

Implementation of the Head Start National Reporting System on Child Outcomes

ACYF Administration on Children, Youth and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES Administration for Children and Families	
	1. Log No. ACYF-IM-HS- 03-07	2. Issuance Date: 06/26/03
	3. Originating Office: Head Start Bureau	
	4. Key Word: Head Start National Reporting System on Child Outcomes	

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM [[See Attachments at the bottom](#)]

TO: Head Start and Early Head Grantees and Delegate Agencies

SUBJECT: Implementation of the Head Start National Reporting System on Child Outcomes

INFORMATION:

This Information Memorandum (IM) provides information and directions to Head Start agencies preparing for the national reporting system for all 4- and 5-year-old children in 2003-4. The IM includes the following sections:

- Overview of the National Reporting System (NRS)
- Selecting Participants for NRS Training-of-Trainers
- Selecting Staff Members to Implement the NRS
- Training Staff at the Program Level
- Implementing NRS Child Assessment
- Financial Support for NRS Activities

This IM is being sent now to give programs information needed to plan and prepare for important implementation steps within the context of local timelines, budgets, staff assignments and management systems.

We are currently completing the final steps in developing the National Reporting System. With the assistance of the NRS Technical Work Group we are reviewing data from the NRS field test in 36 local Head Start programs. On April 11, 2003, we published an announcement in the [Federal Register](#) to request public comments on the proposed NRS information collection plan. The public comment period closed on June 10, 2003. We are currently considering the comments and making appropriate changes before seeking final approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to proceed with the NRS.

It is important to note that, in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction of 1995 (Public Law 104-13), our agency may not conduct or sponsor a collection of information until we obtain OMB approval. Therefore, you may not begin to assess children until you receive assessment instruments from us with a currently valid OMB control number. After obtaining OMB approval, we will send you an official notification of the specific expectations and requirements for the first year of this important work.

Overview of the National Reporting System (NRS)

The National Reporting System is designed on the basis of President Bush's *Good Start, Grow Smart*, Early Childhood Initiative and provisions of the Head Start Act (Sections 641A.(a)(1)(B), 641A.(b)(4), 641A.(c)(2)(D), 648.(c)(1)(B), 649.(b)(4)) to create a new national data base on the progress and accomplishments of 4- and 5-year-old Head Start children on specific child outcomes. Programs will administer a common NRS assessment to all 4- and 5-year-old children at the beginning and end of the program year in order to determine some of the skills with which they enter Head Start, their levels of achievement when they leave Head Start and the progress they make during the Head Start year.

The assessment information collected through the NRS will be used to strengthen Head Start program effectiveness in these ways:

- Each local Head Start program will receive information from the NRS to supplement and enhance their local aggregation of child outcome data and local program self-assessment efforts and results.
- The Head Start Bureau and ACF Regional Offices will incorporate NRS information to plan future training and technical assistance efforts.
- Future Head Start program monitoring reviews will incorporate consideration of child outcomes information from the NRS.

It is equally important to stress that the NRS assessment and reporting system is not intended to be used to assess the school readiness of individual children, nor to replace locally-designed ongoing child assessment efforts, carried out for the purposes of curriculum planning, individualization and communication with parents.

As outlined in [Attachment A](#), the NRS child assessment items are from currently available instruments designed and validated for use with preschool aged children and presently in use in a variety of large-scale studies of Head Start children. Based on the field test of the NRS this spring in 36 diverse Head Start programs with more than 1400 children, we estimate the one-on-one assessment will take approximately 15 minutes per child. Children who demonstrate language proficiency in both English and Spanish will be assessed in both languages, which will take approximately 30 minutes per child, in two separate sessions.

The NRS child assessment will provide information on the following five learning indicators as mandated by Congress in the Head Start Act in 1998:

- Understanding and using language to communicate for various purposes.
- Using increasingly complex and varied vocabulary.
- In the case of children whose native language is other than English, progressing toward acquisition of the English language.
- Identifying at least 10 letters of the alphabet.
- Numeracy awareness.

