

**OFFICE OF HEAD START  
TRIBAL CONSULTATION**

**July 31, 2014  
Tulsa, Oklahoma**

Presented by  
Ann Linehan, Acting Director  
Office of Head Start

## Introduction

The Office of Head Start (OHS) convened five Tribal Consultation sessions in 2014 in accordance with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Tribal Consultation Policy and Section 640(l)(4) of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. The purpose of consultations is to better meet the needs of American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) children and families by taking into consideration funding allocations, distribution formulas, and other issues affecting the delivery of Head Start services in the Tribes' geographic locations.

OHS is committed to meaningful consultation with Tribes during which elected officials and other authorized representatives of Tribal governments have the opportunity to provide considered input that may affect the development of policy or regulations. OHS considers Tribal input when interpreting existing regulations and formulating policies or procedures affecting AIAN Tribes. OHS is committed to seeking participation by Region XI (RXI) AIAN governing bodies, leaders, and individuals designated by Tribal leaders and to considering their comments when making decisions on matters affecting Tribes and RXI AIAN children and families.

The 2014 schedule follows:

March 10, 2014	Albuquerque, New Mexico
June 9, 2014	Bloomington, Minnesota
July 31, 2014	Tulsa, Oklahoma
August 4, 2014	Airway Heights, Washington
October 22, 2014	Anchorage, Alaska

By Notice in the *Federal Register* dated February 20, 2014 OHS notified RXI AIAN leaders of a Tribal Consultation for the Tribes in RXI on July 31, 2014, in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This consultation was held in conjunction with the 2014 Oklahoma Indian Head Start Directors Association Conference.

The following report includes comments and recommendations from RXI AIAN Tribal leaders and representatives, comments and responses from OHS, and areas discussed that require additional follow-up. (There are separate reports for each Tribal Consultation.)

## Participants

*Administration for Children and Families (ACF):* Linda K. Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development.

*OHS:* Captain Robert Bialas, Regional Program Manager, Region XI. Other participating federal and national contractor staff are listed in the appendix.

*Tribal leaders and Tribal representatives:* (See the appendix for a detailed listing.)

No written testimony was provided by grantees.

## **Introductory Remarks**

The Tribal Consultation began with opening remarks from Linda K. Smith, ACF Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development, and Captain Robert Bialas, RXI AIAN Regional Program Manager. Ms. Smith represented OHS Acting Director Ann Linehan at this Tribal Consultation. Mike Richardson, Director of the RXI AIAN National Collaboration Office, offered the opening prayer.

Captain Bialas welcomed Tribal leaders and members and said that he is honored to work with the Tribes. After attendees introduced themselves, Ms. Smith addressed the issues listed below and invited the leaders to comment.

*Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnerships:* This grant is part of the President's Early Learning Initiative. Efforts are under way to ensure that the \$500 million allocation is awarded properly. Ms. Smith noted that these partnerships are a turning point in U.S. history, signifying a shift in focus to aligned programs. She said that because the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) has been released for Tribal programs, federal officials are not allowed to discuss the opportunity or respond to questions. Questions raised to federal staff will be delivered to the appropriate federal officials in Washington, DC.

*Tribal Workforce Issues:* It is important for the workforce to have the right mix of education and cultural and language skills. Ms. Smith said she is eager to hear Tribal leaders' suggestions about workforce training. It is critical to make sure teachers are properly trained and to ensure they make cultural richness available to children as they are learning their Native language.

*Facilities:* There have been many meetings in Washington, DC, about the condition of facilities nationwide. This topic was raised at last year's consultations. Ms. Smith said attendees will soon be hearing about a report to Congress on this topic. There is serious concern about the state of facilities in all Head Start programs, especially those with dangerous conditions, which cannot be tolerated. Head Start is turning 50, and some facilities are 50 years old. It is important to find problems and plan for correction. Many locations with the worst facilities lack a strong local infrastructure.

*Revision of the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS):* OHS has heard the Tribal leaders' concerns about how cumbersome the standards are. New standards have been drafted and will soon be coordinated and cleared at the federal level. When they are published, it is important to share the Tribes' comments and concerns.

*Redesign of the OHS Monitoring System:* The pilot of a redesign of the monitoring system will be implemented in the fall of 2014. The monitoring system was redesigned to reflect the fact that quality programs should be assessed differently from programs with problems. The past system treated all programs the same way. There is a new risk and quality indicator screening to assess programs. If a program passes this screening due to quality indicators, a full monitoring review will not be scheduled for that program. This new approach will help OHS focus on programs that need assistance at the point when they need it. When the system is implemented, a white paper will be issued to explain the new approach to monitoring.

*Developmental Screening Tools:* There is federal interest in making sure developmental screening tools are validated in Tribal communities. A recent test of the screening tool with Tribes was positive. The next step is to decide how to further validate the instrument. This instrument is sensitive to how culture affects screening.

*Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA):* T/TA is a mix of materials and delivery of services in the field. Ms. Smith believes that there should be more focus on helping individuals learn to use the available resources. She asked for comments about this during the Tribal Consultation discussion. Although the Tribal leaders and OHS are pleased with the T/TA system, it is stretched to its maximum. It is important to examine how T/TA is delivered to all early childhood programs (child care, Head Start, pre-kindergarten, and home visiting). If federal staff believe that early childhood programs should be aligned with one another, this must be demonstrated by the way they do business, including how they deliver T/TA.

*Head Start Quality:* Research shows that Head Start children arrive in kindergarten on par with their peers. However, Head Start is being held accountable for what is occurring in the kindergarten through third grade system. Ms. Smith said that there should be more done on preparing programs for quality and measuring progress. She has challenged headquarters staff to work on this topic. She believes the ultimate goal is meeting children's needs, rather than attaining scores using tools. Currently, federal staff are looking at helping programs reach higher levels of quality by examining available curricula and discussing assessments.

Ms. Smith mentioned visiting a Tribal child care program. The director discussed the curricula used within the program and the need to use multiple curricula to meet the cultural needs of the children. The director was apologetic about this, although she was doing the best thing for the children. Ms. Smith noted that we are sending the wrong message when we say there is only one curriculum that will result in high-quality education. Instead, she said, it is crucial to consider what children need to help them make progress. She asked those attending the consultation to help the government think about these issues in the context of Tribal communities. It is important to incorporate culture into curricula and to make sure teachers are meeting the needs of children.

In his opening presentation, Captain Bialas provided information about RXI AIAN demographics, funding, and enrollment in a nationwide context. He stressed the uniqueness of AIAN programs and noted that there are 16 federal program specialists and four contracted program specialists serving the Region. They support 150 Head Start grantees representing 150 Tribal nations throughout the United States. He highlighted the fact that a large number of Head Start children and families are served in Oklahoma. To meet the needs of children, it is important that everyone work as a team, including program specialists and senior advisors at OHS, Tribal leaders, FHI 360, National Centers, and Danya.

Captain Bialas highlighted improved communication with Tribal leaders through discussions about the Designation Renewal System (DRS). FHI 360 offered outstanding T/TA to RXI AIAN DRS grantees.

He identified the RXI areas of interest at OHS and introduced Yasmine Daniel Vargas of FHI 360 and Jessica Barnes of Michigan State University, who discussed T/TA and a survey of AIAN programs. The topic areas of interest to RXI follow:

*RXI AIAN DRS:* The 16 DRS grantees in Cohort 1 succeeded during reevaluations after putting in place plans to improve quality. The reevaluation tool has been reviewed and condensed to a 17-page protocol document for use in Cohort 2 evaluations. During the second cohort, if a program was in the DRS due to deficiencies, the 17-page protocol was used. If problems with the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS™) protocol led to DRS findings, only that protocol was applied. If there were CLASS findings as well as deficiencies, reviewers used both protocols. This process will be used for Cohort 3, as well. Captain Bialas noted that Oklahoma Tribal grantees had passed the DRS process. He further observed that when a program needs T/TA due DRS findings, all team members collaborate closely to create quality plans for improvement. Program specialists work with FHI 360 and the National Centers to provide T/TA after learning from Tribal programs what is needed. In Cohort 2, 27 out of 28 reevaluations were successfully completed by the time of this meeting. There are 16 grantees in Cohort 3. The consultation calls have been conducted, and those grantees are developing and implementing plans to improve quality.

*RXI CLASS Scores:* Last year, RXI was below the national average in all CLASS domains. However, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 and to date in FY 2014, the emotional support and classroom organization scores were not only above the national average but were the highest of all Regions nationwide. One Tribal program received a perfect score in emotional support, and this was the only program in the country to achieve that score. The team working with Tribes has been helping them to increase the instructional support domain scores, and these scores are now above the national average.

*Sequestration and Funding:* OHS has restored the sequestered funds based on congressional action. The funds represent 5.27 percent of the funded allotment. Additionally, Congress granted a 1.3 percent cost of living adjustment (COLA) to programs. New funding in the amount of \$500 million will be available to programs for EHS-CC Partnerships. This topic is discussed below. Captain Bialas noted that the FOA has been released to solicit applications.

*Tribal Communication:* Captain Bialas discussed improvements in communications. There are weekly OHS email communications, regular calls by program specialists with grantees, onsite visits by program specialists to grantees, and enhanced response times to Tribal inquiries. He encourages grantees to take part in networking opportunities and has regular calls with the National Indian Head Start Directors Association (NIHSDA), the Oklahoma Indian Head Start Directors Association, the Northwest Indian Head Start Coalition, and Alaskan Head Start directors. He offers updates about OHS and RXI AIAN when he participates on calls.

*Support for T/TA:* Twenty-one FHI 360 staff members have spent over 3,000 days with grantees since October 2012 to offer training on school readiness, program governance, and fiscal matters. The National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning offered support by developing and offering training on classroom environments and the DRS. The other National Centers provided extensive resources.

