Program Planning

Annual Planning Calendar

Native American Child and Family Conference

March 20, 2024

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Introductions

Darlene Zacherle
Grantee Specialist

Welcome Tribal Leaders, Elders, Parents and Head Start Leaders!

Patricia Banks
Grantee Specialist

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Learning Objectives

- Review the key activities in the Head Start Planning Cycle.
- Learn about the new "Annual Planning Calendar" planning tool.
- Learn what planning activities are identified in HSPPS/HS Act and understand when each is required.
- Consider how you might use the Annual Planning Calendar in your program as you move "Head Start Forward/Enrollment Forward".

3

What kinds of things do you plan for in your own life?

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What comes to mind in thinking about the word "cycle"?

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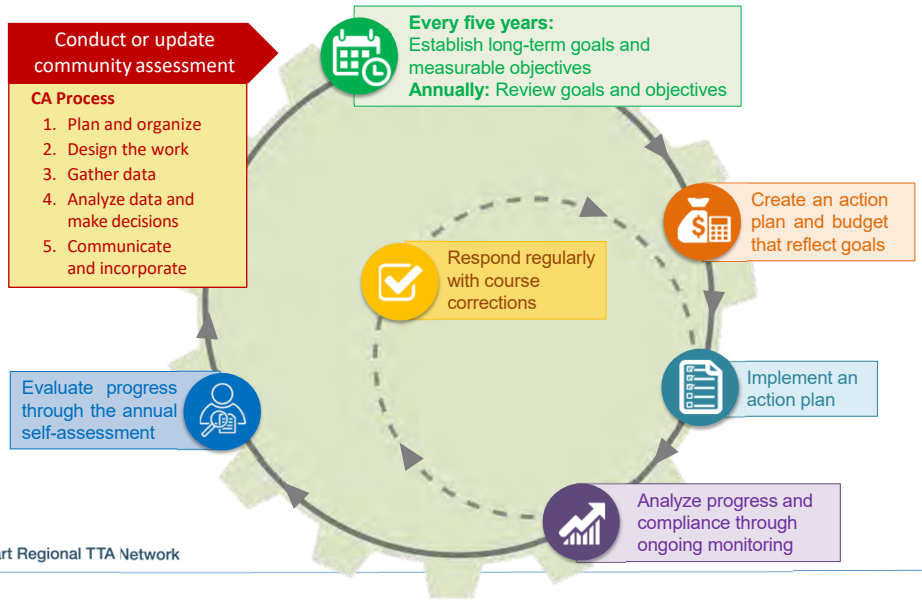
Program Planning Cycle → Annual Program Calendar



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Who's involved in the planning cycle?

Head Start five-year grants require the development of data-informed goals and objectives as well as a mechanism for continuous improvement. Through the Head Start inclusive leadership model, the governing body, Policy Council, and program's management team must collaborate to develop a system of planning and oversight that will achieve progress toward their goals and ensure quality services for children and families.

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Office of Head Start Expectations for 2021-2022

Office of Head Start (OHS) Expectations for Head Start Programs in Program Year (PY) 2021–2022 ACF-PI-HS-21-04

U.S. Department
of Health and Human Services

ACF
Administration for Children and Families

1. Log Number: ACF-PI-HS-21-04
2. Issuance Date: 05/20/2021
3. Originating Office: Office of Head Start
4.Key Words: ERSEA; Recruitment; Selection; Enrollment; Virtual and Remote Services; In-person Services

Program Instruction

To: Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees and Delegate Agencies

Subject: Office of Head Start (OHS) Expectations for Head Start Programs in Program Year (PY) 2021– 2022

Instruction:

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Head Start programs — inclusive of Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start, and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership programs — have faced unprecedented challenges. Beginning in spring 2020 and throughout PY 2020–2021, all of our directors, staff, and families have demonstrated resiliency, innovation, and perseverance. To date, OHS has provided needed flexibilities and guidance that allowed programs to adapt services based on the changing health conditions in their communities. Now, as programs prepare for PY 2021–2022, OHS is providing updated guidance.

This Program Instruction (PI) outlines OHS's expectations for Head Start programs to begin working toward full enrollment and providing in-person comprehensive services for all enrolled children, regardless

Annual Planning Calendar can HELP you plan for the coming year!

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What is your current system for setting up an annual calendar ?

- What is working well?
- How do you coordinate planning dates?
- Are you able to calendar tasks and meetings and feel comfortable that you are not missing important steps?
- What are your challenges?

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Check out this new planning calendar tool

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At first glance --

Do you think that this tool could help your management team with planning and ongoing monitoring of required planning tasks?

Do you see how it could foster meaningful collaboration with program and fiscal leaders?

