

EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR CENTER-BASED INFANT AND TODDLER TEACHERS

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS: STEPS FOR PROGRAMS TO CONSIDER



Use this brief to better understand the Head Start regulations and considerations for infant and toddler teachers.

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 infant and toddler teachers meet the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS).

1. Read the HSPPS.
 - Know the specific education requirements for staff and consultant roles detailed in §1302.91.
 - Review the cross references to the staff and consultant qualification requirements in the Head Start Act and other relevant HSPPS.
2. Gather data 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 and consultants 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 and consultants

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS?*

*For full text access the [HSPPS](#)

KNOWLEDGE

§1302.91(e)(1) “As prescribed in section 645A(h) of the Act, a program must ensure center-based teachers that provide direct services to infants and toddlers...have:

- a minimum of a Child Development Associate (CDA)...or comparable credential**; and
- been trained or have equivalent coursework in early childhood development with a focus on infant and toddler development.”



**The national infant and toddler center-based CDA credential that is issued by the Council for Professional Recognition fully meets the requirements. Other CDA credentials may fully or partially meet the HSPPS requirements. Programs need to ensure staff have sufficient training, coursework, experience and competency to be an infant and toddler teacher:

- Family child care and home visitor’s CDAs include an infant and toddler focus but do not address effectively working within center-based settings.
- Preschool center-based CDA does not have an infant toddler focus.

COMPETENCIES

§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.”

§1302.91(e)(5) “A program must ensure center-based [infant toddler] teachers...demonstrate competency to:

- Provide effective and nurturing teacher-child interactions,
- Plan and implement learning experiences that ensure effective curriculum implementation and use of assessment and
- Promote children’s progress across...the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five* and applicable state early learning and development standards, including for children with disabilities and dual language learners, as appropriate.”

PLEASE NOTE!

Grantees have the flexibility to implement higher or more stringent requirements than those outlined in the regulations. To meet the Head Start requirements, infant and toddler teachers could have one of the following:

- A current national infant and toddler center-based CDA credential issued by the Council for Professional Recognition
- A comparable certificate or credential that meets or exceeds the national infant and toddler center-based CDA credential requirements***
- A degree in child development or early childhood education (ECE) as well as training or coursework with a focus on infant and toddler development
- A degree in a related field as well as training or coursework with a focus on infant and toddler development

***A comparable credential is issued by state, territory and tribal agencies, boards, and commissions as well as accredited colleges and universities or other early childhood organizations that offer certificate or degree programs.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HIRING STAFF

- Ensure every infant and toddler teacher who is assigned primary responsibility for no more than four children meets staff qualification requirements. Groups of eight infants and toddlers need two qualified teachers and groups of nine need three [§1302.21(b)(2)].
- Ensure infant and toddler teachers have sufficient training, experience, and competency to be able to effectively plan for and implement education services for very young children and their families.
- Use the national infant and toddler center-based CDA credential issued by the Council for Professional Recognition to help you determine if a state or comparable credential meets or exceeds the requirements.
- Review training and course content to determine if it includes infant and toddler development. Make sure that decisions are based on more than just the course title or name of the department that issued the credits. To the extent possible, get the course descriptions from awarding institutions to better determine content. ECE or child development related courses may be offered in various departments—such as education, home economics, family and consumer science, human ecology, music, art, library science, physical education and recreation, psychology, family studies, and others.
- 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

- Use the annual professional development (PD) hour requirement to ensure teachers effectively
 - support child development and learning;
 - implement and individualize curriculum for infants and toddlers;
 - complete training or coursework needed for their credential or degree in a timely manner; and
 - build respectful, culturally responsive, and trusting relationships with families.
 This can include ongoing training, taking college courses, and intensive coaching.
- Use individualized professional development plans and ongoing supervision to
 - support areas of need or interest such as implementing curriculum and learning experiences with very young children, or working with mixed-ages, etc.; and
 - outline steps and ensure timely progress in acquiring a degree.
- Enlist partners to support an ECE career pathway in your community.
 - Contact your child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agency to learn about trainings and courses. Determine if and how they connect to CDA credential or degree programs.
 - Create a cadre of CDA professional development specialists to expedite the national CDA approval and renewal process. Identify local candidates from your program, ECE programs, and the community.
 - Partner with local colleges for an ECE degree program. Ensure course offerings include adequate ECE content with an infant and toddler focus.
 - Create a cohort of students from your program and other ECE programs.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE ON THIS TOPIC?

- Head Start Regulations <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>
 - Head Start Program Performance Standards Excerpts on Infants and Toddlers <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/ehs-infant-toddler-hspps-chart.pdf>
 - Section 645A of the Head Start Act on Early Head Start Programs <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/head-start-act/sec-645a-early-head-start-programs>
- 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>
 - Relationship-Based Competencies to Support Family Engagement <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/article/relationship-based-competencies-support-family-engagement>
 - Steps Local Agencies Can Use to Determine Credential or Degree Equivalency <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/steps-local-agencies-can-use-determine-credential-or-degree-equivalency>
- Early Educator Central <https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov/>
 - Free or low-cost online coursework on Early Educator Central <https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov/coursework>
 - Early Educator Central's video on what it means to be an infant and toddler professional <https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov/media/early-educator-central-hero>
- National CDA Credential Program <http://www.cdacouncil.org/credentials/apply-for-cda>
 - Infant and Toddler Center-Based CDA credential <http://www.cdacouncil.org/credentials/apply-for-cda/infanttoddler>
 - Professional Development (PD) Specialists <http://www.cdacouncil.org/pd-specialists/role-a-responsibilities#>
 - The Council's Online Platform YourCouncil <https://www.cdacouncil.org/yourcda>
- Quality Rating and Improvement Systems <https://qrisguide.acf.hhs.gov/about-qris>
 - State QRIS info <https://qrisguide.acf.hhs.gov/states>
 - National Program Standards Crosswalk Tool <https://qrisguide.acf.hhs.gov/crosswalk/>