

**HEAD START
TRIBAL CONSULTATION**

**October 15, 2012
Portland, Oregon
Region X**

FINAL REPORT

Presented by:
Yvette Sanchez Fuentes, Director
Office of Head Start

Introduction

Pursuant to the Department of Health and Human Services Tribal Consultation Policy and Section 640 (1)(4) of the Head Start Act, in 2012 the Office of Head Start (OHS) is convening six Tribal Consultation sessions for the purpose of better meeting the needs of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) children and families, taking into consideration funding allocations, distribution formulas, and other issues affecting the delivery of Head Start services in their geographic locations.

OHS is committed to meaningful consultation with Tribes through which elected officials and other authorized representatives of the tribal governments have the opportunity to provide meaningful and timely input prior to the development of policies or regulations, the interpretation of existing regulations, or other policies or procedures that affect Indian Tribes. OHS is committed to seeking input from AI/AN governing bodies, leaders, and individuals designated by tribal leaders and incorporating such input into its decision-making process related to all matters that significantly affect Tribes and AI/AN children and families.

The 2012 schedule is as follows:

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|-------------------|-------------------------|
| February 15, 2012 | Petoskey, Michigan |
| March 22, 2012 | Phoenix, Arizona |
| April 3, 2012 | Billings, Montana |
| May 4, 2012 | Oklahoma City, Oklahoma |
| October 15, 2012 | Portland, Oregon |
| October 17, 2012 | Anchorage, Alaska |

By Notice in the Federal Register, dated August 13, 2012, OHS notified AI/AN leaders of a Tribal Consultation for Tribes in Region X on October 15, 2012, in Portland, Oregon. The following Report reflects comments and recommendations raised by AI/AN leaders and representatives; comments and responses from OHS; and areas identified as requiring additional follow-up as discussed at the Tribal Consultation. (Separate reports for each Tribal Consultation were issued following each of the dates listed above.)

Participants

Office of Head Start: Ross Weaver, Director, Quality Assurance Division; Fran Majestic, Data and Information Technology Lead; Nancy Hutchins, Regional Program Manager, Region X.

Tribal leaders and Tribal representatives: (See Appendix for detailed listing.)

Introductory Remarks

Ross Weaver, Director, Quality Assurance Division, OHS, and Fran Majestic, Data and Information Technology Lead, OHS, opened the session. Michael Thom, Vice Chairman, Karuk Tribes, offered the opening prayer. Following introductions of all participants, Mr. Weaver introduced a video greeting from OHS Director Yvette Sanchez Fuentes.

Discussion/Comments of AI/AN and OHS Participants

Mr. Weaver and Ms. Majestic extended Director Sanchez Fuentes' regrets for being unable to attend in person. They also affirmed the Director's goal that Tribal Consultations will improve communication and relationships with AI/AN grantees and support programs in providing improved services to Native children and families. In addition to participant comments at the Tribal Consultation, written testimony was submitted by Craig Corn, Tribal Chairman, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin.

A. Tribal Challenges – AI/AN Participant Comments

- One grantee stated that Webinars scheduled on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays are not helpful since they are held during class time. Webinars should be accessible on Fridays when children are not in the classroom.
- A Head Start career advancement grant in Wisconsin helped Tribes fulfill teacher mandates but is expiring soon.
- Transportation funds are needed to keep 80 percent to 90 percent of the children in the programs.
- There is concern about the high turnover of OHS Program and Fiscal Specialists. Turnover does not offer the opportunity to familiarize the Program Specialists with the Tribes and their culture. New Program Specialists often consult their supervisors before answering questions, and that step delays timely responses.
- Culture and language are important to the Tribes; the teacher qualification mandates should recognize the relevance of those issues.
- Curriculum that supports the importance of language and culture is critical.
- In a recent monitoring review, a Tribe received positive comments regarding culture and language efforts. This was surprising and long overdue.
- CLASS reviewers who are not familiar with tribal culture may score programs on the low end. Tribes need intensive and formal training on CLASS. CLASS was presented at meetings for Native audiences and at cluster trainings, but Tribes are behind due to the lack of training and technical assistance (T/TA).
- Like new Program Specialists, T/TA contractors do not have experience with Tribes.
- There is no funding to help Tribes support teacher qualifications.
- Local tribal elections affect what the Tribes are able to do.
- The Menominee Nation supports school readiness and has a college. However, the grant supporting the college and educational efforts is expiring in September 2013. This will negatively affect the Tribe. Students will attempt to transfer to other institutions and this will create a hardship for them. Qualified staff supporting the college who have cultural competency will be lost.

Tribal Challenges – AI/AN Recommendations to OHS

- Archive Webinars for later viewing.

- Fund another career advancement five-year grant in Wisconsin through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF).
- Provide transportation funds to Tribes.
- Select T/TA contractors who have experience with Indian Tribes. Since Region XI recruits for AI/AN reviewers and Federal staff, it makes sense for contractors to have Native staff and experience with Tribes.
- Curricula for Tribes should include language and culture components.
- Assist Tribes with more funding and increase allocations to AI/AN for resources to overcome obstacles. Reallocate Indian Head Start advancement partnership funds for education services to the teaching staff.
- Provide an update about sequestration to help prepare the Tribes for the funding changes.
- Provide an update on the status of the new *Head Start Program Performance Standards*.
- Provide additional T/TA at conferences held for Tribes.
- Clarify how training about tribal issues is provided at the Federal level.
- Clarify how the National Center on Health will support Tribes. The Indian Health Service (IHS) did help the tribal Head Start programs. Continued support is a major concern of Tribes since the IHS agreement may be terminated.
- Clarify whether a Tribe may apply to expand, since the reservations overlap non-tribal counties or are located inside non-tribal counties.

Tribal Challenges – OHS Responses

- Many of the issues raised will be discussed by the OHS senior team when explaining budget and other developments.
- Expansion of a tribal grantee to a non-tribal service area is not fully addressed. One regulation notes there should not be overlapping service areas. OHS will consider this subject.

B. Tribal Consultations – AI/AN Participant Comments

- Several participants expressed their disappointment that the Director and Deputy Director were not present. One participant noted that the Director has not attended any of the 2012 Tribal Consultations.
- Consultations need to be viewed as important by OHS. They should be developed to cover what Tribes view as important and to discuss tribal budgets. Tribes do not need information about designation renewal. OHS should get back on track and discuss agenda items raised by Tribes and tribal budget concerns.
- Tribes are interested in hearing OHS updates and in having the opportunity to speak to OHS officials.

Tribal Consultations – AI/AN Recommendations to OHS

- Form a partnership that creates an action plan or matrix based on the results of Tribal Consultations. Share the plan with Tribes along with successes. This would be a meaningful response to consultations.
- Consider forming a tribal advisory committee.
- Consultations should include OHS updates and be followed by action plans shared with Tribes.
- The Director and Deputy Director should attend the consultations.

Tribal Consultations – OHS Responses

- OHS understands the frustration about the Director not being present. However, two of the six members of the OHS senior team are present at this Consultation.

C. Budget – OHS Comments

- Congress approved Continuing Resolution funding for programs through March 2013 at the 2012 funding level.
- Those programs due for refunding between October 2012 and January 2013 will be funded at 80 percent.
- Sequestration will go into effect unless Congress acts before the January 2013 effective date. The cut will have serious ramifications for all programs including Head Start.
- Flexibility will not be clear until after the November election.
- Expansion is not likely to occur for 2013. It is uncertain if the current Congress will address sequestration.
- If the budget is passed as the President proposed, there will be a slight increase in the cost of living allowance (COLA) plus some funds for the transition of programs that are not successful in the competition process.
- If there is no money for quality areas, such as transportation, programs need to look at options. It is a problem to determine how a program can offer services without funds. OHS encourages programs to request COLA when available. COLA can be used for cost increases in areas other than wage when wage adjustments are not feasible. Programs should explain why wage increases are not planned and why other costs are a priority for use of these funds. COLA is a permanent addition to the base, and programs should not miss an opportunity to utilize these types of funds.
- Funds allocated to AI/AN stay with Region XI. During the replacement grantee process, the funds stay in Region XI.
- Head Start fact sheets are relevant and posted online. They show how the funds are broken out more transparently than other sources of information.

Budget – AI/AN Participant Comments

- Sequestration will take funds from those already underfunded.
- Will there be expansion funds in the future? More families are out of work, and the ripple effect is serious.
- There is a need for more information on sequestration.
- Where do funds go if a Tribal program is discontinued?
- Tribes are worried about fund reductions and financial challenges. They want to maintain regular grant levels.

D. Designation Renewal System (DRS) – OHS Comments

- The Director and Deputy Director will be part of the DRS consultation national Webcast this week.
- The Head Start Act provided for a system of designation renewal and noncompetitive grants for high quality services. There are special provisions for AI/AN programs in the Act to improve quality through consultation with Tribes to establish a plan for quality.
- There are four steps in designation renewal:
 1. Determination
 2. Government-to-government consultation
 3. Implementation of a formal plan
 4. Re-evaluation after six months

- Regulations at 45 CFR 1307 establish rules implementing the OHS Designation Renewal System. Section 1307.3 describes seven DRS conditions that make a Head Start/EHS agency ineligible for an automatic five-year grant:
 1. One or more deficiencies on a single monitoring review from June 12, 2009.
 2. Average scores falling below established thresholds on any of the three CLASS pre-k domains OR score on any of the three CLASS pre-k domains is in the lowest 10 percent nationally. The lowest 10 percent will be identified based on the annual cohort of grantees receiving a triennial monitoring review; therefore, these determinations will be made following the final monitoring review report release for the year. The 10 percent of grantees with the lowest average scores in each domain will be required to compete. If 90 percent of the programs exceed the program under consideration, that program will compete.
 3. Lack of established School Readiness goals, as demonstrated by the requirements at 45 CFR 1307.3 (b) (1). There is no minimum amount of progress.
 4. Revocation of license to operate by a State or local licensing agency from June 12, 2009, if the revocation has not been overturned or withdrawn prior to issuance of a relevant Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA).
 5. A final determination of suspension by OHS since June 12, 2009.
 6. Debarment by another Federal/State agency or disqualification from Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).
 7. Determination by the responsible HHS Official that the agency is at risk of failing to continue functioning as a going concern based on reviews of agency audits. (The term “going concern” means an audit shows that the program may not be solvent for the next 12 months.)
- If there is a deficiency in one or more of the areas, the program will be in designation renewal and must correct in the required timeframe. It will move to termination if not corrected.
- School readiness goals are developmental and involve establishing data sources, and aggregating and analyzing data at least three times each year to reach the goal of continuous program improvement.
- The determination process involves a letter sent to the tribal government explaining the need for consultation. Key persons involved will include tribal leaders, a DRS AI/AN liaison, a T/TA manager, a program and grantee specialist, and a liaison from the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning (NCQTL). The AI/AN liaison is Todd Lertjuntharangoon. The NCQTL liaison is Jarma Wrihten.
- There will be an onsite visit after the first meeting. The outcome will be a draft plan to address all seven conditions, demonstrate what T/TA will be offered, and describe the Tribe’s efforts to meet requirements. The T/TA contractor will assign a grantee specialist, as well as an early childhood education specialist.
- The close of the consultation will be a conference call with the OHS Director and the tribal chair. This will conclude up to six months of consultation. Then the six-month timeframe for implementation begins.
- During the re-evaluation, OHS will determine if there is a deficiency by looking at the seven criteria. If there are no conditions requiring re-competition, the Tribe will be awarded a five-year grant. If there are conditions, re-competition will
- occur.
- The Head Start Enterprise System (HSES) will be used to track DRS progress and will be transparent. All stages of the DRS process will be visible. This will include the initial letter, consultation information, the plan as formulated and formal, and any training.

- HSES will generate system-generated notifications to indicate submitted information is received.
- The review during re-evaluation is not a triennial review. The reviewers will look at the seven criteria. There is discussion about who will conduct the review and how to avoid a conflict of interest. There will be a Federal team leader and a review team assembled by Danya. The team is not planning to identify areas of noncompliance. They will determine if a deficiency was corrected while looking at all seven areas listed in the conditions. The team may be as small as three people but will be larger for a large grantee.
- OHS will look into whether the DRS webinar can be posted on the ECLKC.

Designation Renewal System (DRS) – AI/AN Participant Comments

- The National Indian Head Start Directors Association is interested in supporting mentor coaching for DRS but needs funds and resources. Peer-to-peer T/TA was mentioned on the slides as one potential for T/TA, and there is interest in extending this type of training beyond the DRS grantees.

Designation Renewal System (DRS) – AI/AN Recommendations to OHS

- Facilitate peer-to-peer mentor coaching for DRS.
- Clarify who will sign off on a new review and how the team is connected to the process that the Tribe went through during the consultation process for DRS.

E. CLASS – AI/AN Participant Comments

- Why was the previously conducted CLASS review not included in consideration for five-year grant awards? It does not seem fair that grantees went through the review process but did not qualify for awards, although they met the CLASS criteria during that review process.
- CLASS is not research-driven for Tribes and, therefore, is not culturally appropriate.
- A new AI/AN Head Start Director needs CLASS certification but that is not available because there is a wait list in Region X.

