



ADMINISTRATION FOR **CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

Dear Tribal Leaders,

I am pleased to share exciting news that on March 23, President Biden signed into law a new provision that gives Tribes increased flexibility in determining which children are eligible for Tribal Head Start programs. This change will allow Tribes to better prioritize and enroll the children in your communities who would benefit from Head Start.

This historic provision clarifies that Tribes have the discretion, using their own selection criteria, to enroll any child in their service area who would benefit from Head Start. This includes children in families for which a child, a family member, or a member of the same household, is a member of an Indian tribe. This new policy achieves categorical eligibility for your program's entire service area regardless of income – inclusive of Tribal children as well as other children in the service area. This policy will increase the number of children in Tribal communities who have an opportunity to participate in Head Start, including learning their Native language and experiencing their culture while enrolled in Head Start programs.

This guidance fortifies Tribal sovereignty and self-determination by giving Tribes more control in determining eligibility for Head Start programs. This change is designed to ensure that Tribes have flexibility and decision-making power when it comes to how they deliver services in Tribal communities.

This new policy is effective immediately. However, no child who is currently served in a Tribal Head Start program should have their enrollment disrupted to accommodate new enrollees who may qualify based on these provisions.

The Biden-Harris Administration and HHS and ACF leaders fought for this important change alongside Tribal leaders and program administrators, including so many of you. We are grateful for your partnership in raising this important issue and working with us to see it become law. We are especially pleased to have the opportunity to implement this new policy that aligns with [President Biden's Executive Order](#) to provide Tribes with more flexibility and autonomy when it comes to program administration.

The Office of Head Start (OHS) understands that this change will take time to enact and anticipates that you will have questions. OHS will be issuing a Program Instruction with more details soon. Please feel encouraged to share this letter with your program managers.

We welcome your feedback and communication throughout this implementation process. We will soon share specific opportunities to provide feedback through the Tribal consultation process. If you have questions about this new policy, please send your questions to AIANHeadStart@acf.hhs.gov.



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CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Hild", is positioned above the name "Jeff Hild".

Jeff Hild

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary