

**Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
Administration for Children and Families (ACF)
Office of Head Start**

**Virtual Tribal Consultation – Summary Report
Geographic Regions 9-10**

October 28, 2020

Office of Head Start Representatives

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Greeting and Introductions

Dr. Deborah Bergeron, Director of the Office of Head Start (OHS), welcomed attendees, and expressed her excitement to attend today's consultation, as she was unable to attend the previous consultations. She publicly thanked Ann Linehan, Deputy Director of OHS, for filling in for her and sharing the comments and concerns presented in the previous consultations. Before turning the meeting over to Mr. Todd Lertjuntharagool, she recognized his hard work and thanked him for his service as a liaison, keeping her updated about what's happening and the things that can be done to improve support for OHS programs.

Transcript from OHS Overview/Presentation

Todd Lertjuntharagool
Regional Program Manager
Region 11/American Indian Alaska Native (AIAN)
Office of Head Start

Mr. Todd Lertjuntharagool thanked Dr. Bergeron and greeted the attendees. He gave a brief introduction, sharing his background and allowed the other members of the AIAN leadership team, Delroy Grant and Trevondia Boykin, to introduce themselves before transitioning to the OHS PowerPoint presentation.

National Overview

The OHS funds preschool programs which serve nearly a million children and their families each year. The majority of programs provide services to three and four-year-old children. We do also have a growing number of programs who are serving infants, toddlers, and pregnant women in Early Head Start programs.

Head Start Legislation and Regulations

To administer and oversee these grants, OHS is governed by several pieces of legislation and policy which include the 2007 Head Start Act, Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS), and the various fiscal regulations which govern the administration and oversight of federal funding.

Purpose and Service Models

Head Start and Early Head Start programs offer a variety of service models, days, and hours depending on the needs of the local community. Many of those Head Start programs and Early Head Start programs are center based and those services are provided in a classroom setting. Other programs are located in childcare settings and family childcare homes and we do have some programs who also offer home based services with dedicated staff who go to the home and work with that child and that family.

Head Start programs provide services targeted at supporting children's growth and development in a positive learning environment through a variety of services, which include Early Learning, Health, and Family Well-being.

OHS Structure

In addition to our central office located here in Washington DC, we also have 12 Regional Offices. Through that structure, we are responsible for funding, for ensuring that our programs have access to training and technical assistance, for monitoring those programs, and of course, for implementing leadership priorities. 10 of the Regional Offices are geographic and are located at various cities across the United States. 2 of our Regional Offices support specific populations and those are Region 11 which support all of our American Indian and Alaska Native programs and Region 12 which supports all of our Migrant and Seasonal Programs.

Region 11 - American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) Overview

Region 11 supports all of our tribal Head Start and Early Head Start programs across 26 states. Currently our region funds approximately 180 grants across 154 grantees. These numbers fluctuate as programs may relinquish their grants or programs may apply for and obtain more grants through the OHS. Currently in Region 11, we serve over 17,000 Head Start children, over 4,700 Early Head Start children.

2019 Tribal Consultations

Prior to discussing work that has taken place in 2020, we feel it is appropriate to start with where we left off in 2019 and some of the things that we heard in our discussions with tribal leadership. OHS participated in five tribal consultations around the country in 2019 and some of the most common areas for discussion were around funding, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and implementation of monitoring overall, and concerns around staffing, that included the credentialing of staff, staff turnover, and staff salaries.

Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Funding Update

Region 11 will have funded approximately \$299 million to tribal grantees around the country in FY20. This figure is inclusive of \$5.6 million for Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) increases and \$9.2 million for increases for Quality Improvement.

What have we been up to in 2020?

Many of the areas we have focused on over the past year were driven by what we heard in consultations in 2019. One thing we did was we brought together several members from AIAN communities: long standing directors and individuals who have provided testimony in past consultations, to help the OHS identify ways that we could tweak the way we implement the CLASS tool to make it of more benefit to our tribal grantees. Something we were extremely thankful for. That group of individuals did provide several recommendations that we were really excited about and that we believe could be implemented. Due to COVID-19, CLASS reviews have been paused. We are optimistic that once these commence again, we can continue our dialogs and explore where we can implement suggestions.

Another concern identified during 2019 tribal consultations was the lack of CLASS observers and reviewers from AIAN communities. We did a couple things to try to be more responsive to this throughout 2019 and into 2020. One thing that we did was, we did a bit more heavy recruiting. We started sending out e-blasts to ensure that our tribal grantees were aware of how they could apply to become observers and reviewers. We were also supported by our TA network who also shared information at the various events they were facilitating. Our Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO) also reached out to tribal colleges and tried to make sure that they were aware of how potential observers and reviewers could apply. We also relaxed some of our previous credentialing requirements for CLASS observers to support recruitment. These efforts have not produced the type of results that we had hoped they would. So one additional thing we did, we came back to the table made the decision to team up with Teachstone, the founders of the CLASS tool for what we called the AIAN CLASS Pilot. Through this Pilot, OHS was able to provide virtual CLASS training for staff members from AIAN communities at no cost to them. We reached out to staff members from programs originally scheduled to receive CLASS reviews in FY21. Through this Pilot, training was provided to over 30 individuals in the months of June and July of 2020. As a result, 12 AIAN program staff were able to obtain their CLASS reliability. What we do hope is that these individuals who became reliable can potentially serve as observers to support CLASS reviews in Region 11 in the future.

A huge priority for us was to ensure that we got out all of the CARES Act funding that was meant for our tribal Head Start and Early Head Start grantees.

In 2020 OHS also facilitated several national competitive processes for various contracts. These included our Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) contract, our National Centers, and our Monitoring contracts.

COVID-19

On March 13th a national emergency was declared. Virtually all tribal programs were shut down or had to temporarily suspend service. One thing that I do want to make note of here and thank Tribal Leadership for is the fact that so many communities and tribes reacted so swiftly in making big decisions that I think helped mitigate the spread of the virus in their communities.

Region 11 funded \$19.2 million to tribal programs to prepare, prevent, and respond to COVID-19 through the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security or CARES Act.

Also during this time, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Administration for Children and Families, and OHS have issued unprecedented flexibilities to alleviate the administrative burden on grantees while they focus on COVID-19 and the safety of their communities.

During this summer, OHS also implemented the Collaborating Actively in Meaningful Planning (C.A.M.P) webinar series to support grantees. Those webinars were recorded and are still available on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) website. If you have not already seen those, I definitely encourage folks to make time to view these informative webinars.

