

**Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
Office of Head Start Tribal Consultation**

June 13, 2018

Sheraton Music City
Nashville, Tennessee

Summary Report

Greeting, Invocation and Introductions

As the new director of the Office of Head Start (OHS), Deborah Bergeron, Ph.D., met with and listened to Tribal leaders during the June 2018 Nashville Consultation. The Consultation occurred during the national conference of the National Indian Head Start Directors Association (NIHSDA). The event served as Dr. Bergeron's first Tribal Consultation.

Following the opening prayer, OHS Deputy Director Ann Linehan opened the discussion with brief remarks as well as introductions around the table and the room.

Meaningful Consultation with Sovereign Nations

Reauthorization/Head Start Performance Standards:

- Regarding the reauthorization of the Head Start Act, Tribal leaders appreciate receiving information but want to obtain details on amendments to the laws well in advance of any formal actions regarding reauthorization. This will allow Tribes to work directly with Head Start program staff to determine implications and ramifications of any new laws on current program operations.

- New Head Start Program Performance Standards: Although higher expectations are necessary, Tribes request an increase in baseline funding to hire qualified managers and lead teachers. These professionals must have a bachelor's degree or higher, noted Gov. Moquino. To recruit, retain and support the education of current employees, the caliber of expectation costs money. In less than one year, Santo Domingo has hired three qualified staff with masters' and bachelor's degrees. Within the same year, all have left due to salary competition from other programs. Further, 13 employees attend higher education institutions. The Tribe is unsure if these employees will remain upon reaching the mandated education requirements. Santo Domingo requests additional funding for salary increases besides cost of living adjustments (COLAs).

- Mandated coaching/mentoring performance standards: Although coaching and mentoring meet critical staff development needs, these efforts require an educated, skilled professional when costs and/or time remain challenging.
- Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS): This system has been a crucial conversation in American Indian/ Alaska Native (AI/AN) Head Start programs. Although assessments provide baseline aspirational goals, when the CLASS audit occurs in 2018, the qualified observer should not only be a speaker of Santo Domingo language but also understand Pueblo culture.
- The Head Start Act of 2007 states that one half of all Head Start teachers nationwide should have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field. Tribes face challenges, however, when degreed teachers cannot get appropriate pay for their new status.
- Program managers/coordinators also must now have more advanced credentials. These credentials come with a higher rate of pay, and Tribes cannot compete with public schools, government agencies or other organizations that can offer these professionals a significantly higher salary than what is available in Tribal budgets.
- Native language/traditions: New performance standards include statements that support Native languages and tradition. OHS must establish its role in supporting such performance standards and explain how each program will receive assessment around language and traditions.

Language Preservation:

Tribes realize the importance of Native language and the risk of losing this important connection with their history and culture. Tribes asked OHS to consider establishing an ongoing, respectful and fruitful dialogue with Tribal Head Start grantees on this priority need. Tribes also want to establish a forum for Tribal education departments to share best practices for teaching and preserving Native language. Many Tribes have successfully implemented language programs within Head Start, and Native leaders want to engage in further discussion about this matter.

Addressing Tribal cultural teacher qualifications, elders typically serve as teachers within Native communities. Elders know the language and carry Tribal culture and traditions. As data continue to reveal the rapid decline of language and culture, Tribes should use all available resources, especially elders, to revitalize Native traditions -- without requiring these "experts" to secure formal education or certifications.

OHS should issue a public statement acknowledging that Tribal language and cultural practices are just as important as academic knowledge. Supporting Native communities in a public forum will encourage communities that have been negatively impacted by past OHS evaluation

practices and requirements. These requirements have made Tribal grantees afraid to teach language and culture in the program. A public statement from OHS in support of language immersion programs will rebuild good will.

In New Mexico, a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with the State Department of Education allows Tribes to certify teachers. Tribes also certify teachers for language programs in public school systems to ensure those professionals belong in the classrooms. New Mexico should be a model for using MOUs to support language revitalization.