*EHS-CC Partnerships:* This opportunity offers \$500 million available through March 31, 2015. The national FOA was released on June 6, 2014, with a due date of August 20, 2014. The Tribal FOA was released on July 21, 2014, with a due date of October 6, 2014. The grants will support early learning opportunities for children through EHS-CC partnerships. The goals are to enhance support of early learning settings and to provide new full-day opportunities to meet the needs of working families. It is important to know your communities and to submit a plan to meet their needs. Captain Bialas acknowledged that many Head Start programs, including Tribal programs, have lost 4-year-olds due to universal pre-kindergarten.

*Health Literacy Institute:* Captain Bialas stated that health training was identified as a need of Tribal communities by FHI 360 and the Integrated Service Team. The Health Literacy Institute is offered through the National Center on Health in cooperation with the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). Training will take place in Washington, DC, for 50 grantees. Each grantee may send three individuals. All grantee costs will be covered except costs for transportation. The institute offered by UCLA will be held in spring 2015, and it will focus on building partnerships around health. The training targets family members, including grandparents, parents, and children, as well as Head Start directors. Training identifies connections between child and family health, community involvement, and school readiness, and it stresses the importance of culturally specific messages. Individuals who attend the Institute will become part of a cohort that continues to receive health resources after the Institute.

*T/TA:* After being introduced by Captain Bialas, Ms. Daniel Vargas discussed the FHI 360 approach to T/TA, which takes into account the needs of parents and families, strengths and capacity building, and transparency. FHI 360 partners with Tribal governments and believes onsite work is critical. Ms. Daniel Vargas explained that the early childhood specialists are providing instructional support and grantee specialists are working on fiscal issues, the DRS, and training new directors. There have been 400 visits to Oklahoma and the surrounding area this year. The number of onsite visits to RXI overall so far this year is 1,528. The FHI 360 team can use technology to support T/TA through conference calls and webinars. The team is available to provide Tribes with any assistance they may need to support the quality of their Head Start programs.

*RXI AIAN Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES):* Captain Bialas introduced Ms. Barnes from Michigan State University, who asked for feedback from the Tribal leaders about including Tribes in FACES. There are presentations on this topic at every Tribal Consultation this year.

FACES is a descriptive study of the characteristics of children and families in Head Start programs and is intended to assess the growth of a sample of children during the Head Start year. Ms. Barnes mentioned differences between the Bureau of Indian Affairs' FACES and the FACES study overseen by ACF. FACES has been conducted every 3 years since 1997 in Regions I–X. After the 2009 survey, ACF and Mathematica, its contractor, redesigned the study. At that point, ACF began discussing including RXI AIAN in the study. FACES informs policy and practice at the national level, where decisions are made affecting Head Start.

Although there have been many advocates for inclusion of RXI in national studies, the cultural appropriateness of measures for the population have been questionable. The measures must be validated for use in this context. Also, logistics have been an issue due to distance and the wide diversity of Tribal cultures.

To obtain comments about the value of including RXI in the FACES survey, study designers have been discussing Tribal participation with program directors. They noted the following benefits: Tribal Head Start programs would no longer be invisible, Congress would have data on RXI programs to use in making decisions, and the study could highlight challenges and successes of Tribal programs. With this information, policymakers would be able to address these problems and identify the strengths of programs. The designers noted the importance of including the voices of Tribal communities and deciding how best to share the research. They worked with groups on methods and questions for study participants. One large workgroup and two smaller workgroups have been discussing these issues. The groups include Head Start directors, research partners, and federal partners.

RXI serves Native and non-Native children, though 87 percent are Native. RXI serves 51 percent of the Native children in the country. The decision was to focus on the Native children in RXI. Some Native children also will be picked up in the main study of Regions I–X.

The group developing FACES has weekly conference calls and two face-to-face meetings each month. They decided to begin collecting data in fall 2015. Tribal programs will be randomly selected in fall 2014; approval of each Tribe will be necessary before programs participate. This plan allows a year for recruitment of Tribal programs before data collection begins.

Mathematica will gather data in two phases, one beginning in the fall of 2015 and another in spring of 2016. Results will become available between fall of 2016 and spring of 2017. The survey will be conducted at the program, center, classroom and teacher, and parent and child levels. It will examine children's cognitive and social and emotional growth during one Head Start year, will determine needs of RXI children and families, and will highlight the differences between RXI and the other 10 Regions. Collecting these data will ensure that information about RXI is included in descriptions of Head Start. Updates on the project will be communicated via the *Federal Register*.

The study will look at RXI as a whole, and programs will be able to compare their data to other Head Start programs. The survey will identify needs to be met, help determine what changes in policy are necessary, and offer guidance for changes to practice. Ms. Barnes noted that the ACF lead is Maria Woolverton, Child Welfare Research Team Leader/Senior Social Science Research Analyst in ACF's Division of Child and Family Development. A one-page handout about FACES was available at the meeting.

After Ms. Barnes's presentation, Captain Bialas commented that a substantial amount of work has been done on the project. He stressed the importance of involving RXI in the next round of FACES.