Funding Opportunities in 2020

In 2020, OHS published several Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs). These included \$4 million for Tribal Colleges and Universities and Head Start Partnerships. In September OHS awarded 6 grants to tribal colleges to support higher education opportunities for AIAN Staff to obtain credentialing and further their education. OHS posted another round of Early Head Start and Childcare Partnership funding opportunities. OHS also posted a Region 11 specific FOA to redistribute funds recaptured from under enrollment or relinquishment in the previous year. Before the close of the fiscal year, we were also able to issue several one-time funding awards for health and safety needs that were requested by grantees.

Final Rule Update

During the summer of 2019, the Federal Register was opened up for comments on a Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) on the Designation Renewal System (DRS). Within that Notice of Proposed Rule Making, there were changes proposed for three of the current seven conditions that are identified in section 1304.11 of the HSPPS. These were the Deficiency Condition, CLASS Condition, and Going Concern.

We were happy to see that COVID-19 did not significantly delay what we had earlier estimated our timeline for the issuance of that new rule. It was published on August 28, 2020. The new rule will go into effect approximately 60 days after the date of publication.

FY2021 Forecast

Priorities for Region 11 have to start with engaging with tribal leadership and understanding the goals and priorities of tribal leaders for their specific communities. One thing I want to encourage folks to do, in addition to the larger tribal consultation, is that our tribal programs always communicate the specific priorities and the goals you have for your children, families, and communities in the years to come. This will help ensure the work we are doing is supporting that direction and those goals.

Funding of our programs is always going to be a huge priority for us. OHS has received our first quarter appropriation for FY21 through a continuing resolution. This continuing resolution is through December 11, 2020. Grantees who are funded in the first quarter of the fiscal year, specifically November, December, January, and February will be funded 50% of their annual grant rather than the full amount upfront. The remaining balance will be funded once our remaining appropriation is issued by congress for FY21.

Over the summer, our team facilitated our regional needs assessment and began to pull different data sources that we will look at as ongoing and reliable. Those included past year tribal consultation testimony, Program Information Reports (PIR), reports from our Head Start Enterprise System (HSES), monitoring reports, reports from our training and technical assistance network (T/TA), our regional needs assessments from the Region 11 HSSCO, data from our AIAN FACES data collection and the Tribal Research Center, as well as input from the National Indian Head Start Director's Association (NIHSDA). Through several weeks of data analysis, our team identified to most significant concerns and most urgent needs of tribal Head Start programs and developed our Regional priorities for FY21.

The first priority area is Health, Disabilities and Mental Health.

The second priority area is staffing. With staffing, we're referring to the challenges that programs are experiencing with high turnover and the challenges experienced with recruiting and retaining qualified staff.

The third priority area is fiscal. One concerning observation made by pulling data was we went back to the last year that was not impacted by COVID-19 because we know FY 20 and FY19 have both been impacted by COVID-19. We looked at FY18 and one thing that we noticed was out of an annual budget of approximately \$290 million we finished that year with about \$30 million unobligated or left on the table. Region 11 was able to work with a lot of those programs to retain and continue to utilize those funds through carry over, but undoubtedly a lot of programs lost, or 'left' money on the table. That's definitely a concern to us because we never want to see our programs sending any funding back.

Another thing that we observed was, we saw some of our grantees who were falling behind on audits. Falling behind on audits impacted certain grantees' eligibility for other grants, which then impacted eligibility for the Head Start Grant.

One example I will give was we saw programs who fell behind on audits and therefore they were not eligible for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) grant for meal reimbursement, which is a requirement of the Head Start grant. One thing we want to do is target how we can support any programs who are experiencing challenges or falling behind with their audits and their internal financial controls.

The fourth priority area was promoting School Readiness and Supporting Teachers. That was the systemic approach to getting kids ready for kindergarten and progressing them throughout their time with Head Start and the systemic approach that programs were taking to support teachers with ongoing growth and development so that we have the best teacher child interactions happening in every classroom and promote high quality learning experiences program wide and region wide for tribal children.

The fifth priority area is governance. This particular area was one where we saw many programs that struggled with not having effective internal communication structures between the Head Start program, the fiscal office, human resources, or other internal division to ensure the smooth delivery of services to children, families and their communities. Through monitoring we saw a high number of programs who weren't doing their regular reporting to the policy councils and governing bodies. Without these regular reports, governing bodies and tribal leadership are limited in their ability to provide effective and ongoing oversight of the Head Start grant and Head Start program.

Lastly, full enrollment is always going to remain a priority for OHS. One alarming thing that I observed in the fall of 2019 when pulling enrollment data, was that we had about 48% of our grantees nationally that were under enrolled by four or more months. We really want to take a targeted look at what is contributing to this. We want to identify pathways for our grantees to reduce or eliminate under enrollment and to meet what their full enrollment is. I do think a lot of that is going to start with revisiting what the current unmet need in the community is to make sure that your Head Start program or Early Head Start Program is aligned to meet those needs.

Resources

Lastly, I do want to encourage our grantee to keep in close contact with your Program Specialists and Grant Specialists assigned to your programs. By ensuring they are kept in the loop and are informed allows them to ability to more effectively support your programs success. Also, I'll refer folks to Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) website. We do have a specific page for COVID-19. This page is updated regularly, and I do want to encourage folks to check this from time to time just to ensure that you have the most updated information, guidance, and support. Thank you.

Tribal Leader Testimony

**Ned Norris,
Chairman
Tohono O'odham Nation**

- Thank you for the opportunity. I am Ned Norris Jr. I'm the tribal chairman for the Tohono O'odham Nation, in Arizona. We thank you for this opportunity to provide some comments and

some concerns that are specifically related to our ability to deal with and meet the needs of our children and their families here on my tribal nation.

