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PROGRAM INSTRUCTION

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

SUBJECT: Participation in Your State’s Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Plan

INSTRUCTION:

This Program Instruction (PI) addresses the role of Head Start and Early Head Start grantees in the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC), which will be jointly administered by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. This program is an exciting opportunity for Head Start grantees and for young children and their families. RTT-ELC is a competitive grant program whereby States will be encouraged to focus on transforming early learning systems through better coordination, effective tiered quality rating and improvement systems, clearer early learning standards, data and assessment systems, and meaningful workforce development. Through this competition, Head Start can highlight and model the high-quality services and collaborations that have always been part of Head Start’s vision.

The Head Start regulations at 45 C.F.R. § 1304.41(a)(2) require grantees and delegate agencies to take affirmative steps to establish ongoing collaborative relationships with community organizations, including educational and cultural institutions, to respond to the needs of the children, families, and communities Early Head Start and Head Start programs serve. In addition, the Head Start Act supports collaboration with States’ overall educational program and promotes an effective relationship between Head Start programs and publicly funded preschools and K-12 programs. See Head Start Act sections 642(e)(5), 642A, 636.

OHS expects Head Start and Early Head Start grantees to take part in their State RTT-ELC application process and program to the maximum extent possible unless doing so would conflict with the Head Start Act or preclude a program from meeting the regulations. If a grantee believes participating in a State’s RTT-ELC plan would conflict with the Head Start Act or preclude a program from complying with the regulations, the grantee should consult the Office of Head Start.

A notice inviting States to apply for RTT-ELC will be published in the Federal Register late this summer. Applications will be accepted until mid-fall, and grant awards to States will be made in December. Information on the RTT-ELC competition is available at: www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge. A draft executive summary of the

requirements, priorities, selection criteria and definitions for the RTT-ELC competition has been posted on the Department of Education's website. OHS expects all grantees in States that receive a RTT-ELC grant to participate in the State tiered quality rating and improvement system. States will also be asked to develop data systems, a Kindergarten entry assessment, and supports to improve the early childhood workforce and OHS encourages grantees to participate in these reforms to the fullest extent.

OHS looks forward to supporting your ongoing efforts and making Head Start an integral component of State early learning systems.

Please direct any questions on this Program Instruction to Richard Gonzales at Richard.Gonzales@acf.hhs.gov.

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