## **Comments of RXI AIAN Participants and Federal Responses**

### **A. FACES Study**

- *Steve Smith, Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma:* RXI comprises about 1 percent of the Head Start population, which may be why they were not previously included in FACES. Mr. Smith expressed his concern that RXI data will get lost when merged with the rest of the FACES data. There are approximately 35,000 AIAN students in the other 10 Regions. How many children are represented by 1 percent? Does the 1 percent statistic correlate with the number of children in RXI who will participate in this study?

*Response:* Ms. Barnes replied that she didn't remember the exact number of children who will be part of the survey. However, she knows it is not limited to 1 percent of the population. She said they are oversampling so data will be representative of RXI and added to the main FACES study in a meaningful way. The statisticians at Mathematica have been helpful by providing them with a view of Head Start overall without overburdening the survey. She also noted that there are discussions about incorporating data about the need for services related to the percentage of children that are being served by Head Start into the study or into an additional study.

### **FACES Study—Federal Response**

- Ms. Smith commented about the importance of determining the percentage of need for services related to the percentage of children that are being served by Head Start. She believes this is a question that the survey should take into account. The percentage of funding that is going to Tribal Head Start programs needs to be examined, and better data are needed to do that. Studies like FACES will help to accomplish that task.
- Captain Bialas stated that once there are data, he will make sure this information is provided at meetings. There is a scarcity of data available now about the AIAN population.

### **B. Universal Pre-Kindergarten and State Funding**

- *Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes:* Two representatives spoke. *Eddie Hamilton* discussed his daughter's good experience with Head Start and said that he is happy about how the Tribe's children have benefitted. He discussed his Tribe's endeavors to gain educational grants for teachers. Another representative asked how the migration of so many children to the state-run pre-kindergarten programs will affect Tribal programs.
- *Danny Wells, The Chickasaw Nation:* His concern about applying for state funds is the sovereignty issue. He asked if federal officials have discussed the difficulties that may arise when a Tribe applies for state funding. He highlighted the fact the Tribe is a federal entity and that any time a federal entity is overseen by a state entity, there are problems.

### **Universal Pre-Kindergarten and State Funding—Federal Response**

- Ms. Smith responded to concerns about losing 4-year-olds. She believes Head Start programs will have to shift their focus to the birth-to-3 age group. She stated that many programs will still work with the 4-year-old pre-kindergarten population; however, this group will be funded from a different source. State funds will be utilized for 4-year-olds and federal funds for children 3 and under. She recognized the fact that the cost per child

will go up for programs because it is more expensive to educate the 3-and-under age group. When the cost per child goes up, fewer children will be served. She stated this has been factored into the Head Start budget. She encouraged the group to talk to Captain Bialas and the program specialists to discuss how this change will affect their programs.

- Ms. Smith said the federal staff would need to know the specifics of Tribal concerns about sovereignty. Situations vary by state and situation. She asked that in such situations the Tribe give them the details so they can help them work on the issue. She said they recognize the fact there is some potential for problems due to jurisdiction. She stated that they have worked on other issues between states and Tribes previously, but it would be hard for her to give an answer without a lot of details.
- Ms. Smith recognized that the Tribe and the state must discuss the federal role. It is unclear at this point whether there is a federal role in working this out. She gave an example of how federal staff helped to work through issues and barriers involving the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) offered in Head Start programs. In CACFP, federal money is issued to states. Tribes are required to participate, and the federal staff had a role in resolving challenges. There must be a federal role in a situation involving HHS. Otherwise the discussion of concerns is between the Tribe and the state.

### **C. Background Checks and Oklahoma Fingerprinting Requirements**

- *Pam Savage, Choctaw Nation:* One of the Tribe's biggest challenges is the state fingerprinting process. Head Start programs in the Choctaw Nation are licensed by Oklahoma. As of July 1, 2014, staff members without a fingerprint result could not work with children. The federal requirement is for a criminal background check. Because federal and state requirements differ, the Tribe is conducting two types of background checks costing \$100–150 per person. Oklahoma said that the state fingerprint requirement meets the federal requirements. The Tribe is fulfilling both requirements although it takes a long time to get the fingerprint results from the state. The state is not responding to their calls or requests for the fingerprint results, although the school year is about to begin. The state's answering machine greeting states that the office is no longer accepting calls. The state has contracted with one organization to do fingerprinting, and there is a backlog. The Tribe suggested overcoming this backlog by using casino fingerprint machines and offered to purchase one of the state's fingerprint machines. The state declined and said this would be a conflict of interest. Staff travel at least 1 hour to be fingerprinted, and the Tribe absorbs the overall costs. The state visits several times each year. The Tribe will be declared out of compliance unless they can get the results.
- *Jennifer Swope, Otoe-Missouria Tribe:* The Tribe submitted fingerprints in January 2014 and has not received results from the state.
- *Katy Pruitt, Choctaw Nation:* Many individuals are fingerprinted during the teacher certification process in Oklahoma, but the state is not accepting those fingerprints even if the staff member is hired immediately after becoming certified. The state planned to put the fingerprint requirement in place in January 2013. However, the backlog of 11,000 to 12,000 cases was so great that they waived this requirement until June 2014 but said that staff members without fingerprint results could not be left alone with children. The state fails to respond when inquiries are made regarding the status of the fingerprinting results. Ms. Pruitt asked if there was anything Ms. Smith could do from the federal level for

guidance on this issue. She added that the state will only use MorphoTrust USA centers (formerly L-1) to do fingerprinting.