- Just for background purposes, the Tohono O’odham Nation is a federally recognized tribe in southern Arizona. We have about 34,000-plus enrolled tribal citizens. We have a tribal nation that’s a 2.8 million acres in size. We have four noncontiguous areas located in three counties in Arizona, Pima County, Maricopa County, and Pinal County. We also have about 62 miles of international border with Mexico to the southern part, a southern part of a border of our tribal nation. We also acknowledge that we have about 17 identified tribal communities that still have, some of them still have tribal citizens, enrolled tribal citizens, living in those communities in Mexico. To add that, and they’re not necessarily living in Mexico because that’s where they want to live, but that’s where they ended up when the international border was established. Again, without any consultation to the tribe, with the Purchase, the Gadsden Purchase in, I think, when was that? 1854 or somewhere around there.
- We have 11 political districts within our 2.8 million acres of reservation. Those political districts are governed by local elected district chairs and vice chairs and district councils, similar to where you have your city council, your county government council, and so on and so forth. There are seven Head Start centers on the Tohono O’odham Nation. We have the San Xavier center, which has about 40 children, the Sells center, which is about 68 children, the Pisinemo center, which is, they have 20 children, Vaya Chin enter, with 20 children, Santa Rosa center, with 20 children, and a North Komelik center.
- With 20 children, and North Complex center 20, San Lucy center 10, and home-based we have about 17 children in the home-based option. We are honored to be part of the Head Start family since its inception in 1965. It’s really been a most successful program focusing on family and community model along with culturally appropriate instruction. I did realize and want to recognize that even some of our 22 Tribal Council members are products of the Head Start program, so Head Start has had a very significant impact on our young people, our children, since its inception in 1965.
- We wanted to just go through some concerns that we have here on the nation, and I believe that some of these concerns are also common among all Tribal Head Start programs.
- As a board member of the National Indian Head Start Directors Association, our Head Start program manager has spent many board hours discussing the issues and concerns that affect the Tribal Head Start programs. Some of these comments are the product of those shared concerns. Specifically talking about culture teacher qualification, the current regulations for meeting the qualification requirements for education coordinators, teachers, and teacher assistants will produce burdensome challenges for tribal programs.
- The challenges for the Tohono O’odham Nation are that we would like to try to outline the qualification for cultural teachers. The current expectation is that all teachers have a minimum of a bachelor’s degree. However, our cultural experts, our elders currently employed by our Head Start program. These cultural slash language teachers are not interested and are unlikely to seek a degree to meet the teacher qualification.
- We also do not have resources to employ a third person in the classroom as a language and/or a cultural teacher. To address these challenges the nation recommends that the Office of Head Start should consider waiving the teacher qualifications for teacher staff so that tribes can employ qualified as deemed by the tribes and sometimes certified language speakers and/or cultural transmitters in their Head Start programs.
- If tribes and states have established a program for certifying American Indian and Alaska native speakers as qualified teachers, we believe that the Office of Head Start should accept such individuals as meeting the teacher qualifications requirements coming out of Arizona, California, Oregon, Washington. With regards to the class and designation renewal system, we have grave concerns regarding the cultural appropriateness and reliability to native American populations.

Teachstone, the developers of CLASS cannot provide research data on Native American, Alaska Native children to show cultural and behavioral norms or differences.

- These are white paper references on the importance of cultural competency and respect, but no real information on how it impacts tribal teachers or children. Related to this, I'm going to talk a little bit about the challenges for our tribal nation as it relates to CLASS and the Designation Renewal System. Currently on a corrective action due to score at the bottom 10%, programs are requesting additional training and technical assistance to ensure that the teachers will receive additional training and resources to be in compliance with this regulation.
- The Tohono O'odham Nation makes the following recommendations. One, to eliminate the arbitrary 10% criteria of the class evaluation system. It's tied to the office of Head Start self-imposed 25% goal in 1304.11 of the Head Start Performance Standards. Low class threshold score should be treated as a non-compliance rather than a deficiency. Office of Head Start should then implement a follow-up review of CLASS. We would recommend to identify and use proficient reviewers that demonstrate knowledge, that demonstrate expertise and experience in working with tribal populations and have demonstrated abilities to work with diverse cultural and ethnic populations.
- We would recommend to provide additional resources and supports for bringing the tribal grantees up to speed on implementing and using CLASS. Additional funds to support the purchasing of CLASS materials, attending training programs, and added additional funding to the CLASS contract for the logistics and facilitation of training events. Also, to establish a formal grievance process for challenging CLASS evaluations not conducted appropriately. Last but not least as it relates to CLASS and designation, the Designation Renewal System to exempt tribal grantees from CLASS until it has been tested and shown to be valid and reliable in American Indian and Alaska Native populations.
- With regards to staff qualifications and professional development in the Head Start programs, or should I say Indian Head Start programs, have great difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers and teacher aids. The Tohono O'odham Nation have many vacant positions due to unqualified applicants. Currently the program is conducting a reclassification of all teaching and specialist positions to ensure that we are in compliance with the Head Start Performance Standards. Once approved, the program will need to seek additional funding to increase salaries.
- Some of the challenges that we are facing as it relates to staff qualifications and professional development are, one, we have difficulty in recruiting qualified applicants with an existing CDA, AA or a BA in early childhood education. Also that the teachers earn required degrees and then are able to take higher paying positions. Head Start employees who obtain a degree are able to seek employment with the local school system or other early childhood programs for a higher paying wage. Due to inadequate funding levels, Tribal Head Start programs are unable to compete with the wages that other schools and Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs can offer to their employees. They are able to earn a higher wage with fewer requirements creating perpetual vacancies within the Head Start program. Funding to maintain qualified teaching staff. The Head Start Act continues to increase the educational requirements for teaching staff but does not provide adequate funding levels to tribal programs that would allow programs to increase current wages to be competitive and to improve starting wages or wage scales of our particular program.
- To address this, the Tohono O'odham Nation recommends that the Office of Head Start one, grant waivers to staff that do not meet the degree requirements until funding levels can be increased to allow for competitive pay of qualified staff, and two to allow programs to renegotiate their cost per child to allow for the proper compensation and retention of qualified staff.
- So Head Start folks that basically concludes a summary of my comments. Again, I thank you for the opportunity. We will be submitting this in written form to the Office of Head Start for further consideration. Thank you very much.

