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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

TO: All Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees

SUBJECT: Qualifications for Early Head Start Infant and Toddler Center-based staff

INFORMATION:

Section 645A(h)(1) of the Head Start Act requires that “not later than September 30, 2010, all teachers providing direct services to children and families participating in Early Head Start programs located in Early Head Start centers, have a minimum of a child development associate credential, and have been trained (or have equivalent coursework) in early childhood development.”

As a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), Early Head Start (EHS) programs are serving 48,000 additional infants, toddlers and pregnant women. This EHS expansion has created thousands of new infant and toddler teacher positions across the country. This unique and unanticipated change, coupled with increasing demand by public and private pre-K programs for credentialed teachers has created a “demand-supply imbalance” which makes it extremely difficult currently for programs in certain locations to recruit and hire Child Development Associate (CDA) or equivalent credentialed teachers at this time. Understandably, Early Head Start grantees are concerned about how their programs will be monitored for compliance with the center-based teacher qualification requirements during the 2010-2011 monitoring cycle.

OHS wants to take this opportunity to remind all Early Head Start programs that there are a number of OHS approved CDA and alternative credential programs. The Council for Professional Recognition’s Child Development Associate (CDA) National Credentialing program offers CDA credential programs nationally. There are also state agencies, boards and commissions, as well as some colleges and universities that have developed infant-toddler and preschool certificate and degree programs that meet or exceed the requirements for a CDA. Teachers who successfully complete any of these programs are considered by OHS to have met the Early Head Start CDA credential requirement. EHS programs that collaborate with other early childhood systems and programs may have an additional alternative. Those agencies may meet the CDA requirement by utilizing teachers employed by their partners who have successfully completed teacher certifications that meet or exceed the requirements for a CDA.

The Office of Head Start (OHS) understands that meeting these requirements can be challenging and will require an ongoing commitment from the governing body and Policy Council, as well as sufficient and skilled supervisory staff to support teachers in meeting these requirements. The following are suggestions for the process and steps that programs might consider to assure that they are hiring staff that have the appropriate qualifications, or are able to achieve the qualifications in a reasonable period of time.

What to look for when hiring:

1. The first priority is to hire qualified, credentialed staff in accordance with the Head Start Act.
2. If the program cannot currently recruit and hire qualified, credentialed staff, the program may hire a person who is in the process of completing their credential, has experience working with infants and toddlers, and has one of the following:
 - a. Course work with infant and toddler content
 - b. Degree in a related field
 - c. Training with infant and toddler content

Grantees must make every effort to reach and sustain compliance with the requirements for infant and toddler center-based teaching staff. OHS recognizes that all programs may not have achieved compliance by September 30, 2010. For Early Head Start programs that are not in compliance with these requirements when monitored during the 2010-2011 monitoring cycle, OHS will document a "Concern" in the review report. OHS plans to conduct reviews to determine whether the program has achieved timely compliance at a later date.

Consistent with the goals of the Head Start Road Map to Excellence, we look forward to supporting EHS programs in providing high quality services in an effort to assure that our children have highly competent and qualified staff.

Please direct any questions to your OHS Regional Office.

/ Yvette Sanchez Fuentes /

Yvette Sanchez Fuentes
Director
Office of Head Start