- *Mike Williamson, Otoe-Missouria Tribe*: At one time, there was only one person working in the state office overseeing fingerprinting; now there are seven or eight individuals in that office. Mr. Williamson agreed that it is frustrating to require fingerprinting for staff who had already been fingerprinted when they were certified.
- *Danny Wells, The Chickasaw Nation*: This Tribe de-licensed all Head Start programs on Tribal land. If Tribes are licensed by the state, there are some benefits, such as available safety technicians. However, the Tribe decided licensing was a burden. The only advantage of being licensed was having another set of eyes taking a look at the program. Due to the state requirements, it was more beneficial for the Tribe to give up the license. If a program is on Tribal land and has never been licensed, Oklahoma does not require a license. However, if the Tribal Head Start program has been licensed, they must go through a process to become de-licensed. The programs must prove they are on Tribal land and must explain why they no longer want state licenses.
- *Verna Thompson, Cherokee Nation*: The reason the state is using one contractor is because, after the process, an individual can receive instantaneous reports regarding the status of an individual and information about any moves to another position. The information about fingerprints will move with personnel and be available immediately. Also, programs can be alerted immediately if an individual's status changes.
- *Denise Keene, Osage Nation*: Staff submitted their fingerprints in January 2014, and received those results last week. When Ms. Keene submitted fingerprints for individuals hired in April 2014, results were available in 3 or 4 days. As long as an individual has a state preliminary background check and is not left alone with children in a classroom, that person can begin to work. Also, the state requires having someone on site who has access to fingerprint results online when state staff visit. Additionally, the state wants to see a hard copy report of results.
- *Pam Savage, Choctaw Nation*: The preliminary report of results states that the person who receives the preliminary report cannot be left alone with a child. This is a problem for their programs. In July 2014, 20–30 staff members applied. Only 10 have final results. The form to submit staff members was revised by the state, but the state failed to inform programs. Because the wrong form was submitted, the process has slowed. There is a lack of communication between the Tribes and the state office handling this process. The Head Start centers, day care centers, Head Start Director's office, and the human resources department may receive fingerprint results. The Tribe is unsure to which of these offices the state will send results.
- *Jim Parrish, Choctaw Nation*: Individuals with concerns about the fingerprint process may contact Jacque Hensley, Tribal liaison to the Governor's office, at this email address: [jacque.hensley@gob.ok.gov](mailto:jacque.hensley@gob.ok.gov). Mr. Parrish said that Ms. Hensley may be able to assist with this matter.

### **Background Checks and Oklahoma Fingerprinting Requirements—Federal Response**

- Captain Bialas noted that there is a requirement in the federal performance standards to have a criminal record check on all Head Start employees. This can be either a Tribal, state, or federal background check. In RXI, at least a Tribal background check is

required. Due to licensing requirements in Oklahoma, fingerprint checks are now required.

- Ms. Smith noted that the headquarters office has been working on the background checks in the last few weeks due to issues with state requirements and timelines. Efforts are under way to clarify federal requirements. Work also is under way to align the requirements of child care and Head Start. Ms. Smith said that although the Oklahoma issue is new to her, she has been involved with background checks for a long time. She understands why Oklahoma is requiring fingerprints. She plans to talk to the state about recognizing what the federal government is requiring and hopes those requirements will meet the state requirements.
- Captain Bialas said the majority of Tribal Head Start programs are not licensed by states.

#### **D. HSPPS and Curricula**

- *Vernon Miller, Omaha Tribe:* He enjoyed the discussion of Head Start priorities and asked about progress on redrafting the HSPPS. He also asked Ms. Smith to expand her discussion of curricula. Is there a way for Head Start programs to share curricula? It will be important for the Education Manager and staff to realize that curricula can be made more culturally relevant. He specifically inquired about how to make curricula culturally relevant for children.
- *Gaye Moore, Caddo Nation:* The Tribe collaborates with public schools in the area. Ms. Moore mentioned a discussion about curricula she had with a new principal. This principal said that she believed using different curricula would be confusing to 4-year-old children. Public schools do not seem to respect the opinions of Head Start programs, even when Head Start staff members explain their suggestions.
- *Danny Wells, The Chickasaw Nation:* What is the expected completion date for the HSPPS? The current standards place a burden on programs. There would be many benefits to having a concise and streamlined set of standards.

