

SUBPART D — PROGRAM DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

1304.50(a)(1)

Program Governance

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INTRODUCTION TO 1304.50

The objective of 45 CFR 1304.50 is to ensure that each grantee and delegate agency has an established policy group and a well-functioning governing body that share responsibility for overseeing the delivery of high quality services to children and families in accordance with Head Start legislation, regulations, and policies. Through the Policy Council and Policy Committee — groups with policy-making authority at the grantee and delegate agency levels, respectively — and through the local Parent Committees, parents and other community representatives are empowered to actively participate in the shared decision-making process.

This section describes the formal structure of shared governance, outlining the composition and responsibilities of policy groups, Parent Committees, and governing bodies. The standards also discuss policy group and Parent Committee reimbursements and the need for internal dispute mechanisms. Finally, the chart “Governance and Management Responsibilities” in Appendix A of this section restates the responsibilities and outlines the interactions of policy groups, governing bodies, and agency management staff.

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Performance Standard 1304.50(a)(1)

(a) Policy Council, Policy Committee, and Parent Committee structure.

(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must establish and maintain a formal structure of shared governance through which parents can participate in policy making or in other decisions about the program. This structure must consist of the following groups, as required:

(i) Policy Council. This Council must be established at the grantee level.

(ii) Policy Committee. This Committee must be established at the delegate agency level when the program is administered in whole or in part by such agencies (see 45 CFR 1301.2 for a definition of a delegate agency).

(iii) Parent Committee. For center-based programs, this Committee must be established at the center level. For other program options, an equivalent Committee must be established at the local program level. When programs operate more than one option from the same site, the Parent Committee membership is combined unless parents choose to have a separate Committee for each option.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1306.3(h) for the definition of a Head Start parent.

Rationale: A formal structure of program governance provides parents and other community representatives with the authority and opportunity to participate in shared decision-making concerning program design and implementation. *This rationale serves 45 CFR 1304.50(a)(1)-(5).*

Guidance: Although the formal structure of governance will vary across local agencies, policy groups and Parent Committees are required for all. Each agency has only one policy group.

Policy groups — the Policy Council at the grantee agency level and the Policy Committee at the delegate agency level — have policy-making authority and, therefore, are governed by locally determined bylaws that ensure clarity and consistency in function and purpose.

Parent Committees provide every parent of an enrolled child with the opportunity to assist in the development of activities that address their interests and needs and that support the education and healthy development of their children.

Agencies provide parents, community representatives, community partners, and staff with training regarding program governance and shared decision-making, so they may understand and support the purpose of the Policy Council, Policy Committee, and Parent Committee.

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Performance Standard 1304.50(a)(2)

(2) Parent Committees must be comprised exclusively of the parents of children currently enrolled at the center level for center-based programs or at the equivalent level for other program options (see 45 CFR 1306.3(h) for a definition of a Head Start parent).

Performance Standard 1304.50(a)(3)

(3) All Policy Councils, Policy Committees, and Parent Committees must be established as early in the program year as possible. Grantee Policy Councils and delegate Policy Committees may not be dissolved until successor Councils or Committees are elected and seated.

Guidance: All parents of enrolled children are automatically members of a Parent Committee. The Parent Committee may choose to develop smaller groups to facilitate in-depth discussions of significant issues before such issues are considered by the larger Parent Committee. The formation of subgroups also encourages the participation of those who feel more comfortable expressing opinions in smaller groups. The Parent Committee may choose to structure meetings around a breakfast, potluck meal, or other social event, to encourage participation by as many parents as possible.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.52(k)(4) on providing training to members of the Policy Councils and Policy Committees.

Guidance: Because shared decision-making is a critical element of ongoing planning, it is important for agencies to maintain effective grantee Policy Councils, delegate Policy Committees, and Parent Committees from one year to the next. The following are suggestions for encouraging the parents of newly enrolled children to participate in policy groups and Parent Committees:

- Discuss policy groups and Parent Committees during recruitment;
- Display posters, show videos, or use other means to provide information about the role and importance of the policy groups and Parent Committees and about the nature and timing of the election process;
- Provide opportunities for outgoing members of policy groups to play an active role in recruiting, meeting with, welcoming, training, and providing one-on-one mentoring to potential new members; and
- Invite new parents to observe Policy Council or Policy Committee meetings.

Although outgoing parents from Policy Councils or Policy Committees may not have children in Head Start at the beginning of the next program year, it is important that parents complete their term and continue in a policy-making role until new parents are elected and seated. It may be necessary to develop procedures to maintain the participation of outgoing parents or to elect parents to complete an unexpired term, if parents have left the area, as is often the case in migrant programs.

In order to meet the mandate for parental involvement, a new grantee or delegate agency needs to form an appropriate interim policy group that represents potential Head Start parents, as well as other community members. This interim body is immediately

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involved in start-up program planning, the development of interim procedures, and the hiring of staff.

Performance Standard 1304.50(a)(4)

(4) When a grantee has delegated the entire Head Start program to one delegate agency, it is not necessary to have a Policy Committee in addition to a grantee agency Policy Council.

Guidance: In situations where a grantee delegates the entire Head Start program to one delegate agency, the Policy Council takes on all policy responsibilities. Grantees have procedures that describe how decisions are made involving the grantee governing body, the delegate governing body, and the Policy Council.

Performance Standard 1304.50(a)(5)

(5) The governing body (the group with legal and fiscal responsibility for administering the Early Head Start or Head Start program) and the Policy Council or Policy Committee must not have identical memberships and functions.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.50(g) for information on governing body responsibilities, and the chart, "Governance and Management Responsibilities," in Appendix A to this section, which describes the roles and responsibilities of the governing body, the Policy Council and the Policy Committee, and key management staff.

Guidance: Agencies review membership lists and bylaws to ensure that memberships and functions of the governing body and the policy group are not identical. Communication between the groups is improved if there is at least one representative from the governing body serving on the policy group and at least one representative from the policy group serving on the governing body.

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Performance Standard

1304.50(b)(1) — (b)(7)

(b) Policy group composition and formation.

(1) Each grantee and delegate agency governing body operating an Early Head Start or Head Start program must (except where such authority is ceded to the Policy Council or Policy Committee) propose, within the framework of these regulations, the total size of their respective policy groups (based on the number of centers, classrooms, or other program option units, and the number of children served by their Early Head Start or Head Start program), the procedures for the election of parent members, and the procedure for the selection of community representatives. These proposals must be approved by the Policy Council or Policy Committee.

(2) Policy Councils and Policy Committees must be comprised of two types of representatives: parents of currently enrolled children and community representatives. At least 51 percent of the members of these policy groups must be the parents of currently enrolled children (see 45 CFR 1306.3(h) for a definition of a Head Start parent).

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Rationale: Established procedures for electing parent members and selecting community representatives ensure consistency and fairness in the selection of policy group members. It is essential that families receiving services play an active role in making decisions about such services, and that the Head Start program reflects the community as a whole. *This rationale serves 45 CFR 1304.50(b)(1)-(7).*

Guidance: The following are suggestions for the governing body and policy group review of procedures for parent elections:

- Inform all parents of their vital role in program governance;
- Ensure that there is a fair method of nomination, either by parents nominating themselves or by other parents nominating them; nominations should be placed only with the consent of the nominee;
- Provide proportionate representation to parents in all program options and settings. If agencies operate programs serving different geographical regions or ethnic groups, to adopt policies to ensure that all groups being served will have an equal opportunity to serve on policy groups; and
- Consider using Parent Committees to facilitate the process of nominating and electing parents to the Policy Council or Policy Committee.

Parents are involved in every step of the process for selecting community representatives. Parents may be involved, for example, in discussions of the issues of interest and the types of community representatives needed in the coming year, as well as in developing methods for soliciting and screening potential candidates.

When nominating parent members or selecting community representatives to policy groups, consider:

- The willingness and ability of the potential members to contribute time and effort to the program and to serve as mentors and role models, as well as resource persons;
- The diversity of the group of individuals nominated, with consideration being given to the programs or program options in which the children of nominees are enrolled;
- The agency's goals and the information generated by the Community Assessment; and
- The desirability of having representation from the governing body to the policy group, in order to improve communication between the two groups.

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Performance Standard

1304.50(b)(1) — (b)(7)

(continued...)

(3) Community representatives must be drawn from the local community: businesses; public or private community, civic, and professional organizations; and others who are familiar with resources and services for low-income children and families, including, for example, the parents of formerly enrolled children.

(4) All parent members of Policy Councils or Policy Committees must stand for election or re-election annually. All community representatives also must be selected annually.

(5) Policy Councils and Policy Committees must limit the number of one-year terms any individual may serve on either body to a combined total of three terms.

(6) No grantee or delegate agency staff (or members of their immediate families) may serve on Policy Councils or Policy Committees except parents who occasionally substitute for regular Early Head Start or Head Start staff. In the case of Tribal grantees, this exclusion applies only to Tribal staff who work in areas directly related to or which directly impact upon any Early Head Start or Head Start administrative, fiscal or programmatic issues.

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Agencies and policy groups establish procedures for monitoring the three-year limit for both parents and community representatives. Agencies also develop volunteer opportunities that allow former policy group members to use their skills and experience to support program activities and operations. If agencies view and present the opportunity of serving on policy groups as a time to learn new skills and to gain self-confidence in a supportive environment, parents will understand the value of leaving a policy group after a few years, and of moving into other leadership roles in school organizations and in the larger community.

Personnel policies and bylaws address potential conflicts of interest between agency employment and membership on a Policy Council or Policy Committee. For example, agencies may consider developing policies that define “occasional substitute” and that determine at what point in the hiring process a candidate for a Head Start position must resign his or her membership from a policy group, that is, upon application or upon hiring.

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Performance Standard

1304.50(b)(1)—(b)(7)

(continued)

(7) Parents of children currently enrolled in all program options must be proportionately represented on established policy groups.

Performance Standard

1304.50(c) & (d)

(c) Policy group responsibilities - general.

At a minimum policy groups must be charged with the responsibilities described in paragraphs (d), (f), (g), and (h) of this section and repeated in appendix A of this section.

(d) The Policy Council or Policy Committee.

(1) Policy Councils and Policy Committees must work in partnership with key management staff and the governing body to develop, review, and approve or disapprove the following policies and procedures:

Rationale: Policy groups are established and charged with the specific functions outlined in paragraphs (d), (f), (g), and (h) of this section and in the chart, “Governance and Management Responsibilities,” in Appendix A of this section, in order to ensure that parents have the opportunity to be involved in shared decision-making. Policy groups provide a vehicle for parents to assume leadership roles in representing the collective interests of all families. *This rationale serves 45 CFR 1304.50(c), (d), (f), (g), (h), and Appendix A of this section.*

Guidance: Formal systems of communication and a thoughtful plan of ongoing training serve as a critical foundation to the development of effective working partnerships among the policy group, the governing body, and key management staff. To further support cooperative relationships, grantee and delegate agencies:

- Develop a consultation and approval process that is integrated between the policy group and governing body in order to expedite agency decision-making concerning the Head Start program;
- Establish written procedures for many of the policy approval functions of the governing body and the Policy Council or Policy Committee;
- Recognize that having organized and agreed upon practices reduces the time and effort needed to conduct business and reduces conflict between the groups;
- Recognize the role of staff in developing policy issues for consideration, discussion, and approval by both the policy group and the governing body; and
- Provide information to the policy groups in a timely manner in order to support effective decision-making.

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Performance Standard 1304.50(d)(1)(i)

(i) All funding applications and amendments to funding applications for Early Head Start and Head Start, including administrative services, prior to the submission of such applications to the grantee (in the case of Policy Committees) or to HHS (in the case of Policy Councils);

Performance Standard 1304.50(d)(1)(ii)

(ii) Procedures describing how the governing body and the appropriate policy group will implement shared decision-making;

Related Information: See function (I)(e) in the chart, “Governance and Management Responsibilities,” in Appendix A of this section.

Guidance: The agency’s planning process provides for the involvement of the governing body and the Policy Council or Policy Committee at strategic points during the development of all funding applications. The following are suggestions for involving grantee Policy Councils and delegate Policy Committees in a meaningful review of applications and related materials:

- Consider the funding application as part of an ongoing planning process, and involve members in the decision-making process early on, before the applications and related materials are drafted;
- Provide timely training on the interrelated nature of budgets and program planning (see 45 CFR 1304.52(k)(4)); and
- Provide frequent information on program progress and expenditures to create a climate in which agency decision-making is supported by adequate and ongoing information about agency activities (see 45 CFR 1304.51(h)(1) on financial and program reporting systems).

Related Information: See function (II)(c) in the chart, “Governance and Management Responsibilities,” in Appendix A of this section. Also see 45 CFR 1304.51(d) for information on communication between the Policy Council or Policy Committee and the governing body.

Guidance: Shared decision-making presents a variety of challenges. Suggested strategies for successful shared decision-making follow:

- Develop written procedures describing how the sharing of responsibilities across the functions specified in the chart in Appendix A of this section will be implemented;
- Ensure that the Policy Council, the Policy Committee, and the governing body receive regular and accurate information about program planning, policies, and agency operations through the communication system required by 45 CFR 1304.51(a); and
- Support open channels of communication between the grantee Policy Council or the delegate Policy Committee and the relevant governing body through such measures as
 - the exchange of minutes from meetings,
 - forums for open discussions between the groups,
 - joint meetings on specific issues or concerns,

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Performance Standard

1304.50(d)(1)(iii) & (iv)

(iii) Procedures for program planning in accordance with this part and the requirements of 45 CFR Part 1305.3;

(iv) The program's philosophy and long- and short-range program goals and objectives (see 45 CFR 1304.51(a) and 45 CFR 1305.3 for additional requirements regarding program planning);

- the participation of policy group members in staff meetings, and
- concurrent membership of selected individuals on both the governing body and policy group.

Related Information: See functions (I)(a) and (b) in the chart, "Governance and Management Responsibilities," in Appendix A of this section. Also, see 45 CFR 1304.51(a) on program planning, and specifically, 45 CFR 1304.51(a)(1)(ii) on formulating long-range goals and short-term objectives.

Guidance: Active policy group participation in program planning is critical to the continuous process of program improvement. The following are suggestions for involving Policy Councils and Policy Committees in program planning and in shaping the program's philosophy and long- and short-range goals and objectives:

- Ensure that members are aware of established agency time frames and procedures for program planning;
- Ensure that the Policy Council and Policy Committee participate in discussions concerning program vision;
- Establish subcommittees, as needed, to work with the director, the governing body, and appropriate staff on developing and analyzing program plans, long-range goals and short-term objectives for each program area;
- Obtain recommendations from Parent Committees;
- Provide input on relevant community issues;
- Review financial statements of the program and explore program resources to determine if adequate resources exist to support goals and objectives; and
- For Policy Councils of agencies with delegate agencies, ensure that the grantee agency's planning procedures describe how delegate agencies will integrate their planning activities into those of the grantee.

Performance Standard

1304.50(d)(1)(v)

(v) The selection of delegate agencies and their service areas (this regulation is binding on Policy Councils exclusively)(see 45 CFR 1301.33 and 45 CFR 1305.3(a) for additional requirements about delegate agency and service area selection, respectively);

Related Information: See functions (I)(c) in the chart, "Governance and Management Responsibilities," in Appendix A of this section.

Guidance: Approval of delegate agencies and their service areas is a shared decision of the Policy Council and the governing body. The provision of all information to both groups in a time-sequenced manner supports and facilitates the agency's decision-making processes and minimizes conflict as well.

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Performance Standard 1304.50(d)(1)(vi)

(vi) The composition of the Policy Council or the Policy Committee and the procedures by which policy group members are chosen;

Related Information: See functions (II)(a) in the chart, “Governance and Management Responsibilities,” in Appendix A of this section; and see 45 CFR 1304.50(b)(1) regarding policy group composition and formation.

Guidance: See cross-references under “Related Information” for this standard.

Performance Standard 1304.50(d)(1)(vii)

(vii) Criteria for defining recruitment, selection, and enrollment priorities, in accordance with the requirements of 45 CFR part 1305;

Related Information: See functions (I)(d) and (b) in the chart, “Governance and Management Responsibilities,” in Appendix A of this section.

Guidance: To facilitate the meaningful participation of policy group members in the periodic reviews of criteria for recruitment, selection, and enrollment priorities, policy group members need to be familiar with the requirements of 45 CFR 1305. They are encouraged to examine how the enrollment process is working in relationship to these requirements as well as their understanding of the program philosophy and the needs of children and families in the community.

Performance Standard 1304.50(d)(1)(viii)

(viii) The annual self-assessment of the grantee or delegate agency’s progress in carrying out the programmatic and fiscal intent of its grant application, including planning or other actions that may result from the review of the annual audit and findings from the Federal monitoring review (see 45 CFR 1304.51(i)(1) for additional requirements about the annual self-assessment);

Related Information: See functions (I)(g) and (b) in the chart, “Governance and Management Responsibilities,” in Appendix A of this section.