**Yvonne Kee-Billison,
Executive Staff Assistant
Navajo Nation**

- Hi, good afternoon. Thank you again. My name is Yvonne Kee-Billison. I work with the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President. And on behalf of our president, Jonathan Nez and Myron Lizer, as well as our Navajo Nation Head Start team, really want to say thank you for allowing us to participate in the or coordinating the tribal consultation today. For the Navajo individuals that are on the line they're probably listening. I just really want to say that... briefly introduce myself in my language [native language]. And in English, my clan is Bitter Water, my father's clan is Black Streak of Wood People, and my maternal grandfather's clan is One Who Walks Around, and my paternal grandfather's clan is of the Deer Spring people. Really want to say thank you again for allowing this time to speak to you about several things. There are several items relevant to Navajo Head Start. As many of you are aware and as was stated in the introduction and as well as in some of the dialogue already, this pandemic has really made an impact on many people across the country.
- Navajo Head Start is a tribal super grantee as you're all aware of and again, we just want to provide some insight and recommendations to OHS. I do want to say thank you for providing additional funds for the children and families of the Navajo Nation through tribal colleges and universities, the partnership grant, as well as quality improvement, the COLA that you mentioned earlier, and again, the COVID-19 one-time supplemental funding. With your continued assistance, Navajo Head Start will continue to meet the needs of the children we serve across the Navajo Nation.
- We're talking about 27,000 square miles of Navajo Nation in three states. Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, and then we border Colorado. We have over 60 Head Start centers across the Navajo Nation. So briefly, I just want to go into the pandemic. It's really impacted the Navajo Nation. We are doing everything we can to mitigate the pandemic. Families have requested for assistance and the desire to continue early childhood education and many schools have moved to virtual formats and education remains very important to the Navajo Nation. Our teachers really miss their students. Most of our teachers have created bonds with their children.
- The social emotional development is a leading pillar for Head Start and right now, just not being able to physically interact it's very difficult for many. And as we all know, virtual learning is a new avenue for former in-person school settings. We're a vast society and early childhood education is an essential component of social justice. It really is a tool to fight the inequities that play in American Indian societies. Direct education service delivery plant the seeds of knowledge and wisdom in our communities. As Head Start offers the following recommendations to strengthen and to streamline the collaboration between the Office of Head Start and in our tribe.
- The very first item I would like to cover, and it was talked about a little bit is attendance and enrollment. We want to request clarification on attendance reporting discrepancies especially for the summer months as the current calculation does not accurately capture true enrollment over the summer.
- In addition to that, one of the things I wanted to mention in our report is that a lot of our roads are impassable. We really feel like this factor should be taken into account. Thirdly, the current compliance requirements create barriers for students to access online learning platforms. The lack

of connectivity and technological infrastructure in remote areas has created many obstacles for our families.

- The next item that I would like to cover is about program management. We really feel it is important for the Office of Head Start to be more flexible in considering and changing the grant period for tribes so that the grant period aligns with the tribe. This is one of the major issues we have when it comes to external resources.
- Another item I wanted to mention is that needs improvement is communication from the Office of Head Start. Sometimes we communicate with staff members and maybe they're not aware of both tribal and Office of Head Start requirements. Sometimes we have that situation that goes back and forth. We want to bring it back up and make sure communication is at the forefront. Sometimes we have notices for meetings and it would be nice to receive communication ahead of time so that everyone is aware, and we can get prepared for those meetings or issues that need to be discussed.
- I also really feel that it's important to address that OHS really respect tribal sovereignty. As a sovereign entity, tribally run Head Start programs are unique and they must be administered with their unique, legal status. We all understand that federal regulations are essential for effective administration of grants and compliance requirements should not override tribal compliance requirements. The nation requests that the Office of Head Start be more collaborative in ensuring that grant oversight enlist greater respect than difference to tribal internal governance as appropriate.
- The next item I would like to cover is curriculum. It is really important for the curriculum to honor indigenous research perspectives and application to programmatic operations and justifications. We want to be able to incorporate our way of life and our language into the curriculum and that's something that I believe is on everyone's minds these days. In addition to that, I also want to cover mental health and disabilities. The 10% disability count does not include children with a 504 Plan. According to performance standards, Navajo Head Start cannot count these children when these children need services that Head Start can provide. The 10% disability count requires American Indian families to identify their children in terms that are harmful and not culturally appropriate.
- Finally as I covered this a little bit earlier, but I also want to go over it again, and that is the COVID impact of safe facilities and transportation. The pandemic has increased the needs for facilities, including supplies and materials. We've had to reconstruct many of our classrooms and many things in these last eight months. So we're looking at more direct funding to support those costs because not really quite sure how long this pandemic will be in place. The increased costs for decontamination, of the cleaning of centers, the PPEs, and the safety equipment that staff are needing as well as the sanitizing supplies and cleaning supplies for 85 centers across our Navajo Nation. It can be very difficult to meet all those needs.
- In addition to that, we want to be able to start working on Grab site services for our people. Things like learning packets and snacks, so that we can meet the needs of our families and the children. I covered this a little bit earlier too and that's regarding technology and the infrastructure. In a rural area like we are in, it's really created some obstacles for families, for all generations from preschool, Early Head Start, early childhood, all the way to our elders. We're really wanting to be considered for E-rate funding given the limited funding for fiber connectivity. We also include in there; asset management and an inventory of technology be considered into this infrastructure requests. So connectivity at the... We have 110 chapters across the Navajo Nation, and at pretty much every one of these chapters, we have a Head Start center. Some of those locations, especially way deep into the Navajo Nation have very difficult times with connectivity.
- In addition to that, I also want to indicate that we wanted to know if there would be another COVID-19 relief for tribes given the ongoing pandemic and lack of vaccine. I know that Dr.

Fauci has indicated that we may not be able to see a vaccine until next year, and that even when the vaccine is developed it may be only limited for those who are first responders and such, maybe some of our vulnerable population. So it may be a little bit of time before we really see a vaccine for the entire nation. So I also have another question and that is, how do prior approved Office of Head Start construction projects affect the new five-year model grant? Does Navajo have to reapply for construction again? That's something that is also on our minds here at Navajo Head Start.

- In addition to that, the Navajo Nation remitted the final FFR for 2019 on October 1, 2020. How is the Office of Head Start using this financial data? Is it proactive? How is it being used? That's the question that we have. And the last question I have is, is there going to be an extension by the Office of Management and Budget for audit requirements due to the pandemic? So those are the comments that I have from the Navajo Nation. Again, I wholeheartedly appreciate the conversation today and as was stated earlier, our nation will provide this document to you all in written format. Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

**Sherri Provolt,
Tribal Council Member
Yurok Tribe**

- Thank you. It's early afternoon here on the West coast, Northern California by the Pacific Ocean and the Redwood trees. Thank you for having this listening session. I am Sherry Provolt with the Yurok tribe. Again, appreciate all the comments that have been said before me. They relate to the Yurok tribe in many ways. Foremost, for us as a York tribe, we are still not opened in many of our centers in schools and learning to do.
- Learning to how to connect with students and the families have been the most difficult time. Mental health is really key to our families right now, trying to figure out how to homeschool many levels of students in your home while continuing to do work is challenging for a single parent or a small family or a large family. I think it would be great to have a way of sharing what works for various different tribes and have a place to talk about that in a group, to see, what's working in some of the rural areas or urban areas that we might be able to learn from each other.
- Many of our places up and down the Klamath River don't have cell phone service, let alone internet service. It is a challenge that we can't go pick up our students and visit with them and visit with the families and bring them over to the classroom to have a great day with them. We have tried to do some drop-off packets and, but it's certainly not the best. You can't really have that engaging conversation and ability to show compassion and share the growth of the children.
- Is there going to be any changes in the grant that we can foresee that we might want to prepare for or make some suggestions for in that regard? We are also ready and looking forward to when we do come back together in our community and have a great learning space for our children's and families.
- Our facilities are not ready for this new world that we live in. We certainly do need, we all have needs for facilities to meet this health and safety standards for our children have good play areas, have good consultation areas with families, but now even the challenge is more. We would be interested in having some more discussions about facility funding. We have facilities right now that are just absolutely just hanging on by a nail, but we do need to figure out how we can be able to have some more funding for those facilities up and down our rural river area.
- Busing is a high cost to us and that does take a lot of our grant funding. Sometimes it's an hour up and down the river to get somebody to come to class round trip. That's a lot but it's important and it's really engaging and it's great, but it does take a lot out of our budget. If there's a way to have

just a simple, different line item for transportation costs that actually do meet that need so it's not taken out of other line items we'd really appreciate some consideration for that.