The NRS child assessment instruments, training, and materials will be available in both English and Spanish language versions this year.

Programs are expected to include all 4- and 5-year old children who will be entering kindergarten following their 2003-4 Head Start year. This will include 4- and 5-year-old children with identified disabilities, 4- and 5-year olds served through all of the various Head Start program design options, and all 4- and 5-year-old children who speak either English or Spanish, or both. Children who speak other languages will only participate in two initial sections of the assessment designed to document their progress in acquiring English.

Programs will also be responsible for entering background information on children, teachers, classrooms, centers and programs in the NRS web-based computer information system, as described in [Attachment B](#). The computer system will generate an individualized computer-scalable assessment form for each child which staff members will use to record children's responses. These forms will be mailed for scanning into the NRS database and to generate reports. The background information will also be used to analyze the NRS reports in order to understand different forms of Head Start services in promoting the progress of groups of children with a variety of characteristics. Security features will protect the confidentiality of children and all data. Programs with limited computer capability or no Internet access will be able to enter background descriptors on paper forms.

Selecting Participants for NRS Training-of-Trainers

As described in [Attachment C](#), each Head Start program is requested to designate one or more representatives (based upon the number of 4- and 5-five-year-olds enrolled) to participate in the NRS Training-of-Trainers this summer. American Indian and Alaska Native program representatives will attend the Training-of-Trainers session in the ACF region in which their program is geographically located. (Programs funded by the Migrant and Seasonal Programs Branch will participate in the Training-of-Trainers in early spring, 2004.) During this training participants will learn and be certified to train and certify local staff for implementing the NRS. A team that includes Head Start Bureau, ACF regional office, and contractual specialists will conduct each two and one half-day Training-of-Trainers session.

The training design includes:

- Presentations on the NRS system and materials.
- Preparation on the English and Spanish language versions of the NRS materials, and role-playing and practice with preschool children.
- Preparation and practice in observing and providing feedback to others learning about the NRS.
- Training and practice on data entry and operations of the computer-based information system.
- Sessions on training and certifying local staff.

The Training of Trainers design culminates in a certification process based on observational ratings by expert trainers of the performance of participants in administering the child assessment. Additional learning, practice and coaching is planned each evening to support all participants successfully completing certification for the NRS. Participants will also receive training materials to support local staff.

Based on the training design and capacity of the Training of Trainers training teams, each grantee and delegate agency

with up to 400 children age 4 or 5 is requested to send one participant to the Training of Trainers. Programs with more than 400 children age 4 or 5 are requested to send an additional participant for each group of up to 400 children age 4 or 5.

Programs should identify their training representative(s) to participate in Training-of-Trainers based on their capacity to successfully train local staff and, in conjunction with the support of the local management team, to monitor and support high quality implementation of the NRS. Programs may consider individuals such as Education or Disabilities Coordinators, Early Literacy Mentor Coaches, Center Directors, or Managers with lead responsibilities in the areas of assessing and analyzing information on child outcomes or programs may utilize a consultant for this assignment. Prior experience, training, and demonstrated effectiveness in the areas of early childhood assessment and staff development are important criteria in selecting participants.

Programs serving children whose primary language is Spanish should strongly consider sending a trainer who is fully bilingual, so that they can become well prepared to train local staff members on both the English and Spanish language versions of the NRS child assessment. A limited number of additional Training of Trainers slots will be available for programs that serve 400 or fewer 4- and 5-year-old children and that need to send two training participants in order to assure local training in both the English and Spanish language versions.

Selecting Staff to Implement the NRS

Programs need to carefully determine the most appropriate staff and, when necessary, consultant team to implement the NRS. Key criteria in this decision should be the skills and experience of the individuals in assessing young children and accurately documenting children's responses to questions and tasks.