Guidance: As active participants in the ongoing process of annual self-assessment, as required under 45 CFR 1304.51(i), the Policy Council and Policy Committee consider the extent to which:

- The time schedule for self-assessment is reasonable;
- An appropriate assessment team has been formed, which includes parents and adequate representation from the community;
- The self-assessment team receives training on how to conduct an assessment;
- All team members are fully aware of the results of the last self-assessment, as well as of the Federal monitoring review;
- The measures used to conduct the self-assessment adequately evaluate the program;
- Findings from the self-assessment are reported to the Policy Council, Policy Committee, Parent Committees, and governing bodies; and
- Improvement plans are appropriate and feasible in terms of resources and time frames.

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Performance Standard

1304.50(d)(1)(ix)

(ix) Program personnel policies and subsequent changes to those policies, in accordance with 45 CFR 1301.31, including standards of conduct for program staff, consultants, and volunteers; and

Performance Standard

1304.50(d)(1)(x) & (xi)

(x) Decisions to hire or terminate the Early Head Start or Head Start director of the grantee or delegate agency; and

(xi) Decisions to hire or terminate any person who works primarily for the Early Head Start or Head Start program of the grantee or delegate agency.

Policy groups also review the agency's procedures to ensure that an annual independent audit is conducted, in accordance with 45 CFR 1301.31, and copies of the audit are available to them.

Related Information: See function (III)(a) in the chart, "Governance and Management Responsibilities," in Appendix A of this section; 45 CFR 1301.31 on personnel policies; and 45 CFR 1304.52(h) on standards of conduct for program staff, consultants, and volunteers.

Guidance: Policy groups are knowledgeable about personnel policies, because of their roles in approving or disapproving decisions to hire or terminate staff. Elements to consider during the review of personnel policies include:

- The effectiveness of the personnel policies in securing qualified staff who can provide appropriate services and who reflect the families served;
- The potential need for modifications or addendums to agency-wide personnel policies and procedures, so that program staff are treated in accordance with 45 CFR 1301.31; and
- The possible desirability of focusing the review on a particular area, such as benefits, recruitment, promotion procedures, salaries, job descriptions, or grievance procedures, during any given year.

Related Information: See functions (III)(b)-(e) in the chart, "Governance and Management Responsibilities," in Appendix A of this section; and see 45 CFR 1304.50(e)(3) on Parent Committee involvement in the recruitment and screening of Head Start employees.

Guidance: A method for including the Policy Council or Policy Committee in the approval or disapproval of decisions to hire or terminate individuals working for the program is essential. Some roles of the Policy Council or Policy Committee are to:

- Actively participate in the personnel process through such means as establishing a personnel committee that is charged with making recommendations to the full Policy Council or Policy Committee;
- Ensure that positions are openly advertised;
- Work with Parent Committees to implement the recruitment, selection, and approval process;
- Encourage parents to understand the employment process and to apply for jobs for which they are qualified; and

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Performance Standard

1304.50(d)(2)(i)

(2) In addition, Policy Councils and Policy Committees must perform the following functions directly:

(i) Serve as a link to the Parent Committees, grantee and delegate agency governing bodies, public and private organizations, and the communities they serve;

Performance Standard

1304.50(d)(2)(ii)

(ii) Assist Parent Committees in communicating with parents enrolled in all program options to ensure that they understand their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in Early Head Start and Head Start and to encourage their participation in the program;

- Participate in the approval process, without taking responsibility for directly hiring or terminating individuals, because this is a management function.

To avoid barriers to hiring staff on a timely basis, migrant programs and other programs with geographical constraints develop guidelines for securing input from policy group members who are not living in the local area at the time of the hiring process.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.51(b) regarding communication with the community.

Guidance: Members of policy groups play an active role in listening to parents and community agencies by:

- Supporting parents in being effective spokespeople in the community by providing training in such areas as communication and listening skills;
- Being members of grantee and delegate agency governing bodies and other community boards in order to share information about services for children and their families;
- Reporting back to parents, keeping them informed about policy group actions through Parent Committee meetings, program newsletters, bulletin boards, and one-on-one contacts;
- Ensuring that staff provide basic information, such as copies of the *Head Start Program Performance Standards*, bylaws, notices, and general information, to all interested parties;
- Being familiar with resources in the community;
- Fostering positive community relationships; and
- Becoming advocates and leaders at local, State, Tribal, and Federal levels.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.40(d)(3) on parent participation in the program, and 45 CFR 1304.51(c) on communication with families.

Guidance: The Policy Council and Policy Committee play important leadership roles in working with the Parent Committees to encourage all parents to participate in the activities of the Parent Committees and policy groups, as well as in other program activities. Effective methods for communicating the importance of parent participation vary, depending upon the parents and program. One suggestion is for members of these groups to work with staff in developing a handbook addressing parental rights, responsibilities, and opportunities.

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Performance Standard 1304.50(d)(2)(iii)

(iii) Assist Parent Committees in planning, coordinating, and organizing program activities for parents with the assistance of staff, and ensuring that funds set aside from program budgets are used to support parent activities;

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.50(e) on Parent Committee responsibilities.

Guidance: Parent Committees are allowed broad latitude when planning, coordinating, and organizing activities. Grantee Policy Councils and delegate Policy Committees, as well as staff, are available to support the Parent Committees in planning these activities, as needed, by:

- Encouraging parents to discuss all parent activities that the program currently sponsors and to assess the effectiveness of those activities;
- Obtaining input from parents about what they would like to do in the program;
- Assisting in securing funding, personnel, and other resources to support desired activities;
- Discussing when to use parent activity funds to help carry out proposed activities; and
- Encouraging Parent Committees to take responsibility for submitting a recommended budget for parent activity funds for the following year to the Policy Council or Policy Committee.

Performance Standard 1304.50(d)(2)(iv)

(iv) Assist in recruiting volunteer services from parents, community residents, and community organizations, and assist in the mobilization of community resources to meet identified needs; and

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.41(a)(3) for information on volunteer outreach.

Guidance: In order to assist in recruiting volunteers and in mobilizing community resources, Policy Councils and Policy Committees:

- Work with the Parent Committees to encourage parent participation;
- Identify how volunteers and community resources can extend program services;
- Assess the types and quality of volunteer opportunities;
- Suggest where to look for community volunteers and resources;
- Supplement agency volunteer outreach efforts; and
- Collaborate with local foundations and other organizations to mobilize resources.

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Performance Standard 1304.50(d)(2)(v)

(v) Establish and maintain procedures for working with the grantee or delegate agency to resolve community complaints about the program.

Performance Standard 1304.50(e)(1), (2) & (3)

(e) Parent Committee.

The Parent Committee must carry out at least the following minimum responsibilities:

- (1) Advise staff in developing and implementing local program policies, activities, and services;
- (2) Plan, conduct, and participate in informal as well as formal programs and activities for parents and staff; and
- (3) Within the guidelines established by the governing body, Policy Council, or Policy Committee, participate in the recruitment and screening of Early Head Start and Head Start employees.

Related Information: See function (II)(e) in the chart, “Governance and Management Responsibilities,” in Appendix A of this section; and see 45 CFR 1304.51(b) regarding communication with the community.

Guidance: The following are suggested procedures for fostering good community relations and resolving community complaints:

- Foster positive community relations by being proactive with local agencies;
- Conduct outreach to community agencies or individuals to solicit constructive suggestions for quality improvement;
- Establish a follow-up process to respond to all community inquiries; and
- Develop procedures that describe specific steps in the process for addressing community concerns and for resolving complaints and make copies of such procedures available widely.

Rationale: Parent Committees provide all parents with a broad range of opportunities to participate in the shared decision-making process.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.40, Family Partnerships, sections (a)(4), (a)(5), (d), (e) and (f) for information on parent involvement, parent education programs, and other interactions with parents.

Guidance: Parent Committees contribute to program development and operations in many ways, including, but not limited to:

- Electing policy group representatives;
- Becoming involved in the development of the program’s curriculum and approach to child development and education (see 45 CFR 1304.21(a)(2)(i) and 45 CFR 1304.40(e)(1));
- Designing program activities planned for various program settings, group socialization experiences, and weekly home visits;
- Locating resources to carry out program activities;
- Bringing parents together to share common interests;
- Working with the Policy Council or Policy Committee to support program development and implementation; and
- Planning programs and activities for parents and staff. Parent Committees are encouraged to discover and discuss what parents would like to do and what they would like to learn; and to discuss how these ideas can be carried out with or without staff assistance.

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In addition, Parent Committee members play a vital role in the recruitment and screening of employees. Within the guidelines established by the Policy Council or Policy Committee, members of Parent Committees:

- Assist agencies to determine how and where to recruit potential employees;
- Help determine the selection criteria; and
- Participate in the interview process.

Performance Standard 1304.50(f)

(f) Policy Council, Policy Committee, and Parent Committee reimbursement.

Grantee and delegate agencies must enable low-income members to participate fully in their group responsibilities by providing, if necessary, reimbursements for reasonable expenses incurred by the members.

Performance Standard 1304.50(g)(1) & (2)

(g) Governing body responsibilities.

(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must have written policies that define the roles and responsibilities of the governing body members and that inform them of the management procedures and functions necessary to implement a high quality program.

(2) Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that appropriate internal controls are established and implemented to safeguard Federal funds in accordance with 45 CFR 1301.13.

Guidance: Reimbursements to low-income members for reasonable expenses in fulfilling their group responsibilities are provided by the grantee or delegate agency from grant funds. Agency procedures and policy group bylaws may contain definitions of necessary reimbursement and reasonable expenses, which may include:

- travel, lodging, and per diem expenses, in line with agency policies for staff travel,
- child care expenses, and
- other expenses deemed appropriate.

Related Information: See functions (II)(b),(f) and (g) of the chart, "Governance and Management Responsibilities," in Appendix A of this section; 45 CFR 1304.50(d)(1)(ii) about shared decision-making between the governing body and the appropriate policy group; 45 CFR 1304.51(h)(1) concerning financial reporting systems; and 45 CFR 1304.52(k)(4) about training.

Guidance: The responsibilities of the governing body include, but are not limited to:

- Ensuring compliance with Federal laws and regulations, including the *Head Start Program Performance Standards*, as well as applicable State, Tribal, and local laws and regulations, including laws defining the nature and operations of the governing body;
- Understanding the Head Start philosophy and the role of parents and the Policy Council or Policy Committee in the Head Start shared governance structure, including the need to secure approval of policies and procedures by the grantee Policy Council or delegate Policy Committee;
- Being fiscally and legally accountable for overseeing the Head Start program, including taking general responsibility for guiding and directing planning, general

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procedures, and human resources management, as outlined in the chart, “Governance and Management Responsibilities” in Appendix A to this section; and

- Ensuring that their agency develops an internal control structure to
 - safeguard Federal funds,
 - comply with laws and regulations that have an impact on financial statements,
 - detect or prevent noncompliance, and
 - receive audit reports and direct and monitor staff implementation of corrective actions.

In addition, members of the governing body support the program by:

- Identifying and developing resources to augment Federal funds;
- Visiting or volunteering in classrooms and other program activities;
- Becoming involved in the self-assessment process;
- Initiating joint training opportunities with the Policy Council or Policy Committee;
- Establishing mentoring programs which match governing body members with members of the policy groups or other interested individuals; and
- Obtaining feedback from parents and community members about the quality of services.

Performance Standard 1304.50(h)

(h) Internal dispute resolution.

Each grantee and delegate agency and Policy Council or Policy Committee jointly must establish written procedures for resolving internal disputes, including impasse procedures, between the governing body and policy group.

Guidance: The governing body and relevant policy group of each grantee or delegate agency have the responsibility for writing and following their own procedures for resolving internal disputes. It is important to develop and formally adopt dispute resolution policies on a proactive basis. Therefore, agencies:

- Consider using community resources to assist in developing resolution procedures and in resolving disputes;
- Set procedures for seeking outside assistance from community-based organizations for the negotiation, mediation or arbitration of disputes that threaten to disrupt services to children and families; and
- Ensure that new policy group members are made aware of the process.

Program Governance

Performance Standard
Appendix A to 1304.50
Governance and
Management Responsibilities.
See chart on following pages.

Related Information: See paragraphs (c), (d), (f), (g), and (h) of this section, as well as 45 CFR 1304.51(a) and 45 CFR 1304.52 (a) and (c) for further guidance on governance and management responsibilities.

Guidance: The chart, “Governance and Management Responsibilities,” Appendix A to 45 CFR 1304.50, restates the responsibilities and outlines the interactions of governing bodies, policy groups, and agency management staff.

Knowledge of the connections between all elements represented by the chart is critical to understanding the responsibilities of each individual or group. The chart provides a “bridge” linking the governance structure described in 45 CFR 1304.50 with the management functions described in 45 CFR 1304.51 and 45 CFR 1304.52.

To effectively implement shared decision-making, members of governing bodies, policy groups, and agency management teams adopt a holistic view of the complete system of program design and management and of how this system is integrated with the entire set of *Head Start Program Performance Standards*.

Program Governance



Program Governance



Program Governance



Management Systems and Procedures

1304.51

Management Systems and Procedures

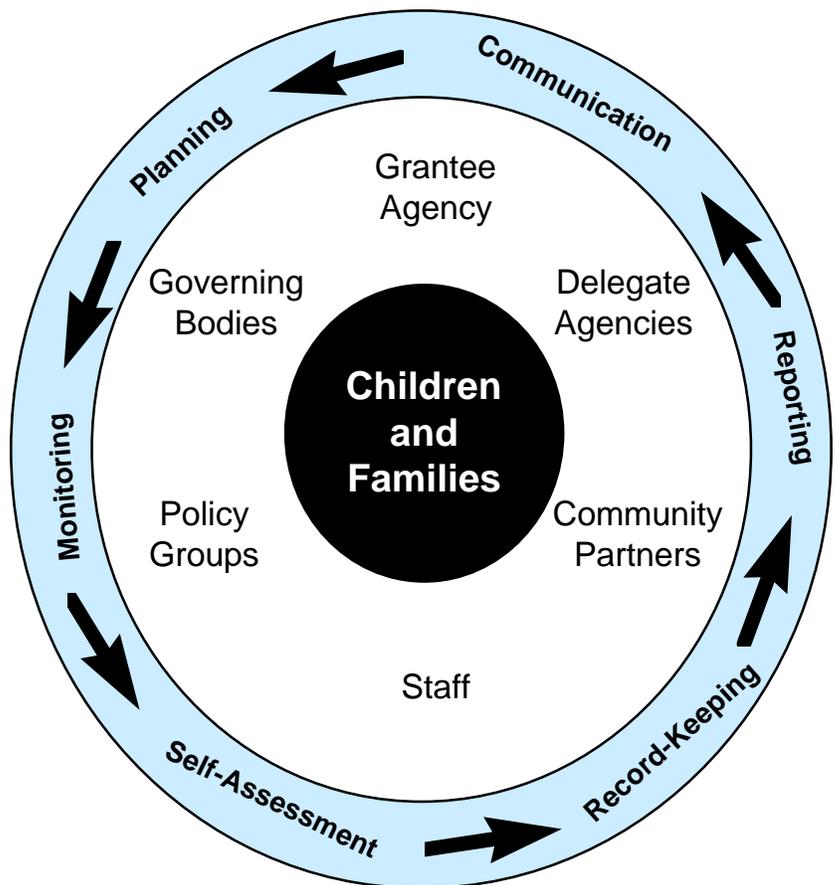
- (a) Program Planning
- (b) Communications - General
- (c) Communication with Families
- (d) Communication with Governing Bodies and Policy Groups
- (e) Communication Among Staff
- (f) Communication with Delegate Agencies
- (g) Record-keeping Systems
- (h) Reporting Systems
- (i) Program Self-Assessment and Monitoring

INTRODUCTION TO 1304.51

The objective of 45 CFR 1304.51 is to establish dynamic and cohesive management systems that support continuous improvement and foster commitment to providing the highest level of services to children and families in accordance with legislation, regulations, and policies.

Management systems and procedures are part of each program's on-going and organized approach to managing Head Start services. They are all connected and inter-related with each impacted by the others and all influencing and influenced by program services. The graphic below is intended to convey this message. With all of these systems, the emphasis is as much on the process involved in their implementation as it is on the product that may come from implementation.

The standards in this section are written to allow grantees great flexibility in designing the approach that will work best in their program and community. Through designing and implementing effective systems for program planning, communication, record-keeping, reporting, and program self-assessment and monitoring, each Head Start program has greater ability to integrate the various functions of Head Start and provide high quality services to children and families.



Management Systems and Procedures

Performance Standard

1304.51(a)(1)(i)-(iii)

(a) Program Planning.

(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must develop and implement a systematic, ongoing process of program planning that includes consultation with the program's governing body, policy groups, and program staff, and with other community organizations that serve Early Head Start and Head Start or other low-income families with young children. Program planning must include:

(i) An assessment of community strengths, needs and resources through completion of the Community Assessment, in accordance with the requirements of 45 CFR 1305.3;

(ii) The formulation of both multi-year (long-range) program goals and short-term program and financial objectives that address the findings of the Community Assessment, are consistent with the philosophy of Early Head Start and Head Start, and reflect the findings of the program's annual self-assessment; and

(iii) The development of written plan(s) for implementing services in each of the program areas covered by this part (e.g., Early Childhood Development and Health Services, Family and Community Partnerships, and Program Design and Management). (See the requirements of 45 CFR Parts 1305, 1306 and 1308.)