Teacher Qualifications:

Native communities also need staff to teach language programs. Engaging traditional speakers and cultural transmitters as teachers and assistants remains imperative to the survival of Tribal languages. Current requirements for Education Coordinators, teachers, and teacher assistants create burdensome challenges for Tribal programs. Many language speakers, for example, are elders who are unlikely to seek degrees to meet the teacher/teacher aide qualifications. In addition, most Tribes do not have the resources to employ a third person in the classroom as a language and/or cultural teacher. Tribes should determine the proficiency of staff or Tribal members to work with infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

Because the teacher qualification requirements are a nationwide priority, OHS should consider waiving the teacher qualifications and let Tribes determine qualifications for teachers, certified language speakers, and cultural transmitters in their Head Start/Early Head Start programs.

Many teachers who meet or almost meet Head Start qualifications are drawn away by higher salaries available in other school districts.

If Tribes and states have established a program for certifying American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) speakers as qualified teachers, OHS should accept such individuals as meeting the teacher qualification requirements.

Fiscal Concerns:

Carry Forward: Due to Head Start restrictions on how and when to carry-forward unused funds to the next year, Tribes face challenges in re-programming those funds. A Tribe that has \$10,000 left in the budget for personnel, for example, might not be able to carry those funds forward next year to replace a kitchen stove. For a large expense, such as resurfacing a playground, a Tribe would have to carry forward \$125,000 and “save” for several years in a row to have enough funding to redo the playground. Other grant issues might arise, however, if OHS decides to reduce grant funding the following year by the amount the Tribe wants to carry forward. Most

years, funding is not sufficient for that year alone, much less to have a grant reduced because of carry-forward.

One-time Money: These unreliable funds often are not available when Tribes need them. Without carry-forward or one-time funds, Tribes have no way to resolve issues that come up and exceed Head Start program budgets, said Mr. Padilla.

Enrollment:

Enrollment remains another key issue many tribal programs. Lack of facilities limits the number of students that can be enrolled. OHS needs to work more closely around facilities issues. Tribal Head Start grantees have reported the need for facility improvements that include major and minor renovations and new construction. A lack of alternate facilities in rural/remote areas is forcing Head Start grantees to spend significant portions of their budget to maintain environmentally safe facilities. An FY2015 OHS report to Congress on AI/AN Head Start facilities highlighted the following:

- Nearly 40 percent of the facilities had documented concerns, including worn interiors, cracked ceilings, poor insulation and overall deterioration due to the impact of adverse weather conditions.
- Nearly 40 percent of the facilities had concerns related to building materials and conditions such as mold, leaks and flooding as well as gas and sewage odors.
- 14 percent of the restrooms were not size appropriate. Restrooms were sized for adults, not for children, and the ratio of restrooms to children is low.
- Investing in short-term maintenance and repair rather than renovation and new construction design for the long term creates inefficient spending. Outdated buildings also might contribute to low enrollment or high costs per child.
- Small enrollments that threaten the Head Start program if one child misses class.
- Over-income levels that separate community members.
- OHS should re-evaluate its enrollment/income levels in regards to Tribal communities,

Facilities:

Suggested OHS actions include creating opportunities for grantees to apply for renovation funding, informing Head Start programs of other funding sources and providing a separate space for facility topics regarding construction and renovation requirements. Tribes also need additional resources to address how to prepare an application for facilities funding.

OHS also needs to fund upgrades for security, access control, video surveillance, and perimeter fencing. Aging roof, stucco, heating and cooling system, boiler room, water heater, and asphalt/concrete areas need to be replaced.

Mentor Coaching: Additional support is needed to hire mandated coaching and mentoring staff programs once the Tribe surpasses Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) funding. Coaching is a newer requirement that aims to improve classroom quality and staff competence by having

an observer provide support and feedback while monitoring staff quality. Tribes, however, do not have the funds to pay for this service.

