(Revised) Head Start Program Performance Standards: Program Management

(upbeat music)

David Jones: Hello everyone. Ann, it's good to be with you again. We are going to sort of talk about program management, Subpart J and quality improvement. And some important changes in this approach.

Ann Linehan: Great, well let me start. And I'm glad to be with you also. I think we can say this for all sections of the Head Start Performance Standards. But these are really grounded in research, which really is going to inform effective practices. I think our colleagues remind us that this section really is a sister section to Subpart B, which really talks about the structure.

David: Right.

Ann: And that--and I think just want to draw the comparison because Subpart Bs--It's sort of very prescriptive. You know with the ratios are. You know what the options are. You know when you have to apply for a waiver.

David: That's correct.

Ann: And then you move over to Subpart J and it feels very different. It feels less prescriptive. And I think we really are looking at this section to really think about how programs are gonna implement their services. How they're gonna monitor their services. And we can't tell them how to do that. Because we don't know what their structure services are. So, this is really an area section where there's a lot of critical thinking.

David: Yes.

Ann: I like to call it the "Hot" Section because it's the high order thinking skills. You're gonna need a lot of communication. A lot of deliberate, intentional planning. You know what your structure is, now what systems do you have to put in place to really manage that. And I think that one of the elements that are throughout this section is the use of data. Ongoing data, again, to inform the governing body, management, and staff about how effectively services are being implemented.

David: Yes.

Ann: I think when it comes to the timeliness and the flexibility. And we're also saying that your systems should be such that they're adjusting continually, so there's no lapse in services, or there's no displacement of children, if you're changing an option--

David: Right.

Ann: Or you're not running out of money, because you didn't anticipate that you would need additional dollars for new playground equipment, so kids have adequate outdoor space to play in. I think, and again, it gets back to this section-- also, establishing the goals. One key feature is: Again there's a much stronger emphasis on using program data for ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement.

Again, I think it is less about the how and more about focusing on really what the intended outcomes are.

David: Yeah, I really like the flexibility piece. And I think that there are four sections in this Subpart. Subpart J 1302.100 really focuses on management. The ongoing monitoring, as you said, and also continuous improvement. So, it really highlights the importance of ensuring child safety and delivery of effective high quality program services. I think 1302.101 speaks to implementation of the management systems and the coordinated approaches.

The management systems are not broken out as they were in the previous performance standards. But the emphasis is really on these coordinated approaches, in four key areas. It's training and professional development, servicing dual language learners and their families, ensuring the inclusion and appropriate supports for children with disabilities, which is not really new, and management of program data. And really what we're looking for here is just this sort of full integration. Programs may develop and implement coordinated approaches in additional areas. But these four are required.

Ann: So, when you think about the coordinated approach. I mean really if you take the example of dual language learners. The coordination's not just about what happens in the classroom; you've got to think about your family service workers.

David: That's right.

Ann: You've got to think about budgetary implications. You've got to think about bus drivers. I mean it really is--If you're going to fully serve a dual language learner, then it cuts across all service areas. And multiple staff.

David: That's right.

Ann: Let's go into a brief overview of 1302.102 and then broadly addresses the achievement of program goals. Again, we're talking about establishing program goals, including, again, the strategic long-term goals for comprehensive services, school readiness goals, and health and safety goals. That's a lot of goals to be establishing.

David: Yes.

Ann: So, when you think about the effort, the deliberateness, the conversations that have to go on before you even get to that point where you're really understanding the goals. And again, a heavy emphasis on asking programs to demonstrate how they're gonna monitor program performance and be held accountable. I think that's really important. It's not just that you've got goals.

David: Right.

Ann: It's now being held accountable to showing what progress you're making in those goals. And I think the other thing that is interesting here is they really have to have now, not just the goals but the measurable--The objectives that accompany the goals.

David: That's right.

Ann: That can measure the progress. So, I think that really is a key step in helping programs better articulate and understand how across many, many service areas how progress is being made.

David: That's right.

Ann: And again, we talk here about--in establishing program goals, we're not overly prescriptive. Again, there's flexibility. Certainly, there are requirements that are around the school readiness, that those goals be aligned with the framework, as well as the early learning stances within the states.

Again, this is not, when you read these--it doesn't mean you gotta do away with all your goals. It's just to reevaluate where you are and are you meeting these new requirements. I think in many programs are gonna say: We're already there. We're already doing it. And for many programs, it would be validation of what they're doing. And again, I just want to mention the importance of using now the requirement of the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes framework, which I think when it was published, we got such positive response.

So, again, to have it codified in the regulations, I think is really important. And again, just end with the using data for quality improvement throughout the year, on a continuum basis.

David: So, 1302.103 essentially addresses requirements for the implementation of the actual performance standards. You know current programs, at the time, of publication of the new regs will implement a program-wide approach for effective and timely implementation of the changes to the standards. So, that's including things like purchasing materials, allocation of staff time, as appropriate; areas of emphasis here also include assessment of the necessary changes to the program approaches as described in 1302.101, and the development of appropriate protections with data sharing.

There is also a prohibition on displacing currently enrolled children in order to implement the new standards. And this is a really important cross reference, back to 1302.21 Subpart B, which allows for a one year extension of service duration, if it's necessary to prevent displacement.

So, just a few final thoughts, in areas that we'd like for you to focus on. Just ensure that the goals are not only strong but they're measurable and they have great objectives; that you remember the key areas for the coordinated approaches, the ongoing analysis and action. And finally, the creation of thoughtful systems supporting intentional implementation of structure.

Ann: And again, this section is what is going to allow you to fulfill what you have developed, what grantees have developed in the--Subpart B.

David: And the Subpart B.

Ann: Their structure.

David: That's correct.

Ann: Thanks.

David: Thank you.

(upbeat music)