#### **HSPPS and Curricula—Federal Response**

- In response to the Omaha Tribe, Ms. Smith offered to provide the names of contacts using curricula. Some are modifying curricula locally. She stressed that the standards require using a comprehensive curriculum and mentioned the federal interest in providing guidelines to the programs on how to view curricula and understanding what is relevant and comprehensive. In Head Start, curricula should be research based. Evidence-based curricula also are desirable, but there is little or no evidence available at this point. She wants to give programs the tools to choose their own curricula rather than tell them which ones to use. They can then meet the needs of children. It would be best to guide programs to select the right math, literacy, and science curricula for their populations. There is work to do to meet this goal. Head Start should not be shy about what we know about what is developmentally appropriate for children. Public schools tend to be academically focused and do not see the entire picture. We need to work with them to make them aware of what is beneficial for younger children. Head Start providers need to feel more secure in their knowledge and advocate for what they know is needed for children. Ms. Smith also commented that Head Start has had successful relationships with public schools.

- Ms. Smith agreed that cultural relevance should be part of the criteria individuals use to evaluate curricula.
- Ms. Smith said that the HSPPS will be presented to the public for comment via the *Federal Register* by the end of 2014. She also described the effort to look at the organization of the standards and to help the programs understand the underlying goals and how to achieve them. The new version will be easier to read and will highlight goals.

#### E. T/TA

- *Charles Hoskin, Cherokee Nation*: The T/TA contract ends in June 2015 before the beginning of the next school year. A lapse in training occurred the last time the contract ended. Will the Tribes experience this again? Will the Tribes receive an update regarding the status of the contract?
- *Mike Williamson, Otoe-Missouria Tribe*: Will efforts be made to deliver services if a decision has not been made regarding T/TA in June 2015? Will service be provided to them in a lapse period?

#### **T/TA—Federal Response**

- Captain Bialas stated that the goal is to have the contract filled in June 2015 with no lapse in T/TA services. The FOA is being developed and hopefully will be released in late winter 2014 or early spring 2015. He will ensure that everyone knows when the FOA is released and when a selection is made.
- Ms. Smith added to Captain Bialas' comments by talking about how they were just as frustrated about the situation that occurred last time. OHS does not have much control over when a FOA is appealed. Headquarters will do everything they can to ensure continuity of T/TA services. She stated there will be a plan in place for interim T/TA if there is an appeal. The government wants to do everything possible to make sure services are available to fill any gap.

#### F. Funding Issues

- *Steve Smith, Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma*: The latest budget request from the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) includes a paragraph that states that Head Start has played and continues to play an instrumental role in Native education. Mr. Smith highlighted the portion of the budget request that discussed the decrease in funding for Head Start programs as budget constraints increase and highlighted that there is a return of \$7 for every dollar invested in Head Start. Addressing the elected officials in the room, he said that everyone should take advantage of the resolution process and encouraged Tribes to band together to lobby. If linked, they would have more impact when petitioning Congress. He talked about the importance of education about making effective resolutions and using the NCAI resources to learn about committee membership and find out who champions the Tribes in Congress. He emphasized that Tribal members should visit the NCAI embassy to learn about hearings in Washington, DC, and opportunities to speak in favor of Head Start and Tribal programs. It is better to get 40 resolutions from Tribes than just a few.
- *Mike Williamson, Otoe-Missouria Tribe*: Will there be a COLA in 2015? Will there be any sources of one-time funding available for buses?

- *Danny Wells, The Chickasaw Nation*: How can they limit the number of kids who attend their programs as a way to conserve funds when there are currently huge waiting lists for their programs? They already use some of their own Tribal funds to support the Head Start population in their programs.

### **Funding Issues—Federal Response**

- Ms. Smith suggested talking to legislatures, inviting legislators to communities, and asking them to visit Head Start programs. It is important to educate people about our programs and to be clear about what you are requesting. She urged Tribal representatives at the meeting to think collectively about needs so that requests, such as those for more funding, are clear. When you educate people, you need three things to be effective: data, research about what works, and stories from real people.
- Captain Bialas extended an invitation to everyone to come visit him in the office before they visit Capitol Hill and the U.S. Congress. He mentioned that some Tribal delegates visit him to ask what Head Start needs before contacting members of Congress.
- Ms. Smith noted that EHS-CC Partnerships, and the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge initiatives received over \$1 billion last year, which is rare. This appears to be the time to ask for what we need in Head Start.
- Captain Bialas commented that they believe there will be one-time funds available for buses, but there is no guarantee of this. He said OHS has collected one-time requests totaling \$16 million and has gone through all of the applications received. He will be reviewing the list one last time and then submitting the requests to see how much funding will be available to meet them.
- Ms. Smith stated they did submit a request for a COLA with the new budget request, and the Senate committee recommended a 1 percent increase, but they're not sure whether this request will be honored. She stated that they wished it were a full COLA, but other priorities took precedence. She suggested that as the Tribal leaders negotiate their grants, they look at how to reduce enrollments to pay staff and come up with creative solutions for how to put more money towards this effort instead of waiting for funds from Congress. Annual child care has increased since 2000. The states are cutting how much they pay per child, as well as quality, in order to serve more children. Head Start should not follow this path. It is advisable to serve fewer children but provide better and more comprehensive services.
- Captain Bialas commented that not many Tribes are able to provide the extra funding that Chickasaw Nation can for their programs. Many teachers are underpaid because there is no additional funding available to supplement their Head Start award.
- Ms. Smith stated that sometimes the best way to show what is going on with the system is by examining the results of underfunding. It is important to balance and not put funding on the backs of teachers.
- Captain Bialas emphasized the need to band together to approach Congress about AIAN needs.

