

§ 1302.81 Prenatal and postpartum information, education, and services.

(a) A program must provide enrolled pregnant women, fathers, and partners or other relevant family members the prenatal and postpartum information, education and services that address, as appropriate, fetal development, the importance of nutrition, the risks of alcohol, drugs, and smoking, labor and delivery, postpartum recovery, parental depression, infant care and safe sleep practices, and the benefits of breastfeeding.

(b) A program must also address needs for appropriate supports for emotional well-being, nurturing and responsive caregiving, and father engagement during pregnancy and early childhood.

§ 1302.82 Family partnership services for enrolled pregnant women.

(a) A program must engage enrolled pregnant women and other relevant family members, such as fathers, in the family partnership services as described in § 1302.52 and include a specific focus on factors that influence prenatal and postpartum maternal and infant health.

(b) A program must engage enrolled pregnant women and other relevant family members, such as fathers, in discussions about program options, plan for the infant's transition to program enrollment, and support the family during the transition process, where appropriate.

Subpart I—Human Resources Management

§ 1302.90 Personnel policies.

(a) *Establishing personnel policies and procedures.* A program must establish written personnel policies and procedures that are approved by the governing body and policy council or policy committee and that are available to all staff.

(b) *Background checks and selection procedures.* (1) Before a person is hired, directly or through contract, including transportation staff and contractors, a program must conduct an interview, verify references, conduct a sex of-

fender registry check and obtain one of the following:

(i) State or tribal criminal history records, including fingerprint checks; or,

(ii) Federal Bureau of Investigation criminal history records, including fingerprint checks.

(2) A program has 90 days after an employee is hired to complete the background check process by obtaining:

(i) Whichever check listed in paragraph (b)(1) of this section was not obtained prior to the date of hire; and,

(ii) Child abuse and neglect state registry check, if available.

(3) A program must review the information found in each employment application and complete background check to assess the relevancy of any issue uncovered by the complete background check including any arrest, pending criminal charge, or conviction and must use Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) disqualification factors described in 42 U.S.C. 9858f(c)(1)(D) and 42 U.S.C. 9858f(h)(1) or tribal disqualifications factors to determine whether the prospective employee can be hired or the current employee must be terminated.

(4) A program must ensure a newly hired employee, consultant, or contractor does not have unsupervised access to children until the complete background check process described in paragraphs (b)(1) through (3) of this section is complete.

(5) A program must conduct the complete background check for each employee, consultant, or contractor at least once every five years which must include each of the four checks listed in paragraphs (b)(1) and (2) of this section, and review and make employment decisions based on the information as described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, unless the program can demonstrate to the responsible HHS official that it has a more stringent system in place that will ensure child safety.

(6) A program must consider current and former program parents for employment vacancies for which such parents apply and are qualified.

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(c) *Standards of conduct.* (1) A program must ensure all staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers abide by the program's standards of conduct that:

(i) Ensure staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers implement positive strategies to support children's well-being and prevent and address challenging behavior;

(ii) Ensure staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers do not maltreat or endanger the health or safety of children, including, at a minimum, that staff must not:

(A) Use corporal punishment;

(B) Use isolation to discipline a child;

(C) Bind or tie a child to restrict movement or tape a child's mouth;

(D) Use or withhold food as a punishment or reward;

(E) Use toilet learning/training methods that punish, demean, or humiliate a child;

(F) Use any form of emotional abuse, including public or private humiliation, rejecting, terrorizing, extended ignoring, or corrupting a child;

(G) Physically abuse a child;

(H) Use any form of verbal abuse, including profane, sarcastic language, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or child's family; or,

(I) Use physical activity or outdoor time as a punishment or reward;

(iii) Ensure staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family and do not stereotype on any basis, including gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or family composition;

(iv) Require staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers to comply with program confidentiality policies concerning personally identifiable information about children, families, and other staff members in accordance with subpart C of part 1303 of this chapter and applicable federal, state, local, and tribal laws; and,

(v) Ensure no child is left alone or unsupervised by staff, consultants, contractors, or volunteers while under their care.

(2) Personnel policies and procedures must include appropriate penalties for

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staff, consultants, and volunteers who violate the standards of conduct.

(d) *Communication with dual language learners and their families.* (1) A program must ensure staff and program consultants or contractors are familiar with the ethnic backgrounds and heritages of families in the program and are able to serve and effectively communicate, either directly or through interpretation and translation, with children who are dual language learners and to the extent feasible, with families with limited English proficiency.

(2) If a majority of children in a class or home-based program speak the same language, at least one class staff member or home visitor must speak such language.

§ 1302.91 Staff qualifications and competency requirements.

