

New Head Start Program Performance Standards

The new Head Start Program Performance Standards have been nearly a decade in the making and are the most holistic revision of the standards in 40 years.

These updated standards are the cornerstone of Head Start's mission, articulating what is needed to deliver comprehensive, high-quality individualized services to support the school readiness and healthy development of children from low-income families.

They are based on the latest available research on early childhood learning as well as input from both Head Start grantees and the public. The standards are the foundations upon which we will accomplish our critical goal of helping Head Start children reach their full potential so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

Highlights

- Education services which focus on effective teaching practices and key areas of child development, using stronger curriculum requirements and child assessment data, to ensure effective teaching in Head Start, so that children are academically and socially competent.
- Reduce bureaucratic burden on programs by cutting the current 1,400 Head Start regulatory standards by approximately 30 percent. This will improve regulatory clarity and transparency by eliminating unnecessary and duplicative rules while setting high standards that will drive program performance. This will allow programs to focus on outcomes over process and plans.
- Over time, programs will serve Head Start preschoolers for a full school day and a full school year, which is based on research and evidence that shows that students who spend more time in high quality early learning programs learn more and are better prepared for kindergarten.
- Programs will create a system of evidence-based, individualized professional development that builds teacher skills and core competencies which includes the use of targeted intensive mentoring and coaching.
- Produce higher returns on taxpayer investment. When children start school ready to succeed, they benefit and the entire nation benefits. High quality Head Start programs have demonstrated outcomes that are just as strong as, if not stronger than, the best public pre-k programs in the country. Research has shown that comprehensive services – physical and mental health and family engagement – are critical to promoting children's school readiness and to reaping the economic return on investment in early childhood.



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Performance Standards Quick Facts

New Performance Standards

- Improve impact on children's learning and development
- Extend classroom instruction to a full school day and a full school year
- Build teacher skills
- Focus on outcomes rather than overly prescriptive rules
- Produce higher returns on taxpayer investment

New standards strengthen Head Start's commitment to serving the children and families most in need including:

- Dual language learners
- Children and families experiencing homelessness
- Children in foster care
- Children with disabilities

About Head Start



Head Start programs promote school readiness of children ages birth to five from low-income families by supporting their development in a comprehensive way. Head Start programs provided services to 944,000 children in 2015.

Head Start and Early Head Start programs offer a variety of service models, depending on the needs of the local community. Many Head Start and Early Head Start programs are based in centers and schools. Other programs are located in child care centers and family child care homes. Some programs offer home-based services

that assigned dedicated staff who conduct weekly visits to children in their own home and work with the parent as the child's primary teacher.

Head Start programs support children's growth and development in a positive learning environment through a variety of services, which include early learning, health, and family well-being.

Delivered through 1,700 agencies in local communities, Head Start and Early Head Start programs provide services to over a million children every year, in every U.S. state and territory, in farmworker camps, and in over 155 tribal communities. Head Start programming is responsive to the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage of each child and family.



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