

EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT SPECIALISTS

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS: STEPS FOR PROGRAMS TO CONSIDER



Use this brief to better understand the Head Start regulations and considerations for child development specialists.

Local programs determine how their staff meet the Head Start regulations.

Follow these steps to help guide you in the process of determining and justifying how your child development specialists meet the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS).

1. Read the HSPPS.
 - Know the specific education requirements for staff and consultant roles detailed in §1302.91.
 - Review the cross references to the staff and consultant qualification requirements in the Head Start Act and other relevant HSPPS.
2. Gather data to know your program's needs and expectations, based on:
 - Community, family, and child needs
 - Program goals including school readiness goals
 - Your existing continuous quality improvement system
3. Use all available information to ensure your program has:
 - Human resources and professional development policies and procedures to help you meet regulations
 - Clear program goals including school readiness goals
 - Qualified staff and consultants who can effectively support your program's goals and service delivery
 - An ongoing monitoring process that identifies and addresses challenges in hiring and retaining qualified staff and consultants

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS?*

*For full text access the [HSPPS](#)

KNOWLEDGE

§1302.91(e)(4)(ii) "...a child development specialist, as required for family child care...must have, at a minimum, a baccalaureate degree in [either] child development, early childhood education, or a related field."¹

COMPETENCIES

§1302.91(a) "A program must:

- Ensure all staff, consultants, and contractors...have sufficient knowledge, training and experience, and competencies to:
 - fulfill the roles and responsibilities of their positions...
 - ensure high-quality service delivery...
- Provide ongoing training and professional development to support staff in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities."



§1302.23(e) "A program that offers the family child care option must provide a child development specialist to:

- Support family child care providers...
- Ensure the provision of quality services at each family child care home.

Child development specialists must:

- Conduct regular visits to each home, some of which are unannounced, not less than once every two weeks;
- Periodically verify compliance with either contract requirements or agency policy;
- Facilitate ongoing communication between program staff, family child care providers, and enrolled families; and,
- Provide recommendations for technical assistance and support the family child care provider in developing relationships with other child care professionals."

PLEASE NOTE!

Grantees have the flexibility to implement higher or more stringent requirements than those outlined in the regulations. To meet Head Start requirements, a child development specialist could have a bachelor's or advanced degree in one of the following:

- Child development
- Early childhood education
- A related field

1 §1302.91(e)(4)(ii) is in effect on August 1, 2018.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HIRING STAFF

- Ensure child development specialists have sufficient knowledge, training, experience, and competency to be able to effectively support FCC providers and ensure the delivery of quality services within each FCC home.
- Review*** training and course content to determine if it includes ECE content. To the extent possible, get the course descriptions from awarding institutions. ECE or child development related courses may be offered in various departments—such as education, home economics, family and consumer science, human ecology, music, art, library science, physical education and recreation, psychology, family studies, and others.
- Seek individuals who have the following:
 - Previous early childhood experience within family child care (FCC) settings.
 - Interpersonal communication skills
 - Experience building relationships over time
 - Knowledge and experience in areas that include the theories and principles of child growth and development, early childhood education (birth to age five), and family support
 - Familiarity with the national Child Development Associate (CDA) competency standards for FCC settings and if applicable, with the state credential standards
 - Knowledge and understanding of the Head Start Program Performance Standards and other applicable FCC regulations
- Consider your local needs to help you determine what “a related field” is for your program.
 - Access the T/TA system for support and connect with your regional office program specialist as necessary.
 - Consider requirements detailed within the state/territory early care and education system (includes licensing requirements, requirements included within the Quality Rating and Improvement System, etc.).

****In reviewing coursework taken by applicants, be sure to look beyond just the title or name of the department that issued the credits, as they are sometimes deceiving.*

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Use the annual professional development (PD) hour requirement to help child development specialists effectively support family child care providers in implementing and adapting curriculum and assessment across the birth to five continuum. This can include ongoing training and taking college courses.
- Use individualized professional development plans and ongoing supervision to support key areas such as supporting family child care providers working with infants and toddlers, children who are dual language learners, children who are experiencing homelessness, or children with disabilities.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE ON THIS TOPIC?

- Head Start Regulations <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii>
 - Program Performance Standards on Staff Qualifications and Competency Requirements <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-91-staff-qualifications-competency-requirements>
- Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/>
 - Being an Effective Mentor Coach <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/professional-development/article/being-effective-mentor-coach>
 - Introduction to Mentor Coaching <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/professional-development/article/introduction-mentor-coaching>
 - Relationship-based Competencies to Support Family Engagement <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/article/relationship-based-competencies-support-family-engagement>
- Early Educator Central <https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov>
 - Free or low-cost online coursework on Early Educator Central <https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov/coursework>
 - Early Educator Central’s video on what it means to be an infant and toddler professional <https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov/media/early-educator-central-hero>
- Quality Rating and Improvement Systems <https://qrisguide.acf.hhs.gov/about-qris>
 - State QRIS info <https://qrisguide.acf.hhs.gov/states>
 - National Program Standards Crosswalk Tool <https://qrisguide.acf.hhs.gov/crosswalk/>
- The Council’s Online Platform YourCouncil <https://www.cdacouncil.org/yourcda>