(a) *Purpose.* A program must ensure all staff, consultants, and contractors engaged in the delivery of program services have sufficient knowledge, training and experience, and competencies to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of their positions and to ensure high-quality service delivery in accordance with the program performance standards. A program must provide ongoing training and professional development to support staff in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

(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.

(c) *Fiscal officer.* A program must assess staffing needs in consideration of the fiscal complexity of the organization and applicable financial management requirements and secure the regularly scheduled or ongoing services of a fiscal officer with sufficient education and experience to meet their needs. A program must ensure a fiscal officer hired after November 7, 2016, is a certified public accountant or has, at a minimum, a baccalaureate degree in accounting, business, fiscal management, or a related field.

(d) *Child and family services management staff qualification requirements—(1)*

Family, health, and disabilities management. A program must ensure staff responsible for management and oversight of family services, health services, and services to children with disabilities hired after November 7, 2016, have, at a minimum, a baccalaureate degree, preferably related to one or more of the disciplines they oversee.

(2) *Education management.* As prescribed in section 648A(a)(2)(B)(i) of the Act, a program must ensure staff and consultants that serve as education managers or coordinators, including those that serve as curriculum specialists, have a baccalaureate or advanced degree in early childhood education or a baccalaureate or advanced degree and equivalent coursework in early childhood education with early education teaching experience.

(e) *Child and family services staff*—(1) *Early Head Start center-based teacher qualification requirements.* As prescribed in section 645A(h) of the Act, a program must ensure center-based teachers that provide direct services to infants and toddlers in Early Head Start centers have a minimum of a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or comparable credential, and have been trained or have equivalent coursework in early childhood development with a focus on infant and toddler development.

(2) *Head Start center-based teacher qualification requirements.* (i) The Secretary must ensure no less than fifty percent of all Head Start teachers, nationwide, have a baccalaureate degree in child development, early childhood education, or equivalent coursework.

(ii) As prescribed in section 648A(a)(3)(B) of the Act, a program must ensure all center-based teachers have at least an associate's or bachelor's degree in child development or early childhood education, equivalent coursework, or otherwise meet the requirements of section 648A(a)(3)(B) of the Act.

(3) *Head Start assistant teacher qualification requirements.* As prescribed in section 648A(a)(2)(B)(ii) of the Act, a program must ensure Head Start assistant teachers, at a minimum, have a CDA credential or a state-awarded certificate that meets or exceeds the requirements for a CDA credential, are

enrolled in a program that will lead to an associate or baccalaureate degree or, are enrolled in a CDA credential program to be completed within two years of the time of hire.

(4) *Family child care provider qualification requirements.* (i) A program must ensure family child care providers have previous early child care experience and, at a minimum, are enrolled in a Family Child Care CDA program or state equivalent, or an associate's or baccalaureate degree program in child development or early childhood education prior to beginning service provision, and for the credential acquire it within eighteen months of beginning to provide services.

(ii) By August 1, 2018, a child development specialist, as required for family child care in §1302.23(e), must have, at a minimum, a baccalaureate degree in child development, early childhood education, or a related field.

(5) *Center-based teachers, assistant teachers, and family child care provider competencies.* A program must ensure center-based teachers, assistant teachers, and family child care providers 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 standards described in 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.

(6) *Home visitors.* A program must ensure home visitors providing home-based education services:

(i) Have a minimum of a home-based CDA credential or comparable credential, or equivalent coursework as part of an associate's or bachelor's degree; and,

(ii) Demonstrate competency to plan and implement home-based learning experiences that ensure effective implementation of the home visiting curriculum and promote children's progress across the standards described in the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five*, including for children with disabilities

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and dual language learners, as appropriate, and to build respectful, culturally responsive, and trusting relationships with families.

(7) *Family services staff qualification requirements.* A program must ensure staff who work directly with families on the family partnership process hired after November 7, 2016, have within eighteen months of hire, at a minimum, a credential or certification in social work, human services, family services, counseling or a related field.

(8) *Health professional qualification requirements.* (i) A program must ensure health procedures are performed only by a licensed or certified health professional.

(ii) A program must ensure all mental health consultants are licensed or certified mental health professionals. A program must use mental health consultants with knowledge of and experience in serving young children and their families, if available in the community.

(iii) A program must use staff or consultants to support nutrition services who are registered dietitians or nutritionists with appropriate qualifications.

(f) *Coaches.* A program must ensure coaches providing the services described in §1302.92(c) have a minimum of a baccalaureate degree in early childhood education or a related field.

§ 1302.92 Training and professional development.

(a) A program must provide to all new staff, consultants, and volunteers an orientation that focuses on, at a minimum, the goals and underlying philosophy of the program and on the ways they are implemented.

