

Education Requirements for Head Start Directors



Staff Qualifications: Steps for Programs to Consider

Use this brief to better understand regulations and considerations for a Head Start director.

Local programs determine how their staff meet the Head Start regulations.

Follow these steps to help guide you in the process of determining and justifying how your Head Start director meets the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS).

1. Read the HSPPS:
 - Know the specific education requirements for staff roles detailed in 45 CFR § 1302.91
 - Review the cross references to the staff qualification requirements in the Head Start Act and other relevant HSPPS
2. Gather information to know your program's needs and expectations, based on:
 - Community, family, and child needs
 - Program goals including school readiness goals
 - Your existing continuous quality improvement system
3. Use all available information to ensure your program has:
 - Human resources and professional development policies and procedures to help you meet regulations
 - Clear program goals including school readiness goals
 - Qualified staff who can effectively support your program's goals and service delivery
 - An ongoing monitoring process that identifies and addresses challenges in hiring and retaining qualified staff

What Are the Requirements?*

*For full text access the [HSPPS](#) and [Uniform Guidance and Related Regulations](#).

Knowledge

45 CFR § 1302.91 (b) Early Head Start or Head Start director. A program must:

- Ensure an Early Head Start or Head Start director hired after November 7, 2016, has, at a minimum, a baccalaureate degree and experience in supervision of staff, fiscal management, and administration

Competencies

45 CFR § 1302.91 (a) A program must:

- Ensure all staff, consultants, and contractors...have sufficient knowledge, training and experience, and competencies to:
 - Fulfill the roles and responsibilities of their positions
 - Ensure high-quality service delivery...
- Provide ongoing training and professional development to support staff in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities

Approval

Revision of budget and program plans. 45 CFR § 75.308

- (c)(1) For non-construction federal awards, recipients must request prior approvals from HHS awarding agencies for one or more of the following program or budget-related reasons:
- (ii) Change in a key person specified in the application or the federal award.

Please Note!

Grantees have the flexibility to implement higher or more stringent requirements than those outlined in the regulation.

What Else Do I Need to Know?

Considerations for hiring staff

- Programs should consider pertinent qualities when hiring, such as does the candidate have:
 - The skills necessary to be an innovative and creative thinker and encourage these skills in team members
 - The skills necessary to direct a strategic planning process involving staff, Policy Council, governing body/Tribal Council members, and community representatives
 - The capacity to foster an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued
 - The capacity to prioritize, consider alternatives, and respond quickly and effectively to unexpected and rapidly changing conditions
 - The competencies to work collaboratively with the Policy Council and the governing body/Tribal Council
 - The capacity to solve complex technical, administrative, and regulatory/policy issues involved in implementing strong systems and services by making timely decisions
- Access the T/TA system for support and connect with your Regional Office Program Specialist as necessary.



- Consider requirements detailed within the State/Territory early care and education system (includes licensing requirements, requirements included within the Quality Rating and Improvement System, etc.).

Considerations for professional development

- Programs must ensure that the Head Start director uses professional development to increase the knowledge and skills needed to provide high-quality, comprehensive services within the scope of their job responsibilities.
- Programs must ensure the Head Start director is trained on methods to handle suspected or known child abuse and neglect cases, that comply with applicable federal, state, local, and tribal laws.
- Head Start directors can consider applying for the UCLA New Directors Mentor Initiative.



Where Can I Find More On This Topic?

- Head Start Regulations
 - Program Performance Standards on staff qualifications and competency requirements <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii>
 - Program Performance Standards on staff qualifications and competency requirements <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-91-staff-qualifications-competency-requirements>
 - The Showcase of Head Start Regulations on staff qualifications <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/showcase/staff-qualifications>
 - Head Start Program Performance Standards excerpts on staff qualifications <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/docs/pdf/staff-qualifications.pdf>
- Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov>
 - Head Start Staff Qualifications <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/human-resources/article/head-start-staff-qualifications>
- Foundations for Excellence, 2nd Edition <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/foundations-for-excellence-complete-guide.pdf>