CLASS:

Tribes also requested the status of qualified, culturally competent CLASS observers and asked for reassurances to report back to Tribal Head Start families.

. How appropriate is the CLASS assessment tool across Native cultures? The assumption that all Native cultures are the same and have the same expectations creates problems. What one Tribe might see as normal and appropriate might be forbidden or disrespectful in another.

CLASS also does not seem to help staff improve. CLASS results come to the Head Start program in broad terms following a review. All scores from different classrooms are grouped together, and the program receives a composite set of scores with no feedback. The Tribe does not know which classrooms performed well or did poorly. Head Start staff would appreciate specific feedback on observations to address individual issues. For example, if three classrooms receive a score in instructional support of 2.3, staff cannot determine if all the classes scored low or if only one of them brought down two high scores. Leaders also cannot determine what the program should do to address future training plans.

CLASS also has become a tool to put Tribes into the Designated Renewal System (DRS) rather than help programs improve teacher quality. Assessments are provided from an outside agency that has no knowledge or connection to the community -- and may offer guidance to a Tribal Head Start with no community or parent input or investment. These assessments, which lack meaningful support and input, often discourage staff and cause them to quit. CLASS should be used in a way to support rather than punish Tribal Head Start programs.

General Comments:

Despite all of these challenges, Head Start works. Many former Head Start students have become attorneys, engineers, Indian Chiefs and Governors. However, the children of these successful former students cannot participate in Head Start due to income requirements. More flexibility is needed so Tribes can develop programs that meet the local needs identified by Pueblo Leaders. Tribes also seek greater collaboration and partnerships, such as the use of funds from Head Start, Child Care, Early Head Start, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) and other available programs.

Further, Tribes that have become self-sufficient may be supplementing programs. OHS should allow that to occur without penalty.

To further promote success, Tribes must remain aware of all funding opportunities. And although some Tribes have reached a place a self-sufficiency, the federal government still has a

trust responsibility to provide adequate funding. The reauthorization act requires appropriate funding so Tribes can benefit from those programs.

It was asked why federally recognized Tribal children need an income requirement to participate in Head Start. As previously noted, the federal government has a trust responsibility. Adding training and education dollars within the 477 program for Head Start could serve as one funding solution. Tribes simply need flexible authorization

A request was made to allow some tribes to operate the Head Start program under PL102477, which is the Indian Employment Training and Related Services Act. Achieving 477 status puts tribes on a path toward exercising Tribal sovereignty and self-determination. Tribal leaders want to combine formula-funded federal grants into a single plan, single budget and single reporting system.

There is a need for OHS representation during Regional Consultations. Tribal directors and managers discuss Head Start and child care during these meetings but often no one is available to engage in back-and-forth conversation.

Closing:

Dr. Bergeron wrapped up the meeting with brief responses, noting that critical Head Start issues require deeper thought, conversation and research. As staff seek solutions to Tribal concerns, Dr. Bergeron wants to maintain Head Start's rock-solid focus on child development.

Head Start will continue to assess its monitoring efforts without losing the importance of high standards. OHS seeks to preserve standards without putting out a statement that assumes people have to fail, added Dr. Bergeron. Good assessment remains a steep challenge as the Office of Head Start attempts to develop a system that works for programs throughout the country. The real purpose, however, should be growth and reflection, said Dr. Bergeron.

OHS continues to address ways to preserve culture and communication while ensuring children receive effective training and preparation for the future. These issues will require ongoing thought and conversation.

Unique enrollment situations also will require dialogue, said Dr. Bergeron. Head Start still aims to provide for a community's most vulnerable children. If children in Tribal communities cannot access Head Start due to income but empty seats are available in another school, Tribal leaders and OHS staff must ensure those children still receive quality education.

Ms. Linehan collected written testimony and asked Tribal Head Start leaders to address individual issues after the meeting. Following closing prayer, the meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

OHS Tribal Consultation - Nashville

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