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Let's look at some of the features of the annual planning calendar tool and how it works……

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Compliant

- Includes and links to the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS), Head Start Act, Uniform Guidance, and relevant fiscal Program Instructions
- Follows a calendar of expected events
- Allows programs to plan and coordinate program and fiscal year activities

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Annual Planning Calendar: Activity List

Month	September	*Enter Project Month start here*
Year	2021	*Enter Project Year here*

Prior to the Five-Year Project Period

Progress	*Date to be completed*	*Activity*	*Citation*
		Conduct a communitywide strategic planning and needs assessment to design a program that meets community needs.	1302.11(b)
		Ensure appropriate governance structure (e.g., governing body, Tribal Council, Policy Council) and bylaws are in place.	Sec. 642(c)
		Establish Policy Council selection procedures.	Sec. 642(c)(1)(E)(iv)(VI)
		Develop strategic long-term goals to ensure responsive program services.	1302.102(a)

Start of Project Period

Progress	*Date to be completed*	*Activity*	*Citation*

Instructions for Use | Activity List | Calendar

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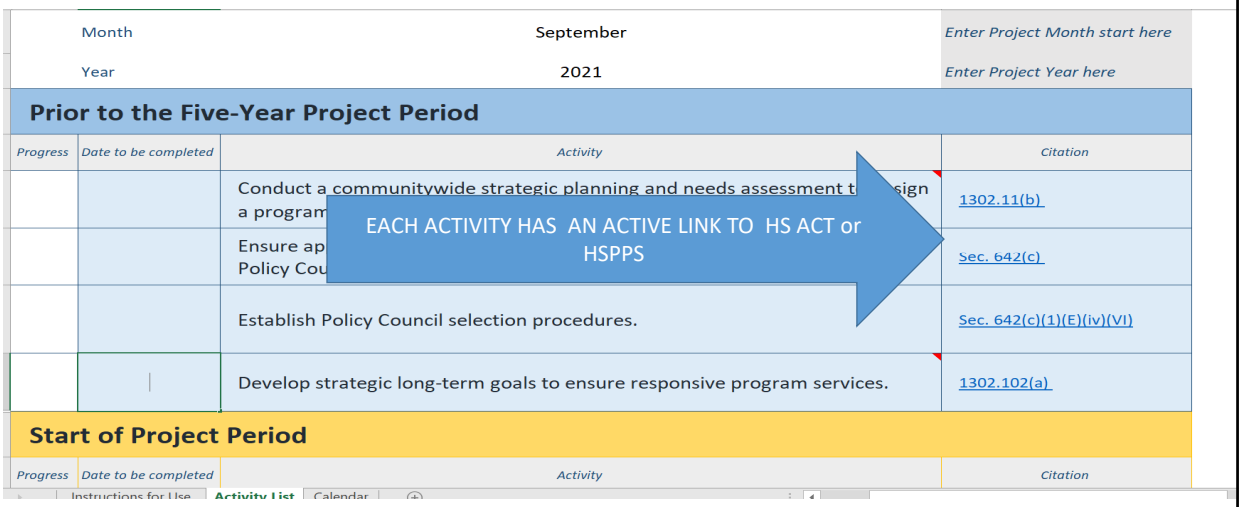
Annual Planning Calendar: Activity List



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		Establish Policy Council selection procedures.	Sec. 642(c)(1)(E)(iv)(VI)
		Develop strategic long-term goals to ensure responsive program services.	1302.102(a)

Start of Project Period

Progress	Date to be completed	Activity	Citation

Instructions for Use | Activity List | Calendar

EACH ACTIVITY HAS AN ACTIVE LINK TO HS ACT or HSPPS

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Comprehensive

- Helps grantees organize and plan on a weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually, grant-year, and project-period basis
- Outlines planning requirements in a way that integrates seamlessly with operational calendars
- Focuses on the leadership and administrative functions and requirements of the grant development and oversight process

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Planning Calendar: Start with the Activity List

11 Sections with Tasks listed in each section

- Prior to Five Year Project Period
- Start of Project Period
- Annually at Beginning of Program Year
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Semi-Annually
- Annually
- Annually at end of Program Year
- Annually at end of Grant Year
- At the end of the Five-Year Project Period
- Ongoing Activities
- Additional Items

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Customizable

- Adapts flexibly to fit fiscal year start dates
- Allows users to add program activities based on individual needs
- Builds on an easily accessible platform (Microsoft Excel)
- Prints as a wall calendar and can be shared electronically

