

Head Start Family Worker Training and Credentialing

ACYF-IM-HS-01-08

Abstract

This Information Memorandum (IM) is to inform Head Start and Early Head Programs about new efforts to enhance the preparation, ongoing training and effectiveness of Head Start Family Workers. Grantees and delegate agencies will find descriptions of the Head Start Family Worker Training and Credentialing Initiative. This IM also encourages local grantees and delegate agencies to use the Competency Goals and Indicators to improve the preparation and development of Family Workers.

Head Start Family Worker Training and Credentialing

ACYF Administration on Children, Youth and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES Administration for Children and Families	
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	4. Key Word: Head Start Family Worker Training and Credentialing	

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM [\[See Attachment at the bottom\]](#)

TO: Head Start Grantees and Delegate Agencies

SUBJECT: Head Start Family Worker Training and Credentialing

INFORMATION:

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform Head Start and Early Head Programs about new efforts to enhance the preparation, ongoing training and effectiveness of Head Start Family Workers.

Specifically this Memorandum:

- Describes the Head Start Family Worker Training and Credentialing Initiative.
- Disseminates a newly developed framework of Head Start Family Worker Competency Goals and Indicators.
- Encourages local grantees and delegate agencies to use the Competency Goals and Indicators to improve the preparation and ongoing professional development of Family Workers.

Head Start's Family Worker Training and Credentialing Initiative

The goal of the Family Worker Training and Credentialing Initiative is to improve the effectiveness, quality and outcomes of more than 25,000 Family Workers employed by local Head Start programs. Family Workers play a critical role in developing and supporting the health, family and community partnerships and management systems implementation of Head Start's family partnership process. Through this process the family of each enrolled child has opportunities to develop and implement an individualized plan of services based on their interests and needs. In many instances, the quality of support received by families correlates with the training and qualifications of the program's Family Workers.

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Local agencies have established a range of qualifications for Family Workers (varying from a Masters of Social Work or other graduate degrees to a High School diploma). Local programs also make important decisions in establishing salary levels, staffing patterns, ratios of

Family Workers to families, forms of supervision and ongoing professional development opportunities. Accordingly, Head Start Family Workers vary in their preparation, forms of licensing or credentials, and working conditions as they seek to implement the Head Start Program Performance Standards and contribute, along with other staff members, managers, volunteers, and community partners to positive program outcomes for all children and families. This initiative is designed to implement a mandate from Congress in Section 648A (c) of the Head Start Act. This Section of the Act requires that, in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of the staff providing in-home and other services (including needs assessment, development of services plans, family advocacy, and coordination of service delivery) to families of children participating in Head Start programs, the Secretary, in coordination with concerned public and private agencies and organizations examining the issues of standards and training for family service workers, shall-- 1) review and, as necessary, revise or develop new qualification standards for Head Start staff providing such services; (2) promote the development of model curricula (on subjects including parenting training and family

literacy) designed to ensure the attainment of appropriate competencies by individuals working or planning to work in the field of early childhood and family services; and (3) promote the establishment of a credential that indicates the attainment of the competencies that is accepted nationwide.

To assist in planning to carry out this legislative mandate, the Head Start Bureau in 1999 and 2000 convened five focus groups of leaders from national organizations, local Head Start Programs including parents of past and currently enrolled children; Head Start Quality Improvement Centers; accreditation organizations and higher education institutions to discuss the needs, issues, and existing models of Family Worker staff training. Based on the focus group input and additional planning, the Head Start Bureau has completed the development of a set of Competency Goals and Indicators for Head Start Staff Working with Families, attached in Appendix A. These

Competency Goals and Indicators may be utilized by local Head Start agencies as they review and update job descriptions, qualification standards, and can guide the selection, training, and supervision of Family Workers.

We also announced in the Federal Register, on May 3, 2001, the availability of \$1 million for up to ten grants to universities or other organizations to support the development or adaptation of model competency-based curricula for family workers. The central requirements for these projects are as follows:

Competency Goals and Indicators may be utilized by local Head Start agencies as they review and update job descriptions, qualification standards, and can guide the selection, training, and supervision of Family Workers.