### **G. EHS-CC Partnership Grant and Other Funding Opportunities**

*Mike Williamson, Otoe-Missouria Tribe*: His Tribe is considering funneling federal funds to birth-to-3 programs and state funds to pre-kindergarten programs for 4-year-olds. Applications for EHS-CC grants are due October 6, 2014, for RXI AIAN. When will they

be funded, and will they be funded through Head Start? Will Head Start and Early Head Start be two separate grants? What are the timeframes for each grant, and is there a maximum or minimum amount of slots that should be part of the application? Will a small Tribe be at a disadvantage if requesting fewer slots, perhaps 28–30? Can a Tribe convert their Head Start slots to Early Head Start slots using this grant? Can a Tribe add new Early Head Start (EHS) slots? In addition to asking these questions, Mr. Williamson said that the terms “birth to 5” and “birth to 3” are confusing.

#### **EHS-CC Partnership Grant and Other Funding Opportunities—Federal Response**

- Captain Bialas stated that grants have to be funded by March 31, 2015. If they are for Tribal EHS, they will be funded through RXI. If they are for national EHS grants, they will be funded through the other Regional Offices. If they are funded, they will have one grant for Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership and another grant for their existing Head Start program.
- Captain Bialas noted that while funds will be appropriated on March 31, 2015, that may not be the start of a program’s funding cycle. Regarding slots, he said, most Tribes are planning 50 to 75.
- Ms. Smith stated that in the Tribal programs fewer slots will not be a concern. This could be a consideration in state programs if they have infrastructure concerns.
- Captain Bialas explained that the FOA indicates the opportunity to both form partnerships and expand EHS.
- Ms. Smith discussed rethinking Head Start and Early Head Start to eliminate artificial separations. For example, at this time, when a child turns 3, he or she moves into the other program. She said that OHS is looking at birth to 5 comprehensively. This will mean that when the Tribes negotiate grants, they may declare how many they are supporting in each age bracket and receive funding that meets their needs. This will break down barriers and create a continuum.
- Ms. Smith said that the exact terminology for Head Start is confusing and depends on the state and situation. In Oklahoma it would be birth to 4, because they have funds for pre-kindergarten. Head Start will become birth to 4 in the long term but not immediately.

#### **H. Facilities**

- Captain Bialas discussed what headquarters is planning to do about facilities. The facility report is prepared every 5 years and is due in 2015. Discussions are under way about how it should be prepared. OHS wants to examine facilities. The program specialists will be reaching out to Tribal grantees to request photographs of their centers and playgrounds to share with Congress.
- Ms. Smith discussed her experience preparing this type of report while she was with the Department of Defense. It is important to make a case that construction is needed by submitting photographs and other visuals to support this request in the 2015 report.
- *Danny Wells, The Chickasaw Nation*: Someone was working on this type of project about 3 or 4 years ago. He suggested touching base with the person who had been working on this previously.

#### **Facilities—Federal Response**

- Captain Bialas stated that he had worked on this report previously.

- Ms. Smith stressed the need to get photographs and correctly represent the state of Head Start facilities to Congress.

### **Conclusion**

Captain Bialas then asked if there were other questions or comments, or if there was any advice for the two new directors in the group. *Danny Wells, The Chickasaw Nation*, recommended taking advantage of NIHSDA and using this group of Tribal directors as a resource.

*Verna Thompson, Cherokee Nation*: Tracie Little, OHS Program Specialist, and FHI 360 have offered great support for programs. Mr. Richardson also has been a great help with collaboration. The Tribe would not be able to accomplish what they do without this support.

*Mike Williamson, Otoe-Missouria Tribe*: Since Captain Bialas and Ms. Smith have been managing the program, there have been many improvements, especially in the area of communication.

Ms. Smith complimented the Washington, DC, staff for the support they offer RXI. She said a lot of people are working hard to make the Head Start program work. The people in Washington are behind the Tribes 100 percent.

Captain Bialas thanked Ms. Daniel Vargas and FHI 360 for their support and said that they have great leadership. He also talked about how well OHS and FHI 360 collaborate to assist the programs. Meetings are purposeful, and staff members are well trained.

Captain Bialas commented that federal staff listens to Tribal concerns. He will be following up on the issues surrounding fingerprinting, facilities, and the questions regarding curricula. He added that there will be further discussions about T/TA services and what OHS will do if there is any type of appeal.

Ms. Smith then talked about collaborations between Head Start, child care, education, health, and the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge. She expressed her hope that the time is ideal for Tribal Head Start and Early Head Start leaders to reach out to their partners in child care and take advantage of the emphasis on partnerships. She urged everyone at the meeting to engage in this type of collaboration as Head Start leaders.