Rationale: Program planning occurs in a continuous cycle, involving key members of the Head Start community. Planning, therefore, is critical for setting clear program goals and for defining an organized approach to program services driven by the specific priorities of the community. *This rationale serves 45 CFR 1304.51(a)(1)(i)-(iii).*

Related Information: Many planning activities are mandated by regulations, including:

- completion of the Community Assessment (see 45 CFR 1305.3 and 45 CFR 1304.51(a)(1)(i)),
- formulation of long-range program goals and short-term program and financial objectives (see 45 CFR 1304.51(a)(1)(ii)),
- involvement of policy groups in formulating long-range goals and short-term objectives (see 45 CFR 1304.50(d)(1)(iv)),
- development of written plan(s) for implementing services in all program areas (see 45 CFR 1304.51(a)(1)(iii)), and
- completion of program self-assessments and agency and delegate monitoring activities (see 45 CFR 1304.51(i)).

Also see 45 CFR 1304.50(d)(iii) and 45 CFR 1304.51(a)(2), on involving policy groups in program planning.

Guidance: Program planning is an active and dynamic process in which ideas and strategies are shared, discussed, and updated as local circumstances and the needs of children and families change. Planning involves key members of the Head Start community, including staff, parents, governing body, policy group, advisory committee members and community representatives; and any plan represents the viewpoints of persons affiliated with all program options and all agency locations. The planning process also results in a written plan or a series of plans that describe an agency's approach to serving children and families. This plan or series of plans will impact all program products and processes so that all aspects of the program reflect an integrated approach to services.

Planning strategies include:

- Orienting participants to the mission, goals, and philosophy of the agency and the Head Start program; and
- Scheduling times for planning that are appropriate and convenient for those involved, paying special attention to the kinds of accommodations that parents may require in order to participate.

Planning begins with the Community Assessment, through which agencies collect data about community strengths, needs, and resources. Agencies use these data to make decisions about the

Management Systems and Procedures

types of services they will provide for children and families. Examples of decisions that agencies make on the basis of the Community Assessment include:

- the program options and settings the agency will provide, such as the center-based, home-based, combination or family child care locations, and the hours of operation,
- the organizational structure it will use to implement these options,
- the kinds of staff skills and experience the agency needs, including the staff composition necessary to reflect the languages, cultures, and heritage of members of the community, and
- the services that the agency will provide directly and those it will provide through community collaboration and referrals.

Agencies consider the ways in which they could collaborate with other local service providers in conducting the Community Assessment and in interpreting its results. For example, agencies could conduct joint, initial Community Assessments or annual updates with other organizations, such as child care agencies and other organizations serving young children and their families. They could also meet with representatives of such organizations to discuss the roles each agency plays in meeting identified community interests and need or to leverage local resources.

Goal setting is an ongoing, dynamic process that stems from the Community Assessment and helps to establish agreed-upon priorities about what the agency expects to accomplish in the short- and long-term. Once established, goals and objectives are periodically reviewed and revised to respond to changes in the community.

It is helpful to distinguish between long-range program goals and short-term program and financial objectives in the planning process. Program goals are usually broad statements of what the program wants to accomplish in an overall sense and in each of the program areas. Program and financial objectives include specific steps that need to be taken to accomplish the long-range goals. The target date for achieving short-term objectives is often one year or less.

A written plan or set of plans is an outcome of a process of program planning that documents the agency's strategies for implementing the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* and other applicable regulations, along with its own goals and objectives. For example, an agency may choose to prepare a single "strategic plan" which comprehensively discusses the results of the planning process. Another agency may choose to write separate plans for each service area. Agencies are encouraged to "tailor" plans to their own requirements. In addition, the outcomes of the planning process may include changes in grantee procedures (e.g.,

Management Systems and Procedures

Community Assessment, recruitment) or documents (e.g., statement of goals and objectives, curriculum for children).

The process for developing the written plan(s) can vary widely from agency to agency. However, the process invariably includes developing a strategy for involving parents, staff, and policy group members in the development of the plan or plans.

As needed, consultants may be called upon to assist with preparing specific sections of the plan. Staff also can consult with the Health Services Advisory Committee in developing sections of the plan dealing with Early Childhood Development and Health Services.

Performance Standard

1304.51(a)(2)

(2) All written plans for implementing services, and the progress in meeting them, must be reviewed by the grantee or delegate agency staff and reviewed and approved by the Policy Council or Policy Committee at least annually, and must be revised and updated as needed.

Rationale: Policy group members are involved in reviewing program plan(s) to ensure they adequately reflect the needs and concerns of enrolled children and their families.

Guidance: Written plans are meant to be “working documents.” Therefore, a review of plans and agency progress toward meeting the objectives of those plans could be a regularly scheduled topic at staff and policy group meetings. Examples of strategies for involving staff and policy group members in the regular review of plans include:

- Introducing staff and policy group members to program plans through small group orientation sessions;
- Providing updated information about program plans in regular bulletins or newsletters; and
- Organizing program staff and policy group members into committees or subcommittees charged with making necessary revisions or updates to the program plans or selected portions of those plans.

Performance Standard

1304.51(b)

(b) Communications - general.

Grantee and delegate agencies must establish and implement systems to ensure that timely and accurate information is provided to parents, policy groups, staff, and the general community.

Rationale: A communication system ensures the exchange of information that allows individuals to become fully involved in program activities and to make group decisions that promote a quality program. To be effective, information flows to and from parents, staff, governing bodies, delegate agencies and community groups. *This rationale serves 45 CFR 1304.51(b)-(f).*

Related Information: More specific guidance on communication with parents, governing bodies and policy groups, staff, and delegate agencies is provided in 45 CFR 1304.51(c). For information about communicating with community partners, see 45 CFR 1304.41(a).

Guidance: When establishing systems of communication, agencies consider the following issues:

- What information is important to members of the Head Start community;

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- When people need to receive information;
- How the information should be communicated; and
- Whether communication flows both to and from parents, governing bodies, delegate agencies, policy groups, staff, and the general community in a timely fashion.

Communication comes in many forms: informal and formal, written and face-to-face, verbal and non-verbal, textual and graphic. Strategies used to communicate often can be as important as the content of the message being communicated.

Performance Standard 1304.51(c)(1) & (2)

(c) Communication with families.

(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that effective two-way comprehensive communications between staff and parents are carried out on a regular basis throughout the program year.

(2) Communication with parents must be carried out in the parents' primary or preferred language or through an interpreter, to the extent feasible.

Related Information: Head Start regulations require effective communication with families in a language that each family understands (see 45 CFR 1304.52(b)(4)), and the conduct of specific activities that enhance staff-parent communication, including:

- opportunities for engaging in a family partnership agreement process (see 45 CFR 1304.40(a)(2)),
- home visits involving parents, home visitors or teachers, and, as appropriate, the enrolled child, and other staff members (see 45 CFR 1306.33 and 45 CFR 1304.40(i)),
- staff-parent conferences conducted as needed, but at least twice a year (see 45 CFR 1304.40(e)(5)),
- representation by parents and staff on Individualized Education Program (IEP) development teams (see 45 CFR 1308.19), and
- ongoing communication with parents regarding follow-ups that address identified health needs (see 45 CFR 1304.20(c)(1)).

See 45 CFR 1304.40(e)(3) for additional information on communicating with parents regularly, and 45 CFR 1304.50(d)(2)(ii), on policy group and Parent Committee communications with parents.

Guidance: The communication system includes opportunities for agencies to share and receive information on program activities, goals, and philosophy, as well as opportunities for parents to share and receive feedback on their child. Such communication is carried out in a variety of ways, such as:

- orientation activities,
- regular, informal telephone or face-to-face conversations, or notes in the parents' preferred language, and
- newsletters.

To make communication efforts more effective, the agency communicates, to the extent possible, in the parent's preferred language. Examples of ways to communicate with parents in their primary or preferred language include:

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Performance Standard 1304.51(d)

(d) Communication with governing bodies and policy groups.

Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that the following information is provided regularly to their grantee and delegate governing bodies and to members of their policy groups:

- (1) Procedures and timetables for program planning;
- (2) Policies, guidelines, and other communications from HHS;
- (3) Program and financial reports; and
- (4) Program plans, policies, procedures, and Early Head Start and Head Start grant applications.

Performance Standard 1304.51(e)

(e) Communication among staff.

Grantee and delegate agencies must have mechanisms for regular communication among all program staff to facilitate quality outcomes for children and families.

- Collaborating with local community organizations, such as ethnic associations and refugee or immigrant aid agencies, for assistance in communicating with parents; and
- Drawing upon parents and members of the local community to obtain bilingual staff and interpretation services and to ensure sensitivity to family culture and heritage (see 45 CFR 1304.52(g)(2)).

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.50(d)(1)(ii) for information on communication between governing bodies and policy groups.

Guidance: As a part of the communication system, agencies use strategies to ensure that members of governing bodies and policy groups understand the information specified in this Performance Standard and its implications. Strategies include:

- Providing new members of governing bodies and policy groups with an orientation packet, as described in the guidance to 45 CFR 1304.52(k)(4), and with the appropriate training necessary to understand and participate in collective decision-making;
- Ensuring that policy group and governing body members have adequate preparation time to review and “digest” material they receive from the agency; and
- Facilitating discussions and an open exchange of ideas on program plans, policies, procedures, and reports at the meetings of policy groups and governing bodies.

Guidance: An effective staff communication system supports the ongoing exchange of information among staff, is focused on quality of services, and represents the best interests of children and families. Effective formal and informal communication methods include:

- Establishing a supportive climate in which open and frequent staff communication is encouraged and appreciated, so that staff can freely share their ideas and concerns and provide constructive feedback to their colleagues and supervisors;

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Performance Standard 1304.51(f)

(f) Communication with delegate agencies.

Grantees must have a procedure for ensuring that delegate agency governing bodies, Policy Committees, and all staff receive all regulations, policies, and other pertinent communications in a timely manner.

Performance Standard 1304.51(g)

(g) Record-keeping systems.

Grantee and delegate agencies must establish and maintain efficient and effective record-keeping systems to provide accurate and timely information regarding children, families, and staff and must ensure appropriate confidentiality of this information.

- Considering various ways that regularly scheduled staff meetings at all levels of the agency can be used to facilitate staff input and discussions; and
- Utilizing computer technology to support and enhance staff communication and to minimize geographical constraints —through electronic bulletin board systems, electronic mail, and Internet access.

Guidance: It is the responsibility of each grantee agency to design procedures for ensuring that delegate agencies receive, understand, and respond to pertinent information in a timely manner. Strategies to accomplish this include:

- Bringing representatives from the delegate agencies together when new regulations, plans, policies, program instructions or information memoranda are released by the Head Start Bureau or the grantee agency;
- Providing regular informational meetings, newsletters, a central library of resources, and joint staff training and technical assistance;
- Designating regular grantee staff liaisons to delegate agencies; and
- Making use of current technologies (such as conference calling, electronic bulletin boards, and E-mail) that minimize communication constraints related to distance.

Rationale: Effective record-keeping and reporting systems provide the information needed to individualize programs for children and families, to monitor the quality of program services, to assist in program planning and management, and to ensure the delivery of quality services. These systems also provide documentation that agencies are meeting program requirements and other Federal, Tribal, State, and local laws. To ensure that privacy rights are respected in these systems, safeguards are developed and maintained. *This rationale serves 45 CFR 1304.51(g)-(h).*

Related Information: Agencies are required to develop written confidentiality policies to ensure that all staff are aware of and implement those policies correctly (see 45 CFR 1304.52(h)(1)(ii)).

Regulation 45 CFR 1304.41(c)(1)(i) requires agencies to coordinate with schools and other agencies to ensure that relevant child records are transferred to and from other child placements or schools, which includes transfers among Head Start migrant programs and centers.

State or Tribal law may dictate the length of time that certain records are maintained; and recipients of Federal grants are

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required to maintain their records, in principle, for a minimum of three years.

Guidance: In building an effective record-keeping system, agencies consider what information they need to collect, who needs to receive it, and how it should be stored. The following factors are considered when establishing and maintaining record-keeping systems:

- **Use of standard forms.** Standard forms simplify information collection and record keeping, if they are designed in a way that minimizes unnecessary writing.
- **Recording and storage of useful information.** Staff are encouraged to review periodically the usefulness of recorded information and to avoid the unnecessary paperwork and files associated with information duplication.
- **Confidentiality of information.** The agency's policy on confidentiality of information incorporates the following:
 - Controlling access to files and prohibiting parents and volunteers from reviewing any records other than their own;
 - Developing family permission forms for the release of information to and from agencies or individuals, and storing forms signed by the responsible adult; and
 - Familiarizing relevant staff with all laws governing confidentiality policies, particularly as they pertain to interagency collaborations in which information about children and families is shared.
- **Use of computer technology.** If used properly, computers allow staff to:
 - Share information readily across wide geographical distances;
 - Quickly aggregate financial or program data for use by program planners or decision makers;
 - Generate and produce standard forms used regularly by agencies; and
 - Up-date, store, and retrieve program records quickly and easily.
- **Transfer of records.** When children and families transition from Head Start, records go with them with parental consent. Especially among migrant programs, where grantees assist with the rapid transfer of records to the families' next destination, effective record-keeping systems ensure a smooth, timely transfer.

Management Systems and Procedures

Performance Standard

1304.51(h)(1)

(h) Reporting systems.

Grantee and delegate agencies must establish and maintain efficient and effective reporting systems that:

(1) Generate periodic reports of financial status and program operations in order to control program quality, maintain program accountability, and advise governing bodies, policy groups, and staff of program progress; and

Performance Standard

1304.51(h)(2)

(2) Generate official reports for Federal, State, and local authorities, as required by applicable law.

Guidance: The following are strategies to consider when designing and implementing effective and efficient reporting systems:

- **Identification of critical reports.** Staff are encouraged to consult with each of their funding sources and with their State and local licensing agencies for complete lists of reports that agencies may be required to produce in areas such as personnel qualifications, facilities and property, and health, safety, and sanitation. In addition, management staff may wish to consult with governing bodies and policy groups to determine the discretionary reports that will allow those groups and staff to most effectively plan and manage the program and its finances.
- **Report content and structure.** Agencies produce reports that are clear, accurate, and readable. These reports will help staff, governing bodies, and policy groups with varying levels of experience and education to make informed decisions concerning the program.
- **Frequency of reports.** Establishing a time schedule for the release of reports allows staff, governing bodies, and policy groups to schedule meetings when up-to-date information is available.

Guidance: Examples of official reports that are likely to be required of local agencies include:

- reports required by the Head Start Bureau, HHS or other offices, including Program Information Reports (PIRs), financial audit reports, and reports of financial status and expenditures (SF-269s),
- annual returns filed by independent non-profit agencies with the Federal Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and, in some States, with State agencies,
- forms providing information on payroll taxes, such as Social Security (FICA) taxes, withholding of income taxes, Federal unemployment (FUTA) and State unemployment taxes,
- reports of meals served, menus, and training provided for the USDA meal programs,
- program enrollment reports, including attendance reports for children whose care is partially subsidized by another public agency, and
- other reports required by Federal, State, Tribal, or local law.

Management Systems and Procedures

Performance Standard

1304.51(i)(1)

(i) Program self-assessment and monitoring.

(1) At least once each program year, with the consultation and participation of the policy groups and, as appropriate, other community members, grantee and delegate agencies must conduct a self-assessment of their effectiveness and progress in meeting program goals and objectives and in implementing Federal regulations.

Rationale: As a method of measuring agency accomplishments, strengths, and weaknesses, self-assessment allows for the continuous improvement of program plans and service delivery methods; and for the enhancement of program quality and timely responses to issues that arise in the community, the program, and among enrolled families. The self-assessment process also provides an opportunity for involving parents and community stakeholders, and for making staff more aware of how the program is viewed by its consumers. *This rationale serves 45 CFR 1304.51(i)(1)-(3).*

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.50(d)(1)(viii) for information on policy group participation in the annual self-assessment.

Guidance: A critical element to a successful self-assessment is the ongoing participation and oversight of the policy groups. After considering the following suggested steps, each grantee and delegate agency establishes its own structured self-assessment process:

- **Specify a time schedule.** As part of the continuous cycle of program planning, self-assessments are scheduled in a way that responds flexibly to the agency's need for review and evaluation.
- **Select a self-assessment team.** Depending upon the specific focus of the self-assessment, consider including staff, policy group members, parents, representatives from community organizations, governing body members, and staff from other Head Start agencies on the self-assessment team. Staff may participate in reviews of program areas outside their own area of responsibility to build a broader base of staff expertise, perspective, and understanding of how the organization works as a team.
- **Provide training about the self-assessment process.** Agencies are encouraged to provide all members of the Head Start community with information concerning the purposes of the self-assessment, the agency's preferred methods of accomplishing an assessment, and the agency's policy on confidentiality. Members of the self-assessment team can be assigned specific roles and be trained for those roles.
- **Assess the program** by collecting information about program practices, and comparing that information with the goals and objectives established in program plans and with the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* and other relevant Federal, Tribal, State, and local regulations. All aspects of program operations can thus be evaluated. Agencies are encouraged to draw upon a variety of monitoring tools, in addition to the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* and monitoring instruments used by the Federal government, to help them with their task.