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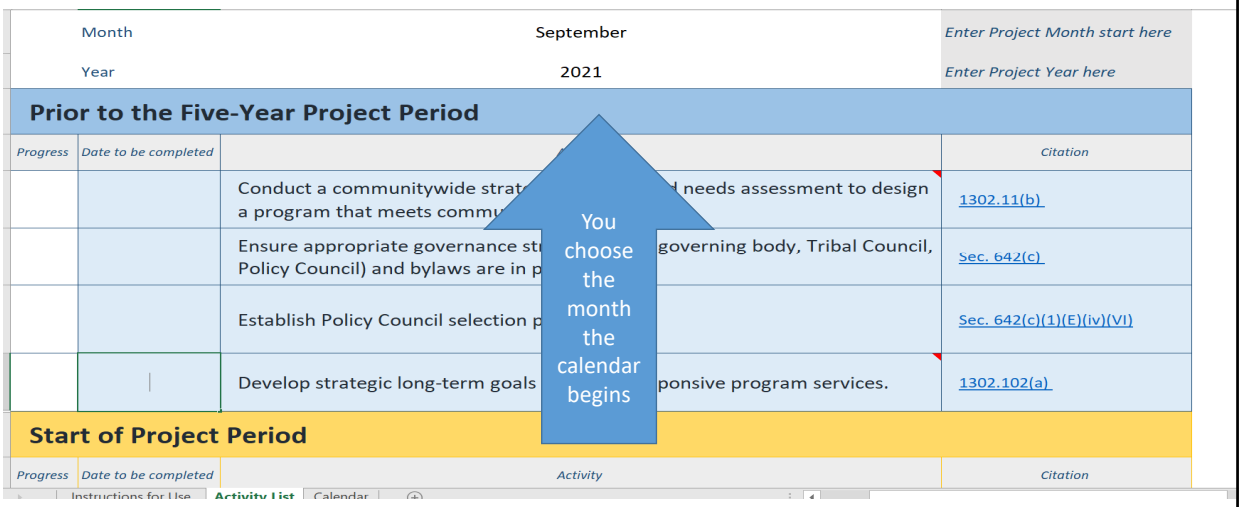
Annual Planning Calendar: Activity List



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Let's try an Example….

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Once you enter an date on the Activity List it transfers to the calendar page..

Annual Planning Calendar for Program Management:
A Customizable Roadmap for Program and Fiscal Leaders

Many Rivers Head Start

September 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16 Establish Policy Council selection	17	18
19	20 Establish the Policy Council.	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30 Develop strategic long-term goals to ensure responsive program services.	Ensure appropriate governance structure (e.g.,	

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LET'S OPEN UP THE EXCEL VERSION of the TOOL….

AND GIVE IT A TRY…..

If you have your laptop or phone you can access the excel version of the annual planning calendar.

ECLKC search annual planning calendar

https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/program-planning/article/annual-planning-calendar-program-management

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Additional Planning Resources on ECLKC

Foundations for Excellence | ECLKC (hhs.gov)

Self-Assessment: Your Annual Journey | ECLKC (hhs.gov)

Community Assessment: The Foundation for Program Planning in Head Start | ECLKC (hhs.gov)

https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/pandemic-programmatic-community-update

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- **RXI AIAN Training and Technical Assistance Team**

If you need to know how to contact your assigned Grantee Specialist or Early Childhood Specialist, ask us and we will send you the information.

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Contact Information

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We'll do it together!

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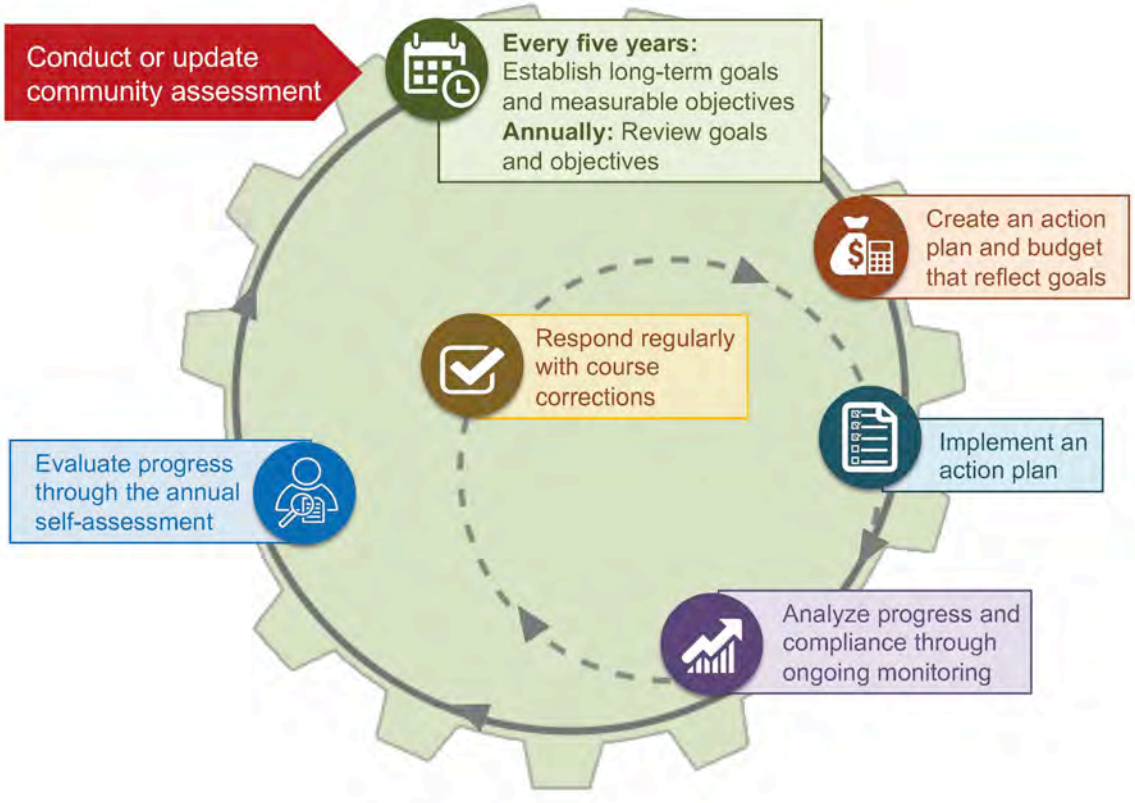
Program Planning in Head Start: The Program Planning Cycle

