

EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR CENTER-BASED PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS: STEPS FOR PROGRAMS TO CONSIDER



Use this brief to better understand the Head Start regulations and considerations for preschool teachers.

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 preschool teachers 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)(2)(ii) "...a program must ensure all [preschool] center-based teachers have...an associate's or bachelor's degree in:

- child development [or] early childhood education (ECE)
- [with] equivalent coursework [to a major relating to ECE and experience teaching preschool children], or
- otherwise meet the requirements of section 648A(a)(3) (B) of the Act."

§1302.91(e)(2)(i) "...no less than fifty percent of all Head Start teachers, nationwide, have a baccalaureate degree."

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."

§1302.91(e)(5) "A program must ensure center-based [preschool] teachers...demonstrate competency to:

- Provide effective and nurturing teacher-child interactions,
- Plan and implement learning experiences that ensure effective curriculum implementation and use of assessment and
- Promote children's progress across...the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five* and applicable state early learning and development standards, including for children with disabilities and dual language learners, as appropriate."

Head Start Act, Sec. 648A.

(a) "ensure that each Head Start classroom...is assigned a teacher who has demonstrated competency to perform functions that include:

- planning and implementing learning experiences that advance the intellectual and physical development of children, including:
 - improving the readiness of children for school by developing their literacy, phonemic, and print awareness,
 - their understanding and use of language,
 - their understanding and use of increasingly complex and varied vocabulary,
 - their appreciation of books their understanding of early math and early science,
 - their problem-solving abilities, and their approaches to learning;
- establishing and maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment;
- supporting the social and emotional development of children;
- encouraging the involvement of the families of the children in Head Start program and supporting the development of relationships between children and their families."



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 as prescribed in section 648A(a)(3)(B) of the Head Start Act, preschool teachers could have one of the following:

- An associate, bachelor, or advanced degree in child development or ECE
- An associate, bachelor, or advanced degree in a related field with coursework equivalent to a major relating to ECE and experience teaching preschool children
- A bachelor or advanced degree and:
 - Is (or was) admitted into Teach for America Program,
 - Passed a rigorous EC content exam, such as the Praxis II, and
 - Participated in a Teach for America summer training institute that includes (or included):
 - Teaching preschool children and is receiving (or received) ongoing professional development, and
 - Support from Teach for America’s professional staff.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HIRING STAFF

- Head Start preschool classrooms can be staffed with a teacher and an assistant or with two teachers. Staff-child ratios and group size maximums are determined by the age of most children in the class and the needs of the children [§1302.21(b)(1)(3)&(4)].
- Ensure preschool teachers have sufficient knowledge, training, experience, and competency to be able to effectively plan for and implement education services for preschool-age children and their families.
- 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.

Courses equivalent to ECE major can:

- come from more than one accredited college;
- be earned at the associate degree level and at the four-year level; and
- include one-credit courses. Colleges may require one or more specific one-credit courses as part of their ECE studies. Know that isolated one-credit courses rarely provide the intensity of study or the depth of content necessary for mastery of a subject or improvement of teaching skills.
- Consider your local needs to define what “experience teaching preschool children” means 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 ensure teachers effectively:
 - support child development and learning;
 - implement and individualize curriculum for preschool children; and
 - build respectful, culturally responsive, and trusting relationships with families.

This can include ongoing training, taking college courses, and intensive coaching.
- Use individualized professional development plans and ongoing supervision to support areas of need and interest such as planning and implementing curriculum for preschoolers, assessing young children's developmental progress, etc.

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>
 - 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/>
- The Council's Online Platform Your Council <https://www.cdacouncil.org/yourcda>