- My last comment is going to be around staffing and the need to have quality staffing. I want to definitely respond to what Ned was saying earlier about once we get a really good qualified person and who is engaged with our families and our students, it doesn't take long for them to be picked up by another education program. Our school systems, it's really hard to hold on to really good staff, and it's not because they don't love the job. It's not because I don't want the families, or they love the students. It's because they can get a little bit more benefit and a little bit more pay somewhere else. I really want to think about the tribes, do whatever we can do. We try to find some monies to do a match for their 401K program.
- We try to do the best health plan that we can afford for our employees, but what can we do for Head Start? How do we retain our staff if we offer them stipends to finish up their credential? We offer them, we're trying to think creatively outside the box, but to really hold onto teachers throughout our nation, right? We have to figure out how we can create a benefit program that will keep them in the job that they love. We don't want them to be going over to our school systems or going over to even our other parts of our education department. We need to think about how can we create a really good benefit program for staff in our Early Head Start programs.
- I think that was all on my list for today. Thank you so much for listening and providing this platform for us to be able to give you us comments.

**Paul Flores IV,
Head Start Director
Cocopah Head Start**

- Good after morning, I'm going to have to steal that from Trevondia. I like that phrase because it was the morning when we started the meeting, right. I'm Paul Flores, the fourth, I've been given the authorization to speak on the behalf of the Cocopah Indian tribe here in Yuma, Arizona. I'll be speaking on the behalf of the chairwoman, Sherry Cordova, and the rest of the tribal council. Thank you very much for this opportunity to share ideas, concerns, and questions. This is a great process to continue to make improvements and to continue to improve Head Start. I was just hired actually at the end of July. So I'm a brand new director. I do have 16 years of experience in education from preschool after school, elementary, middle, all kinds of things like that.
- I'm just going to shoot from the hip here and trust your expertise to fill these in and file them where they need to go. First off the bat, I'm going to go over the three specific goals of our Head Start program and anywhere you guys feel you could help out with those things, that would be great. First goal is of course, preserving and revitalizing the culture here, the language, the dances, the culture as a whole, and currently in our program, we have appointed a tribal member who's also a teacher assistant here to head that project with all of our support. I would like to take her out as a cultural head for this department. I would like to take her out to other reservations and other tribal programs and conventions so that she can see the broader picture of things. I know at that age, everything seems so upfront and in my face that it was overwhelming. As soon as I started traveling to other tribal events, the powwow trail, conventions, different non-profitable organizations, and you see that big picture. You begin to see that, you know that a lot of these problems are the same and some people have already come up with solutions for problems that we're currently facing. As that happens, and you see the bigger picture, the problems get smaller and your confidence begins to grow. We can, this is really solvable. Let's get at this. So if there's any other resources that could be dedicated from the Office of Head Start for travel for tribal-cultural preservation, employees or people, the heads of those departments in Head Start, if there's any other way we could support them or tools like computer devices, the

support of internet tools, funding towards getting internet set up because a lot of the reservations are in remote areas.

- Goal number two is for this tribe for Cocopahs is to combat obesity. Again, it's one of those things that's like very common across a lot of different nations. So with that, I was thinking facilities for so long. Even now a lot of culture takes place is centered around places. There's Holy places, there's burial places. There's houses for funerals, there's houses for ceremonies. There's always a place and as people, over here, when you go here, there's a certain protocol you have to follow whether it's a washing of some sort when you enter and leave. To promote this healthy living this culture of exercise and healthy living, I feel we really need a facility for that, a place where we go and there's in modern times it's exercise equipment. It's a gym, but I feel like we may need a place where not just the gym is there, but also a kitchen that's dedicated only to traditional foods. There will be no fry bread in there. That's not a traditional food. We're not going to be bringing in these outside items. So to create a healthy living space an actual physical space where young people and older people can come in, work out, do sports, healthy food is served. That's where you would have your classes for healthy living. That's where you would have your trainings. And I've noticed that is a struggle sometimes to get these facilities up the funding, it's always back to funding.
- Goal number three is family engagement. One of the members that spoke here already talked about transportation. We do have other organizations here. They're not a part of Head Start that have vehicles, and we've been networking with them through the tribe. Like, Hey, can you pick this family up? We need someone to pick them up, bring them over here, this appointment, bring them to parent policy elections, or tonight we need rides. We got to be able to pick up parents and bring them to the parent policy committee elections. So it would be great to have more resources for transportation.
- Then again, family engagement, I feel like that facility for the healthy living facility would be a great place for family engagement nights, so it could just be this really great multi use center. We do have a cultural center here at Cocopah, but I don't think it's equipped with a kitchen. I'm not sure, definitely not exercise equipment, but I feel that would be a great space. What exercise looks different for different tribes. Some tribes do lacrosse, some tribes are, they're runners, they run, right? So we have to adapt those to the region, to the nation that it's put on.
- We really need the Office of Head Start to be more of a voice in speaking with the administration and the tribal council here so that we can help each other, understand our viewpoints and our responsibilities and so forth. So for example, like someone had mentioned the salaries, right? The benefits, the cause is here, the need is here. People love to be a part of something that's really making a huge impact in the community. I think true teachers have that in their heart already. The problem is the anchor to keep them here is not there. And so we need to somehow look at how we can help tribal council, the administration, and this Head Start be competitive with the school district. That's giving the teachers vacation time for their families, vacation time for the holidays, benefits, and a salary.
- That's a living wage, right? Our This tribe has done great with the benefits. They have great benefits. Everyone has full benefits and we just need to get the salary and I think the vacation to be competitive because at the end of the day, we got to take a step back and look at why do we work originally? At first and foremost, we work to take care of our families. And if we cannot provide for our families, then we're not going to stay. Additional support and best practices from other tribal programs that we could use would be helpful.
- Last but not least, training. When I was hired, I was just dropped in and I had great help from Trevondia and Delroy. With the grant we actually were able to obligate, I think like 99% of our funds, even though there was quite a large amount left when I came in at the end of July.