(b) A program must establish and implement a systematic approach to staff training and professional development designed to assist staff in acquiring or increasing the knowledge and skills needed to provide high-quality, comprehensive services within the scope of their job responsibilities, and attached to academic credit as appropriate. At a minimum, the system must include:

(1) Staff completing a minimum of 15 clock hours of professional development per year. For teaching staff, such professional development must meet

the requirements described in section 648A(a)(5) of the Act.

(2) Training on methods to handle suspected or known child abuse and neglect cases, that comply with applicable federal, state, local, and tribal laws;

(3) Training for child and family services staff on best practices for implementing family engagement strategies in a systemic way, as described throughout this part;

(4) Training for child and family services staff, including staff that work on family services, health, and disabilities, that builds their knowledge, experience, and competencies to improve child and family outcomes; and,

(5) Research-based approaches to professional development for education staff, that are focused on effective curricula implementation, knowledge of the content in *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five*, partnering with families, supporting children with disabilities and their families, providing effective and nurturing adult-child interactions, supporting dual language learners as appropriate, addressing challenging behaviors, preparing children and families for transitions (as described in subpart G of this part), and use of data to individualize learning experiences to improve outcomes for all children.

(c) A program must implement a research-based, coordinated coaching strategy for education staff that:

(1) Assesses all education staff to identify strengths, areas of needed support, and which staff would benefit most from intensive coaching;

(2) At a minimum, provides opportunities for intensive coaching to those education staff identified through the process in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, including opportunities to be observed and receive feedback and modeling of effective teacher practices directly related to program performance goals;

(3) At a minimum, provides opportunities for education staff not identified for intensive coaching through the process in paragraph (c)(1) of this section to receive other forms of research-based professional development aligned with program performance goals;

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(4) Ensures intensive coaching opportunities for the staff identified through the process in paragraph (c)(1) of this section that:

(i) Align with the program's school readiness goals, curricula, and other approaches to professional development;

(ii) Utilize a coach with adequate training and experience in adult learning and in using assessment data to drive coaching strategies aligned with program performance goals;

(iii) Provide ongoing communication between the coach, program director, education director, and any other relevant staff; and,

(iv) Include clearly articulated goals informed by the program's goals, as described in § 1302.102, and a process for achieving those goals; and,

(5) Establishes policies that ensure assessment results are not used to solely determine punitive actions for staff identified as needing support, without providing time and resources for staff to improve.

(d) If a program needs to develop or significantly adapt their approach to research-based professional development to better meet the training needs of education staff, such that it does not include the requirements in paragraph (c) of this section, the program must partner with external early childhood education professional development experts. A program must assess whether the adaptation adequately supports staff professional development, consistent with the process laid out in subpart J of this part.

§ 1302.93 Staff health and wellness.

(a) A program must ensure each staff member has an initial health examination and a periodic re-examination as recommended by their health care provider in accordance with state, tribal, or local requirements, that include screeners or tests for communicable diseases, as appropriate. The program must ensure staff do not, because of communicable diseases, pose a significant risk to the health or safety of others in the program that cannot be eliminated or reduced by reasonable accommodation, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act

and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

(b) A program must make mental health and wellness information available to staff regarding health issues that may affect their job performance, and must provide regularly scheduled opportunities to learn about mental health, wellness, and health education.

[81 FR 61412, Sept. 6, 2016, as amended at 86 FR 68101, Nov. 30, 2021; 88 FR 41334, June 26, 2023]

§ 1302.94 Volunteers.

(a) A program must ensure volunteers have been screened for appropriate communicable diseases in accordance with state, tribal or local laws. In the absence of state, tribal, or local law, the Health Services Advisory Committee must be consulted regarding the need for such screenings.

(b) A program must ensure children are never left alone with volunteers.

[81 FR 61412, Sept. 6, 2016, as amended at 86 FR 68101, Nov. 30, 2021; 88 FR 41334, June 26, 2023]

Subpart J—Program Management and Quality Improvement

§ 1302.100 Purpose.

A program must provide management and a process of ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement for achieving program goals that ensures child safety and the delivery of effective, high-quality program services.

§ 1302.101 Management system.

(a) *Implementation.* A program must implement a management system that:

(1) Ensures a program, fiscal, and human resource management structure that provides effective management and oversight of all program areas and fiduciary responsibilities to enable delivery of high-quality services in all of the program services described in subparts C, D, E, F, G, and H of this part;

(2) Provides regular and ongoing supervision to support individual staff professional development and continuous program quality improvement;

(3) Ensures budget and staffing patterns that promote continuity of care for all children enrolled, allow sufficient time for staff to participate in