Management Systems and Procedures

Performance Standard

1304.51(i)(2)

(2) Grantees must establish and implement procedures for the ongoing monitoring of their own Early Head Start and Head Start operations, as well as those of each of their delegate agencies, to ensure that these operations effectively implement Federal regulations.

- **Analyze and share findings.** Agencies are encouraged to analyze assessment findings and to openly discuss what the data have to say about agency strengths, weaknesses, and accomplishments with staff, policy groups, and governing bodies. Grantee agencies also may consider sharing self-assessment findings with Regional Office staff, before Federal reviews, in order to improve linkages between self-assessment and Federal monitoring processes.
- **Develop and implement action plans.** Strong action plans identify the specific steps that agencies need to take in order to build on program strengths and to implement the changes necessary to correct areas of weakness. Plans indicate where responsibility for change lies and the time frames in which change should occur.
- **Make evaluations ongoing.** The impact of proposed changes are evaluated during subsequent self-assessments, to ensure that the results of the changes are beneficial to the program and to the children and families served.

Rationale: Ongoing, regular monitoring by grantee agencies helps to assess grantee and delegate operations, to ensure that necessary steps are being taken to meet Federal regulations as well as local goals and objectives, and to ensure that appropriate interventions are taken in a timely manner. Ongoing monitoring also helps to build trust and strong partnerships between grantee and delegate agencies, which allow them to share best practices and program strengths and to support one another's progress toward program excellence.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.51(h)(1) concerning the maintenance of reporting systems to control program quality and maintain program accountability. See 45 CFR 1304.51(d) and (e) on the maintenance of regular and effective communication with governing bodies and policy groups and among staff.

Guidance: Internal grantee monitoring is an ongoing process in which an agency analyzes program reports, self-assessment findings, written plans, and other important documents to determine whether its program of services and fiscal operations are in compliance with Federal regulations.

Grantees with delegate agencies are encouraged to use their own monitoring responsibilities as an opportunity to build cooperative relationships between grantee and delegate agency staff. Strategies that help agencies build these interdependent relationships include:

- Holding regular meetings between the staff of each agency, to decide how the groups can best work together to support one another's program goals and services;

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Performance Standard 1304.51(i)(3)

(3) Grantees must inform delegate agency governing bodies of any deficiencies in delegate agency operations identified in the monitoring review and must help them develop plans, including timetables, for addressing identified problems.

- Ensuring the participation of grantee agency staff and parents on the self-assessment teams of delegate agencies, as well as on those of their own programs; and
- Providing training and technical assistance in areas identified by grantee or delegate agency staff or governing bodies.

Related Information: A process for appeals to grantees by current or prospective delegate agencies is established in 45 CFR Part 1303, Subpart C; 45 CFR 1304.60, and 45 CFR 1304.61.

Guidance: In order to assist delegate agencies' governing bodies in their oversight responsibilities, grantee agencies:

- Develop strong cooperative partnerships with delegate agencies that allow grantees to support delegates' efforts to reach their goals and to both implement quality services and identify problems early (see 45 CFR 1301.51(i)(2) for additional information);
- Establish mentoring relationships so that well-performing delegate agencies assist those who are performing less well;
- Promptly inform delegate agency governing bodies of any problems identified through the grantee agency's work with and review of the delegate agency programs or through the Federal monitoring process;
- Enter into dialogue with delegate agencies to address any disagreements about identified deficiencies;
- Work with delegate agencies to set priorities for addressing areas of deficiency in delegate agency operations, including the development of the quality improvement plan (QIP);
- Establish schedules to ensure that deficiencies in delegate agency operations are corrected in a timely manner; and
- Specify the consequences of deficiencies that are not corrected and mutual grantee and delegate agency responsibilities for correcting them.

1304.52

Human Resources Management

- (a) Organizational Structure
- (b) Staff Qualifications - General
- (c) Early Head Start or Head Start Director Qualifications
- (d) Qualifications of Content Area Experts
- (e) Home Visitor Qualifications
- (f) Infant and Toddler Staff Qualifications
- (g) Classroom Staffing and Home Visitors
- (h) Standards of Conduct
- (i) Staff Performance Appraisals
- (j) Staff and Volunteer Health
- (k) Training and Development

Performance Standard

1304.52(a)(1)

- (a) Organizational structure.
 - (1) Grantee and delegate agencies must establish and maintain an organizational structure that supports the accomplishment of program objectives. This structure must address the major functions and responsibilities assigned to each staff position and must provide evidence of adequate mechanisms for staff supervision and support.

INTRODUCTION TO 1304.52

The objective of 45 CFR 1304.52 is to ensure that grantee and delegate agencies recruit and select dynamic, well-qualified staff who possess the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to provide high quality, comprehensive, and culturally sensitive services to children and families in the program. Striving for continuous improvement, Head Start offers staff, as well as consultants, volunteers, and members of policy groups and governing bodies, opportunities and support for ongoing training and development.

Head Start is committed to establishing a learning environment in which children, parents, and staff can teach and learn from one another. This section discusses the organizational structure of agencies, staff qualifications, classroom staffing and home visitor requirements, staff standards of conduct, staff performance appraisals, and staff and volunteer health requirements. Training and development for staff, consultants, volunteers, and members of policy groups and governing bodies also are discussed.

Rationale: An organizational structure describes how staff and functions are organized to fulfill the program's mission and goals. That structure also may describe how Head Start fits into a larger agency. A well-developed organizational structure establishes clear lines of communication and supervision, helps individuals understand their jobs, and assists staff in the smooth running of the agency.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1301.31 for requirements regarding personnel policies, and 45 CFR 1306.20 for requirements concerning staffing patterns. See 45 CFR 1304.50, Appendix A: "Governance and Management Responsibilities," for further information regarding the functions and responsibilities of Head Start policy groups.

Guidance: A grantee or delegate agency's organizational structure may be formulated in many different ways, depending upon the results of the agency's planning process and other requirements set by Federal, State, Tribal, or local regulations. To define their own structure, staff may look first at how Head Start fits into the larger agency of which it is a part, and describe (in

Human Resources Management

words or through an organization chart) where Head Start belongs. Next, staff may describe the structure and staff functions within the Head Start or Early Head Start program itself. They also may prepare a narrative on some of the topics listed below:

- descriptions of the grantee agency and its departments, including the programs the agency sponsors and the support services it offers, as they relate to the Head Start program,
- a description of each staff position, including the knowledge, skills, and experience required, and an explanation of the lines of authority and supervision among positions,
- program staffing, including how the grantee or delegate agency ensures that teacher:child ratios are met, and
- Policy Council and Policy Committee functions, including relationships among policy groups, governing bodies, and key management staff in both the grantee and delegate agency.

Performance Standard

1304.52(a)(2)(i)

(2) At a minimum, grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that the following program management functions are formally assigned to and adopted by staff within the program:

(i) Program management (the Early Head Start or Head Start director);

Rationale: Sound and rational program management requires that responsibilities of staff be clearly stated and that someone be placed in charge of major functions. The way in which the agency chooses to assign these functions to staff is up to the individual agency. Each agency, however, has someone designated as the Head Start director to provide the program with vision and leadership, and to ensure management functions are properly carried out. *This rationale serves 45 CFR 1304.52(a)(2)(i)-(iii).*

Guidance: The responsibilities of the Head Start director depend upon the community, staff, and families served, the mission and structure of the organization, and the plans for the delivery of program services. Governing bodies consider the director's responsibilities in areas such as:

- communication, including interactions with the governing body, agency director, managers of other agency programs, the Policy Council, the Policy Committee, and parents,
- program planning,
- day-to-day program management and operations, including personnel administration and supervision,
- staff training and development, coaching, and mentoring,
- administration and maintenance of facilities, materials, and equipment,
- financial administration,
- assessment of staff and program operations, and
- community relations and advocacy.

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1304.52(a)(2)(ii) & (iii)

(ii) Management of early childhood development and health services, including child development and education; child medical, dental, and mental health; child nutrition; and, services for children with disabilities; and

(iii) Management of family and community partnerships, including parent activities.

Performance Standard

1304.52(b)(1) & (2)

(b) Staff qualifications - general.

(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that staff and consultants have the knowledge, skills, and experience they need to perform their assigned functions responsibly.

(2) In addition, grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that only candidates with the qualifications specified in this part and in 45 CFR 1306.21 are hired.

Guidance: Agencies define the roles of individuals who will manage the delivery of services to children and families. Agencies assess their own size and complexity, geographic factors, and program goals and options as they determine the staffing patterns and job responsibilities of their managers. In some agencies, it may be appropriate to assign the management functions to several individuals, each with responsibility for a discrete portion of services. Regardless of the choice of organizational structure and job titles, this level of management is responsible for leadership, direction, and oversight in areas such as:

- planning, development, and implementation of operational procedures for the area of service,
- analyses of trends in the field, as well as data on children and families in the program,
- community linkages, to locate and access resources for families,
- staff and parent communication,
- personnel administration and supervision of staff, and
- team leadership, team building, staff training and development.

Rationale: One of the most important determinants of program quality is having qualified staff who interact with children and families and who ensure the provision of quality services.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1301.31 for a description of the personnel policies to be used in the hiring process.

Guidance: The responsibility for ensuring that all staff and consultants have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and experience lies with grantee and delegate agency management in coordination with the appropriate policy groups. In considering the appropriateness of employing a staff member or retaining a consultant's services, managers consider the individual's:

- training or experience in the area of expertise required by the position,
- experience in a human services setting, including working with low-income children and families,
- interpersonal and communication skills, as needed for the position,
- awareness of and sensitivity to cultural issues and local community practices, including Tribal policies, where appropriate, and
- education related to the program's requirements for the position.

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Agency management also take a proactive approach to finding and developing staff. On an ongoing basis, agency staff explore the community to identify individuals who would make successful staff members. They also adopt strategies (e.g., an ongoing mentoring program) to help develop the skills and knowledge of parents and staff already working in the program who wish to advance.

Performance Standard 1304.52(b)(3)

(3) Current and former Early Head Start and Head Start parents must receive preference for employment vacancies for which they are qualified.

Rationale: Parents are a vital resource for Head Start, because they are familiar with the Head Start philosophy and services, and because they are familiar with their community. The agency also is an important place for employment opportunities for parents and a vehicle for providing additional skills for parents who are seeking employment or who are already employed. Parents employed by Head Start serve as role models and mentors for other parents.

Guidance: Ways to support and encourage the parents of currently or previously enrolled children to apply for positions for which they qualify include:

- Providing opportunities for parents to receive skill-development or on-the-job training as part of the agency's parent involvement activities;
- Posting job vacancies in program settings, the newsletter, and in locations in the community such as churches and other religious centers, schools, clinics, laundromats, and stores; and
- Describing to parents how they can become qualified for various positions.

Performance Standard 1304.52(b)(4)

(4) Staff and program consultants must be familiar with the ethnic background and heritage of families in the program and must be able to serve and effectively communicate, to the extent feasible, with children and families with no or limited English proficiency.

Rationale: To establish an atmosphere of recognition and respect for the beliefs and practices of others, staff and consultants become familiar with the history, traditions, beliefs, and institutions of the cultures in the community served by the program. To meet the needs of families and children, staff and consultants communicate with them in their own language, to the extent possible.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.51(c)(2) on communicating with parents in their primary or preferred language, and 45 CFR 1304.52(g)(2) regarding appropriate staffing strategies for bilingual staff.

Guidance: Agencies ensure that staff and consultants are familiar with the background and heritage of families in the program by:

- Recruiting qualified, bilingual staff and consultants who are culturally and ethnically diverse, thus ensuring an appropriate representation of the ethnicities and cultures of enrolled families;

Human Resources Management

Performance Standard 1304.52(c)

(c) Early Head Start or Head Start director qualifications.

The Early Head Start or Head Start director must have demonstrated skills and abilities in a management capacity relevant to human services program management.

- Using current and past parents and staff as resources for understanding different cultures;
- Making use of museums, libraries, artists, poets, writers, storytellers, musicians, and community theater groups to help staff and parents appreciate and enjoy diverse cultures;
- Offering staff development in anti-bias strategies and approaches to developing skills in accepting cultural differences and in conflict resolution; and
- Exploring the feasibility of sponsoring joint staff training in issues of cultural diversity with organizations such as local schools, social service groups, and other early childhood development programs.

Rationale: Leadership and management skills and abilities are essential to overseeing the staff and operations of a comprehensive, quality child and family program.

Guidance: To ensure that an appropriately qualified director is employed, agencies require that the director possess the following attributes:

- leadership ability,
- good interpersonal and communication skills, including the ability to work as part of a team, communicate effectively both orally and in writing, receive and provide feedback, and manage dynamic interchanges in meetings,
- the ability to develop and manage a budget,
- experience in human services program management, including program planning, operations, and evaluation, and the use of management information systems, and
- an understanding of the Head Start philosophy and the ability to implement its principle of shared authority and decision-making.

Agencies also may choose to specify levels of education, knowledge, or experience in substantive areas, such as theories of early childhood education and child development or techniques for working in partnership with families and for involving parents in program activities.

Human Resources Management

Performance Standard

1304.52(d)

(d) Qualifications of content area experts.

Grantee and delegate agencies must hire staff or consultants who meet the qualifications listed below to provide content area expertise and oversight on an ongoing or regularly scheduled basis. Agencies must determine the appropriate staffing pattern necessary to provide these functions.

Rationale: Head Start requires that content area experts have specialized knowledge, skills, and experience, and are able to provide oversight that ensures quality services are delivered to children and families. Content area experts can either be on staff or be consultants. *This rationale serves 45 CFR 1304.52(d)(1)-(8).*

Guidance: Agencies consider the qualifications of staff and consultants in all content areas to ensure that they support the implementation of a quality program. Agencies have the flexibility to organize staffing patterns in the way most effective for their families. Agencies may choose to employ an individual as a content area expert for each area discussed in the standards; or, agencies may combine content areas. Staff and consultants are available, on an ongoing or regularly scheduled basis, to implement their program area.

To ensure that appropriately qualified content area experts are available, agencies employ individuals with the ability to:

- Plan and administer the required program of services for children and families;
- Coordinate their program of activities with staff in other content areas and in other community agencies;
- Engage in ongoing assessment of the quality of services provided;
- Communicate effectively with others, including giving and receiving feedback on the quality of services;
- Cooperate successfully as a member of a team;
- Provide staff training and development, including on-site consultation, coaching, and mentoring to other staff;
- Furnish supervision for ongoing program development; and
- Meet any specific content area requirements.

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Performance Standard 1304.52(d)(1)

(1) Education and child development services must be supported by staff or consultants with training and experience in areas that include: the theories and principles of child growth and development, early childhood education, and family support. In addition, staff or consultants must meet the qualifications for classroom teachers, as specified in section 648A of the Head Start Act and any subsequent amendments regarding the qualifications of teachers.

Performance Standard 1304.52(d)(2)

(2) Health services must be supported by staff or consultants with training and experience in public health, nursing, health education, maternal and child health, or health administration. In addition, when a health procedure must be performed only by a licensed/certified health professional, the agency must assure that the requirement is followed.

Related Information: Content area experts in education services must meet the qualifications for classroom teachers specified in section 648A of the Head Start Act, which include:

- a current Child Development Associate (CDA) credential that is appropriate to the program option(s) used and to the age of the children served, or
- a State-awarded certificate for preschool teachers that meets or exceeds the requirements for a CDA credential, or
- an associate, baccalaureate, or advanced degree in early childhood education, or
- a degree in a field related to early childhood education, with experience in teaching preschool children and a State-awarded certificate to teach in a preschool program.

Guidance: To ensure that appropriately qualified content area experts in education and child development services are employed, agencies require the general abilities defined in the guidance to 45 CFR 1304.52(d), above, and other specific abilities, such as to:

- Guide the planning and implementation of a comprehensive child development program that meets the Head Start definition of curriculum in all program options and settings;
- Put into practice theories and sound principles of child and adult education; and
- Embrace the role of the parent as the primary educator of the child and promote and support attachment between parent and child.

Guidance: To ensure that appropriately qualified content area experts in health services are employed, agencies require the general abilities defined in the guidance to 45 CFR 1304.52(d) and other specific abilities, such as to:

- Link families with an ongoing system of health care, assist parents in the selection of health providers, counsel them about child or family health problems, and promote parent involvement in all aspects of the health program;
- Negotiate with the Health Services Advisory Committee and local health care professionals and service providers to ensure that services for families are available and accessible;
- Review, evaluate, and interpret health records and other vital health service data; and
- Promote health and safety practices in the program and coordinate safety and sanitation procedures, first aid, and emergency medical procedures.

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Performance Standard

1304.52(d)(3)

(3) Nutrition services must be supported by staff or consultants who are registered dietitians or nutritionists.

When health staff perform screenings, immunizations, or other health procedures for children, which, by State or Tribal regulation, require the services of a licensed or certified health professional, the agency must employ or contract with individuals possessing those credentials and provide appropriate oversight.

