

# STEPS LOCAL AGENCIES CAN USE TO DETERMINE CREDENTIAL OR DEGREE EQUIVALENCY

## IMPLEMENTING HEAD START PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARD §1302.91

### STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION STAFF

#### BACKGROUND

Head Start and Early Head Start agencies must ensure they have qualified staff in accordance with the Head Start regulations. The Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) include equivalency provisions for some staff roles as part of the educational requirements.

#### STAFF ROLES WITH EQUIVALENCY PROVISIONS:

- **Education manager:** Non-early childhood education (ECE) degree with equivalent coursework in ECE and early education teaching experience [§1302.91(d)(2); 648A(a)(2)(B)(i) of the Act]
- **Early Head Start center-based teacher:** CDA or comparable credential and have been trained or have equivalent coursework in early childhood development with a focus on infant and toddler development [§1302.91(e)(1)]
- **Head Start center-based teacher:** Non-ECE degree with equivalent coursework in ECE and early education teaching experience [§1302.91(e)(2); 648A(a)(3)(B) of the Act]
- **Family child care (FCC) provider:** FCC CDA or state equivalent [§1302.91(e)(4)]
- **Home visitors:** Home based CDA, comparable credential, or equivalent coursework as part of a degree [§1302.91(e)(6)] – by August 1, 2018

It is the agency's responsibility to determine equivalency. Local agencies have flexibility in determining and justifying how their employees meet the educational equivalency qualification requirements.

#### USE THESE STEPS TO HELP GUIDE YOUR AGENCY IN THE EQUIVALENCY DETERMINATION AND JUSTIFICATION PROCESS.

- 1) **Read and re-read the HSPPS** particularly 1302 subpart I Human Resources Management.
  - Know the specific education qualification requirements for staff roles detailed in §1302.91.
  - Cross reference the staff qualification requirements to the Head Start Act and other relevant HSPPS such as §1302.92, §1302 subpart B, etc.
- 2) **Gather information** to aid in your agency's determination and justification of how the equivalency meets the HSPPS. Access relevant information related to your program option(s), the roles of staff, and the ages of children you serve.
- 3) **Use all available information** to help your agency make determinations, decisions, and justifications related to employing or retaining staff. Use it to inform agency policies and procedures, as applicable.

Local agencies have the flexibility to implement higher or more stringent requirements than those detailed within the HSPPS.

#### HELPFUL INFORMATION FOR STEP 2

Gather from the Early Childhood Education (ECE) field:

- **Higher education's systems for credits and continuing education units (CEU).**  
Partner with local college(s) or university(ies) to understand how many quarter or semester credits are needed for a major and what course content is included in their ECE degree program. Determine if and how it sufficiently meets your program's expectations and needs for staff.

- **National, state and local child development associates (CDA) credentialing programs** for teachers, home visitors and family child care providers. Determine if and how state awarded and comparable CDA credential(s) meet or exceed those of the national CDA credential by crossing walking their requirements to those of the applicable national CDA credential.

Know: There are four types of national CDA credentials that are applicable to Head Start and Early Head Start programs:

1. Infant/toddler center-based setting (working with children birth to 36 months);
2. Preschool center-based setting (working with children 3 to 5 years old);
3. Family child care setting (working with children birth to age 5); and
4. Home visitor (working with children birth to age 5).

For more information about the national CDA credentials, go to: [www.cdacouncil.org](http://www.cdacouncil.org).

- **Your state’s professional development or quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS).** Many state systems organize training opportunities through registries, track and recognize practitioners’ achievements, and help ensure the quality of available trainings.
- Identify trainings that are applicable for the CDA credential, offer CEUs or credits.

**Useful information to gather from individual staff:**

- Access information about completed credentials, degrees, and miscellaneous courses.

Some state early childhood workforce registries provide this information, including course syllabi and transcripts.

- Review the course content to determine if and how it relates. Sometimes, it can be unclear as to whether or not courses are applicable to ECE. Don’t jump to conclusions based on the title of the course or the name of the department that issued the credits. To the extent possible, get course descriptions from awarding institutions(s).

**THERE IS A BILINGUAL SPECIALIZATION FOR EACH OF THE FOUR NATIONAL CDA CREDENTIALS.**

Candidates for bilingual specialization must:

- Work in a bilingual program that requires the candidate to speak both languages (English and another language) daily and consistently; and
- Have a working knowledge of those two languages.

Gathering and reviewing information can be a complex process. Grantees may find it helpful to have team at the program level that could:

- Develop systems to ensure consistent measures are used to determine educational equivalencies. If your state has an early childhood workforce registry check with them for support in determining equivalencies, they may have systems in place that can support your work.
- Review information related to individuals’ training, and education to determine if they possess the required equivalent coursework.

**HELPFUL INFORMATION FOR STEP 3**

Use all available information to help your agency make determinations, decisions, and justifications related to employing or retaining staff. Use it to inform agency policies and procedures, as applicable.

Make sure your approach results in qualified staff who are effective, strong performers:

- Ensure staff have the sufficient knowledge, training, experience, and competencies to effectively perform and fulfill the responsibilities of their roles.
- Understand the benefits and drawbacks of hiring or retaining individual staff. For new hires, justify why the person was the best hire at that time.
- Provide ongoing training and professional development that supports staff in acquiring or increasing the knowledge and skills they need to effectively fulfill their roles and responsibilities. As much as possible, link these events to academic credits.

**REMEMBER:**

Quality staff are key to quality services. Your staff should be able to support your agency’s mission and provide services that foster positive child and family outcomes.



- Create individual professional development (PD) plans that include appropriate steps and manageable timelines. Monitor how well individuals progress along their plan.
- Use your program's on-going monitoring process to identify and address challenges in hiring and retaining qualified staff. Know if challenges are caused by systemic issues or are individually based.

**Talk with your program specialist.** Keep him or her informed about your staff's progress in meeting the educational requirements.

When you have quality staff members who are close to meeting educational requirements:

- Use individualized PD plans to ensure effective and strong performing staff continue to make steady progress in attaining the necessary credential or degree. The PD plan spells out specific steps and timelines in meeting the qualifications in a timely manner.

Note: These steps may also be helpful in your agency's process to determine credentials and degrees in related fields.

#### **STAFF ROLES WITH RELATED FIELD PROVISIONS:**

- **Fiscal officer:** baccalaureate in accounting, business, fiscal management or related field [§1302.91(c)(2)]
- **Family, health, and disabilities management:** baccalaureate, preferably related to one or more disciplines they oversee [§1302.91(d)(1)]
- **Child development specialist:** baccalaureate in child development, early childhood education or related field [§1302.91(e)(4)(ii)] – by August 1, 2018
- **Family service staff:** credential or certification in social work, human services, family services, counseling or a related field [§1302.91(e)(7)] – for staff hired after November 7, 2016
- **Coaches** providing services in the program's integrated coaching strategy described in §1302.92(c): baccalaureate in early childhood education or related field [§1302.91(f)] – by August 1, 2018