- We turned it around in one month and it was awesome. Ron Ransom has really been training me these last couple of weeks, but it's only been these last couple of weeks. So there is a big gap of when I was dropped in, it was like full blown, what's happening here for like a couple months. And then I got the training. So I think maybe setting up something, you probably already have it there, but I just need to put it out there where, all right. I know Donald Wyatt mentioned admin would notify him of a new hire. And then I think something's supposed to happen there where there's a scheduling of trainings that happen to make it a smooth transition.
- So that would be great. Carol Bellamy and Ron Ransom have been working great. So shout outs to them and thank you for their support, but maybe scheduling if we could set up a schedule thing for new hires. Maybe just for that first year, first six months, some schedule of trainings.

**Mark Johnston,
Executive Director
Cocopah Indian Tribe**

- Good afternoon or a good after morning. I like that as well. So I'll be brief as many of we have council meetings that happen frequently, and I've got one here in about 20 minutes. So my name is Mark Johnson. I'm the executive director for the Cocopah Indian tribe. We're in Southwestern, Oregon, like many of the tribes in the Northwest. There are 53 tribes in the Northwest of Oregon, Washington, Idaho. We're a small tribe, lot of small tribes here of tribes that have just a couple thousand members. Some, even less. Many of us have one Head Start program, some a couple, but for the most part, single programs.
- For us, the lack of fully funding our in direct contract support costs or fully funding our indirect is really significant to our programs. So there's an administrative cap, as you're all aware of. The difference between that administrative cap and our federally approved indirect cost rate ends up being supplemented by the tribe and with COVID and reduced tribal general funds. We've all had to sit down and look at how we divvy up those limited tribal general funds. As we look at those tribal general funds and look at grants that we receive that don't fully fund in direct, the conversation comes back to do we continue those grants. This is heartbreaking to me because tribes are having to have conversations about, do we continue to have Head Start a program that has such incredible outcomes for our kids. So my message today is, please consider relooking at how you support the indirect cost component of the program. Every tribe in the nation has a federally negotiated, indirect cost rate. It's not a number we just pull out of the air. It's a number that the federal government negotiates with us. They audit it annually and it's a rate that reflects how we manage our sovereign nation. When another federal agency does not recognize that rate and fully fund that rate, it has really big implications to us. That's what I really wanted to share today. I know that our Head Start director's on the line as well and wants to talk about some other issues and I believe that she's in the queue, but I wanted to share that with you, Dr. Bergeron.
- For the chairs that have spoken, the folks from Yurok and Navajo and Mr. Norris, I agree with everything they've said. They were spot on in all of those topics. What I don't want you all to feel, though, is that today is all negative. It's an incredible program that creates incredible outcomes for kids, indescribable outcomes, and really what we're talking about today is, how do we tweak it and make it even better? Thank you for that, and I hope you consider, in some way, re-looking at that underfunded indirect cost. Thank you.

**Kristina Simpson,
Head Start Director
Coquille Indian Tribe**

- So I just wanted to, first of all, thank you for providing the opportunity for us to join with you all today. My name is Kristina Simpson. I am the Head Start director for the Coquille Indian tribe. You just spoke with Mark Johnston, our executive director. I just really wanted to, first of all, thank you all for, like I said, meeting with us and just having this consultation scheduled for this afternoon. I have been with the Coquille tribe for about five years. So I'm still learning some things related to our Head Start program, but I feel like I'm finally getting my knees in the depths of the program and really getting to know our families and our students in a way that really has been beneficial to our program and our families. So one of the things I just really wanted to talk on today was what Mark had already addressed, but also just really appreciating the collaboration that I've had with my Program Specialist, with the office of Head Start in general.
- I have really felt supported specifically when it comes to the grant application. I had never written a grant before I started here, and so a lot of that was new. I actually started during the first year of our five-year application. I have just really felt very supported by the office of Head Start working with my Program Specialist and my Grant Specialist in the development of the application, so I just really wanted to thank them for being such a great support for me and the program. We have been really lucky here and blessed to have a tribal council who really supports our program in a way that I have never really seen before. Our tribal council Chairwoman, her grandson is actually in our program this year. We just hired a teacher assistant last week who actually grew up, she graduated from our Head Start program and now she's a teacher assistant in our program.
- So I just think that that's really amazing. It's incredibly rewarding to see staff who were in our program and they've gone through all of our youth programs, and now they're actually working full-time in our program. I just think that's very cool. It's very rewarding to see that happen. So, one of the things that I did want to just touch on as well was some of those communication pieces. I believe there was an individual who already spoke on that. I am someone who's a planner. I'm a scheduler. I check my emails constantly. It's actually not a really great healthy habit, but I do it. One of the things I'd really would like to see is more of that open communication with the office of Head Start on some of the changes. I do feel, overall, the communication is good, but I do think that it could be better. But that is also where I really built a really great rapport with my Program Specialist.
- So, when I have questions or things or concerns or things that I need clarification on related to the performance standards, genuinely, I just reach out to her and she's really quick to respond. So, I really do appreciate that support from her. Other than that, I just really wanted to thank you all for meeting and for just forming these consultations. I believe this is my first consultation I've been a part of. So, one of my questions is, is how many consultations are usually scheduled? Are these things that are usually frequent or how frequent are they scheduled and how often do they usually take place? So, that was one question I had.

Office of Head Start Remarks and Response to Testimony:

**Deborah Bergeron,
Director
Office of Head Start**

Sure. I'm happy to address that, and I just want to thank you for taking time to come and share. Positive feedback is always good for us to get, and even thinking about better ways to communicate. We're always trying to improve. That's always a challenge for any organization, so we'll keep working on that. The consultations, traditionally, there are about five or six of them a year, but what's interesting is typically they are in person. So they usually are spread out throughout the country, and that gives people,

geographically, an opportunity to more easily attend. They typically might go to one or two, not to all of them. But now that they are virtual, they're more accessible. So we can have a more eclectic group at any one session. I know we aim for between four and six a year. They typically come... They're not scheduled right now for next year, but we do try to schedule them ahead of time.