Guidance: To ensure that appropriately qualified content area experts in nutrition services are employed, agencies identify individuals with characteristics such as the following:

- experience in menu planning, including the quantity, quality, and variety of food to be purchased;
- the abilities to interpret nutrition assessment data, provide nutrition counseling for families, and in other ways promote good nutrition habits among children and families; and
- expertise to assist staff in dealing with children with feeding problems or special nutritional needs.

Agencies that directly provide nutrition services ensure that the employee responsible for those services or the nutrition consultant who supports this staff member possesses a current registration with the Commission on Dietetic Registration of the American Dietetic Association or be eligible, registered, and ready to take the examination. A master's degree (MPH or MS) from an approved program in public health nutrition may be substituted for this registration. Agencies that contract for nutrition services ensure that staff in the agency with which they have contracted possess the necessary qualifications.

Performance Standard

1304.52(d)(4)

(4) Mental health services must be supported by staff or consultants who are licensed or certified mental health professionals with experience and expertise in serving young children and their families.

Guidance: To ensure that appropriately qualified mental health professionals provide services to enrolled children and families, agencies identify individuals with characteristics such as the following:

- knowledge of treatment strategies in the areas of child behavior management and family crisis intervention,
- the ability to work with families in a supportive manner throughout the diagnostic and referral processes,
- the ability to work with staff to improve their own health and they, in turn, provide supportive services to families, and
- the ability to broker the services or to provide counseling and treatment for children and families with diagnosed problems.

In addition, agencies need to ensure that mental health staff and consultants have appropriate State, Tribal, or local license(s) or certification(s).

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Performance Standard 1304.52(d)(5)

(5) Family and community partnership services must be supported by staff or consultants with training and experience in field(s) related to social, human, or family services.

Guidance: To ensure that appropriately qualified content area experts in family and community partnerships are employed, agencies hire individuals with the abilities defined in the guidance to 45 CFR 1304.52(d), above, and other specific abilities, such as to:

- Develop referral systems and procedures and coordinate social service referrals and follow-up;
- Provide on-site consultation to family and community partnerships staff;
- Oversee transition services (see 45 CFR 1304.40(h) and 45 CFR 1304.41(c) for descriptions of required transition activities); and
- Conduct advocacy work.

Performance Standard 1304.52(d)(6)

(6) Parent involvement services must be supported by staff or consultants with training, experience, and skills in assisting the parents of young children in advocating and decision-making for their families.

Guidance: To ensure that appropriately qualified content area experts in parent involvement services are employed, agencies require individuals with specific abilities, such as to:

- Oversee the recruitment, training, and scheduling of parent volunteers;
- Work with the Policy Council and Policy Committee, and serve as a resource for the Parent Committee;
- Assist parents in developing and scheduling their own social and developmental activities and encourage and support parents in addressing community needs; and
- Keep other agency staff apprised of parent issues, and assist staff in designing and implementing a comprehensive, well-integrated plan for parent involvement that crosses all service areas.

Performance Standard 1304.52(d)(7)

(7) Disability services must be supported by staff or consultants with training and experience in securing and individualizing needed services for children with disabilities.

Related Information: See 45 CFR Part 1308 for further requirements for content area experts in disability services. In particular, see:

- 45 CFR 1308.4(m) for the role of the disabilities coordinator in the development of the service plan;
- 45 CFR 1308.6 for the involvement of the disabilities coordinator in the assessment of children;
- 45 CFR 1308.18(a) for the requirement that the disabilities coordinator work closely with health staff during the assessment process and any follow-up activities;
- 45 CFR 1308.18(b) for the requirement that the disabilities coordinator work with the mental health staff and consultants to identify children who show signs of problems;
- 45 CFR 1308.19(f) for membership on any Head Start Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams; and

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- 45 CFR 1308.20(a) for the requirement that the disabilities coordinator ensure that the nutrition program meets the special needs of children with disabilities.

Guidance: To ensure that appropriately qualified content area experts in disability services are employed, agencies identify individuals with specific abilities, such as to:

- Coordinate the process of assessing children, including initial screenings, ongoing developmental, and specialized assessments, to determine if a disability exists;
- Work with an interdisciplinary team of staff and parents to develop and implement an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) for each child with disabilities;
- Consult regularly with parents and staff on the progress of disabilities services and of the children with disabilities who are enrolled;
- Work closely with local school districts to ensure the coordination of services; and
- Advocate in the community for appropriate services for children with disabilities and their families.

In addition, agencies ensure that disabilities staff have a thorough understanding of Federal laws governing services to children with disabilities.

Guidance: To ensure that an appropriately qualified fiscal officer is available, agencies employ staff or consultants with specific abilities, such as to:

- Develop, monitor, evaluate, and report on financial control programs and procedures, including compensation and benefits, to policy groups and staff;
- Develop and maintain accurate charts of accounts, including the allocation of program income and outlays and in-kind contributions;
- Initiate and direct, in coordination with other staff and parents, cost studies and comparative analyses of alternative operating strategies; and
- Assist in the resolution of audit exceptions and the implementation of auditors' recommendations and report all findings to management staff and governing bodies.

Qualified fiscal officers include Certified Public Accountants (CPAs), persons holding a bachelor's or master's degree in accounting, and others with demonstrated expertise in fiscal matters. They may be hired directly as Head Start staff (on a part-time or full-time basis), be provided by the grantee or delegate

Performance Standard 1304.52(d)(8)

(8) Grantee and delegate agencies must secure the regularly scheduled or ongoing services of a qualified fiscal officer.

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Performance Standard 1304.52(e)

(e) Home visitor qualifications.

Home visitors must have knowledge and experience in child development and early childhood education; the principles of child health, safety, and nutrition; adult learning principles; and family dynamics. They must be skilled in communicating with and motivating people. In addition, they must have knowledge of community resources and the skills to link families with appropriate agencies and services.

agency as a part of the indirect cost pool, or work under contract on a regularly scheduled basis.

Rationale: The home visitor's role is that of a resource for parents and a facilitator for learning, in agencies that operate a home-based or combination option. Training and experience in the variety of topic areas listed in the standard are necessary to implement a high quality program.

Related Information: See *Head Start Home Visitor Handbook* for further guidance.

Guidance: To ensure that appropriately qualified home visitors are employed, agencies require specific abilities, such as to:

- Plan and develop with the parents an individualized program for the family, including establishing a caring professional relationship and a climate of mutual trust and respect for the parents;
- Work with parents to strengthen the family's knowledge of child development, including assisting parents to understand how children grow and learn, and planning and conducting child education activities with the parents which meet the child's intellectual, physical, emotional, and social needs;
- Assist parents in strengthening the families' knowledge of health and nutrition, including integrating health and nutrition education into the program, coordinating with other staff and parents regarding health screenings for family members, and providing information and referrals, if necessary; and
- Assist parents to strengthen their knowledge of community resources and support parents in problem solving.

In addition, grantees may require a Child Development Associate (CDA) for Home Visitors, certain college course work, or a particular level of on-the-job training and experience.

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Performance Standard 1304.52(f)

(f) Infant and toddler staff qualifications.

Early Head Start and Head Start staff working as teachers with infants and toddlers must obtain a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential for Infant and Toddler Caregivers or an equivalent credential that addresses comparable competencies within one year of the effective date of the final rule or, thereafter, within one year of hire as a teacher of infants and toddlers. In addition, infant and toddler teachers must have the training and experience necessary to develop consistent, stable, and supportive relationships with very young children. The training must develop knowledge of infant and toddler development, safety issues in infant and toddler care (e.g., reducing the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), and methods for communicating effectively with infants and toddlers, their parents, and other staff members.

Performance Standard 1304.52(g)(1)

(g) Classroom staffing and home visitors.

(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must meet the requirements of 45 CFR 1306.20 regarding classroom staffing.

Rationale: Working with infants and toddlers requires specialized knowledge and skills in order to properly address the developmental needs of this age group.

Guidance: Within one year of the effective date of the Final Rule or, thereafter, within one year of hire, staff working with infants and toddlers must obtain a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential for Infant and Toddler Caregivers or an equivalent credential or educational degree that addresses comparable competencies. Teachers who work well with infants and toddlers also have certain specific abilities, such as to:

- Maintain an open, friendly, and cooperative relationship with each child's family, encourage their involvement in the program, and promote parent-child bonding and nurturing parent-child relationships;
- Promote feelings of security and trust in infants and toddlers by being warm, supportive, and comforting, and by establishing strong and caring relationships with them;
- Provide toddlers with experiences and opportunities that allow them to develop curiosity, initiative, problem-solving skills, and creativity, as well as a sense of self and a feeling of belonging to the group; and
- Conduct developmental screenings of infants' and toddlers' motor, language, social, cognitive, perceptual, and emotional skills.

Rationale: Research shows that classroom staffing patterns have a powerful effect on program quality. Low child:staff ratios are associated with more positive outcomes for young children and generate more positive social interactions with peers.

Related Information: See the requirements for program staffing patterns, as specified in 45 CFR 1306.33 for home visitors in the home-based program option, and 45 CFR 1306.20 for center-based preschoolers. See 45 CFR 1304.52(g)(4) for staffing and group size requirements for infants and toddlers.

Guidance: Agencies plan their staffing to ensure that appropriate child:staff ratios are maintained at all times of the day and in all locations, and that staff are allowed adequate time for

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Performance Standard 1304.52(g)(2)

(2) When a majority of children speak the same language, at least one classroom staff member or home visitor interacting regularly with the children must speak their language.

planning, record-keeping and training. This is especially important in full-day programs, when the numbers of children may change over the course of the day, but the ratios need to be maintained.

Rationale: Classroom staff members and home visitors who speak a child's home language provide reassurance to the child, support the child's development of a strong sense of identity, and show respect for the values and beliefs of the family.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.21(a)(3)(i)(E) and the *Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs* for suggestions on how to show support and respect for a child's home language.

Guidance: Agencies hire staff who, in addition to speaking English, speak the language of the majority of the children served. Sometimes it is difficult to find qualified bilingual staff who have been trained and certified in early childhood education. To increase the number of qualified adults, agencies:

- Provide or arrange for staff training to develop needed language skills as a step toward becoming bilingual;
- Temporarily use parent or community volunteers to facilitate communication;
- Aggressively recruit staff from community colleges or nearby universities; and
- Contact community organizations that represent the culture and language of the families served.

Performance Standard 1304.52(g)(3)

(3) For center-based programs, the class size requirements specified in 45 CFR 1306.32 must be maintained through the provision of substitutes when regular classroom staff are absent.

Rationale: Occasions arise in which substitutes are needed to maintain appropriate class sizes and appropriate child:staff ratios, and to ensure that children are always safe.

Guidance: Agencies have less trouble locating substitutes on short notice, if a list of trained area substitutes is maintained. In addition, agencies:

- Take advantage of a professional referral service that screens potential substitutes;
- Talk with representatives in other community agencies and with senior citizens and other groups to find substitutes;
- Join with other early childhood programs in the community to hire a substitute who rotates among these programs; or
- Consider using parents who are engaged in a training program in early childhood education or develop a training program in early childhood education for parents and volunteers.

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Performance Standard 1304.52(g)(4)

(4) Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that each teacher working exclusively with infants and toddlers has responsibility for no more than four infants and toddlers and that no more than eight infants and toddlers are placed in any one group. However, if State, Tribal or local regulations specify staff:child ratios and group sizes more stringent than this requirement, the State, Tribal, or local regulations must apply.

Performance Standard 1304.52(g)(5)

(5) Staff must supervise the outdoor and indoor play areas in such a way that children's safety can be easily monitored and ensured.

Substitutes work under the direct supervision of the content area expert in education, the center director, or another appropriate staff member while they are in the classroom.

Rationale: Research indicates that having each staff member work with a small number of infants and toddlers is critical for the development of the child and to the quality of the program.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.53(a) concerning Head Start facilities, especially the minimum space requirements established in 45 CFR 1304.53(a)(5).

Guidance: Agencies ensure that they meet the required child:staff ratios by hiring an appropriate number of trained and qualified teachers and by developing daily staffing plans. In addition, as children grow older and transition to new groups, agencies may choose to move the teacher along with the children.

A group of eight is the maximum number of infants and toddlers assigned to two teachers. In some facilities, space allows a group of eight to be assigned to one room. In other facilities, larger rooms are fitted with appropriate dividers to accommodate more than one group, while ensuring that each group functions separately, and that all of the Program Performance Standards are maintained.

Rationale: Most of the injuries that occur in preschool programs take place in play areas where children try out their gross motor skills. Staff ensure that all children can be observed to prevent mishaps and so that they can be quickly reached, should any mishap occur.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.52(h)(1)(iii) and 45 CFR 1304.53(a)(9) for further information on the supervision of play areas.

Guidance: The following are some guidelines for the supervision of outdoor and indoor play areas:

- Staff make regular checks of the safety and cleanliness of indoor and outdoor play areas, giving themselves time to address any problems they identify (45 CFR 1304.53(b)(1)(vi) specifies that all equipment must be kept safe and in good condition); and
- Staff in center-based programs develop written schedules for play area supervision to ensure appropriate child:staff ratios are maintained at all times.

Home visitors discuss with parents how these same guidelines apply to the home environment and to public playground settings.

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Performance Standard 1304.52(h)(1)

(h) Standards of conduct.

(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that all staff, consultants, and volunteers abide by the program's standards of conduct. These standards must specify that:

(i) They will respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family and refrain from stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability;

(ii) They will follow program confidentiality policies concerning information about children, families, and other staff members;

(iii) No child will be left alone or unsupervised while under their care; and

(iv) They will use positive methods of child guidance and will not engage in corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse, or humiliation. In addition, they will not employ methods of discipline that involve isolation, the use of food as punishment or reward, or the denial of basic needs.

Rationale: The provision of standards of conduct supports agencies in reinforcing appropriate professional behavior among staff. Written standards of conduct help to guide staff members in making decisions about their actions in potentially controversial or ambiguous situations; and they help protect staff against allegations of misconduct. *This rationale serves 45 CFR 1304.52(h)(1)-(3).*

Related Information: Other information pertinent to standards of conduct may be found in the following resources:

- 45 CFR 1301.31 on personnel policies and 45 CFR 1304.50(d)(1)(x) on the role of the Policy Council and Policy Committee in the approval of such policies;
- 45 CFR 1304.24(a)(1)(iii) about discussing and identifying with parents appropriate responses to their child's behavior;
- 45 CFR 1304.21(a)(1)(iii) on providing an environment that supports each child;
- *Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs*, for further guidance related to multicultural issues;
- 45 CFR 1304.22(b)(3) on the confidentiality of child health conditions;
- 45 CFR 1304.22(a)(5) on confidentiality relating to suspected child abuse or neglect;
- 45 CFR 1304.51(g) on effective record-keeping to ensure confidentiality;
- 45 CFR 1304.52(g)(5) and 45 CFR 1304.53(a)(9) on the supervision of outdoor play areas; and
- 45 CFR 1304.21(a)(3), 45 CFR 1304.21(b)(2), and 45 CFR 1304.21(c)(iv) on supporting each child's social and emotional development.

Guidance: Management staff review written policies and procedures to ensure that specific standards about appropriate staff behavior and actions are included, such as child discipline and the confidentiality of information. Guidelines for standards of conduct are a part of the agency's personnel policies, as required by 45 CFR 1301.31. Staff, volunteers, and consultants are introduced to the agency's standards of conduct during their initial orientation, and subsequently trained, if necessary, in the implementation of those standards. Agencies are encouraged to request that staff sign a statement of professional ethics at the beginning of their employment.

To ensure that children of all races, religions, family backgrounds, and cultures are treated with respect and consideration, staff:

- Encourage adult male involvement in the classroom and other parts of the program;

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- Provide opportunities for intergenerational activities through use of grandparent volunteers and community elders;
- Provide both boys and girls with equal opportunities to participate in all activities; and
- Provide books, toys, music, activities, and decorations that reflect the diversity of all children.

To conform with Federal, State, Tribal, and local laws, the confidentiality policy ensures that:

- Confidential information will be seen by and discussed only with staff members who can demonstrate a need for the information in order to perform their jobs;
- Staff personnel records will not be disclosed without the written consent of the staff member; and
- Staff have the right to examine their own personnel files and to respond to the contents of those files.

To determine the degree of supervision that children need and to assign staff members to supervise them, agencies ensure that children are under adult supervision at all times, that required child:staff ratios are maintained, and that no child is ever left alone or unattended.

To ensure the use of positive, non-punitive methods of guidance and discipline, staff:

- Develop clear, reasonable, consistent, and age-appropriate rules and expectations for children and, to the extent possible, engage children themselves in the rule-setting process;
- Work with children to help them solve problems, instead of imposing solutions;
- Reduce the potential need for discipline by anticipating and eliminating sources of trouble whenever possible; and
- Respect and acknowledge children's feelings.

Agencies provide staff, consultants, and volunteers with regular, ongoing training and mentoring in appropriate disciplinary techniques. Home visitors support parents in guiding children's behavior without using corporal punishment.

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Performance Standard 1304.52(h)(2) & (3)

(2) Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that all employees engaged in the award and administration of contracts or other financial awards sign statements that they will not solicit or accept personal gratuities, favors, or anything of significant monetary value from contractors or potential contractors.

(3) Personnel policies and procedures must include provision for appropriate penalties for violating the standards of conduct.

