

# Director of Early Childhood and Family Services Report

## April 2023



### Federal Updates:

- A letter to the Head Start community from Khari M. Garvin Director Office of Head Start is included at the bottom of my report.
- **Update on Vaccine and Testing Requirements** On March 31, the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas vacated the Vaccine and Mask Requirements to Mitigate the Spread of COVID-19 in Head Start Programs, 86 Fed. Reg. 68052 (Nov. 30, 2021) (the “Interim Final Rule” or “IFC”). That decision will take effect on April 7, 2023. Because of this ruling, as of April 7, there will not be a Head Start requirement for vaccination and testing for Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant recipients in all states, tribes, and territories. Separate from the status of the Interim Final Rule described above, there is a Final Rule still in place on Mitigating the Spread of COVID-19 in Head Start Programs that was issued by the US Department of Health and Human Services in January 2023. This Final Rule requires all Head Start grant recipients to, “have an evidence-based COVID-19 mitigation policy, developed in consultation with their Health Services Advisory Committee.”
- **The Office of Head Start (OHS) previously issued flexibilities** to provide administrative relief to grant recipients affected by COVID-19, outlined in [ACF-IM-HS-21-01](#). A number of the flexibilities included finite ending dates, while others were applicable through the duration of the public health emergency (PHE) declaration. Based on current COVID-19 trends, the Biden Administration has announced that the federal PHE in effect since January 2020 will expire on May 11, 2023. At the conclusion of the PHE, the administrative and fiscal flexibility described in ACF-IM-HS-21-01 will also end.
- **Addressing Lead in water in Head Start Programs-** see the IM listed under the State Updates Section.
- **Improper Payment Study** information from the Office of Head Start is included at the bottom of my report.

### State Updates:

- **Addressing Lead in water in Head Start Programs-**The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are committed to working together toward a shared vision of a lead-free future for children and families across the United States. To that end, today HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra and EPA Administrator Michael Regan issued a joint letter to governors encouraging them to leverage all available resources to ensure young children are not exposed to lead in water in those places where many young children spend a great deal of time — early care and education programs. Head Start programs have a critical role to play in preventing lead poisoning in children. Programs are required to maintain facilities free from toxins, make sure children are screened for lead poisoning, and partner with families to promote children’s healthy development. That is why, today, the Office of Head Start published guidance through [ACF-IM-HS-23-01 The Role of Head Start Programs in Addressing Lead in Water](#)

### NRCA Program Updates:

- Attachments included this month:
  - Enrollment and Finance Dashboard reports.
  - Budget modification for the 2022-2023 school year is being submitted for your review and pending approval.
  - COLA and Quality Initiative package from FY2023 is being submitted for your review and approval.
  - Early Education Services Advocate job description.
- Recruitment for 2023-2024 continues.
- We are aggregating data from our Staff and Parent Surveys.
- Staff position openings- Check CA. AT Pulaski.
- We are working on a one-time funding request to address safety within Head Start buildings.
- Last month Deborah and I attended the GoEngage training in Reston Va.
- We looked at the total number of program hours for each classroom in order to determine the need for make up days for each classroom. Site Administrators have been notified.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Roni Fitch, Director* of Early Childhood and Family Services

## **Letter from Khari Garvin, Director of the Office of Head Start**

To the Head Start community,

I am writing to all of you to introduce myself as the director of the Office of Head Start (OHS). I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to serve in this new role, as I have had the privilege to serve on the local, state, and now federal level of the Head Start program.

I still remember my first Head Start job as a social services coordinator, and the excitement I had working with our team of family advocates to partner with families on goal setting to support their ambitions for stability and self-sufficiency. I believe today, as I did then, that the Head Start approach is the right one for supporting our nation's most vulnerable children and families.

In my first week as OHS director, and in true Head Start fashion, the federal team has seized upon the opportunity to leverage the expertise garnered from my years of program experience in the field. I also had the honor of visiting two Head Start and Early Head Start grant recipients in New Mexico. Our commitment to lead with empathy remains firmly intact, drawing also from the important perspectives of the tribal, regional, and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start networks. It is my endeavor to partner with you to ensure the children and families we serve are safe and secure while receiving the highest quality services they deserve from a world-class Head Start workforce.

I know the potential that Head Start programs have for disrupting the poverty cycle. The number of children and families that Head Start programs have supported in breaking that cycle is something you all should be proud of. I am incredibly excited to lead the office in this partnership with our programs and children and families!

Together, we will leave a lasting impact on children, families, and the communities they make up.

With gratitude and in partnership,

/ Khari M. Garvin /

Khari M. Garvin

Director

Office of Head Start

## **Improper Payment Study--**

The Payment Integrity Information Act of 2019 (PIIA), which became law on March 2, 2020, requires agencies to identify and review all programs and activities that may be susceptible to significant improper payments based on guidance from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). On March 5, 2021, OMB issued M-21-19, which provided guidance to program offices on implementing the requirements of PIIA. Based on this guidance, the Office of Head Start is required to conduct an Improper Payment Study.

The Office of Head Start will conduct improper payment reviews of recipients to ensure Federal funding was expended and associated programs were implemented in full accordance with statutory and public policy requirements as outlined in 45 C.F.R. § 75.300.

Recipients must have financial management and standards for financial management systems in place that meet the requirements of 45 C.F.R. § 75.302, including systems that provide accurate, current, and complete disclosure of the financial results of each Federal award and records that adequately identify the source and application for funds for federally funded activities.

The Improper Payment Study will be conducted remotely and is separate from other OHS program and fiscal monitoring activities.

Selected recipients will receive a notice of selection for improper payment review through the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES).

Please make sure your grant recipient contact information is updated.

Please be advised, if chosen for the improper payment review, failure to timely submit the information requested is a violation of the terms and conditions of your Head Start award and may put your agency at risk of further sanctions per 45 C.F.R. § 75.371.