Like I said, when they were in person, we tried to align them with, say, a conference or something so that people weren't traveling just for a consultation. That way it was more efficient. What will be interesting, Kristina, is when we start to travel again, we will probably reach out to get feedback about, do people really want to go back to the face-to-face because it feels more personal?. There certainly are huge benefits to it from that personal angle. Maybe a little bit of both, because I think there are probably some real upsides to the convenience factor of this and the cost benefit. I mean, you can come to these and have the floor. We're taking records, just like we would if we were face-to-face, but you didn't have to spend any money on a plane ticket and a hotel room and maybe get somebody to watch your kids or whatever it takes to travel.

I think about Mark being able to speak to us. If we were traveling to some conference, he probably wouldn't have that opportunity. He went off to another meeting already. So as we reflect on this year and having to make this shift to this virtual world, which we probably never would have chosen, we might be looking at it, going, "Well, even though we wouldn't have chosen it, there could be a real upside to this." Maybe next year we do a couple of face-to-face and a couple virtual, so you have a choice. So I would say the answer to your question, at this point moving forward is, "We're going to wait and see." We'll certainly base that on the feedback we get from you all. I mean, if everyone overwhelmingly says, "No, we hate those virtual ones. We don't want to do them," we're not going to do them.

The purpose of this is for you, so whatever is going to serve the grantees is what we'll do. I do really appreciate you taking time to share, and I love hearing that Program Specialists are creating such great relationships with people because that's really where it's at. I mean, we can communicate all day long from this office, but really, it's that Program Specialist who's going to make that relationship. So, thanks for that.

Service Implementation and Pandemic Response

The OHS is encouraged to hear about the amazing innovations grantees have implemented in 2020 to continue to support families most in need. From ensuring children still received meals, to identifying family needs around housing and basic necessities, Head Start programs have worked tirelessly to ensure the basic needs of families are met and children are mentally, physically, socially and emotionally in environments that support their ability to learn. 2020 has required programs to pivot, assess the impacts of COVID-19 on their communities, and implement modified service delivery that supported the safety of children, families, and staff. We've also seen programs implement modified center based services this year. Programs have designed services for smaller classrooms for families who still want and need center based services, virtual services for families who prefer a virtual setting. Some programs are rotating children's in person days and virtual days to limit in person, group settings and observe social distancing best practices based on the needs of families in their communities. Head Start programs continue to demonstrate why they are such a vital part of the communities they serve.

OHS understands that all communities, especially tribes, have been impacted economically by the pandemic. COVID-19 forced everyone to pivot and with little to no planning time, assess the impacts in their communities, plan for the safest way to implement services, and implement modified service

delivery. In consideration of these enormous challenges faced by programs, OHS worked to communicate programmatic and fiscal flexibilities as soon as possible through e-blast, the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) website, and the Collaborating Actively in Meaningful Planning (C.A.M.P) webinar series hosted over the summer. Additionally, we have worked with grantees to assess the impacts on current year budget and wherever possible and beneficial, to work with grantees to reallocate funding to areas most in need. Additional flexibilities were also implemented to alleviate the administrative burdens on programs when reallocation of funding was an identified need. Many of these flexibilities can be found on the COVID-19 page on the ECLKC website.

OHS always appreciates hearing about the ways the Head Start program is positively impacting children and families in their communities and where programs are experiencing success working with OHS. OHS appreciates hearing about areas where improvements can be made in how we support our tribal programs and hearing recommendations from tribal leadership.

Access to Internet, Broadband, and Technology necessary to implement remote service delivery

Throughout this year, internet connectivity and access to broadband and technology necessary to support families in a virtual setting have been the most significant challenge experienced by tribal programs. Some programs have utilized E-rate funding through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to support improved availability of internet to their communities. Other programs have utilized CARES Act funding or re-budgeted annual award funds impacted by COVID-19 to acquire technological supplies necessary to support virtual service delivery. OHS encourages programs to work with Program Specialists, Grant Specialists, and T/TA to develop remedies to challenges experienced with connectivity or technology supplies which may or may not include modifying current year budgets. OHS also encourages programs to generate supplemental funding requests, often referred to as, 'one time' funding request to support costs that are not normal annual operation costs. One time funding requests are not guaranteed and are contingent upon the availability of funds and prioritized by health and safety needs.

Staffing

Head Start programs have vocalized challenges experienced around the recruitment and retention of qualified staff. Many of these challenges attributed to not having qualified applicants located within communities or losing qualified staff to higher paying positions with other early childhood education programs and school districts. Staffing, and the factors mentioned above, are included in AIAN's FY21 Priorities for support for our grantees. Region 11 / AIAN is currently working with T/TA and the National Centers to develop support targeted at these factors and provide that support to AIAN grantees. Increases in funding levels are possible through competitive Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) that are published when additional funds are available to support additional children and families. OHS cannot, without a competitive process, arbitrarily increase funding levels to a Head Start grantee. Many programs have also communicated the challenges with the recruitment of qualified staff from within their communities. OHS encourages these programs to work with Program Specialists, Grant Specialists, and T/TA to explore additional recruitment methods and platforms to expand the reach of vacancy announcements. Programs are also encouraged to post their vacancies on the ECLKC website's job center. OHS also awarded 6 Tribal College and Universities and Head Start Partnership grants in September of 2020. The purpose of these grants is to increase the number of credentialed staff in AIAN programs. While these 6 Tribal Colleges and Universities have specific AIAN Head Start programs they will be partnering with, our hope is that in the future these grants may evolve into more grants with more broad impact. If and when qualified staff cannot be identified, OHS has also provided teacher waivers to programs to allow for an individual to work toward minimum credentialing requirements. To be considered for a waiver, the individual in question must have a current and valid CDA credential and

currently be enrolled in coursework leading to the required credential. Teacher waivers may be granted up to but not to exceed 3 years. Waiver consideration is for Head Start only. Early Head Start teacher waivers are not available.

OHS encourages programs experiencing these challenges to work with Program Specialists, Grant Specialists, and T/TA to review current funding levels, programs designs, and explore if and where funding can be reallocated to provide more commensurate compensation to staff and prioritize high quality services to the age eligible and income eligible population that are currently unserved in their respective communities.