Performance Standard 1304.52(i)

(i) Staff performance appraisals.

Grantee and delegate agencies must, at a minimum, perform annual performance reviews of each Early Head Start and Head Start staff member and use the results of these reviews to identify staff training and professional development needs, modify staff performance agreements, as necessary, and assist each staff member in improving his or her skills and professional competencies.

Guidance: To ensure that employees deal appropriately with contracts and other financial awards, agencies define “significant monetary value” in their standards of conduct and request that staff sign a statement at the outset of their employment. In addition, agencies provide relevant staff, governing body, and Policy Council and Policy Committee members with training and supervision in proper methods for awarding and administering contracts or grants with outside agencies or businesses.

To ensure that all staff, consultants, and volunteers are accountable for meeting the agency’s standards of conduct, agencies may consult with a legal advisor or a professional in human resources management to define the consequences for violating the standards of conduct. They also provide all staff with training that emphasizes the importance of the standards of conduct and the consequences of breaching them.

Rationale: All Head Start staff should be actively engaged in a process of professional development. Annual performance reviews provide one opportunity for staff and supervisors to meet, discuss and assess progress, define training and developmental needs, and set new professional goals.

Related Information: Performance appraisals are a part of the personnel policies required by 45 CFR 1301.31. Further requirements concerning training and development may be found in 45 CFR 1304.52(k).

Guidance: Staff performance reviews are a management process consisting of a number of formal and informal interactions, such as:

- **Setting standards of performance.** All staff members may benefit from the opportunity to meet with their supervisors and to discuss each others’ expectations and goals for subsequent months. One way to make expectations and goals clear is to draw up a performance agreement and to review it during subsequent performance reviews.
- **Gathering performance data.** There are a variety of ways to gather information on an employee’s progress. Staff may keep a log of their own progress, including successes in their job, additional responsibilities they may have taken on, any awards or professional recognition they received, their attendance at training or educational programs, and even comments they have received about their activities from parents and peers, as well as

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Performance Standard

1304.52(j)(1)

(j) Staff and volunteer health.

(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must assure that each staff member has an initial health examination (that includes screening for tuberculosis) and a periodic re-examination (as recommended by their health care provider or as mandated by State, Tribal, or local laws) so as to assure that they do not, because of communicable diseases, pose a significant risk to the health or safety of others in the Early Head Start or Head Start program that cannot be eliminated or reduced by reasonable accommodation. This requirement must be implemented consistent with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

supervisors. Supervisors also may keep an ongoing record of staff performance.

- **Conducting annual performance review.** Performance reviews should be positive exchanges that
 - acknowledge the achievement of past goals and promote the setting of realistic goals for the future,
 - demonstrate appreciation for employee contributions,
 - provide constructive feedback on employee work, and
 - identify employee training needs and professional development opportunities.

Rationale: To ensure a safe and healthy environment for children and staff, all staff and regular volunteers should demonstrate that they are in good health. *This rationale serves 45 CFR 1304.52(j)(1)-(2).*

Related Information: See the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act for specific instructions on requirements that employers may set for employee medical examinations. Employers are permitted to require employees to have medical examinations or to answer medical inquiries that are job-related and justified by business necessity. Inquiries about things that neither affect job performance nor pose a risk to the health or safety of the employee or others may not be sufficiently job-related or necessary.

Guidance: Agencies consult with their Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) as well as obtain legal advice in developing a policy to implement this standard. The HSAC, the local Department of Public Health, or the public schools also may be helpful in determining the required examinations, in addition to the required screening for tuberculosis, and in the periodicity of re-examinations. However, agencies may choose to leave the decision up to each staff member's physician. Agencies may develop a standard form for staff to take with them to their health examination, ensuring first that the form meets the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Performance Standard 1304.52(j)(2)

(2) Regular volunteers must be screened for tuberculosis in accordance with State, Tribal or local laws. In the absence of State, Tribal or local law, the Health Services Advisory Committee must be consulted regarding the need for such screenings (see 45 CFR 1304.3(20) for the definition of volunteer).

Performance Standard 1304.52(j)(3)

(3) Grantee and delegate agencies must make mental health and wellness information available to staff with concerns that may affect their job performance.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.3(20) for a definition of “volunteer.”

Guidance: Everyone who volunteers on a regular basis in an Early Head Start or Head Start program must comply with State, Tribal or local laws regarding the screening for tuberculosis. (These laws may have specific definitions of the term “regular.” If not, the agency should define the term.) In States and localities where tuberculin tests are not required for adults coming into contact with children, agencies should consult with the Health Services Advisory Committee regarding the need for the tuberculin screening of volunteers. Note that screening may not be necessary for the *occasional* volunteer (a person who comes in from time to time). However, agencies may offer tuberculin screening at a health fair or of a parent education activity as a way of promoting the identification and treatment of health issues among parents and volunteers.

Test results from the tuberculin screening are kept in confidential files. If an individual tests positive, agencies follow the protocols set out by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the State, Tribe, or locality on how to manage communicable diseases. The applicable protocol should be available from the local Health Department. Agencies develop, with the assistance of their local Health Service Advisory Committee, policies that address volunteers who test positive to tuberculosis screening.

The Health Services Advisory Committee may suggest requiring other health screenings and procedures for volunteers and, in fact, State or Tribal requirements may mandate additional screenings or tests. For example, in most States and on American Indian reservations, volunteers who assist with food preparation must meet specific health clearance standards. Such information should be included in the volunteer plan or volunteer handbook, if the agency has one.

Rationale: Caring for children and families with complex challenges can be taxing for staff and may generate problems such as stress and “burnout.” Therefore, agencies should make special efforts to support staff and let them know that their job challenges are understood.

Guidance: In providing information on mental health and wellness, agencies consider implementing measures to assist staff in coping with job-related stress, such as:

- Including topics or informational resources on job-related stress, mental health, and wellness in staff training and development activities;
- Sponsoring mental and physical wellness programs, such as exercise groups or staff support groups;

Human Resources Management

Performance Standard 1304.52(k)(1)-(3)

(k) Training and development.

(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must provide an orientation to all new staff, consultants, and volunteers that includes, at a minimum, the goals and underlying philosophy of Early Head Start and/or Head Start and the ways in which they are implemented by the program.

(2) Grantee and delegate agencies must establish and implement a structured approach to staff training and development, attaching academic credit whenever possible. This system should be designed to help build relationships among staff and to assist staff in acquiring or increasing the knowledge and skills needed to fulfill their job responsibilities, in accordance with the requirements of 45 CFR 1306.23.

(3) At a minimum, this system must include ongoing opportunities for staff to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to implement the content of the Head Start Program Performance Standards. This program must also include:

(continued, next page...)

- Providing employees with information on or confidential referrals to community agencies, including community mental health centers and/or alcohol and drug counseling centers; and
- Providing, or brokering, professional Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).

Rationale: One of the most important determinants of program excellence is the presence of a well-trained, qualified staff. In order for staff to do their jobs effectively and to meet the changing needs of the children and families served, agencies must have a system that supports staff in a process of continuous learning. A structured approach to continuous learning addresses both program philosophy and individual job requirements. Two critical areas to be addressed in this approach are child abuse and neglect and family and child transitions. *This rationale serves 45 CFR 1304.52(k)(1)-(3).*

Related Information: Pre-service and in-service training opportunities are mandated by 45 CFR 1306.23 to assist staff and volunteers in acquiring or increasing the knowledge and skills required to fulfill their job responsibilities.

See 45 CFR 1304.52(b) for a description of staff qualifications; 45 CFR 1304.52(j) for requirements related to staff and volunteer health; and 45 CFR 1304.52(i) for the link between staff performance appraisals and staff development needs, and training.

See 45 CFR 1304.22(a)(5) on establishing local policies and procedures for the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect, and 45 CFR 1301.31(e) and the Appendix to 45 CFR 1301.31 for requirements regarding child abuse and neglect. All staff need to be knowledgeable about their legal and professional responsibilities with regard to reporting suspected child abuse and neglect by parents, staff members, and others, in accordance with the provisions of Federal, State, Tribal, or local law.

See 45 CFR 1304.40(h) on parent involvement in transition activities. Also see 45 CFR 1304.41(c)(1)(iv) on the joint training of Head Start and other agency staff in transition services, and 45 CFR 1304.41(c)(2) concerning transition planning for children leaving Early Head Start.

Guidance: Staff training and development is a continuous, creative process, individualized to meet the goals of each employee while responsive to the overall program. An effective training and staff development system includes an orientation as well as ongoing opportunities that develop each staff member's skills and knowledge. Strategies to support the implementation of this system range from individualized coaching to formal college course work.

Human Resources Management

Performance Standard

1304.52(k)(3)(i) & (ii)

(continued...)

(i) Methods for identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect that comply with applicable State and local laws using, so far as possible, a helpful rather than a punitive attitude toward abusing or neglecting parents and other caretakers; and

(ii) Methods for planning for successful child and family transitions to and from the Early Head Start or Head Start program.

The orientation process is critical for all new staff, consultants, and volunteers, and includes the goals and philosophy of Head Start and:

- the mission and vision of the grantee,
- an introduction to and an explanation of the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* and how they apply to the specific program options, settings, and services, and
- program policies and procedures, including standards of conduct.

A structured approach to ongoing staff development:

- Is ongoing and supports the individual needs of staff;
- Builds on prior staff development activities and includes follow-up activities;
- Links to employees' performance appraisals;
- Uses a variety of approaches and current technology;
- Builds on the principles of adult learning; and
- Makes use of locally available resources.

To determine the elements of a training and development system, agencies consider the following process:

- assessment of staff and program goals and needs,
- design of a training and staff development plan,
- implementation of the plan, and
- evaluation of the process.

Each agency can decide the appropriate topics and target groups for its staff development opportunities through its assessment process. However, certain topics — specifically, child abuse and neglect and transition to and from Early Head Start or Head Start — are included in this structured approach.

Staff who have an ongoing relationship with families and are in families' homes on a regular basis need support concerning the issue of identifying and reporting suspected child abuse and neglect. To ensure that staff understand this responsibility, agencies:

- Provide staff with a copy of relevant laws;
- Organize a variety of training opportunities on how to identify and report child abuse and neglect; and
- Assign one individual the responsibility of supporting staff in their efforts to prevent, identify, and report child abuse and neglect.

Examples of methods that support successful transitions include:

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Performance Standard 1304.52(k)(4)

(4) Grantee and delegate agencies must provide training or orientation to Early Head Start and Head Start governing body members. Agencies must also provide orientation and ongoing training to Early Head Start and Head Start Policy Council and Policy Committee members to enable them to carry out their program governance responsibilities effectively.

- Preparing children and their families for transitions;
- Assisting parents in advocating for their children in the school system and in exercising their rights and responsibilities concerning the education of their children;
- Supporting parents in identifying and selecting child care;
- Maintaining ongoing communication and cooperation between the Early Head Start or Head Start program and the elementary school or other child care setting by
 - encouraging elementary school or other child care teachers to visit Early Head Start and Head Start to understand its philosophy or encouraging joint training with elementary school teachers and other providers of child development services,
 - developing effective methods for transferring records, and
 - continuing transition activities throughout the year; and
- Developing written transition plans, and individualizing the plans, as appropriate, to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

Rationale: Governing body and policy group members must have information about Head Start to develop the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions and to understand their own roles in governing an effective program.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.50 and Appendix A to that section for a discussion of the structure and function of the governing bodies and policy groups; see *Linking Our Voices*, a video-based training that is used for orientation and ongoing training of policy group members.

Guidance: Agencies may use a variety of methods to familiarize members of the governing body and Policy Council or Policy Committee with Head Start and their program oversight responsibilities. These methods or strategies may include an orientation session for new members, video presentations, information packets, and staff presentations. Broad topics for orientation include:

- the agency's history, mission statement, and organizational structure,
- their roles and responsibilities in governing, organizing, and operating the program, and
- the goals, underlying philosophy, and performance standards of Early Head Start and Head Start.

To ensure that the training of policy group members is not limited to initial orientation, but also includes ongoing training, grantee

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and delegate agencies should schedule policy group training activities on a regular basis. The availability of a variety of group and one-on-one training opportunities assists policy groups and individual members to build upon their existing skills and knowledge. It is important to support new policy group members through mechanisms such as establishing one-on-one mentoring programs and the building of training elements into every policy group meeting.

Facilities, Materials, and Equipment

1304.53

Facilities, Materials, and Equipment

(a) Head Start Physical Environment and Facilities

(b) Head Start Equipment, Toys, Materials, and Furniture

Performance Standard

1304.53(a)(1)

(a) Head Start physical environment and facilities.

(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must provide a physical environment and facilities conducive to learning and reflective of the different stages of development of each child.

INTRODUCTION TO 1304.53

The objective of 45 CFR 1304.53 is to ensure that Head Start's physical environment supports the delivery of high quality services to all children and families. Facilities, materials, and equipment are selected and maintained to create a learning environment that is safe, accessible, welcoming, comfortable, age-appropriate, culturally sensitive, and in keeping with the individual needs of children and families and the particular features of local programs and communities. Thus, the requirements in this section are closely allied with those in 1304.21, Education and Early Childhood Development.

These standards are the requirements for the Head Start physical environment and the equipment, toys, materials, and furniture that support programming for the ages and individual needs of children served. Many of the requirements in this section also are cited in State, Tribal, or local regulations. It is expected that whichever regulations are more stringent will be met.

Rationale: A well-designed environment within appropriate facilities supports each child's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. Proper attention paid to the issues of safety and sanitation protects children's health and keeps them free from injury. Proper organization of the space ensures that the full range of program activities can take place with high quality interactions between children and staff. Making facilities welcoming, accessible, comfortable and safe for children, families, and staff, including those with disabilities, ensures their full participation in Head Start. *This rationale serves 45 CFR 1304.53(a)(1)-(10)*

Related Information: See the *Head Start Facilities Manual* for suggestions about designing a well-organized indoor and outdoor environment. Also see 45 CFR 1304.21(a)(5) for a description of the facility and equipment requirements that support the child development and education program.

Guidance: Developmentally appropriate indoor and outdoor environments are safe, clean, attractive, and spacious. Appropriate indoor environments for children include:

- floor coverings and soft elements, such as rugs and cushions,
- an open area on the floor for the safe movement of infants and toddlers,
- identifiable areas for different activities and materials, such as blocks, art, books, and dramatic play. These areas allow children to be alone, although supervised, and to engage in individual or group activities, and
- low, open shelves to allow children to see and to select their own materials.

Facilities, Materials, and Equipment

Appropriate outdoor environments for children include:

- a variety of surfaces, such as soil or sand for digging, hills, flat grassy and hard areas for wheeled toys,
- areas of sunlight as well as shade or portable shade equipment,
- a variety of equipment for riding, climbing, balancing, and digging, and
- areas for individual and small group play.

Performance Standard

1304.53(a)(2)

(2) Grantee and delegate agencies must provide appropriate space for the conduct of all program activities (see 45 CFR 1308.4 for specific access requirements for children with disabilities).

Related Information: Agencies must provide:

- appropriate space for activities for children of different ages (see 45 CFR 1304.53(a)(1), (a)(3), and (a)(5)),
- food preparation areas that are separated from areas used for other activities (see 45 CFR 1304.53(a)(10)(xiv)), and
- cribs and cots for infants and toddlers that are kept at least three feet apart (see 45 CFR 1304.22(e)(7)).

Guidance: Appropriate indoor and outdoor space is sufficient for all program activities and support functions, including office work, the storage of staff belongings, food preparation, janitorial services, children's activities and parent activities. It includes:

- doors, gates, counters, and walls to keep food preparation areas separate from other areas,
- resting and napping facilities, including a crib, cot, bed, or mat for each child, and
- space for the care of children who become ill during the day and cannot be sent home.

Performance Standard

1304.53(a)(3)

(3) The center space provided by grantee and delegate agencies must be organized into functional areas that can be recognized by the children and that allow for individual activities and social interactions.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.21(a)(5)(i) and 1304.21(a)(5)(ii) about standards related to the provision of indoor and outdoor space that encourages each child's physical growth; see 45 CFR 1304.21(c)(1)(vii) about standards related to the provision of individual, small group, and large group activities; and see 45 CFR 1304.53(a)(10)(x) about the selection, layout, and maintenance of playground equipment.

Guidance: Classrooms are divided into functional areas, using child-sized, age-appropriate shelving; low walls; large pillows; mats; or platforms to separate the different areas. Space for preschool children and older toddlers is arranged to facilitate a variety of large group, small group, and individual program activities.

When organizing the center's space or the space used for group socialization experiences:

Facilities, Materials, and Equipment

- Separate active or noisy areas from inactive, quiet spaces;
- Place activity areas near necessary resources, such as the art area near water; and
- Design indoor traffic patterns that keep preschool children from running, yet enable them to move easily between areas.

Outdoor space is designed to support the developmental progress of all children and to prevent injuries:

- Playgrounds are laid out to ensure clearance space from walkways, buildings, and other structures, and to avoid crowding in any one area; and
- Separate space is provided for each type of activity — throwing or kicking balls, climbing hills, digging, and using stationary playground equipment.