Thoughtful planning is key to successful programming and to the achievement of desired outcomes. The Head Start Program Planning Cycle outlines how the required Head Start management systems are interrelated parts of a predictable planning process. Through this process, programs develop goals, objectives, and expected outcomes. They monitor and evaluate progress toward their program goals, which include school readiness goals. In this document, references to long-term goals are inclusive of all program goals. Programs also ensure compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS).

The Program Planning Cycle depicts an ongoing sequence of planning, implementation, and evaluation. It promotes continuous quality improvement and allows programs to work toward the achievement of positive outcomes for children and families. Many of the steps happen repeatedly throughout the cycle, and the cycle itself is repeated throughout the five-year project period.

The Program Planning Cycle



To learn more about the process, follow the arrows clockwise around the planning cycle. Review a list of the steps and a brief description of each below.

1. Begin with either **community assessment** or **self-assessment** (see red arrow above).
    - **New programs** begin with a community assessment. They collect and analyze data about the needs and resources of eligible families, the program, and the community within the service area to inform the goal-setting process.
    - **Existing programs** may begin the process with self-assessment. They take a fresh look at updated community assessment, ongoing monitoring, and other relevant data to make recommendations for program planning and goal-setting.
2. For their baseline grant applications, programs identify the long-term goals they will accomplish during the **five-year project period**. They also identify initial specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely (SMART) **objectives** linked to **expected outcomes**. During their **annual** planning process, programs review their long-term goals and objectives, along with community assessment and self-assessment data, and make any necessary programming adjustments. They continue to break down their goals into measurable objectives linked to expected outcomes.
3. Programs develop an annual **action plan,** which is a defined set of steps outlining what a program will do to accomplish its goals and objectives. The action plan is supported by a budget that is aligned with the goals and objectives. Through the **data and evaluation system**, the program decides which data will be collected to measure progress and determine impact.
4. While **implementing its plan**, the program collects data through its **technology and information systems** and manages it through its **recordkeeping and reporting system**.
5. The program continually evaluates progress toward its goals and objectives and compliance with the HSPPS by reviewing data gathered through the system of **ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement.** Effective ongoing monitoring enables programs to track progress toward their goals and objectives, ensure compliance, and collect data to inform continuous improvement.

