

Director of Early Childhood and Family Services Report July 2023



Federal Updates:

Removal of the COVID-19 Vaccine and Testing Requirements for Head Start Programs

On June 26, 2023, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) will issue Final Rule [Removal of the Vaccine Requirements for Head Start Programs](#) in the Federal Register. It removes the COVID-19 vaccine and testing requirements that were originally included in the November 2021 Interim Final Rule with Comment Period. Specifically, this Final Rule removes the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) requirement that all Head Start staff, contractors whose activities involve contact with or providing direct services to children and families, and volunteers working in classrooms or directly with children are fully vaccinated for COVID-19. The HSPPS requirement that staff who are exempt from vaccination have “at least weekly” COVID-19 testing is also removed.

Currently, Head Start grant recipients are required to have an evidence-based COVID-19 mitigation policy to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and reduce the likelihood of illness or death from infection ([45 CFR §1302.47\(b\)\(9\)](#)). Although ACF has formally removed the vaccine and testing requirements, Head Start programs are strongly encouraged to include them in their mitigation policy. For more guidance for Head Start grant recipients, refer to [ACF-PI-HS-23-01 Supplementary Information on Establishing an Evidence-based COVID-19 Mitigation Policy](#).

State Updates:

In a memo from Va. DOE to school systems: VQB5 - Required Participation for Early Childhood Classrooms Starting in August 2023. Participation in VQB5 will be required by law for every early childhood site that takes public funding, including public schools with pre-K classrooms. This includes classrooms that are funded by Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)/IDEA, Head Start, or Title I.

VQB5 for Public Schools in the 2023-2024 School Year – Three Required Activities As required by the recently approved 2023-2024 VQB5 Guidelines, all public schools with early childhood classrooms must complete the following three VQB5 activities.

1. Schools must register between August 15-October 1 in LinkB5, the VQB5 data portal.
2. Every eligible classroom must complete two local classroom observations, one in the fall and one in the spring, using the CLASS measure.
3. All participating sites must participate in external CLASS observations for each age-level served, between August 15, 2023, and May 31, 2024.

NRCA Program Updates:

Enrollment- Please see the “Enrollment Dashboard.”

Pre-Service- Teaching Staff and Aides have been contacted with their return-to-work dates. Blended classroom staff begin returning July 31st and Head Start teaching staff begin August 7 with optional days for classroom set up August 3 and 4. Teaching staff will participate in some professional development mini conference the week of August 7th. The topics include pyramid model practices, curriculum, assessment, and interactions.

Start dates for Children:

- August 9th Check and Willis
- August 14th McHarg (staggered start, no preschool on 8/15)
- August 16th M. Beeks
- August 21st Macy M.
- ELC (1/2 days until 8/28)
- August 24th All Duration and 5-Day Classrooms (1/2 days until 9/5)

Personnel- Vacant Positions: 22

Site Administrator	Montgomery Co- filled begins July 10
Lead Teacher	Margaret Beeks (processing) First Baptist Pulaski (holding on posting)
Assistant Teacher	Check (processing) McHarg 2 Pulaski 2 Christiansburg 2 both-filled via internal promotion
Center/Instructional Aide	Margaret Beeks 1 McHarg 2 (1 processing) Blacksburg 1 (filled start date is October 1 Aug is temporary bus driver for Pburg). Christiansburg 3 positions Willis 1 First Baptist 1 (filled)
ESSA	McHarg (filled) filled via internal promotion. Macy (holding on posting)

Self -Assessment-Our Annual Program Self-Assessment is underway. We will update our 5-year goal progress and use the data to identify goals for our next 5-year project period.

Respectfully Submitted,

Roni Fitch

Director of Early Childhood and Family Services