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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

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

SUBJECT: Statutory Degree and Credentialing Requirements for Head Start Teaching Staff

INFORMATION:

Attached is a discussion of those statutory requirements related to the qualifications for center-based Head Start and Early Head Start teaching staff. Please direct any questions on this Information Memorandum to your OHS Regional Office.

/Patricia E. Brown/

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Head Start

What are the current requirements for Head Start teacher qualifications?

Each Head Start classroom in center-based programs must have a teacher who has at least one of the following qualifications:

1. A Child Development Associate (CDA) credential that is appropriate to the age of the children being served;
2. A State-awarded certificate for preschool teachers that meets or exceeds the requirements for a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential; (Please contact your regional office to determine if your state's certificate meets the requirements for a CDA.)
3. An associate, baccalaureate or advanced degree in early childhood education;
4. An associate degree in a field related to early childhood education and coursework equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education with experience teaching preschool-age children;
5. A baccalaureate or advanced degree in any field and coursework equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education with experience teaching preschool-age children or;

6. A baccalaureate degree in any field and has been admitted into the Teach For America program, passed a rigorous early childhood content exam, such as the Praxis II, participated in a Teach For America summer training institute that includes teaching preschool children, and is receiving ongoing professional development and support from Teach For America's professional staff.

However, a 180-day waiver may be granted to the above requirement if a Head Start agency can demonstrate it has attempted unsuccessfully to recruit a qualified candidate and the individual for whom the waiver is being requested is enrolled in a program that will award that individual a qualifying credential, certificate or degree within 180 days of being hired as a teacher.

What will the requirements for Head Start Teachers be as of October 1, 2011?

By October 1, 2011, each Head Start classroom in center-based programs must have a teacher who has at least one of the following:

1. An associate, baccalaureate or advanced degree in early childhood education;
2. An associate degree in a field related to early childhood education and coursework equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education, with experience teaching preschool-age children;
3. A baccalaureate or advanced degree in any field and coursework equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education, with experience teaching preschool-age children or;
4. A baccalaureate degree in any field and has been admitted into the Teach For America program, passed a rigorous early childhood content exam, such as the Praxis II, participated in a Teach For America summer training institute that includes teaching preschool children and is receiving ongoing professional development and support from Teach For America's professional staff.

However, a 3-year waiver can be granted to the above requirement if a Head Start agency can demonstrate it has attempted unsuccessfully to recruit a qualified candidate and the individual for whom the waiver is being requested is enrolled in a program that will grant that individual a qualifying degree in a reasonable time period. If such a waiver is granted, there must be, in that individual's classroom, a teacher with a CDA credential appropriate to the age of the children being served or an individual with a State awarded certificate for preschool teachers that meets or exceeds the requirements of a CDA credential.

What will the requirements for Head Start Teachers be as of September 30, 2013?

By September 30, 2013 at least 50% of Head Start teachers nation-wide must have a baccalaureate or advanced degree in Early Childhood Education or a baccalaureate or advanced degree in any subject, and coursework equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education with experience teaching preschool-age children.

OHS expects every grantee to make reasonable progress in increasing its numbers of teachers with qualifying BA degrees but there is not a requirement for each grantee to assure that at least 50% of its teachers have such degrees. The requirements established in 2011 for every Head Start teacher will continue to apply.

What counts as "coursework equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education"?

Coursework equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education includes but is not limited to courses that focus on child development, early childhood education and curriculum, early childhood teaching and assessment, psychology, family development, health and physical development, mathematics, science, and children's literature. Such courses may be offered in various departments, such as Education, Home Economics, Music, Art, Library Sciences, Physical Education and Recreation, Psychology, Family Studies, and others. It is up to each prospective employee to provide the Head Start program with information on the college credit courses taken and to demonstrate that the courses address early childhood education or child development with a focus on children ages 3 to 5. Programs must examine the college transcripts and review course descriptions or syllabi to determine the relevance of the courses to the Head Start program.

Head Start agencies in states that license or certify state Pre-K teachers may also choose to accept the type(s) and number(s) of courses recognized by the local school district or state education agency as qualifying teachers to teach pre-school aged children in that school district or state as "coursework equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education" as long as they also have experience teaching pre-school aged children.

Does a person with an associate, baccalaureate, or advanced degree in a field other than early childhood education need experience teaching preschool-age children in addition to the courses equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education?

Yes. An individual who has a degree in another field must have experience in an early childhood setting with children ages 3 to 5 in addition to courses equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education to meet the qualifications mandate for Head Start teachers. The Act does not prescribe either the kind or duration of qualifying experience; each grantee should establish its own criteria.

Does a person with an early childhood degree need additional experience in working with children to be qualified as a Head Start teacher?

No. A teacher who has an associate, baccalaureate or advanced degree does not need additional work experience with children to be qualified as a preschool Head Start teacher.

What are the qualification requirements for Teacher aides/assistants?

By September 30, 2013 all teaching assistants in center-based programs must:

- Have a child development associate (CDA) credential;
- Be enrolled in a CDA credential program that will be completed within 2 years; or
- Have an associate or baccalaureate degree (in any area) or be enrolled in a program leading to such a degree.

What are the qualification requirements for education coordinators?

By September 30, 2013 all education coordinators (including those that serve as curriculum specialists), nationwide in center-based programs must have:

- A baccalaureate or advanced degree in early childhood education; or
- A baccalaureate or advanced degree in any subject and coursework equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education with experience teaching preschool-age children.

Early Head Start

What are the current requirements for Early Head Start teacher qualifications?

Current Head Start regulations require Early Head Start teachers to have a CDA credential for Infant and Toddler Caregivers, or an equivalent credential that addresses comparable competencies within one year of hire as a teacher of infants and toddlers.

What will be the requirements for Early Head Start Teachers as of September 30, 2010?

By September 30, 2010, all Early Head Start teachers must have, at a minimum, a CDA credential and have been trained (or have equivalent coursework) in early childhood development.

What will be the requirements for Early Head Start Teachers as of September 30, 2012?

By September 30, 2012 all Early Head Start teachers must meet the above requirement and be trained (or have equivalent coursework) in early childhood development with a focus on infant and toddler development.

Additional Information

Head Start agencies are encouraged to maintain—in the personnel files of all teachers, teaching assistants, and education coordinators—a statement identifying which documents were examined to determine that the relevant qualification requirements were met.

Each Head Start agency is required to submit an annual report on its progress in meeting the requirements discussed in this memorandum. OHS will provide more information on this report in the near future.

Section 648A(2)(C)(i)(III) precludes OHS from imposing any penalties or sanctions for any agency failing to meet either the requirement that all education coordinators must have a BA degree or the requirement that all teaching assistants must have a CDA. OHS will provide additional information on this in the future.