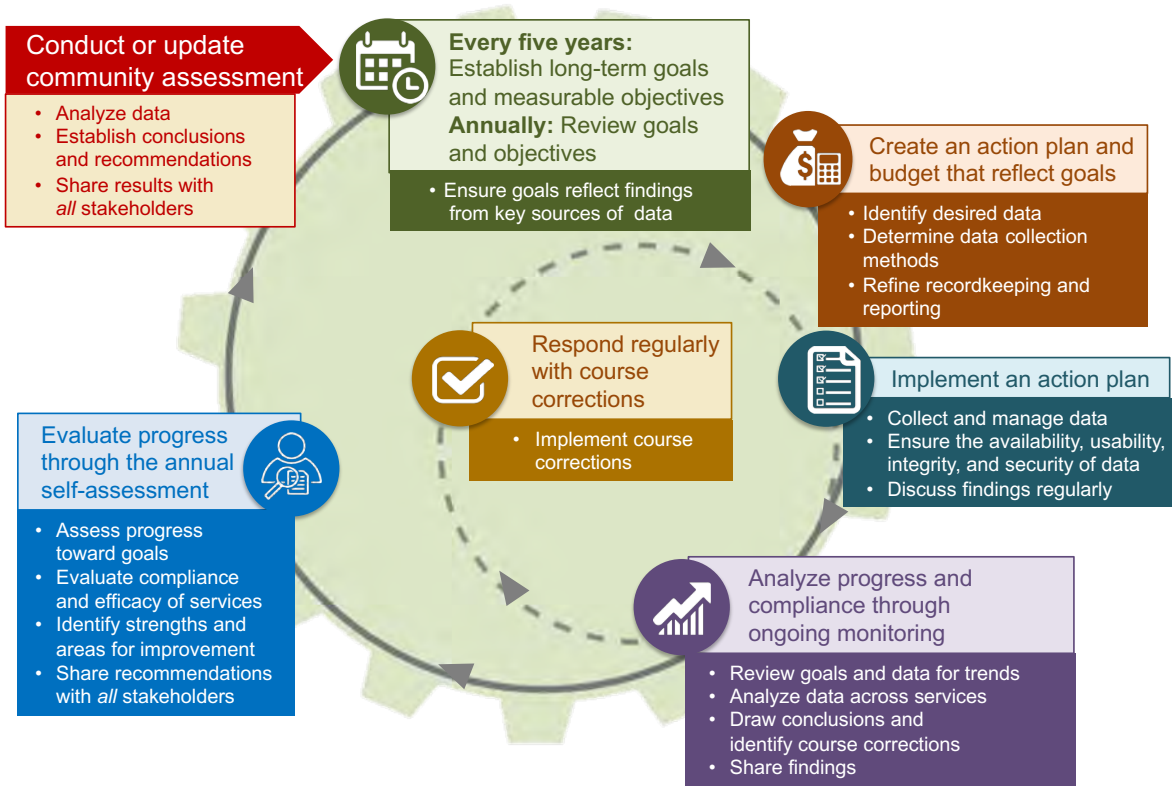
6. Based on ongoing monitoring results, programs may continue to implement their **action plan** as written, change the plan to **replicate best practices**, or make **course corrections** that may require changes in program activities or levels of effort. Following up to determine the efficacy of the course corrections is critical.

7. Finally, the program comes full circle to the annual **self-assessment**. In this step, the self-assessment team uses its ongoing monitoring, community assessment, and other relevant data (e.g., child assessment, professional development, and family engagement data, as appropriate) to assess the program's progress in achieving its goals, objectives, and expected outcomes. The team also evaluates the program's compliance with federal requirements.

Two more elements are essential throughout the planning process:

- Effective use of data that support a coordinated approach to service delivery
- Communication with appropriate stakeholders at each step

Integrating Data into Program Planning Systems



The Integrating Data into Planning Systems graphic above shows how the use of data is integrated into each step of the planning cycle. Below is a list of the steps in the planning cycle, along with the data activities that occur at each step.

- **Evaluate progress through the annual self-assessment (new programs begin with community assessment)**
  - Assess annual progress toward goals and objectives
  - Evaluate compliance and the efficacy of services
  - Identify strengths and areas for improvement
  - Share recommendations with all stakeholders
- **Conduct or update community assessment**
  - Analyze data
  - Establish conclusions and programming recommendations
  - Share results with all stakeholders
- **Every five years: Establish long-term goals and measurable objectives**
- **Annually: Review goals and objectives**
  - Ensure goals reflect conclusions from key data sources (e.g., community assessment, self-assessment, child outcomes, professional development, and family engagement data)
- **Create an action plan and budget that reflect goals**
  - Identify desired data
  - Determine data-collection methodologies
  - Refine recordkeeping and reporting systems
- **Implement an action plan**
  - Collect and manage data
  - Ensure the availability, usability, integrity, and security of data
  - Discuss findings regularly
- **Analyze progress and compliance through ongoing monitoring**
  - Review goals and data for trends
  - Analyze data across services
  - Draw conclusions and identify course corrections
  - Share findings with internal stakeholders

- **Respond regularly with course corrections, as required**
  - Implement course corrections
  - Review corrections to monitor the efficacy of the change
  - Communicate data findings and next steps to internal stakeholders

ACF Administration for Children and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES	
	1. Log No. ACF-IM-HS-23-02	2. Issuance Date: 05/23/2023
	3. Originating Office: Office of Head Start	
	4. Key Words: Head Start; Eligibility; TANF; Tribal; AIAN; American Indian Alaska Native; Public Assistance	

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

TO: American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Agencies

Subject: American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) Head Start Eligibility Through Tribal TANF

Information:

The Office of Head Start (OHS) administers AIAN Head Start programs in partnership with Tribes. Through a nation-to-nation relationship, OHS regularly engages with Tribes to understand the special circumstances of AIAN Head Start programs and to support Tribal sovereignty. Through regular consultation, Tribal leaders and Tribal Head Start program administrators have indicated that Tribes should exercise appropriate discretion in determining which children should be eligible and prioritized for Head Start services. OHS affirms that Tribes — to the maximum extent possible under the Head Start Act — should determine eligibility for Head Start and which children would most benefit from Head Start services. This information memorandum (IM) explains how AIAN programs can maximize the use of an existing eligibility criterion to enroll additional Tribal children, which expands tribal control and decision making in determining which children to serve in Head Start.

