Community Assessment Requirements in the Head Start Program Performance Standards

Determining community strengths, needs, and resources, 45 CFR §1302.11	(b) *Community wide strategic planning and needs assessment (community assessment).* (1) To design a program that meets community needs, and builds on strengths and resources, a program must conduct a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period. The community assessment must use data that describes community strengths, needs, and resources and include, at a minimum:
	(i) The number of eligible infants, toddlers, preschool age children, and expectant mothers, including their geographic location, race, ethnicity, and languages they speak, including:
	(A) Children experiencing homelessness in collaboration with, to the extent possible, McKinney-Vento Local Education Agency Liaisons (42 U.S.C. 11432 (6)(A));
	(B) Children in foster care; and
	(C) Children with disabilities, including types of disabilities and relevant services and resources provided to these children by community agencies;
	(ii) The education, health, nutrition and social service needs of eligible children and their families, including prevalent social or economic factors that impact their well-being;
	(iii) Typical work, school, and training schedules of parents with eligible children;
	(iv) Other child development, child care centers, and family child care programs that serve eligible children, including home visiting, publicly funded state and local preschools, and the approximate number of eligible children served;
	(v) Resources that are available in the community to address the needs of eligible children and their families; and,
	(vi) Strengths of the community.
	(2) A program must annually review and update the community assessment to reflect any significant changes including increased availability of publicly-funded pre-kindergarten (including an assessment of how the pre-kindergarten available in the community meets the needs of the parents and children served by the program, and whether it is offered for a full school day), rates of family and child homelessness, and significant shifts in community demographics and resources.

	(3) A program must consider whether the characteristics of the community allow it to include children from diverse economic backgrounds that would be supported by other funding sources, including private pay, in addition to the program's eligible funded enrollment. A program must not enroll children from diverse economic backgrounds if it would result in a program serving less than its eligible funded enrollment.
Determining, verifying, and documenting eligibility, 45 CFR §1302.12	(a)(3) If a program has an alternate method to reasonably determine eligibility based on its community assessment, geographic and administrative data, or from other reliable data sources, it may petition the responsible HHS official to waive requirements in paragraphs (a)(1)(i) and (ii) of this section
Selection process, 45 CFR §1302.14	(a) *Selection criteria*. (1) A program must annually establish selection criteria that weigh the prioritization of selection of participants, based on community needs identified in the community needs assessment as described in §1302.11(b), and including family income, whether the child is homeless, whether the child is in foster care, the child's age, whether the child is eligible for special education and related services, or early intervention services, as appropriate, as determined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. 1400 *et seq.*) and, other relevant family or child risk factors.
Enrollment, 45 CFR §1302.15	(c) *Reserved slots*. If a program determines from the community assessment there are families experiencing homelessness in the area, or children in foster care that could benefit from services, the program may reserve one or more enrollment slots for pregnant women and children experiencing homelessness and children in foster care, when a vacancy occurs. No more than three percent of a program's funded enrollment slots may be reserved. If the reserved enrollment slot is not filled within 30 days, the enrollment slot becomes vacant and then must be filled in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section.
Determining program structure, 45 CFR §1302.20	(a) *Choose a program option*. (1) A program must choose to operate one or more of the following program options: center-based, home-based, family child care, or an approved locally-designed variation as described in §1302.24. The program option(s) chosen must meet the needs of children and families based on the community assessment described in §1302.11(b). A Head Start program serving preschool-aged children may not provide only the option described in §1302.22(a) and (c)(2). (2) To choose a program option and develop a program calendar, a program must consider in conjunction with the annual review of the community assessment described in §1302.11(b)(2), whether it would better meet child and family needs through conversion of existing slots to full school day or full working day slots, extending the program year,

	conversion of existing Head Start slots to Early Head Start slots as described in paragraph (c) of this section, and ways to promote continuity of care and services. A program must work to identify alternate sources to support full working day services. If no additional funding is available, program resources may be used.
Child health status and care, 45 CFR §1302.42	(b)(4) A program must identify each child's nutritional health needs, taking into account available health information, including the child's health records, and family and staff concerns, including special dietary requirements, food allergies, and community nutrition issues as identified through the community assessment or by the Health Services Advisory Committee.
Community partnerships and coordination with other early childhood and education programs, 45 CFR §1302.53	(a) *Community partnerships*. (1) A program must establish ongoing collaborative relationships and partnerships with community organizations such as establishing joint agreements, procedures, or contracts and arranging for onsite delivery of services as appropriate, to facilitate access to community services that are responsive to children's and families' needs and family partnership goals, and community needs and resources, as determined by the community assessment.
Management system, 45 CFR §1302.101	(b)(2)(i) Utilizing information from the program's community assessment about the languages spoken throughout the program service area to anticipate child and family needs; (ii) Identifying community resources and establishing ongoing collaborative relationships and partnerships with community organizations consistent with the requirements in §1302.53(a)
Achieving program goals, 45 CFR §1302.102	(a) *Establishing program goals*. A program, in collaboration with the governing body and policy council, must establish goals and measurable objectives that include: (1) Strategic long-term goals for ensuring programs are and remain responsive to community needs as identified in their community assessment as described in subpart A of this part; (d)(2) Annually, a program must publish and disseminate a report that complies with section 644(a)(2) of the Act and includes a summary of a program's most recent community assessment, as described in §1302.11(b), consistent with privacy protections in subpart C of part 1303 of this chapter.

Implementation of program performance standards, 45 CFR §1302.103	(b) A program's approach to implement the changes included in parts 1301 through 1304 of this chapter must ensure adequate preparation for effective and timely service delivery to children and their families including, at a minimum, review of community assessment data to determine the most appropriate strategy for implementing required program changes, including assessing any changes in the number of children who can be served, as necessary, the purchase of and training on any curriculum, assessment, or other materials, as needed, assessment of program-wide professional development needs, assessment of staffing patterns, the development of coordinated approaches described in §1302.101(b), and the development of appropriate protections for data sharing…