Performance Standard 1304.53(a)(4)

(4) The indoor and outdoor space in Early Head Start or Head Start centers in use by mobile infants and toddlers must be separated from general walkways and from areas in use by preschoolers.

Guidance: When children of different age groups must make use of a common area, such as an outdoor play area:

- Set the schedule so that children of different age groups occupy the space at different times;
- Ensure that all equipment and toys in shared areas are safe and age-appropriate;
- Ensure that mobile infants and toddlers are kept away from surfaces and equipment that may injure them; and
- Ensure that carpeting is well-padded, secure, and clean (see 45 CFR 1304.53(a)(10)(ii) for requirements on carpeting).

Performance Standard 1304.53(a)(5)

(5) Centers must have at least 35 square feet of usable indoor space per child available for the care and use of children (i.e., exclusive of bathrooms, halls, kitchen, staff rooms, and storage places) and at least 75 square feet of usable outdoor play space per child.

Guidance: See 45 CFR 1304.22(e)(7) which requires that cribs and cots be at least three feet apart.

Guidance: When agencies find that at least 35 square feet of usable indoor space per child available for the care and use of children is inadequate because of the presence of cribs and cots, they increase the amount of child usable indoor space available in order to accommodate activities that support the optimum development of infants and toddlers. To make good use of indoor space, agencies:

- Refrain from placing too much furniture or equipment in individual rooms or play areas;
- Apply these space allocations to the home-based group socialization settings as well as to center-based classrooms;
- Measure the 75 square feet of outdoor space per child based upon the number of children using the space at one time; and

Facilities, Materials, and Equipment

Performance Standard 1304.53(a)(6)

(6) Facilities owned or operated by Early Head Start and Head Start grantee or delegate agencies must meet the licensing requirements of 45 CFR 1306.30.

- If there is less than 75 square feet of accessible outdoor space per child
 - Use a large indoor activity room meeting the 75-square-foot-per-child requirement, if it accommodates activities similar to those performed outdoors (such areas should be ventilated with fresh air when windows cannot be opened); and
 - Arrange for the use of an adjoining or nearby school yard, park, or playground, which is safe, clean, and provides drinking water and toilet facilities.

Related Information: According to 45 CFR 1306.30, Head Start facilities must meet applicable State, Tribal, and local licensing and zoning requirements; fire, health, and safety regulations; and laws regarding environmental hazards. Licensing requirements vary among communities. Generally, they regulate child health and safety issues such as child:staff ratios, indoor and outdoor space requirements, toilet facilities, the safety and sanitation of food preparation areas, and the placement and designation of exits, fire doors, and sprinkler systems, among other requirements.

In cases where licensing requirements are less comprehensive or stringent than the Head Start regulations, grantee and delegate agencies are required to comply with the Head Start regulations. If the Head Start regulations are less stringent, agencies must follow the more stringent requirements. (See 45 CFR 1304.40(f)(2)(iii) about working with parents to promote a safe home environment.)

Guidance: Agencies and their policy groups familiarize themselves with Indian Health Service Environmental Health and Tribal, State, and local licensing requirements and request information and assistance from fire and health departments in determining health and safety standards.

Performance Standard 1304.53(a)(7)

(7) Grantee and delegate agencies must provide for the maintenance, repair, safety, and security of all Early Head Start and Head Start facilities, materials and equipment.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.53(a)(10)(x) for guidance on the maintenance of outdoor play areas.

Guidance: To provide for the maintenance, repair, safety, and security of the facilities, materials, and equipment owned or used by Head Start agencies, staff:

- Follow the most recent safety standards for toys and equipment used in the program (available through organizations such as the Consumer Product Safety Commission), check frequently to ensure that the toys and equipment are in good condition, and remove or replace those that are broken;
- Develop a checklist of equipment, furniture, and play areas that need to be inspected frequently;

Facilities, Materials, and Equipment

- Follow Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines regarding protection from unsafe or hazardous materials;
- Ensure that outdoor play areas are free of broken glass, stones, sharp objects, standing water, poisonous plants, brush or high grass, and ice and snow accumulations;
- Implement a system to monitor entry into the building;
- Implement procedures that assure daily cleaning of indoor and outdoor areas (see 45 CFR 1304.53(a)(10)(viii) for further guidance on standards related to cleaning facilities);
- Check the facility regularly for damage or other conditions that present hazards to children (e.g., plumbing, electrical, structural problems) (see 45 CFR 1304.53(a)(10) for requirements about conducting facility safety inspections);
- Ensure that leases and rental agreements specify the landlord's responsibilities for maintenance and repairs; and
- Suspend the use of any facility that is unsafe, unclean, or otherwise in disrepair.

Performance Standard 1304.53(a)(8)

(8) Grantee and delegate agencies must provide a center-based environment free of toxins, such as cigarette smoke, lead, pesticides, herbicides, and other air pollutants as well as soil and water contaminants. Agencies must ensure that no child is present during the spraying of pesticides or herbicides. Children must not return to the affected area until it is safe to do so.

Related Information: ACYF-PI-HS-95-04 on a Smoke-Free Environment requires that agencies establish and enforce written policies that prohibit smoking at all times in all spaces utilized by the program, including outdoor play areas and vehicles used for transporting children.

Guidance: A number of measures are taken to provide a center environment free of toxins, even though it is difficult to eliminate all pollutants that are not directly under the control of staff:

- Prohibit the use of tobacco, alcohol, and illegal drugs in all spaces used by the program (in the evenings as well as during the day), including classrooms, staff offices, kitchens, restrooms, parent and staff meeting rooms, hallways, outdoor play areas, and vehicles used for transporting children;
- Educate families about the harmful effects of smoking, including the effects of secondhand smoke on children;
- Protect children from the harmful effects of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides or other potentially toxic or unhealthy chemicals by
 - Having pesticides applied by a licensed exterminator in strict compliance with label instructions;
 - Removing children from the areas being treated and ensuring that potential poisons are not applied to surfaces that can be touched or mouthed by children;

Facilities, Materials, and Equipment

Performance Standard 1304.53(a)(9)

(9) Outdoor play areas at center-based programs must be arranged so as to prevent any child from leaving the premises and getting into unsafe and unsupervised areas. Enroute to play areas, children must not be exposed to vehicular traffic without supervision.

- Obtaining schedules of topical spraying by agricultural agencies and farmers to prevent the exposure of children; and
- Educating parents and staff about the dangers of pesticides and other toxic substances they may be working with and the steps to be taken to minimize the exposure of children at the center and in their homes.
- Work with health officials to determine inspections which should be conducted for environmental hazards, such as asbestos, radon, and formaldehyde; and
- Arrange for the inspection and subsequent removal of any environmental or health hazards only by certified or licensed contractors.

Guidance: The safety of children in outdoor settings is enhanced by:

- Establishing safety and supervision procedures for escorting children through traffic between the facility and outdoor play areas;
- Establishing procedures for walking very young children in strollers. Only strollers meeting national child safety standards are used; children in strollers are buckled into seat restraints; and streets are crossed only at traffic lights and clearly marked crosswalks;
- Installing fences or other physical barriers to separate the outdoor play areas from vehicular traffic and other dangers. Fences and other physical barriers should be high enough and constructed well enough to prevent children from exiting the area;
- Assuring that the outdoor play area is fully supervised at all times (see 45 CFR 1304.52(h)(1)(iii) about staffing patterns);
- When a rooftop is used as a play area, enclosing it with a fence that is high enough to prevent falls and constructed of materials that will prevent children from climbing it, and ensuring the presence of an approved fire escape; and
- Establishing written procedures for safely loading and unloading buses and for checking at the end of bus runs that no children remain on the bus (e.g., asleep).

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Performance Standard 1304.53(a)(10)

(10) Grantee and delegate agencies must conduct a safety inspection, at least annually, to ensure that each facility's space, light, ventilation, heat, and other physical arrangements are consistent with the health, safety and developmental needs of children. At a minimum, agencies must ensure that:

Related Information: See the guidance provided under each sub-section of this standard. Also, see 45 CFR 1304.53(a)(7) for further guidance on the standard related to the maintenance, repair, and security of Head Start facilities, materials, and equipment.

Guidance: Agencies supplement the annual safety inspection with more frequent safety inspections of their facilities, including:

- heating, cooling, and electrical systems,
- storage of medications, cleaning supplies, and other poisons,
- fire prevention measures (e.g., absence of flammable materials, presence of currently inspected and fully charged fire extinguishers, smoke detectors with working batteries, exits, and evacuation routes),
- lead-free painted surfaces,
- playground equipment and surfaces,
- electrical outlets,
- the water supply,
- toilets and handwashing facilities,
- diaper changing areas,
- ventilation and air quality,
- sewage and waste disposal systems, and
- adaptations to the facility to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

American Indian program grantees may request the assistance of the Indian Health Service in conducting these safety inspections.

Performance Standard 1304.53(a)(10)(i)

(i) In climates where such systems are necessary, there is a safe and effective heating and cooling system that is insulated to protect children and staff from potential burns;

Guidance: Safe cooling and heating systems are checked by staff or by other appropriate professionals to ensure that Tribal, State, and local laws are followed and that:

- Heating and cooling units are vented properly;
- Radiators, hot water pipes, and similar equipment are screened or insulated to prevent burns and other injuries. Heating units, including baseboard heaters hotter than 110 degrees Fahrenheit, are inaccessible to children;
- Electric space heaters that are UL-approved are placed in locations inaccessible to children and at least 3 feet from curtains, papers, and furniture. These heaters also have protective coverings to prevent injury;
- Portable open-flame and kerosene space heaters and portable gas stoves are not used;
- Electric fans are inaccessible to children; and

Facilities, Materials, and Equipment

Performance Standard

1304.53(a)(10)(ii)

(ii) No highly flammable furnishings, decorations, or materials that emit highly toxic fumes when burned are used;

Performance Standard

1304.53(a)(10)(iii)

(iii) Flammable and other dangerous materials and potential poisons are stored in locked cabinets or storage facilities separate from stored medications and food and are accessible only to authorized persons. All medications, including those required for staff and volunteers, are labeled, stored under lock and key, refrigerated if necessary, and kept out of the reach of children;

Performance Standard

1304.53(a)(10)(iv)

(iv) Rooms are well lit and provide emergency lighting in the case of power failure;

- Heating and ventilating equipment is professionally inspected annually, or immediately should there arise a concern or malfunction. The inspection verifies that the equipment is properly installed, cleaned, and maintained.

Guidance: Agencies follow State, Tribal, and local licensing regulations and the guidelines of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission regarding the flammability of materials, furnishings, and equipment. It is important to limit the amount of paper and mobiles used for decoration, and to ensure the proper storage of paper materials that may burn easily.

Guidance: Agencies reduce risks for children when they follow the regulations of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regarding flammable and dangerous materials. In accordance with OSHA, staff:

- Store cleaning materials, detergents, aerosol cans, pesticides, medications, poisons, chemicals used in lawn-care treatments, and other toxic materials in their original labeled containers, entirely separated from food, and out of children's reach;
- Use these materials according to the manufacturer's instructions, only for their intended purpose, and in a manner that will not contaminate play surfaces, toys, food, or food preparation areas;
- Ensure that all medications are under lock and key, have child-protective caps, are labeled, and are stored away from food and at the proper temperature (see 45 CFR 1304.22(c) on medication administration); and
- Explain to families how to store and secure cleaning supplies and other toxic materials and medication in the home, away from children.

Guidance: To ensure proper and safe lighting, agencies:

- Test emergency lighting regularly, and keep such lighting in good repair at all times;
- Use light fixtures containing shielded or shatterproof bulbs;
- Refrain from using sodium and mercury vapor lamps, as they produce toxic fumes;
- In case of a power failure, use flashlights and ensure that electrical panels and circuit breakers are readily accessible to authorized adults and that the circuits are clearly labeled; and

Facilities, Materials, and Equipment

Performance Standard 1304.53(a)(10)(v)

(v) Approved, working fire extinguishers are readily available;

- Ensure that lights used in places where infants look at the ceiling are not unnecessarily harsh, bright, or glaring.

Guidance: Agencies support fire prevention by:

- Determining the size, type, placement, and number of fire extinguishers to be installed by consulting with the fire marshal or an insurance company fire loss prevention representative, and by examining local building and fire codes;
- Placing fire extinguishers in accessible locations, and ensuring that all staff are aware of those precise locations;
- Providing training to staff on the use of fire extinguishers, and posting instructions for their use on or near the extinguishers themselves;
- Servicing fire extinguishers annually, and tagging them with the service date;
- Providing education on fire prevention to children and families; and
- Ensuring that all vehicles owned, operated, or used by Head Start are equipped with working fire extinguishers.

Performance Standard 1304.53(a)(10)(vi)

(vi) An appropriate number of smoke detectors are installed and tested regularly;

Guidance: Agencies support fire prevention by:

- Placing smoke detectors throughout the facility, no more than 40 feet apart, and in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions;
- Testing smoke detectors and evacuation procedures monthly, and replacing smoke detector batteries at least annually;
- Complying with all smoke detector requirements in State, Tribal, or local building codes; and
- Installing and testing fire alarm systems, as prescribed by State, Tribal, or local licensing requirements.

Performance Standard 1304.53(a)(10)(vii)

(vii) Exits are clearly visible and evacuation routes are clearly marked and posted so that the path to safety outside is unmistakable (see 45 CFR 1304.22 for additional emergency procedures);

Guidance: Agencies ensure safe evacuation from a facility by:

- Following the recommendations of the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA), including the suggestion that exits have a minimum width of 36 inches;
- Ensuring that exits are unobstructed and are not padlocked or chained shut during program hours. All exit doors operate easily and open outward;
- Having entrance and exit routes examined and approved by local fire authorities and clearly marked;

Facilities, Materials, and Equipment

Performance Standard 1304.53(a)(10)(viii)

(viii) Indoor and outdoor premises are cleaned daily and kept free of undesirable and hazardous materials and conditions;

- Conducting monthly fire and evacuation drills (see 45 CFR 1304.22(a)(3));
- Having enough evacuation cribs and strollers available to evacuate infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities who cannot walk on their own, and smooth ramps on which evacuation cribs and strollers can be wheeled; and
- Providing at least two exits on each floor of a building, each of which leads to an open space at ground level.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.53(a)(7) about the maintenance, repair, and security of Head Start facilities, materials, and equipment.

Guidance: Procedures for daily indoor and outdoor safety inspections for undesirable and hazardous materials and conditions in and around the Head Start facilities include a search for poisonous plants that cause allergic reactions, as well as other common plants that are toxic to young children when eaten. An effective cleaning and sanitation schedule includes:

- Vacuuming or sweeping and mopping uncarpeted floors with a sanitizing solution at least daily and when soiled;
- Sanitizing mops thoroughly before and after a day of use;
- Vacuuming carpeted areas and rugs daily, and cleaning them regularly, or whenever soiled or contaminated with body fluids, using only hypoallergenic products for cleaning;
- Cleaning and sanitizing all kitchen equipment and maintaining equipment in good condition; and
- Cleaning and sanitizing toilet rooms, flush toilets, toilet training equipment, and fixtures when soiled, or at least daily (see 45 CFR 1304.22(e)(6) about cleaning potties).

Agencies keep their facilities free of insects, rodents, and other pest infestations by:

- Using outward-opening, self-closing doors, closed windows, screening and curtains, or any other effective means to prevent the entrance of flies or other air-borne insects;
- Ensuring that basement windows used for ventilation and all other openings to a basement or cellar do not permit the entry of rodents;
- Making sure that each foundation, floor, wall, ceiling, roof, window, exterior door, basement, cellar hatchway or other opening is free from cracks and holes;
- Keeping trash and garbage containers covered and in designated areas;
- Ensuring that the play areas do not provide shelter to or a breeding ground for pests; and

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Performance Standard

1304.53(a)(10)(ix)

(ix) Paint coatings on both interior and exterior premises used for the care of children do not contain hazardous quantities of lead;

- Contacting the local health and sanitation department for assistance or referral for extermination, if evidence of rodents, insects, or other vermin is found.

Guidance: Agencies are encouraged to obtain qualified, professional assistance in testing any surface (exterior and interior) painted before 1978 for lead levels of 0.06 percent or more. If professional inspection reveals paint with excessive lead levels, agencies obtain qualified professional assistance in:

- Removing lead-contaminated paint; or
- Refinishing the area with lead-free, encapsulant paint or other locally approved, nontoxic materials.

In addition, sanding, scraping, or burning of high-lead surfaces should be strictly prohibited, and agencies ensure that no paint containing hazardous quantities of lead is ever used. Lead-contaminated products are replaced immediately.

Parents are educated about the dangers of lead paint and the danger of lead contamination in other household products.

Local public health departments are good sources of information on the prevention of lead poisoning. In addition, agencies with concerns about lead paint are encouraged to seek the assistance of the Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, or knowledgeable Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or Housing and Urban Development (HUD) authorities.