Captain Bialas closed the consultation with further comments regarding FACES and data collection. He said that Ms. Linehan sends her regards. Finally, he thanked the Choctaw and Kickapoo Tribes for their hospitality and expressed his appreciation for letting him come out and see their programs.

Mr. Richardson closed the consultation.

## **RXI AIAN Participant Recommendations**

### **Universal Pre-Kindergarten and State Funding**

- *The Chickasaw Nation* asked if the federal government would play a role in resolving differences between Tribes and states that arise when Tribes apply for state funds.

### **Background Checks and Oklahoma Fingerprinting Requirements**

- *Choctaw Nation, Otoe-Missouria Tribe, and the Chickasaw Nation* asked that the federal government offer guidance about how to proceed to resolve Oklahoma's requirements for fingerprints, which are affecting their programs, and to address the backlog.

### **Curricula**

- *Omaha Tribe* suggested that the federal staff explain how to make curricula culturally relevant for children.

### **HSPPS**

- *The Chickasaw Nation* asked for a concise and streamlined set of standards.

### **T/TA**

- *Cherokee Nation and the Otoe-Missouria Tribe* asked if they would hear about the T/TA contract announcement and if services would be provided if the award is not made in June 2015 or there is an appeal.

## **Federal Action Steps**

### **Universal Pre-Kindergarten and State Funding**

- HHS has worked to resolve some funding issues between states and Tribes. Ms. Smith said federal officials would need detailed information about the funding issues and Tribal concerns before making a decision about becoming involved in a dispute. Also, they would become involved only if HHS was involved in the issues being discussed.

### **Background Checks and Oklahoma Fingerprinting Requirements**

- Ms. Smith will look into the problem with delays in Oklahoma's processing of fingerprints to see what can be done at the federal level.

### **Curricula**

- Ms. Smith said she is interested in giving programs the tools to choose their own curricula rather than telling them which ones to use. There is work to be done to guide programs in selecting the right math, literacy, and science curricula, for example, to meet this goal.

### **HSPPS**

- Ms. Smith said that the HSPPS will be available for public comment via the *Federal Register* by the end of 2014. She also described efforts to make the standards easier to read.

**T/TA**

- Captain Bialas offered to keep the Tribes informed about the T/TA contract. Ms. Smith said headquarters will do everything they can to ensure continuity of T/TA services. There will be a plan in place for interim T/TA, if there is an appeal.

## Tribal Consultation Participants

### Federal Staff, Presenters, National Contractors

Last Name	First Name	Position	Organization
Barnes	Jessica	Presenter	Michigan State University
Bialas	Robert	Regional Program Manager, RXI	OHS
Daniel Vargas	Yasmine	T/TA Manager, AIAN	FHI 360
Henderson	Phyllis	Program Specialist	OHS (by phone)
Little	Tracie	Program Specialist	OHS
Richardson	Mike	Director	RXI AIAN National Collaboration Office
Smith	Linda	Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development	ACF
Strickland	W. J.	Senior Program Specialist	OHS (by phone)
Wyatt	Donald	Senior Program Specialist	OHS (by phone)

### RXI AIAN Tribal Leaders and Representatives

Last Name	First Name	Title	Organization
Barnett	Susanna	Director	Muscogee Creek Nation
Duncan	Canaan	Government Relations Liaison	Cherokee Nation
Gonzalez	Patricia	Secretary for Business Committee	Kickapoo Head Start
Hamilton	Eddie	Governor	Cheyenne and Arapaho
Hoskin	Charles	Chief of Staff	Cherokee Nation
Keene	Denise	Director	Osage Nation Head Start
Miller	Vernon	Tribal Council Member	Omaha Tribe Head Start Program
Moore	Gaye	Education Disability Manager	Caddo Nation Head Start
Parrish	Jim	Executive Director	Choctaw Nation
Parton	Diana	Business Manager	Caddo Nation Head Start
Pickens	Robert	Head Start Director	Chickasaw Nation Head Start
Pruitt	Katy	Director	Choctaw Nation
Redwing	Stewart	Council Member	Santee Sioux Nation Head Start
Savage	Pam	Organizational Development Manager	Choctaw Nation
Smith	Betty	Mental, Health and Nutrition Coordinator	Muscogee Creek Nation
Smith	Steve	Kiowa Business Committee	Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma Head Start
Soto	Tina	Director	Caddo Nation Head Start
Swope	Jennifer	Education Coordinator	Otoe-Missouria Tribe
Thomas	Joyce	Director	Santee Sioux Nation

<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Thompson	Verna	Director	Cherokee Nation Early Childhood Unit
Toppah	Jeannie	Director	Kiowa Head Start
Trevino	Javiela	Head Start Director	Kickapoo Head Start
Tsoodle	Alva Dee	Kiowa Business Committee	Kiowa Head Start
Wells	Danny	Division of Education Executive Officer	The Chickasaw Nation
Williamson	Mike	Director	Otoe-Missouria Tribe Head Start
Wilson	Kristen	Executive Director	Kickapoo Head Start