Specifically, this IM reminds AIAN Head Start programs that if families are eligible for benefits and services funded by tribal TANF, then they also meet categorical eligibility requirements for Head Start. Congress established Head Start eligibility criteria in Section 645(a)(1)(B)(i) of the Head Start Act to include families with incomes at or below the federal poverty level and families eligible for public assistance. Families eligible for public assistance are categorically eligible for Head Start services. Categorical eligibility allowances consider family circumstances rather than income to determine eligibility for Head Start. Children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, and families who receive, or are eligible to receive, public assistance in the form of Supplemental Security Income, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and TANF are eligible for Head Start services solely on the basis of these circumstances. While the guidance in this IM does not create new policy, OHS believes prior guidance issued on TANF eligibility has not explicitly addressed tribal TANF benefits and services in addition to cash assistance as a means for Head Start eligibility.

As Tribal governments have flexibility in establishing tribal TANF eligibility and because they administer AIAN Head Start programs, they are uniquely positioned to leverage TANF as a means for categorical eligibility under public assistance. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) reminds tribes administering tribal TANF and AIAN Head Start they have the ability to identify tribal members and other individuals who are eligible for tribal TANF (including all TANF benefits and services, not just cash assistance) as being eligible for AIAN Head Start program enrollment. Note that this approach does not guarantee a tribal TANF participant's enrollment in a Head Start program, as programs must adhere to their recruitment and selection criteria to ensure they prioritize enrollment for those who may benefit most from Head Start services.

Overview of AIAN Head Start Eligibility and the Need for Policy Guidance

AIAN Head Start programs are operated by tribal governments, tribal colleges, or tribal agencies. The eligible population for Head Start includes pregnant women[1] and families with a child from birth through age 5. The Head Start Act allows up to 49% of an AIAN Head Start program's enrollment to be comprised of enrollees in the over-income eligibility criterion if 1) all eligible pregnant women or children who wish to be enrolled from Indian and non-Indian families living within the approved service area are served, and 2) the tribe has resources within its grant to enroll pregnant women or children whose family incomes exceed low-income guidelines or who are not otherwise eligible. A minimum of 51% of the AIAN program enrollment must be comprised of income-eligible families, children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, or families who receive, or are eligible to receive, public assistance. Families who receive, or are eligible to receive, tribal TANF, would count toward the minimum 51% of income-eligible families irrespective of their actual income. Understanding tribal TANF eligibility and its relationship to Head Start eligibility creates a flexibility for tribes to make decisions about Head Start enrollment for AIAN Head Start grant recipients.

Overview of Tribal TANF

Tribal TANF gives federally recognized Indian tribes the ability to apply for and receive funding to operate their own TANF programs. When Congress established the TANF program in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act, Public Law 104-193, it recognized that tribes are in the best position to design TANF programs for the populations they serve. As of 2022, there are 75 approved tribal TANF programs which serve over 280 federally recognized Tribes and Alaska Native Villages.

Tribes receive federal funding as a block grant to design and operate tribal TANF programs and may use their TANF funds in any manner reasonably calculated to accomplish the following four purposes of TANF:

1. Provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.
2. End the dependency of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.

[1] The term "pregnant women" is inclusive of pregnant transgender or nonbinary people per ACF-IM-HS-22-02.

3. Prevent and reduce the incidences of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.
4. Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Tribal TANF may provide direct cash assistance for families in need. Because TANF cash assistance provides payments to individual families, it is the easiest to document and therefore the type of TANF assistance most often considered for Head Start eligibility. However, the tribal TANF block grants fund many other services that promote one or more purposes of TANF. Tribal TANF funds provide support for a broad range of benefits and services in addition to cash assistance, including but not limited to workforce training, counseling, case management, transportation, adolescent pregnancy prevention, and healthy marriage education. Families with a child from birth through age 5, or pregnant women who are eligible for any tribal TANF benefits and services also can be eligible for Head Start due to being eligible for TANF public assistance.

Tribes have great flexibility in Tribal TANF program design and implementation, including defining elements of their program such as eligibility, service area and service population (e.g., all Indian families in the service area or only enrolled members of the tribe), and the nature of the benefits and services provided. TANF benefits and services that fulfill purposes one and two outlined above are limited to "needy" families, and Tribes have broad discretion in establishing the standards for determining which families are needy. Moreover, the benefits and services associated with TANF purposes three and four are not limited to those who are needy. The flexibility inherent in tribal TANF for establishing eligibility criteria is particularly relevant for this policy guidance and its implications for determining eligibility for AIAN Head Start.

