EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR DISABILITIES MANAGERS

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS: STEPS FOR PROGRAMS TO CONSIDER

Use this brief to better understand the Head Start regulations and considerations for disabilities managers.

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 disabilities managers 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

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WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS?*

*For full text access the HSPPS

KNOWLEDGE

§1302.91(d)(1) "A program must ensure staff responsible for management and oversight of…services to children with disabilities**…have, at a minimum, a baccalaureate degree, preferably related to one or more of the disciplines they oversee."

**This requirement applies to disabilities managers hired after November 7, 2016.

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."

PLEASE NOTE!

Grantees have the flexibility to implement higher or more stringent requirements than those outlined in the regulations. To meet the Head Start requirements, disabilities managers could have a bachelor's or advanced degree

- preferably related to one or more of the disciplines they oversee***

***When disabilities coordinators also serve as education managers they must meet the requirements in 1302.91(d)(2).

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HIRING STAFF

- Ensure disability managers have sufficient training, experience, and competency to be able to effectively fulfill the responsibilities of their role(s), which may vary based upon your program's structure. For example, some disabilities managers oversee birth to five services so would need knowledge and expertise in Part B and Part C services. Other disabilities managers may also oversee health, mental health, or education services and will need knowledge and expertise in these additional areas.
- Consider local needs to help you determine what "one or more of the disciplines they oversee" means for your management staff.
- Review**** training and course content to determine if it includes content related to children with disabilities. To the extent possible, get the course descriptions from awarding institutions. ECE or child development courses related to serving children with disabilities 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.
  - 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 ensure staff have the skills to manage the provision of services to children with disabilities and their families. This can include ongoing training and taking college courses.
- Use individualized professional development plans and ongoing supervision to support areas of need and interest, such as strengthening staff working with children with identified or suspected disabilities.
- Offer PD opportunities that support staff working with special populations based on your community assessment or continuous quality improvement data.

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*
  - The Showcase of Head Start Regulations on Staff Qualifications *https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/showcase/staff-qualifications*
  - Head Start Program Performance Standards Excerpts on Staff Qualifications *https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/docs/pdf/staff-qualifications.pdf*
- Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) *https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/*
  - Head Start Staff Qualifications *https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/human-resources/article/head-start-staff-qualifications*
  - Professional Development to Support Effective Inclusion Practices *https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/professional-development-support-effective-inclusion-practices*
  - Relationship-Based Competencies to Support Family Engagement *https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/article/relationship-based-competencies-support-family-engagement*
  - Steps Local Agencies Can Use to Determine Credential or Degree Equivalency *https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/steps-local-agencies-can-use-determine-credential-or-degree-equivalency*
- 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/*