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Commitment to the Early Childhood Workforce

• A key part of the ACF mission is to support programs to provide high quality early care and education services that meet the needs of children and their families in communities across the country.
  • This includes a qualified and stable workforce

• To do this, we need:
  • An ECE system that attracts, prepares, supports, and retains a qualified, diverse workforce across settings and programs.
  • Appropriate compensation, including benefits, that demonstrates the value of the workforce to our communities.

• Meeting these needs requires big changes within the ECE system
Stabilizing the Head Start Workforce

• The Office of Head Start (OHS) recognizes and values the commitment of program staff to the mission of Head Start

• Head Start program staff are highly qualified
  • Credentials and qualifications of staff have significantly increased
  • Compensation has been persistently low

• Stagnant wages and lack of comprehensive benefits make it difficult to recruit and retain staff, which impedes programs from serving their funded enrollment.

• Changes are needed to stabilize the workforce and ensure the long-term viability of the Head Start program.
Overview of New Information Memorandum

• ACF-IM-HS-22-06: Strategies to Stabilize the Head Start Workforce

• Released September 12th, 2022
Key Messages

• Strongly encourages programs to look holistically at their organizational structure and identify sustainable ways to stabilize their workforce

• Recipients can consider restructuring their programs, which may include:
  • Restructuring management or organization structure
  • Requesting a reduction in funded enrollment
  • Consolidating grants

• Requires a balance of effectively providing high-quality comprehensive services to highest need children and families while also improving staff compensation and supports

• Programs should make decisions through thoughtful, data-informed strategic planning
Permanently Increase Compensation

- Programs may request an enrollment reduction to increase compensation
  - Address compensation issues for which there are pressing staffing challenges
  - Consider equity issues in pay and benefits

- Data informing these changes can be found in the wage comparability study, as well as other data points, including:
  - Current enrollment and staffing including where staffing challenges exist and why
  - Wages and benefits offered by local or neighboring elementary schools
  - Local cost of living
Shasta County Head Start

Restructured their program and requested an enrollment reduction to better meet the needs of families and improve compensation for their workforce.
Head Start, Inc.

Overhauled their benefits packages to better meet the needs of their workforce, including maternity leave and access to employee assistance programs.
Offer Financial Incentives

• Programs can offer bonuses, short-term pay increases, or other financial incentives to staff.
  • American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds; other COVID-19 relief funds; base grant operations funds may be used to fund incentives

• Reevaluate the size of monetary incentives that are necessary and reasonable
  • What is “necessary and reasonable” during COVID-19 pandemic and workforce shortage is likely different than before (see ACF-IM-HS-21-01)
  • May be appropriate to consider incentive amounts larger than previously offered

• See ACF-IM-HS-22-04 – Competitive Bonuses for the Head Start Workforce
Compensation During Closures and Transitions

• When centers are closed or in-person home visits are suspended due to a disaster, programs can provide compensation for up to two weeks to staff who are unable to work
  • See ACF-IM-HS-19-01

• Programs also may continue to pay health insurance premiums for up to 90 days for staff subject to furlough, such as during a summer break
  • See ACF-IM-HS-21-02
Inspire Development Centers

Provides financial incentives to retain and recruit employees.
Qualification Waiver for Preschool Teachers

• A program may request a waiver of up to 3 years for the qualification requirements for a Head Start center-based preschool teacher who meets certain requirements:
  • Enrolled in a program that grants a qualifying degree that will be completed within 3 years
  • **AND** have a current CDA or state issued equivalent

• Waiver requests must include evidence that the program has unsuccessfully attempted to recruit a qualified teacher

• Qualification waivers may be submitted for individual teachers for a period not to exceed three years

• OHS Regional Office staff review and grant approvals for qualification waivers
Positive and Empowering Work Environment

Supporting staff goes beyond compensation - programs should provide a healthy work environment.

• Strategies to support staff could include:
  • Regularly scheduled breaks
  • Brief unscheduled wellness breaks
  • Reflective supervision
  • Two-way communication with staff
  • Robust orientation and onboarding
  • Clear personnel policies and procedures
  • Promoting clear staff roles and responsibilities

• See ACF-IM-HS-21-05 Supporting the Wellness of All Staff in the Head Start Workforce
Educational Attainment and Career Advancement

• Programs may advertise these benefits to recruit new staff and encourage existing staff to use educational benefits, such as
  • Tuition and fee support
  • Opportunities for career growth associated with increased educational attainment

• Apprenticeship programs support educational growth and consistent pools of staff
  • Apprentices could start as paid substitutes, floaters, or bus monitors and then move into other positions as they obtain the required credentials

• Partnerships with high schools, community colleges, and other higher education institutions can promote successful completion of degree or credential requirements
  • Facilitate courses being offered at times that accommodate full-time workers or in non-English languages
  • Create cohorts of learners and facilitate shared support systems
Parents in Community Action (PICA)

Operates a training program that helps Head Start parents learn new skills, gain hands-on work experience, and provides a pathway to permeant employment in the Head Start program.
Child Care Resource Center (CCRC)

Operates a training program that helps Head Start parents learn new skills, gain hands-on work experience, and provides a pathway to permanent employment in the Head Start program.
Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)

- Most HS programs are considered public service employers, meaning staff can apply for PSLF
  - PSLF forgives remaining federal student loans after 120 payments (~10 years)
- A **limited PSLF Waiver** is available until Oct 31st, 2022
  - Those who weren’t eligible for PSLF before may be eligible now
  - Past periods of repayment, even if only partial or no payments were made, may now count towards forgiveness
- ACF/Ed hosted a [Joint Webinar](#) to raise awareness
- ACF has a [PSLF landing page](#) with additional resources
RESOURCES

• Learn more from this one-pager and recent webinar about the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program and how you or your staff might qualify

• See these Strategy Resources to Address the Early Care and Education Workforce Shortage

• See this collection of Resources to Build and Retain a Strong Education Workforce

• See this brief and this webinar on ECE apprenticeship programs, as well as this webinar on connecting parents to apprenticeships

• See this webinar series on promoting the wellness of Head Start staff
The “State of the Field Analysis Regarding Head Start Background Checks Standards”

Head Start Background Checks Task Force
What is Our Action Plan?

September and October

- Workforce/Background Check Processes **Survey** to a subset of Head Start/Early Head Start grant recipients
- Update FAQs
- Ongoing Collaboration with OCC and Engagement of Head Start Collaboration Offices
- Launch Social Media Campaign to Gather More Information
- Host Listening Session with Head Start Leaders (NHSA)
THANK YOU!