Implementation of Policy Guidance

Tribal governments must adhere to Head Start requirements for determining, verifying, and documenting eligibility when implementing this policy guidance. Head Start Program Performance Standard (HSPPS) 45 CFR §1302.12(i)(2) requires documentation from either the State, local, or Tribal public assistance agency that shows the family either receives public assistance or is eligible to receive public assistance. Because Head Start requires documentation of eligibility for public assistance, Tribes must determine the process for establishing documentation that works best for their unique population. AIAN programs must also adhere to the age requirements in 1302.12(b) and maintain criteria for prioritizing enrollment for children would most benefit from Head Start services.

Any approach adopted by tribes must also align with the eligibility for tribal TANF as stated in the tribal TANF plan. Tribal governments should review their Tribal TANF plan to determine who is currently eligible for TANF benefits and services and may amend the plan if necessary to reflect the Tribe's decisions about who should be eligible for TANF benefits or services. For instance, if the current tribal TANF plan does not currently include all families of a child from birth through age 5 as eligible, and tribes wish to expand eligibility to all such families, the tribe may submit a TANF plan amendment. Once the tribal TANF plan has been approved, the tribe has discretion on the process they use to document eligibility for tribal TANF and on how they communicate that eligibility to AIAN Head Start programs and families. Additional details regarding documentation and communication to AIAN families are provided in subsequent paragraphs.

ACF suggests some approaches to consider that include, but are not limited to:

- **Utilizing the tribal TANF plan as documentation.** If the current tribal TANF plan has defined its eligibility criteria to include all families with a child from birth through age 5 as eligible for TANF cash assistance, benefits, or services, this means these families are considered eligible for public assistance, and therefore, eligible for Head Start services. Since the Tribal TANF plan is issued by the tribal public assistance agency, a Head Start program could include a copy of this tribal TANF plan, or the specific section that indicates a child's eligibility, in each enrolled child's file to satisfy Head Start eligibility documentation. Or the tribe could develop a one-page statement confirming the Tribe's determination that all tribal members are eligible for TANF benefits or services, and therefore meet eligibility requirements for Head Start services, and that statement could be included in each enrolled child's file.
- **Issuing a letter to communicate eligibility to AIAN families and use as documentation.** Tribes have the discretion to determine what the process of issuing a letter may look like. We offer several approaches for consideration:
    - Tribal TANF offices might consider issuing a letter to all families who receive or are eligible to receive tribal TANF benefits or services to notify families that they are eligible for Head Start services.
    - Tribal TANF offices might consider issuing a letter directly to all AIAN Head Start programs stating that all families with children under the age of 5. are eligible for tribal TANF benefits or services and therefore, eligible for Head Start services.
    - Tribes could have a template of a letter onsite at the Head Start program and could fill it in during the intake process, including the name of the child whose family is receiving or eligible for TANF benefits or services. After the template is filled out with the child's name, the AIAN program would then take the letter to the tribal TANF office for signature.
    - Tribes might consider encouraging families in the tribe's tribal TANF service population to individually seek their own documentation from their tribal TANF office stating they receive, or are eligible for tribal TANF benefits or services, and as such, they are eligible for Head Start services.

If a tribe decides to issue a letter, regardless of the process they choose, the letter must include the beneficiary's name, the tribe's name, and confirmation that the beneficiary receives or is eligible to receive tribal TANF benefits or services per the tribal TANF plan. The letter must be issued by the State, local, or tribal public assistance agency. Including a copy of this letter in each enrolled child's file would satisfy Head Start eligibility documentation requirements. Utilizing the tribal TANF plan to extend Head Start eligibility to AIAN families reduces the burden of families navigating multiple federal program eligibility processes and supports better alignment and coordination across federal programs.

Supporting Tribal Sovereignty and Responding to Tribal Consultation

This policy guidance honors tribal sovereignty by explaining additional options to determine which tribal members most benefit from Head Start services. In government-to-government

tribal consultation with HHS officials, Tribal leaders have requested categorical eligibility for tribal members. While categorical eligibility for tribal members would require statutory change, this guidance seeks to maximize existing statutory authority to make progress toward that goal.

The goal of this IM is to support tribes in maximizing enrollment of tribal families in AIAN Head Start programs. Region XI AIAN programs provide essential services to address the unique needs of tribal children and families including language and culture preservation.

Programs should contact their Region XI office with questions about this IM.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Head Start children and families.

Sincerely,

/ Khari M. Garvin /

Khari M. Garvin
Director
Office of Head Start

ACF Administration for Children and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES	
	1. Log No. ACF-PI-HS-21-04	2. Issuance Date: 05/20/2021
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PROGRAM INSTRUCTION

TO: Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees and Delegate Agencies

SUBJECT: Office of Head Start (OHS) Expectations for Head Start Programs in Program Year (PY) 2021–2022

INSTRUCTION:

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Head Start programs — inclusive of Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start, and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership programs — have faced unprecedented challenges. Beginning in spring 2020 and throughout PY 2020–2021, all of our directors, staff, and families have demonstrated resiliency, innovation, and perseverance. To date, OHS has provided needed flexibilities and guidance that allowed programs to adapt services based on the changing health conditions in their communities. Now, as programs prepare for PY 2021–2022, OHS is providing updated guidance.

