

Strategic Use of Consultants: An Interactive Guide for Head Start and Early Head Start Leaders



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Program Management
and Fiscal Operations™

Setting the Context

Head Start Act and Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS)

Head Start Act

On December 12, 2007, [Public Law 110-134](#), “Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007,” reauthorized the Head Start program. This law contains significant revisions in the area of program governance and the composition of the governing body. The following excerpt describes how the governing body shall use consultants when the prescribed experts are not available to serve as regular members of the governing body:

Sec. 642 (c) (1) (B) COMPOSITION—The governing body shall be composed as follows:

- (i) Not less than 1 member shall have a background and expertise in fiscal management or accounting.
- (ii) Not less than 1 member shall have a background and expertise in early childhood education and development.
- (iii) Not less than 1 member shall be a licensed attorney familiar with issues that come before the governing body.
- (vi) If a person described in clause (i), (ii), or (iii) is not available to serve as a member of the governing body, the governing body shall use a consultant, or an other individual with relevant expertise, with the qualifications described in that clause, who shall work directly with the governing body.

Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPS)

Section 1304.52 of the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPS) focuses on human resource management. Subsection 1304.52 (d) outlines the qualifications required of staff or consultants who provide long-term content area expertise and oversight in the various service areas. These qualifications can be considered as well when working with short-term consultants who provide training and technical assistance (T/TA) services:

Sec. 1304.52 (d) *Qualifications of content area experts.* Grantee and delegate agencies must hire staff or **consultants** who meet the qualifications listed below to provide content

area expertise and oversight on an ongoing or regularly scheduled basis. Agencies must determine the appropriate staffing pattern necessary to provide these functions.

(1) Education and child development services must be supported by staff or **consultants** with training and experience in areas that include: The theories and principles of child growth and development, early childhood education, and family support. In addition, staff or consultants must meet the qualifications for classroom teachers, as specified in section 648A of the Head Start Act and any subsequent amendments regarding the qualifications of teachers.

(2) Health services must be supported by staff or **consultants** with training and experience in public health, nursing, health education, maternal and child health, or health administration. In addition, when a health procedure must be performed only by a licensed/certified health professional, the agency must assure that the requirement is followed.

(3) Nutrition services must be supported by staff or **consultants** who are registered dietitians or nutritionists.

(4) Mental health services must be supported by staff or **consultants** who are licensed or certified mental health professionals with experience and expertise in serving young children and their families.

(5) Family and community partnership services must be supported by staff or **consultants** with training and experience in field(s) related to social, human, or family services.


(6) Parent involvement services must be supported by staff or **consultants** with training, experience, and skills in assisting the parents of young children in advocating and decision-making for their families.

(7) Disabilities services must be supported by staff or **consultants** with training and experience in securing and individualizing needed services for children with disabilities.

Subsection 1304.52 (i), Standards of Conduct, provides important information for Head Start leaders engaged in hiring and overseeing consultants who provide long-term and short-term T/TA services:

Sec. 1304.52 (i) *Standards of conduct.*

(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that all staff, **consultants**, and volunteers abide by the program's standards of conduct. These standards must specify that:



(i) They will respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family and refrain from stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability;

(ii) They will follow program confidentiality policies concerning information about children, families, and other staff members;

(2) Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that all employees engaged in the award and administration of contracts or other financial awards sign statements that they will not solicit or accept personal gratuities, favors, or anything of significant monetary value from contractors or potential contractors.