



# **Policy Council Handbook**

**2014-2015**

### **Types of Head Start Grantees:**

Community action agencies federally recognized tribal governments, government agencies, private and public nonprofit organizations, and school systems.

### **Head Start Services:**

Pregnant women and children from birth to age 5. Overall services child development and education, child health and safety, family engagement, nutrition, and prenatal health care and screening.

### **Administration of Head Start:**

The Office of Head Start (OHS) is part of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). There are 12 Regional Offices in the United States that monitor and support local agencies. 2 offices are located in the Office of Head Start in Washington DC, Region 11 services American Indian and Alaska Native program, Region 12 supports migrant and seasonal programs. Our program is part of Region v located in Chicago, IL. Our Regional Officer is Martha Burns.

### **Children with Disabilities:**

Long history of providing quality services to children with disabilities. Not less than 10% of program's enrollment **must** be available to children with disabilities.

### **Head Start Timeline:**

Head Start has a rich history that began in 1965. Core values have guided and inspired Head Start programs for 50 years.

#### **1965-**

Head Start began as 8 week summer demonstration project. It was designed as part of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. Created out of concern for the well-being of children in low-income families, it was grounded in research showing that children raised in poverty were less likely to do well in school and more likely poor in adult hood. Developed to help break the cycle of poverty by providing the nation's poorest preschool children with comprehensive services to help them prepare for success in school.

## **1970-**

Parent Involvement Guidelines, (70.2) solidified the important role of parents in Head Start. Every Head Start program is obligated to provide opportunities for parents to participate and become involved in the program. They are given an opportunity to say how the grant money is spent, how the program is developed and get the children involved in activities.

## **1974-**

Head Start published the first set of Performance Standards which describe in detail how programs should operate. An on-site monitoring process was developed to ensure programs were meeting the standards. OHS expanded its training and technical assistance to help programs reach higher quality and further develop the skills of their staff.

## **1980-**

Head Start expanded opportunities for families with distinct needs. Bilingual and bicultural programs were developed and programs for migrant and seasonal farmworker communities.

## **1995-**

In response to growing medical and psychological research on early brain development Early Head Start was launched to serve pregnant women and children from birth to age 3. When we start early, when we have well implemented programs, when we focus both children and families we can get very positive results before children start preschool.

## **2007-**

Congress reauthorized the Head Start Act with provisions to strengthening Head Start quality, which includes higher qualifications and standards for Head Start teaching workforce, a greater focus on school readiness, and increased monitoring of program quality and fiscal health. The law states under certain conditions an agency shall be required to compete for its next five years of funding.

## **Today-**

For the past 50 years Head Start has served 30 million children across the U.S. Head Start remains a leader in early childhood community. Demographics of our nation have shifted and Head Start has adapted to meet the needs of our changing communities. Head Start has never compromised in its effort to help Americas most valuable children.

By accepting a Head Start grant, our agency is part of the movement dedicated to improving the lives of low –income families living in our community.

### **Policy Council**

As a member of the Governing body, you are assuming legal and fiscal responsibility for your program and safeguarding federal funds. Your role ensures that there is an active and well-functioning Policy Council and works effectively with it.

Policy Council assumes responsibility for the Head Start program direction. Parents of currently enrolled Head Start children make up the majority; other members are from the community served and may include parents of formerly enrolled children.

### **Policy Council Elections:**

Members are elected by parents of currently enrolled children.

### **What is Head Start Program Governance?**

To really understand Head Start program governance, you need to know about the Head Start Act and its key components. Head Start owes its existence to a public law passed by Congress and signed by the president. Congress most recently reauthorized the program with the improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, also known as the Head Start Act. Head Start programs nationwide must adhere to the specifications of this Act.

Head Start Performance Standards are another resource you will need to access in order to fully understand Head Start program governance. The Head Start Act and the Program Performance Standards describe in detail how Head Start programs should be managed and run. If there appears to be a difference programs should seek guidance from your federal Head Start staff.

The governing body assumes legal and fiscal responsibilities for the Head Start program and for safeguarding federal funds.

The Policy Council assumes responsibility for the Head Start program direction.

The Management staff assumes operating responsibilities for the day-today functions of Head Start.

## **Flow of Reports**

The governing body's responsibilities include receiving and using monthly, periodic and annual reports. The flow of reports is a critical process. These reports are generated by management staff and then submitted to Policy Council, which uses the reports to make recommendations to the governing board for review. Required Head Start reports:

- HHS secretary communications
- Financial reports
- Program information summaries
- Enrollment reports
- USDA meal reports
- Financial audit
- Self-assessment
- Community assessment
- Annual Program Report (PIR)

## **Building Relationships**

A Head Start program can only serve children and families well if those involved in program governance work well together. Developing relationships requires many things, including trust, respect, commitment and dedication.

## **Ongoing monitoring**

Every program is required to have internal and comprehensive ongoing monitoring systems. Program managers and leadership must ensure that data is collected and analyzed on a regular basis to determine if services and systems are being implemented properly and if adequate progress is being made towards goals. When monitoring reports reveal an emerging concern, the Head Start program must initiate a timely course of action to get the program back on track.

## **Self-assessment**

At least once a year Head Start programs must engage in a formal Self-Assessment. The Head Start Act requires every grantee and delegate agency to conduct and submit to OHS a comprehensive self-assessment of its effectiveness at least annually. You will review and approve the finale self-assessment.

The self-assessment team looks at the program's ongoing monitoring data in the aggregate and over time. Identify patterns and trends in the data; look at systems to determine strengths and issues that may need attention. Provides critical information

about how well your program complies with the Head Start Act and regulations and how effectively it meets its program goals and school readiness goals.

### **Federal Monitoring Review**

OHS (Office of Head Start) conducts comprehensive monitoring reviews of each program. The review measures your organizations performance and compliance with the Head Start Act, Program Performance Standards, and federal fiscal regulations. All grantees will have an onsite monitoring review in the third year of the five year grant cycle. The review team will interview governing body members as well as program staff and others. A summary report should be shared of their findings' with the governing board. The summary report will include a list of any findings that must be corrected. The governing body is responsible for making sure compliance issues uncovered by the review are resolved in a timely fashion. If corrective action is not taken and processes are not put in place to avoid repeat findings; your program's continued funding may be placed in jeopardy and you may be required to re-compete for future Head Start grants.

### **Part 1307**

Clarifies seven conditions under which a Head Start grantee would be required to re-compete for funds. Any Head Start grantee that meets one or more of these conditions is not considered to be providing high-quality services and must compete for future funding.

- One or more deficiencies are identified in the Grantee's federal monitoring review.
- Grantee has not established or used goals for improving children's school readiness.
- Grantee receives a low score on one or more domains of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) assessment tool.
- State or local licensing agency revokes the grantee's license to operate.
- Federal government suspends the grantee's Head Start grant.
- Grantee is debarred by any federal or state agency or disqualified from the Child Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Based on audit or investigation, the government determines the grantee is at risk of ceasing to be a "going concern".