Performance Standard

1304.53(a)(10)(x)

(x) The selection, layout, and maintenance of playground equipment and surfaces minimize the possibility of injury to children;

Guidance: Minimizing the possibility of injury requires frequent inspection for potential hazards, corrosion, and deterioration. The exact frequency of the inspection and repair of individual pieces of equipment depends upon the type of equipment, the amount of use, and local weather patterns. Effective inspections pay special attention to small or moving parts and other components that are expected to wear. They also involve checking playground surfaces frequently for broken glass, poisonous plants, or other dangerous debris. In selecting and installing playground equipment, agencies:

- Ensure that playgrounds and playground equipment are designed, installed, inspected, and maintained with the children's safety in mind so that the equipment does not pose the threat of serious falls and will not pinch, crush, or entrap the head or any part of a child's body or clothing;
- Install all playground equipment in strict accordance with the manufacturer's instructions over shock-absorbing materials, and securely anchor equipment to the ground;

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- Check with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission regarding proper surfaces surrounding playground equipment and any recalls of equipment; and
- Situate equipment so that the clearance space allocated to one piece of equipment does not encroach on that allocated for another piece of equipment; and locate moving equipment, such as swings, toward the edge or corner of a play area or design the space in another way to protect children from running into the path of moving equipment.

When using a park or an area owned by others, staff advocate for appropriate equipment and surfaces to protect all community users.

Performance Standard

1304.53(a)(10)(xi)

(xi) Electrical outlets accessible to children prevent shock through the use of child-resistant covers, the installation of child-protection outlets, or the use of safety plugs;

Guidance: Agencies prevent shocks by ensuring that all electrical equipment and appliances are properly grounded, and that all electrical cords are in good condition and placed out of the reach of children. In addition, all electrical outlets are covered with child-resistant safety covers unless electrical outlets that are childproof are installed. Home visitors and other staff also encourage families to follow the same safety guidelines for electrical equipment, cords, and outlets in their homes.

Performance Standard

1304.53(a)(10)(xii)

(xii) Windows and glass doors are constructed, adapted, or adjusted to prevent injury to children;

Guidance: The following are guidelines for preventing harm and injury from windows and glass doors:

- Windows and glass door panels in rooms used by children have safety guards (e.g., rails or mesh) or are constructed of safety-grade glass or polymer;
- Windows that can be opened are equipped with child-proof devices that do not block natural light, and are screened when open, so that children cannot pass through the windows or become stuck in any way; and
- All glass doors are marked with opaque tape or other materials to help avoid accidents. Families are encouraged to place stickers on glass doors in the home and to ensure that doors and windows that open to the outside are properly secured with screens and child-proof safety devices.

Performance Standard

1304.53(a)(10)(xiii)

(xiii) Only sources of water approved by the local or State health authority are used;

Guidance: Agencies ensure that their facilities are supplied with piped running water that is under correct pressure and from a source approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or by the State, Tribal, or local health authority, and that provides an adequate water supply to every available fixture. When water is supplied by a well or other private source, agencies ensure that it meets all applicable Federal, State, Tribal, and local health

Facilities, Materials, and Equipment

Performance Standard 1304.53(a)(10)(xiv)

(xiv) Toilets and handwashing facilities are adequate, clean, in good repair, and easily reached by children.

Toileting and diapering areas must be separated from areas used for cooking, eating, or children's activities;

standards, and that it is approved by the local health department or its designee. Agencies keep documentation of water supply approval on file.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.22(e)(1)(i) and 1304.22(e)(5) about diapering sanitation and hygiene procedures. See 45 CFR 1304.22(e)(6) for requirements about cleaning toilet training equipment.

Guidance: To maintain adequate toilet and handwashing facilities that are clean and in good repair, agencies:

- Provide accessible toilets and sinks at a ratio of roughly 1 to 10 for toddlers and preschool children. A maximum toilet height of 11 inches and a maximum hand sink height of 22 inches are recommended; use step stools or low platforms where toilets or handwashing facilities are too high;
- Supervise children during toileting and handwashing;
- Ensure that every toilet room door can be easily opened by children from the inside and the outside;
- Make a hand washing sink accessible to each classroom and group of infants;
- Use utility sinks for rinsing soiled clothing or for cleaning toilet training equipment; and
- Provide a separate sink large enough for washing and sanitizing mops and cleaning equipment.

Agencies maintain diapering areas as follows:

- Ensure that they are not located in dental hygiene or food preparation areas, and are never used for the temporary placement or serving of food;
- Ensure that they are located in areas separate from adult bathrooms;
- Ensure that changing tables have impervious, nonabsorbent, clean surfaces; and are sturdy, at an appropriate height for adults to work at when standing, and equipped with railings;
- Include storage areas close to or within the diapering area for clean diapers, wipes, gloves, and other supplies;
- When cloth diapers are used, dispose of the solid waste contents in toilets before placing the diapers in a proper soiled diaper receptacle; and
- Provide handwashing sinks adjacent to the diaper changing tables.

Facilities, Materials, and Equipment

Performance Standard

1304.53(a)(10)(xv)

(xv) Toilet training equipment is provided for children being toilet trained;

Performance Standard

1304.53(a)(10)(xvi)

(xvi) All sewage and liquid waste is disposed of through a locally approved sewer system, and garbage and trash are stored in a safe and sanitary manner; and

Guidance: Child-sized toilets, safe and sanitizable step aids, and modified toilet seats (where there are only adult-sized toilets) should be used in all facilities. If child-sized toilets, step-aids, or modified toilet seats cannot be used, potty chairs that are easily sanitized are provided for toddlers, preschoolers, and children with disabilities who require them. Handwashing sinks are located nearby. (See 45 CFR 1304.22(e)(6) for additional guidance on cleaning and disinfecting potties.)

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.22(e)(1)(i) and 1304.22(e)(5) about diapering sanitation and hygiene procedures.

Guidance: Agencies ensure that sewage disposal systems are maintained and inspected in accordance with State, Tribal, and local regulations, and that the facility is connected to a public sewer, if available. Where public sewers are not available, agencies install a septic tank system or another method approved by the State, Tribal, or local health department.

To store and dispose of garbage safely, agencies:

- Keep garbage and trash in labeled, plastic-lined, tightly covered containers that do not leak liquids and that are inaccessible to children;
- Remove garbage and trash from rooms used by children, staff, families, or volunteers on a daily basis, and remove it from the premises at least twice weekly or at other frequencies required by the local health authority;
- Keep all waste materials away from children's indoor and outdoor activity areas and from areas used for the storage or preparation of food;
- Refer disposal problems to the local sanitation and public works department; and
- Do not discharge raw or treated wastes on ground surfaces.

The following procedures are for the disposal of soiled diapers:

- Store soiled diapers in containers separate from other waste;
- Provide a sufficient number of diaper containers to hold all of the diapers that accumulate between periods of removal from the premises; and
- Use separately labeled containers for disposable diapers, cloth diapers, and soiled clothes and linens.

Facilities, Materials, and Equipment

Performance Standard 1304.53(a)(10)(xvii)

(xvii) Adequate provisions are made for children with disabilities to ensure their safety, comfort, and participation.

Performance Standard 1304.53(b)(1)

(b) Head Start equipment, toys, materials, and furniture.

(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must provide and arrange sufficient equipment, toys, materials, and furniture to meet the needs and facilitate the participation of children and adults.

Equipment, toys, materials, and furniture owned or operated by the grantee or delegate agency must be:

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1308.4(f) and 1308.4(o)(6) for information about providing adequate provisions for children with disabilities.

Guidance: Agencies are responsible for:

- Ensuring that facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities by making needed accommodations such as ramps and railings, wider pathways, and wheel-chair accessible toilets, sinks, and drinking fountains;
- Accommodating special diets or feeding needs (see 45 CFR 1304.23(a)(2) for additional information);
- Implementing emergency evacuation procedures that will ensure the safety of children with disabilities, by making any necessary accommodations to the evacuation procedures;
- Ensuring consistency and stability of the physical environment for children with visual or hearing impairments; and
- Providing appropriate space for children who may require individual therapy or activities.

Rationale: Equipment, toys, materials, and furniture have a direct impact upon the development of children's cognitive, emotional, social, and physical skills. To support educational objectives and an individualized program of services, and to show respect for children and families, equipment, toys, materials, and furniture are matched to the developmental levels, interests, temperaments, languages, cultural backgrounds, and learning styles of children. A variety of attractive materials and toys are accessible in order to provide psychological and emotional comfort and to encourage exploration and learning. Safety risks are avoided if equipment, toys, materials and furniture are safe, durable and well-maintained. To maximize floor space, minimize clutter, and ensure that items can be easily and safely located, items are stored in a safe and orderly fashion. *This rationale serves 45 CFR 1304.53(b)(1)-(2).*

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.21, Education and Early Child Development, for information about the program approach for all children. See 45 CFR 1304.53(a)(3) for further guidance on the arrangement of items in the center space.

Guidance: To meet the needs and to facilitate the safe participation of children, agencies:

- Purchase a variety of equipment, toys, materials, and furniture that are suitable for the children in the program;
- Assist families in identifying materials in the home that are safe and durable and facilitate children's learning and exploration; agencies may supplement home materials with

Facilities, Materials, and Equipment

Performance Standard 1304.53(b)(1)(i)

(i) Supportive of the specific educational objectives of the local program;

agency purchased supplies, such as construction paper, paste, and crayons;

- Ensure that a variety of appropriate kinds of equipment, toys, materials, and furniture is available in sufficient quantity to avoid excessive competition and long waits;
- Ensure that appropriate equipment, toys, materials, and furniture are available for group socialization activities; and
- Ensure that infant and toddler areas are equipped with diaper changing tables, safe cribs with clean bedding for each infant, and safe, clean cots or mats for each toddler in care.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.21 for guidance on the standards related to the program's child development and education approach and objectives.

Guidance: Agencies support educational objectives when they purchase and arrange items according to the following criteria:

- Choose materials that include art supplies, musical instruments, construction materials, dramatic play props, books, and equipment for gross motor activities;
- Ensure that toys and materials are responsive to the children's interests and abilities;
- Ensure that toys are scaled to a size appropriate to the children who use them;
- Provide a variety of climbing structures and steps as well as other structures that are safe for exploration;
- Pay attention to the number and kinds of toys available at any one time to infants and toddlers to avoid confusion, and rotate the selection of toys to provide variety and new experiences; and
- In outdoor environments, provide a variety of materials, equipment and structures for climbing, riding, pushing, pulling, and digging as well as materials that extend indoor activities, such as art or dramatic play, to the outdoors.

Performance Standard 1304.53(b)(1)(ii)

(ii) Supportive of the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the children;

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.21(a)(1)(i), 1304.21(a)(1)(iii) and 1304.21(a)(3)(i)(E) for further guidance on the standards related to establishing a child development and education approach for children that is linguistically and culturally appropriate.

Guidance: Staff:

- Use materials and toys that demonstrate acceptance of each child's gender, family, race, language, and culture;

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Performance Standard 1304.53(b)(1)(iii)

(iii) Age-appropriate, safe, and supportive of the abilities and developmental level of each child served, with adaptations, if necessary, for children with disabilities;

- Establish and maintain environments which reflect and support the culture(s) of the children;
- Provide appropriate objects that the children see and use in their homes and community; and
- Develop the outdoor area so that it safely utilizes the natural environment, adding culturally relevant structures and materials when possible.

Guidance: Carefully selected, child-sized equipment, toys, materials, and furniture for the age group using them, such as child-sized utensils and furniture, support sound child development and age-appropriate practices. For additional guidance see:

- 45 CFR 1304.21(a)(1)(i) on creating a child development and education approach that is developmentally appropriate,
- 45 CFR 1304.21(a)(5)(iii) on providing an environment supportive of children with special needs,
- 45 CFR 1304.21(c)(1)(i) for information on supporting each child's individual pattern of learning and development,
- 45 CFR 1304.53(b)(1) and 1304.53(b)(1)(i) for guidance on the provision of appropriate and sufficient equipment, toys, materials, and furniture that support the specific educational objectives of the local program,
- 45 CFR 1304.53(a)(10)(x) and (b)(1)(vi) on the safety of indoor and outdoor furniture, toys, equipment, and materials, and
- 45 CFR 1308.4(f) and 1308.4(o)(6) for information on providing appropriate furniture, equipment, and materials for children with disabilities.

Performance Standard 1304.53(b)(1)(iv)

(iv) Accessible, attractive, and inviting to children;

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.21(a)(4)(i) for information about supporting each child's learning and 45 CFR 1304.21(b)(1)(iii) for ways to provide opportunities for each child to explore a variety of sensory and motor experiences.

Guidance: To ensure that toys, equipment, materials, and furniture are accessible, attractive, and inviting to children, agencies:

- Provide easily accessible learning materials, on low shelves, that children can explore by themselves;
- Ensure that materials possess interesting shapes, textures, and colors that invite play, exploration and learning;
- Use equipment and furniture that is child-sized, age-appropriate and adaptable for children's use; and

Facilities, Materials, and Equipment

Performance Standard 1304.53(b)(1)(v)

(v) Designed to provide a variety of learning experiences and to encourage each child to experiment and explore;

Performance Standard 1304.53(b)(1)(vi)

(vi) Safe, durable, and kept in good condition; and

- Select equipment and materials that are designed to give children choices.

Guidance: See the following cross-references related to providing a variety of learning experiences for children:

- 45 CFR 1304.21 for guidance on the standards related to Education and Early Child Development,
- 45 CFR 1304.53(b)(1)(i) on supporting the specific educational objectives of the program, and
- 45 CFR 1304.53(b)(1)(iv) related to the accessibility and attractiveness of equipment, toys, materials, and furniture.

Related Information: See 45 CFR 1304.53(a)(10)(x) for further guidance on the standards related to the safety and maintenance of outdoor playground equipment and surfaces.

Guidance: Agencies ensure the safety and durability of toys and equipment by following safety guidelines in purchasing, installing, and maintaining toys and equipment:

- All toys and equipment are approved for use by the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission, the Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association, or another organization that sets children's safety standards;
- Furniture does not have sharp edges, and is anchored to the ground, if light enough for young children to turn over;
- Equipment and furniture is inviting to the children and also sturdy enough to support non-walkers, thus allowing them to pull themselves up;
- Each child is provided his or her own crib;
- To assure the safety and comfort of children, stacked cribs are not used;
- Infant walkers are not used, because of the considerable risk of injury;
- Care is taken to supervise children when they play with games and toys that have small parts that may be swallowed;
- All equipment is installed in strict accordance with the manufacturer's instructions; and
- A comprehensive maintenance program is implemented for toys, equipment and furnishings; the frequency of inspection and repair of individual items will depend upon the type of equipment and the amount of use it gets.

Facilities, Materials, and Equipment

Performance Standard 1304.53(b)(1)(vii)

(vii) Stored in a safe and orderly fashion when not in use.

Guidance: The following techniques for the storage of equipment, toys, materials, and furniture increase safety and order:

- Each activity area has its own storage space;
- Reserve as much space as possible for children's use by storing materials in locations not used by children;
- Ensure that bookcases and other shelves cannot be pulled over by children;
- Provide storage space for all adaptive equipment for children with disabilities;
- Ensure that adult materials and equipment, such as scissors, staplers, electrical appliances, and knives, are inaccessible to children; and
- Store outdoor equipment, such as tricycles, bicycles, balls, and sand tools, in a shed or other enclosed storage space, to protect these items, as well as to keep the outdoor area free of clutter.

Performance Standard 1304.53(b)(2)

(2) Infant and toddler toys must be made of non-toxic materials and must be sanitized regularly.

Guidance: Infant and toddler toys are cleaned and disinfected on a regular schedule, in keeping with the advice of appropriate health authorities. Agencies immediately clean toys that are touched, placed in children's mouths, or otherwise in contact with bodily secretions. Toys are hand or machine washed with water and detergent, then disinfected or sanitized, and rinsed, before they are handled by another child.

Performance Standard 1304.53(b)(3)

(3) To reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), all sleeping arrangements for infants must use firm mattresses and avoid soft bedding materials such as comforters, pillows, fluffy blankets or stuffed toys.

Rationale: Research findings demonstrate that appropriate sleeping arrangements for infants reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). However, the causes of SIDS are not fully understood. Some researchers believe that babies who die of SIDS are born with one or more conditions that make them especially vulnerable to the syndrome. Other researchers have proposed alternative explanations. Whatever the cause, most deaths occur by the end of the sixth month, with the greatest number of deaths taking place between two and four months of age.

Guidance: The practices that will minimize the risk of SIDS, and can be shared with parents, are:

- Counseling pregnant mothers to obtain early and medically recommended prenatal care, to avoid the use of drugs and alcohol, to refrain from smoking during pregnancy, and to breast feed whenever possible;
- Ensuring that infants receive regular well-baby health visits, and that they are immunized on the recommended schedule;

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- Placing non-mobile infants on their backs, rather than on their stomachs¹ or sides to sleep;
- Using firm mattresses and avoiding the use of cushions, soft fluffy blankets, comforters, sheepskins, and pillows;
- Avoiding the use of soft toys, cushions, stuffed animals or other soft materials where infants sleep;
- Maintaining a smoke-free environment;
- Avoiding overdressing infants or overheating rooms where infants play and sleep; and
- Burping infants properly during and after a feeding, before they are put to sleep.

¹ Prone or “belly positions” may at times be recommended for some infants with certain medical conditions, such as respiratory distress, gastroesophageal reflux, and upper airway abnormalities.