy	Education/Disabilities Coordinator	Council of Athabascan Tribal Government EHS
George	Hernandez	Policy Council Chairperson	Cook Inlet Native Head Start
Robert	Keith	Chairman	Kawerak, Inc.
Ronald	Kirk	Tribal Council Member	SCA
Merlin	Koonooka	Treasurer	Kawerak, Inc.
Mark	Lackey	Executive Director	CCS Early Learning
Racquel	Martinez	Child Development Director	Tanana Chiefs Conference Early Head Start
Beverly	Mierzejek	Child Development Services Coordinator	Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association
Denise	Newman	Early Head Start Director	Fairbanks Native Association
Micker	Richardson	Head Start National Collaboration Director	AI/AN Collaboration Office
Jill	Ridenour	Assistant Director	Tanana Chiefs Conference Early Head Start
Albert	Rinehart	Head Start Director	Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska Head Start
Roy	Roehl	Tribal Representative	Fairbanks Native Association
Jon	Ross	President/Chairman	Cook Inlet Native Head Start

First Name	Last Name	Position	Organization
Anne	Shade	Head Start Director	Bristol Bay Native Association
Dirk	Shumaker	Executive Director	Kids' Corps, Inc.
Teresa	Smith	Head Start Director	Kenaitze Indian Tribe Head Start
Rachel	Solomon	Early Head Start Program Manager	Council of Athabascan Tribal Government EHS
Georgina	Solomon	Family Advocate	Council of Athabascan Tribal Government EHS
Mindy	Strom	Family Advocate	Council of Athabascan Tribal Government EHS
Paul	Sugar	Head Start-State Collaboration Director	Alaska Department of Education and Early Education
Paula	Tikiun	Head Start Records Coordinator	Chugachmiut Head Start
Gilbert	Tocktoo	Executive Committee Sergeant at Arms	Kawerak, Inc.
Pieradora	Tremblay	Family Advocate	Council of Athabascan Tribal Government EHS
Eddie	Ungott	2nd Vice Chair	Kawerak, Inc.
Mark	Wasierski	Head Start Director	Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association
Mary	Willey	Head Start Director	Fairbanks Native Association
Connie	Wirz	Executive Director	Cook Inlet Native Head Start



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
Office of Head Start
1250 Maryland Avenue, SW
8th Floor
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Grantee Director and Program Staff:

It is hard to believe that another program year is half over. By now, you have probably had one or two conference calls with your Program Specialist to discuss your goals for children's school readiness. At the beginning of this program year, I asked every Regional Office to make it a priority to begin an ongoing dialogue with each grantee to learn about your school readiness goals and to hear about the progress your children are making throughout the year.

My goal is to ensure that Regional staff maintain an ongoing dialogue with grantees to better understand how each program is supporting children's learning, and in this process, to identify existing strengths and gain an understanding of the data grantees gather to inform program improvements as well as enhance professional development and to provide ongoing direction of training and technical assistance. These conversations provide you and your staff an opportunity to tell your story about the progress your children are making. This process also provides OHS with valuable information for understanding differences or trends in school readiness efforts within states, across states and nationally. As a result of these conversations, we expect Regional staff to work closely with our TTA partners to assist programs in getting support as needed.

Head Start's authorizing purpose is to promote school readiness. The 2007 Head Start Act specified that programs are to establish goals for children's school readiness. The Designation Renewal regulation that became effective on December 9, 2011 provided additional requirements related to child assessment, individualization, data aggregation and analysis and responsive program improvement. The Office of Head Start anticipates that the regular system of individualized calls will support grantees' efforts to institute systems and practices that yield the best possible child progress.

We also want to make sure that we are fully aware of the challenges you face, the innovations you implement and the successes you achieve.

If you have any questions, please contact your Program Specialist.

As always, I look to our Head Start programs to lead the nation in providing high quality early childhood education and also to our continued mutual efforts on behalf of children and families.

Sincerely,

/ Yvette Sanchez Fuentes /

Yvette Sanchez Fuentes, Director
Office of Head Start