Culturally Relevant Curriculum

The Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) updated in 2016 now make it a requirement that Head Start programs provide educational environments that are culturally and linguistically appropriate to the communities they serve. OHS continues to work with programs, T/TA, and our National Centers to support programs with immersing Native languages and cultures in tribal classrooms to enrich learning experiences. Tribal programs continue to evolve in how language and culture is included in their curriculums from short lesson planning activities up to and including full language immersion in classrooms. School Readiness remains a core priority of the work Head Start programs do. OHS is encouraged to hear of the impacts and intentional direction programs are taking to ensure children are provided the highest quality education service possible. In addition to Program Specialists, Grant Specialists, T/TA, and out National Centers, OHS also makes available the MyPeers network where programs may connect with one another to share best practices and support one another. Additional information can be found on the ECLKC website - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/article/mypeers-collaborative-platform-early-care-education-community>

Health, Disabilities, and Mental Health Services

Services to support Health, Disabilities, and Mental health of children, families, and staff are the top concern of Head Start. OHS understands that normal health requirements including screenings, referrals and follow-up treatment have been significantly impacted by the pandemic. While these services are of the utmost importance to the children and families who need them, OHS understands that programs will experience challenges meeting timeline requirements and for some communities it is unrealistic to expect timelines to be met as they would in a normal year. Additionally, the isolation that has been necessary for some communities to keep families safe may also create additional needs for the families. Head Start staff have performed very well in continuing to provide services, checking in with families to support, and in connecting families to service providers. Virtual support has also introduced virtual mental health support from providers. OHS encourages all programs to plan on the best way to connect families and staff to support from mental health providers in a virtual setting including regular observations to support staff and referrals. In additional to Program Specialists, Grant Specialists, and T/TA staff, OHS also supports programs in this area through our Head Start State Collaboration Office. If/when challenges are experienced with identifying resources or connecting families with outside service providers please contact your Program Specialist who can bring in additional support from our State Collaboration Director, Mr. Micker Richardson.

Federal Financial Reporting (FFR)

Head Start programs are required to regular report the expenditure of Head Start funding bi-annually through Standard Form (SF)-425 reports (Reporting frequencies may vary). This typically includes a mid-year report, yearend report, and final SF-425 report. Through this reporting OHS supports programs

with efficiency of drawdowns, expenditures, and liquidation of their Head Start funding awards. Fiscal Reports provides a measure of ongoing monitoring of regional unobligated balances. These reports provide Program Specialists and Grant Specialists a snapshot of funding expenditures that allow them to, in some cases, proactively reach out to grantees and support them with obligating, liquidating, and/or modifying annual budgets if and where necessary.

Audit Extensions

Grantees who anticipate challenges with timely submission of your annual audit may submit extension requests to the audit clearinghouse for consideration.

15% Administrative Cost Limitations

While OHS funds Indirect Cost to Head Start grantees, statute found at section 644 of the 2007 Head Start Act and section 1305.5 of the HSPPS limit Head Start administrative costs to 15%. The Head Start administrative cost limitations were most recently established in the 2007 Head Start Act.

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) 10% Competitive Condition

With the final rule published in August 27 2020, OHS did away with the lowest 10% CLASS competitive condition and instead will move forward measuring quality thresholds and a competitive threshold.

Additional information on this final rule can be found on the ECLKC website here -

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/pi/acf-pi-hs-20-05>

OHS has heard the desire of tribal programs to include more reviewers and observers from within AIAN communities. OHS has implemented multiple strategies to recruit additional reviewers and observers including e-blasts to tribal grantees, tribal colleges, and promotion of these opportunities at various OHS sponsored events over 2019 and into 2020. Most recently, OHS has facilitated the AIAN CLASS Pilot to support the development of CLASS reliable resources within AIAN programs which may be able to support the increase number of CLASS observers from AIAN communities.

Facilities

While OHS does not receive appropriations from congress for facilities, we have in the past been able to support programs with supplementing or funding facility projects for Head Start and/or Early Head Start programs. OHS is aware that the state of facilities in tribal communities remains an area of high need and encourages all programs who have identified renovations, purchase, or construction as a high need to work with your Program Specialist, Grant Specialist, and T/TA to generate and submit formal supplemental funding requests. Funding for facilities is not guaranteed and is contingent upon the availability of funding and the quality of applications and completed 1303 pre-award facilities checklists. Potential funding for 'one time' awards is derived from the unobligated balances and funds left over by grantees in the previous year, which is something we aim not to do. Currently, funding approved for the purpose of major renovations and construction must be utilized within the current 5 year project period. Head Start funding cannot be carried over into a new 5 year project period and grant number.

Enrollment

OHS expects programs to continue reporting monthly enrollment in the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES). During program closures, programs should continue to provide services to enrolled children and families using technology and other creative means, to the extent possible. Even if the program has not been able to engage a family during this time, OHS expects that programs would consider that slot

enrolled, unless the family has told the program they will not return. When reporting monthly enrollment, grantees should continue to enter the number of children enrolled on the last operating day of the month.

Additional Service Providers in Communities

Over the last several years Head Start programs have experienced an increase in additional service providers in their communities. OHS is encouraged to see additional serviced providers being made available to families who need them and encourages Head Start programs to collaborate and coordinate with other early childhood education providers to ensure services to all children and families in the community receive high quality services to support their needs. OHS also encourages programs to conduct updated and thorough community assessments. Community assessments should evaluate factors including but not limited to current unserved age eligible and income eligible populations, their specific needs, additional service providers in the community, and design programs targeted at meeting current unmet needs of the community. Program Specialists, Grant Specialists, and T/TA teams are available to support programs with this. This may or may not include reassessing the number of families proposed to be served.

Resources

OHS highly encourages all programs to remain in close contact with Program Specialist and Grant Specialists for ongoing support. Additionally, the OHS's Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) website includes a COVID-19 specific page. This page is regularly updated with most recent guidance and programmatic and fiscal flexibilities available to Head Start grantees. A link is included here - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/coronavirus/ohs-covid-19-updates>

Additionally, one resource for Head Start programs that cannot be overlooked, are other Head Start programs. To provide a platform for programs to share best practices and support one another, OHS has created MyPeers. This virtual platform allows programs and program staff to connect with one another to share best practices and support one another. Additional information on the MyPeers virtual network can be found here - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/article/mypeers-collaborative-platform-early-care-education-community>. Program Specialists may also support connecting programs for the purpose of supporting one another.

Closing

Dr. Bergeron closed by thanking everyone for attending. She reassured the attendees that OHS takes copious notes at all Tribal consultations and that she reviews every comment and notes, looking for ways to incrementally improve. She shared an example of the new rule that came out this fall and how it came from concerns presented in previous tribal consultations. Dr. Bergeron also acknowledged that making such huge changes at the federal level is a really heavy lift.

Before turning the floor over to Mr. Lertjuntharangool, Dr. Bergeron expressed her appreciation for the tribal leader's ongoing commitment to the children and their families and to the open communication they are willing to have with OHS in this forum.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Lertjuntharangool took the time to respond to many of the questions and concerns presented in the testimonies. He shared that OHS will provide a formal written response on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center website within 45 days of the consultation. He thanked everyone once again for their participation and their testimonies and closed the meeting.