CLASS – AI/AN Recommendations to OHS

- Clarify why programs did not receive a noncompetitive grant after achieving a review without a deficiency and with CLASS scores above the minimum thresholds in the regulation.

CLASS – OHS Comments

- CLASS and school readiness were not among the conditions for consideration prior to December 2011.

F. Five-Year Grant – OHS Comments

- Tribes are eligible to apply for regional programs. They may propose to serve the neediest children in the services area which may include Native children.
- If a Tribe with an existing AI/AN program applies for a non-tribal area and is successful, two grants will be awarded – tribal and non-tribal. Requirements will vary depending on the type of grant.
- When a grant is awarded for a five-year project period, the indefinite project period will end. Leftover funds cannot be moved to the new grant so programs must consider spending down funds. A new grant number will be issued for the five-year grant.
- When a new grant is issued, there will be an ongoing monitoring process to ensure that grantees reach stated goals and objective.

- The first application will be in-depth for the full five years and should show the expected impact on children, families, and the community. This effort will go hand-in-hand with the emphasis on school readiness as progress is observed year-to-year. Programs will be examining data, making changes, and continuously improving services.
- Year 1 – the application is fundable and the Program Specialist will visit the program in the first year and annually after the first year for the purpose of developing a relationship and overseeing progress in reaching goals and objectives.
 - The Program Specialist will develop an understanding of the programs, learn the strengths, and what has been accomplished.
 - In the first year, the Program Specialist will meet with management, the Policy Council, and the governing body to talk about ongoing monitoring and ensure that a system is in place. There will be discussions about internal processes. If there are problems, such as accomplishing screenings on time, assistance can be provided. If serious issues are observed, such as leaving a child on a bus, the Specialist will address the issue.
- Year 2 – the grant application will be more streamlined and build on Year 1 and information developed that year. The Program Specialist will visit to discuss the data from Year 1, progress, and support needed.
- Year 3 – the onsite review will occur.
- Year 4 – OHS will make a determination when looking at the seven criteria.
- Year 5 – issue a letter about eligibility for a five-year grant or begin a designation renewal re-competition. If there is a new grant, there will be a new grant number.
- The Program Specialist will see and understand programs as the result of the visits and analysis. The strengths of programs will be a focus of the visits, as well.
- OHS would like to receive feedback on the annual visit and what works and does not work well.
- The new process is about a strengths-based model, and the first visit is intended to support building relationships.
- History affected the focus on risks in the past. OHS responded to General Accountability Office (GAO) reports by developing a risk management process that included annual calls focused primarily on risk areas as part of the refunding process. OHS wants to reframe its processes to look at strengths, challenges, and risks in an ongoing way.
- The plan will be explained further in a Program Instruction (PI) or funding guidance letters.

Five-Year Grant –AI/AN Participant Comments

- Region XI has had poor experiences with Program Specialists. The Tribes want assurances that visiting Specialists understand sovereignty. There must be a government-to-government relationship.
- The relationships are important and so is vocabulary.
- A better term for the process described for onsite visits would be “ongoing relationship building.”
- Tribes would like a formal explanation in writing of the five-year plan.

G. Monitoring – OHS Comments

- The teams visiting AI/AN programs for the 2013 monitoring year will be comprised of all Native reviewers plus a Federal team lead. If backfills are needed due to absences, there may be a different plan.
- The first 1½ hours will be set aside to talk to Tribes about their culture and uniqueness. OHS would like feedback about this process.

- OHS will prepare monitoring reports on a timelier basis than in the past.

H. Teacher Qualifications – AI/AN Participant Comments

- Teachers are not being paid what they deserve.

Teacher Qualifications – OHS Comments

- Some programs have misunderstood the teacher qualification requirements that are effective in 2013; they thought it applied to each program, not nationwide. Nationally we have surpassed the requirement that at least 50 percent of Head Start teachers nationwide 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.
- According to the 2011–12 Program Information Report (PIR), most education coordinators meet qualifications requirements that go into effect in October 2013.
- Teacher assistants are moving in the right direction; many hold a child development associate (CDA) credential or are enrolled in either a CDA or early childhood education college degree program.
- Programs should be aware of these requirements and ensure that staff are making intentional steps toward gaining credentials. First and foremost Tribes must be certain that staff working with children have the competencies necessary and that staff are willing to pursue further education. All teaching staff should be on a professional development plan that meets them where they are at in order to help them move forward.
- OHS will note the comments about Tribes’ inability to hire and retain qualified teachers due to wages.

I. Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) – AI/AN Participant Comments

- T/TA focuses on struggling programs, and it is hard to request support services. One Tribe is not receiving any support even though there is a triennial review this year. There is no relationship with the T/TA provider. A new Head Start Director needs support, but that will only be available if the triennial shows a need.
- There are more emails from the new T/TA provider now.
- Some Tribes invite others to trainings. Tulalip Tribe invited others to governance training.

Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) – AI/AN Recommendations to OHS

- Consider providing peer coaching to supplement T/TA, as well as other training offered by Three Feathers and the Indian Health Service.

Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) – OHS Comments

- The T/TA system is new, and the contractor has not yet visited all programs. An Early Childhood Specialist is assigned to each grantee.

J. Language and Culture – AI/AN Participant Comments

- In the state of Washington, there has been a successful effort to certify teachers for K-12 in tribal cultures and languages. Is there anything in writing from OHS to support this certification process?

- OHS should show support for initiatives important to tribal communities on language and culture.
- The Menominee Nation is focused on pre-kindergarten-16. Language and culture are critical elements to the education of the children. There is a grant supported by the Kellogg Foundation to help Head Start infuse the curriculum with the language, and it is offered to classes through third grade. The Tribe is seeking funds to support activities through middle school years.
- It is critical to train teachers in Head Start to implement curricula that ensure future success on all academic levels; funds are needed for this work. Head Start should work on partnerships to support education and should consider that education extends through adulthood. Models for sustaining education in this way exist. Tribal colleges and universities support teachers and want the best training possible for Indian children.

Language and Culture – AI/AN Recommendations to OHS

- Teacher qualification mandates should recognize the relevance of those issues.

Language and Culture – OHS Comments

- OHS is collaborating with ACF's Administration for Native Americans on some of the issues outlined in the Tribal Language Report, including training to teach a language and whether colleges may be able to provide credit for life experiences of teaching staff.

K. Other – AI/AN Participant Comments

- The Race to the Top effort required education not developmentally appropriate for Native children.
- School systems are not meeting the needs of Native children.
- Program Specialists can be difficult to reach. Sometimes Tribes hear that the Program Specialist is leaving by word of mouth. On other occasions, Tribes receive a letter.
- OHS should have done more advertising within the Native communities when hiring the last AI/AN Program Specialist and the current AI/AN Regional Program Specialist.

Other – OHS Comments

- There will be a new Regional Program Manager for AI/AN in the near future. *[Editor's Note: Captain Robert Bialas was named Regional Program Manager for Region XI on November 8, 2012.]*
- Annual visits to programs are to occur during FY2013. Program Specialists are to make a site visit to each of their assigned programs. The majority of these visits are to occur by the end of March 2013.
- OHS acknowledged the ideas presented and agreed to consider advertising through the career center on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC), which is now up and running. OHS will advertise for tribal preference.
- The school readiness calls were not intended to be for data collection. They were intended to raise awareness of school readiness and goals and to see where the grantees were in meeting this objective. OHS did learn about many programs' strengths and areas where more support is needed.
- There is a lot on the drawing board about aligning Child Care and Head Start. For example, there is interest in determining if other agencies are collecting duplicate information and in cutting down on that duplication. There is little early childhood data that Head Start collects that is defined the same way as data collected by others.

- A Memorandum of Understanding is in the works with USDA and Child Care. This takes time to develop.
- OHS knows that some Tribes continue a relationship with families past their years in Head Start. An effort to offer support for families up to age 8 might provide enough support to change the findings that show fade-out of the effect of Head Start.
- Tribes should send their success stories to support the effort to demonstrate the effectiveness of Head Start.
- The Indian Health Service is not expiring yet but is under review.
- OHS realizes the Tribes want to speak to the leadership at OHS.
- It is helpful to hear comments from the Tribes and to focus on supporting programs and sharing information.
- Head Start is an excellent early childhood program. OHS is aware of the interest by Tribes in providing quality services to children and families.
- The grant for career advancement will not be reinstated. More information about that will be available soon.
- OHS will look into why an award did not separate T/TA funds.
- Tribes can change allotments between Head Start and EHS depending on need.
- OHS acknowledges the hard work Tribes are doing in difficult times and thanks staff and parents for their efforts to support the future of children.

