

Building a Culture of Safety Campaign

Director Khari Garvin: Hello, I'm Khari Garvin, the Director of the Office of Head Start. Ensuring Head Start programs are safe places for children that families and communities can trust is one of our top priorities. We know that children need physical and emotional safety in order to develop, learn, heal, and thrive. We have heard and witnessed how challenges in recent years, workforce shortages, staff turnover, mental health needs, and more can affect the safety of children and staff.

We are also witnessing a resounding commitment from Head Start programs to remain steadfast in creating environments and relationships where children can thrive. I'm excited to announce the Building a Culture of Safety series to support this Head Start commitment. From August through November, we'll be providing resources and webinars to share a range of strategies in every program area, and then engaging in discussion with you during special office hours we will make available to support child health and safety across the Head Start ecosystem.

Make sure you are subscribed to our emails to ensure you get the notifications promoting this series. Do you know what we mean by building a culture of safety? Head Start programs are spaces where every child is valued and we know that every single person, Head Start leaders, staff members, and families, plays an important role in safeguarding children.

A culture of safety isn't a one and done training or a checklist. It requires a comprehensive, ongoing, and preventative commitment. There are four core messages about the culture of safety approach. You will learn more about these throughout the series, but I will share them now to anchor us. First, is that Head Start leaders support children's safety and well-being by creating safe program environments, for example, by mapping and reducing potential risks and hazards or creating wellness spaces for staff.

Now, the second core message about the culture of safety approach is that positive guidance from caregivers supports children's social and emotional development and promotes their engagement in the learning environment. Third, Head Start leaders cultivate an organizational culture that sets an expectation for child safeguarding and that builds trust, accountability, empathy, and equity for staff and families.

Leaders establish how we do things in the program with policies and procedures and by putting supports and systems in place to help everyone uphold those expectations. And by the way, did you know that Head Start and Early Head Start grant recipients that encounter program improvement needs related to health and safety, which cannot be covered by your regular budget, can submit a supplemental one-time funding application anytime throughout the year as needs emerge?

Those things in your program that address health and safety like repairs or upgrades to facilities or playgrounds or maybe adding temporary staff positions to achieve lower ratios

in classrooms that need extra support. There is a lot of flexibility for these supplemental funds, although they are limited and available on a one - time basis.

I invite you to reach out to your regional office to learn more about the application process. Finally, everyone who works or volunteers in Head Start programs adheres to the Head Start Standards of Conduct, which are the basic professional expectations for working in a Head Start program. This Building a Culture of Safety series will offer strategies and create space for discussions to put these messages into action and develop a culture of safety in every Head Start program.

You can find out more about this series on the ECLKC website. Thank you for your commitment to making sure Head Start programs are safe. We couldn't do it without you. So long. For Building a Culture of Safety campaign information, visit <https://qrco.de/bfEsZn> to sign up for Office of Head Start email updates. Visit <https://qrco.de/bfEsfm>.

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