This Program Instruction (PI) outlines OHS's expectations for Head Start programs to begin working toward full enrollment and providing in-person comprehensive services for all enrolled children, regardless of program option. The PI also addresses whether virtual or remote services are an allowable, long-term, locally designed option (LDO).

By *virtual*, OHS means services for children provided through technology. *Remote* refers to services provided via the delivery of supports and resources, such as educational materials or food boxes.

Operating Status and Enrollment

OHS expects Head Start programs to provide comprehensive services in their approved program options beginning in PY 2021–2022, to the extent possible, as local health conditions allow.

OHS acknowledges programs are in different stages of fully returning to in-person services. Many programs continued to provide in-person services for children and families throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. These programs are expected to continue serving children in person, as local health conditions allow.

Other Head Start programs have been alternating between in-person services, virtual or remote services, or some combination of the two, due to community health conditions. These programs are expected to move to in-person services, as local health conditions allow.

OHS expects programs to work toward full enrollment and full comprehensive services, contingent upon U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and state and local health department guidance and in consideration of local school districts' decisions.

In September 2021, OHS will begin reviewing monthly enrollment in the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES) and discuss program plans for moving to full enrollment. Programs should build toward full enrollment and provide comprehensive services for all enrolled children as soon as possible. Programs must communicate with their Regional Office and be able to demonstrate why they are unable to be fully enrolled or serve children in person in their approved programs options. All programs must have plans in place that allow for adaptation to changing guidance and to changes in community conditions, which may affect achieving full enrollment or cause programs to temporarily suspend in-person services.

Beginning January 2022, OHS will reinstate pre-pandemic practices for tracking and monitoring enrollment. OHS will also resume evaluating which programs enter into the Full Enrollment Initiative in January 2022. All programs will start fresh, including those participating in the Full Enrollment Initiative prior to the pandemic. Reported enrollment in January 2022 is the first month of enrollment that OHS will evaluate for the under-enrollment process.

Virtual and Remote Services

Virtual and remote services for children are considered an interim strategy in the presence of an emergency or disaster and will not be approved as an LDO.

OHS has supported the implementation of virtual and remote services over the past 13 months. However, they are not an acceptable replacement for in-person comprehensive services. For PY 2021–2022, it is unallowable to have a program option run entirely by technology or delivering educational material, for example. OHS may still support some portion of services to continue remotely, as necessary.

OHS also recognizes that programs have discovered new virtual strategies for engaging families and reinforcing early learning and development at home. Innovations in virtual practice should be used as enhancements rather than substitutes for previously approved program options and service delivery.

Given their increased capacity to conduct virtual and remote services, programs may establish policies and procedures for temporary, weather-related virtual and remote services.

Head Start grantees have significant one-time funds and layered mitigation strategies available to support a return to in-person services. This includes access to the COVID-19 vaccine for adults.

Recruitment and Selection

As grantees look to summer programming and PY 2021–2022, OHS expects programs to prioritize recruiting eligible children and families.

Almost one third of children served in Head Start programs before the pandemic — approximately 250,000 — have not received any services to date.

The pandemic has created and exacerbated long-standing disparities and inequities for families who have been marginalized for decades. The number of children and families in poverty has grown significantly. All grantees should update their community assessments to guide their intensive recruitment efforts and to ensure they are reaching families most in need of services. If a program determines that their pre-pandemic approved program option will not meet the needs of the community, they must submit an updated community assessment and request approval for a change in scope.

Programs should also revisit their established selection criteria based on findings from their updated community assessment. As always, programs must include specific efforts to actively locate and recruit all eligible children and, in particular, those whose families are English language learners, experiencing homelessness, or affected by substance misuse, as well as children with disabilities and children in foster care.

The funds grantees have received from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) and Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Acts, as well from the American Rescue Plan, can and should be used to support enhanced community partnerships and related recruitment efforts. Per OHS guidance in ACF-PI-HS-21-03 FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Funding Increase for Head Start Programs, grantees have flexibility to determine which one-time investments best support the needs of staff, children, and families, while adhering to federal, state, and local guidance. This includes using funds to purchase services, materials, and technology to ramp up recruitment efforts, as well as to provide vaccine outreach and support as one layer of mitigation and protection for staff, children, and families.

Program planning for a full return to in-person services should include new and returning families at every step. Clear communication with families and regular invitations for input ensure Head Start services are most responsive to families, children, and the community.

Additional Information

OHS will support grantees through webinars and guidance as programs continue and return fully to in-person services. Additional resources and information are available on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) website.

Please direct any questions regarding this PI to your Regional Office.

Thank you for your work on behalf of children and families.

/ Dr. Bernadine Futrell /

Dr. Bernadine Futrell
Director
Office of Head Start