Programs serving children whose primary language is Spanish and/or children who speak both Spanish and English will need to identify and train people who can effectively administer both the English and Spanish language versions of the NRS.

Several approaches to staffing for the NRS field-testing were used by local programs. Programs may consider possible implications of staffing based on some of the options:

- Classroom teachers have well-established relationships with children which will support children's cooperation and motivation during the assessment. Having teachers do the assessments can give them additional information that will help them better understand children's characteristics, strengths and needs. Teachers also have the benefit of prior training and experience in a variety of early childhood assessments.
- Other staff, managers, specialists, or consultants may also conduct the NRS assessment. In this approach, teachers do not have to leave their classrooms and be replaced by substitutes. One version of this approach involves training a limited number of individuals who can arrange their schedules to assess children in a number of different classrooms. These individuals would gain the benefit of more practice and experience with the NRS items, perhaps leading to more consistent documentation.

Training Staff at the Program Level

Training-of-Trainers participants will return to their programs to train and certify local staff to deliver the child assessment items in a consistent, accurate and objective manner and to enter information into the computer-based information system. Training-of-Trainers participants are encouraged to prepare and certify one or more local co-trainers to assist in implementing local staff training and certification. Local training on the NRS is estimated to require from 6-8 hours for presentations, demonstration, role-playing and dialogue to clarify and explain. In addition, time should be provided for staff to conduct practice sessions with children and for the trainers to observe and certify the staff. Planning for local training would also include recruitment of children to participate in sessions for the purposes of staff practice and certification. These should not be children who will be participating in the local NRS assessment and reporting effort in 2003-2004. Training for staff assigned to enter data in the computer-based information system is estimated at 1-2 hours per person.

To maintain a high level of consistency in implementation in NRS data quality, a follow-up, refresher training will be held in the spring of 2004, prior to data collection.

Implementing NRS Child Assessment

Each program will need to identify space to conduct the assessments; replacements and possible substitutes for staff while they are conducting assessments; and schedule a time for the assessments. Assessments should be done in a space that is comfortable for the assessor and the child and that minimizes distractions. Children will be assessed one at a time. All NRS activities should be scheduled to minimize disruption of other program activities.

Because the purpose of the National Reporting System is to document the progress of children as they receive Head Start

services, the first assessments should be scheduled soon after children begin program services, so that changes in children's performance documented from fall to spring reflect the benefits of as much program service as possible.

The local NRS team is encouraged to create an ongoing monitoring effort to track the progress of NRS implementation and to identify and respond to any problems concerning consistency and quality control in the administration of all local NRS activities.

Financial Support for NRS Activities

As noted in the April 18, 2003 FY 2003 [Funding Guidance](#) (Program Instruction ACYF-PI-03-01), we are awarding \$16 million in quality improvement funds to support the costs of preparation and implementation of the National Reporting System. Each Head Start and Early Head Start grantee may apply for a one quarter of one percent increase (.0025) in its base funding for this purpose. We understand that your ACF Regional Office has informed you of the exact dollar amount for which you may apply.

These funds should be sufficient to cover the costs of implementing the reporting system, including the following:

- Travel expenses for one or more staff to attend Training-of-Trainers sessions.
- Staff salaries and expenses related to local staff training on the NRS assessment and computer-based management system, if the training is not within work hours that are already budgeted.
- Costs to support the fall and spring implementation, such as hiring of substitute teachers, when necessary.
- Costs related to the timely entry of information into the NRS data management computer system.

We look forward to working with you in this significant effort which will help us ensure that Head Start is successful in preparing children for school.

Windy M. Hill
Associate Commissioner
Head Start Bureau

Attachments:

- [Description of the NRS Child Assessment](#)
- [Description of the NRS Computer-Based Reporting System](#)
- [Schedule and Registration Information for NRS Training-of-Trainers](#)

Implementation of the Head Start National Reporting System on Child Outcomes. ACYF-IM-HS-03-07. DHHS/ACF/ACYF/HSB. 2003. English.