- Develop competency-based training programs and curricula relevant to the work of a Head Start Family Worker based on the

Head Start Program Performance Standards; the Competency Goals and Indicators for Head Start Staff Working with Families, attached in Appendix A, and include a credible approach to assessing the attainment of these competencies by individual trainees;

for these projects are as follows:

- Create or adapt competency-based training that is linked to academic credit and degree programs and to other forms of credentialing for Family Workers. Applicants are urged to present plans for training which provide for articulation to AA, BA, MS degree programs, if the trainee decides to continue his/her education, and portability, should trainees desire to be Family Workers in other related programs;
- Develop training and curricula that is accessible and affordable for adult learners and that accommodates the training needs of current Head Start Family Workers, including former Head Start Parents who are likely to continue to work full-time as they
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Competency Goals and Indicators for Head Start Staff Working with Families **[Attachment for Information Memorandum] ACYF-IM-HS-01-08**

Abstract

Information Memorandum ACYF-IM-HS-01-08 informs Head Start and Early Head Programs about new efforts to enhance the preparation, ongoing training and effectiveness of Head Start Family Workers. This attachment to ACYF-IM-HS-01-08 encourages local grantees and delegate agencies to use the Competency Goals and Indicators to improve the preparation and development of Family Workers.

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- Engage parents in volunteering, community service and other ways of contributing to program activities and services.

Competency Goal #4: Provide opportunities for children and families to participate in family literacy services.

Indicators: Head Start staff working with families must demonstrate their ability to do the following:

- Work with other program staff to support interactive literacy activities between parents and their children;
- Provide training for parents in how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children;
- Assist parents as adult learners to recognize and address their own literacy goals; and
- Link and support parents in engaging in literacy training that contributes to self-sufficiency.

Competency Goal #5: Coordinate and integrate Head Start services in order to enhance effectiveness.

Indicators: Head Start staff working with families must demonstrate their ability to do the following:

- Serve as a productive team member on an interdisciplinary team of professionals;
- Participate in and facilitate case conferences to promote service integration;
- Apply knowledge of health, mental health, disabilities, and child development in order to ensure holistic service delivery;
- Promote and support parent involvement and leadership throughout the program.

Competency Goal #6: Support families in accessing other community resources.

Indicators: Head Start staff working with families must demonstrate their ability to do the following:

- Research and keep up-to-date on program and community resources;
- Analyze match of community resources to family needs and identify unmet family needs.
- Refer families to community resources and follow-up on the effectiveness of referrals; and
- Promote community partnerships that will improve supports to families.

Competency Goal #7: Assist families in crisis.

Indicators: Head Start staff working with families must demonstrate their ability to do the following:

- Listen to families and assess the crisis situation;
- Take active steps to ensure the safety of all involved;
- Decide when to intervene and when to refer a family;
- Identify (with the family) options, resources, and consequences to address the crisis; and
- Support families in making decisions and taking active steps to resolve current crises and be prepared to address future crises;

Competency Goal #8: Respect and respond competently to the culture, traditions, lifestyle, language, and values of each family and community.

Indicators: Head Start staff working with families must demonstrate their ability to do the following:

- Be knowledgeable about and sensitive to each family's values, beliefs, traditions, cultural influences, makeup, and circumstances;
- Work with families representing different cultures using a culturally competent and flexible approach.
- Identify and reflect on personal values, experiences and biases that facilitate and present barriers in working with certain groups

of people.

Competency Goal #9: Contribute to effective program practices and maintain a commitment to professionalism.

Indicators: Head Start staff working with families must demonstrate their ability to do the following:

- Perform record-keeping and internal and external reporting tasks in a timely and objective fashion;
- Effectively utilize supervisory professional development and technical assistance resources to improve competence;
- Contribute to and participate in strategic planning, program self-assessment and other efforts to improve program services and agency responsiveness to families;
- Make decisions and act based on family support principles, theories, practices, and code of ethics;
- Articulate an awareness of self, values, and ethics as they impact on work with families; and
- Maintain professional boundaries and confidentiality.

Competency Goals and Indicators for Head Start Staff Working with Families. [Attachment for Information Memorandum] ACYF-IM-HS-01-08. DHHS/ACF/ACYF/HSB. 2001. English.