APPENDIX

Tribal Consultation Participants

Federal Staff

| First Name | Last Name | Position | Organization |
|------------|------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Nancy | Hutchins | Regional Program Manager, RO X | Office of Head Start |
| Fran | Majestic | Data and Information Systems Lead | Office of Head Start |
| WJ | Strickland | Senior Program Specialist | Office of Head Start |
| Ross | Weaver | Quality Assurance Division Director | Office of Head Start |

Tribal Leaders and Representatives

| First Name | Last Name | Position | Organization |
|------------|-------------|--|---|
| Carmen | Andrews | Head Start Manager | Spokane Tribe |
| Roberta | Bisbee | Member | Nez Perce Tribe |
| Vikki | Bishop | Early Childhood Education Program Manager | Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde |
| Patty | Brown | Executive Director | Karuk Tribe Head Start |
| Rebecca | Cantrell | Disabilities, Health and Family Services Coordinator | Coquille Indian Tribe Head Start |
| Alfreda | Charlie | Early Head Start Director | Tululip Tribe |
| Jeanne | Christopher | Director | Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes |
| Craig | Corn | Tribal Chairman | Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin |
| Dawneen | DeLaCruz | Policy Coordinator | Quinalt Indian Nation |
| Jaclyn | Haight | Early Childhood Education Director | Port Gamble S'klallam Tribe |
| Edie | Hill | Health and Human Services Director | Samish Indian Nation |
| Kirstin | Hisatake | Head Start/EHS Administrator | Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation |
| Stefanie | Jones | Head Start Director | Samish Indian Nation Head Start |
| Jinny | Marchand | Head Start Director | Quinalt Indian Nation Head Start/Early Head Start |
| Dana | Matthews | Council Secretary | Samish Indian Nation Head Start |
| Joan | Metcalf | Head Start Director | Coquille Indian Tribe Head Start |
| Jane | Metcalf | Tribal Council Member | Coquille Indian Tribe Head Start |

| First Name | Last Name | Position | Organization |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Diana | Morris | Chief Academic Officer | Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin |
| Jennifer | Oatman | FISI/Site Supervisor | Nez Perce Tribe Early Childhood Development |
| Gary | Pyawasay | Program Director | Menominee Indian Head Start |
| Tamara | Rogers | Tribal Leader | Samish Indian Nation |
| Michael | Thom | Vice-Chairman | Karuk Tribe |
| Latosha | Underwood | Tribal Secretary | Quinault Indian Nation |
| Camille | Wynecoop | Education Resource Specialist | Children of the Sun Head Start |



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
Office of Head Start
1250 Maryland Avenue, SW
8th Floor
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Grantee Director and Program Staff:

It is hard to believe that another program year is half over. By now, you have probably had one or two conference calls with your Program Specialist to discuss your goals for children's school readiness. At the beginning of this program year, I asked every Regional Office to make it a priority to begin an ongoing dialogue with each grantee to learn about your school readiness goals and to hear about the progress your children are making throughout the year.

My goal is to ensure that Regional staff maintain an ongoing dialogue with grantees to better understand how each program is supporting children's learning, and in this process, to identify existing strengths and gain an understanding of the data grantees gather to inform program improvements as well as enhance professional development and to provide ongoing direction of training and technical assistance. These conversations provide you and your staff an opportunity to tell your story about the progress your children are making. This process also provides OHS with valuable information for understanding differences or trends in school readiness efforts within states, across states and nationally. As a result of these conversations, we expect Regional staff to work closely with our TTA partners to assist programs in getting support as needed.

Head Start's authorizing purpose is to promote school readiness. The 2007 Head Start Act specified that programs are to establish goals for children's school readiness. The Designation Renewal regulation that became effective on December 9, 2011 provided additional requirements related to child assessment, individualization, data aggregation and analysis and responsive program improvement. The Office of Head Start anticipates that the regular system of individualized calls will support grantees' efforts to institute systems and practices that yield the best possible child progress.

We also want to make sure that we are fully aware of the challenges you face, the innovations you implement and the successes you achieve.

If you have any questions, please contact your Program Specialist.

As always, I look to our Head Start programs to lead the nation in providing high quality early childhood education and also to our continued mutual efforts on behalf of children and families.

Sincerely,

/ Yvette Sanchez Fuentes /

Yvette Sanchez Fuentes, Director
Office of Head Start

Head Start Tribal Consultation Final Report
Region X, October 15, 2012, Portland, Oregon