

Information Memorandum - IM - Office Hour

Moderator: Welcome to this Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Office Hour. Be sure to download all handouts, videos, and slides prior to viewing the Office Hour. During the presentation, you may be asked to pause the Office Hour and complete an activity, such as viewing a video, reviewing a handout, or reading a resource. Once you complete the action, return to the Office Hour and continue viewing. Now let's get started with this Office Hour.

Angie Godfrey: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to today's Office Hour. Today, we will be discussing the recently released Information Memorandum on Policy and Program Guidance for the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. I'm Angie Godfrey, the Infant Toddler Specialist at the Office of Head Start, and I welcome you to this afternoon's Office Hours. The purpose of the IM that was recently released is, really, to explain in detail some of the issues and questions that have arisen during the last several months, when we've been funding and providing orientations for the new Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. We hope to clarify the purpose and vision, provide some program guidance for grantees and their partners, and to address various issues and questions that have been raised by grantees during the orientations and start-up, as I mentioned earlier.

So, to get us started, I'm going to talk about just a few -- just several topics today, but around one area in the Information Memorandum; it has to do with staff and staffing and qualifications. So, today I'll talk about child care center ratios and group sizes, family child care group sizes, staffing and planning shifts for staff, and staff qualifications and credential requirements.

The first thing I'm going to talk about are child care center ratios and group sizes. You know, as you all know, the purpose of the Partnership is to serve Early Head Start children in child care programs, and the goal is that Head Start standards will be met throughout the day, and so one of the foundations of Head Start are the ratios. We want programs and children to benefit, both enrolled children to benefit and those that are in classes with enrolled children to benefit from some of the benefits such as small teacher/child ratios.

So the primary ratio that we're going to talk about or the primary bullet I'll talk about this afternoon is that Early Head Start ratios are one teacher to four infants and toddlers, and then a group or class size of no more than eight children. So in any classroom that serves Early Head Start, you would have two teachers to eight children — two qualified teachers — and we'll talk more about that later.

There are a couple of issues around this. I just want to remind you, again, we expect that the children that are being enrolled in partnerships will be spread out among the classrooms so that there would be a greater benefit to more children, including those that aren't directly enrolled in Early Head Start, and that the purpose would be that we would raise the level of quality throughout the classrooms.

I think there's been some confusion about do you need, like, one child in every classroom to spread them around, but we're really looking at a realistic placement of children that sufficient numbers would be enrolled in any one class, and we know that grantees and their partners will need to work together to establish a realistic budget that supports raising the level of quality in centers and classrooms and provides the greatest benefits. So, each grantee and each partner will work together to decide what is the best way to place children across the center that ties in with your budget and is beneficial to the children enrolled as Early Head Start children, and that also helps to raise quality throughout the center.

On this next slide, I'm going to talk a little bit about the family child care group size, and those are — again, when we're talking about one provider, it would be one provider for six children versus five; no more than two of those children would be under 2 years old. If the provider is working with an assistant, the maximum group size for a provider and an assistant would be 12 children, and no more than two of those children could be younger than 18 months.

Then, the third ratio that we look at in family child care is if one provider is caring for just infants and toddlers, then they can care for up to four infants and toddlers, with no more than two of the children under 18 — under the age of 18 months. And I would just remind you that the Head Start regulations for family child care group size are for children under the age of six years of age.

So, with that, we can go to the next slide. Remember, if you have any questions about any of the information that I'm giving on these topics, be sure and go to the right- hand side of your screen and type them in the chat room and we will talk through chat at the end of the presentation. One of the things that has come up several times is how to cover the 10-hour day.

Again, Early Head Start standards must be met all day long, and so you will need to hire additional staff to make sure that you cover full hours of operation, and you will need to work on staffing so that it may not be; I think initially some folks were worried that it may require a lot of additional staff, but I would say what you need to do is: You may decide that you need part-time or full-time substitutes or floating staff members to support coverage for the full-hour day. As long as you have a designated primary teacher for each child and work around that schedule, then that is what you would need to do to cover a 10-hour day, and it will look differently in many of the programs.

There are a couple of things that I think are important to remember. One is that you engage in long-range planning to implement a staffing structure that meets requirements, and Early Head Start programs have been doing this for a long time; that you really need to look at the children, look at the classrooms, look at who is working; you need to develop a budget because, of course, you want all your services to meet the needs of the budget and to meet the needs of the children within a reasonable budget.

So I think that that's an important aspect of it, and the grantees and partners working together to talk about both long-range planning and budgeting to ensure that they're meeting requirements. The other thing that's really an important part of the Early Head Start requirements is that teachers need time outside of classroom time for planning, supervision, reflection, documentation, attending trainings, meeting with parents, and talking with parents.

So, while you may have staff that work a full eight-hour day, it may even be that they have an hour within some days of the week to do this other work that is needed. So that would be part of the planning that you need to do, too. You're going to be looking for additional staff members with appropriate skills and training to provide short breaks and, as available, provide time for the teachers to engage in planning and other out-of-classroom responsibilities.

I know this is a worry for some folks, but I also think that we've spent a lot of time thinking about how this works, and this also relates back to the earlier center when we were talking about how children are placed in the classrooms, so that you have sufficient numbers of children that are placed in the classroom, and you're budgeting for that Early Head Start-enrolled children, and that then you're looking at the same way in terms of sufficient staff members. So it's a complicated process, but I think many of you are already engaged in it.

So, the last thing that I want to talk to you about, in terms of my little bullets today, are staff qualification and credential requirements. And again, partners should have a Professional Development Plan for all staff. This is really important, because we know that one of the goals of the Partnership is to have qualified teachers, infant-toddler teachers working with all children. We also know that there may not often be a large pool of qualified teachers. So, a minimum requirement is that teachers must have a CDA with a focus on infant-toddler, or an equivalent degree. They have an infant and toddler CDA, or they may have a state certificate for teaching infants and toddlers or other equivalencies.

Again, we're working closely with states and higher education institutions so that a program can determine the infant-toddler qualifications of the staff that they are hiring. So the important thing is to have a Professional Development Plan, so if you hire someone who doesn't have an infant-toddler certification, you have a plan that helps them reach that certification.

As you know, the requirement in the legislation is that all infant-toddler teachers should have a CDA or its equivalency within 18 months, and we know that that could be challenging, and so we want to continue to work with you across the 18 months because you need to show progress, and that's what the Professional Development will do is show progress that each staff person you hired has made towards reaching their infant-toddler certification.

Again, if you have questions or if we need to discuss more, make sure that you include that. So, as you're working on your Professional Development Plan, and as you're working to ensure that every child has an infant-toddler CDA and also a focus on infant- toddler or an equivalent certificate, I'd like to remind you that the Office Hour that you recently saw talked a lot about Early Educator Central, and it's one of the best resources that we have to support your work with staff in obtaining infant-toddler credentials through the Partnership. So be sure and go to Early Educator Central and use the resources that are there.

Well, that's the end of my formal presentation, and I hope that I gave you some good information in helping to understand the requirements around center and family child care group size, as well as staffing patterns, and the credentials and qualifications. I'd like to thank you for your time, and I look forward to chatting with you around questions that you may have. I'd also like to thank you for doing the hard, hard work of Partnership.

Moderator: Thank you for participating in this Office Hour. Be sure to post your questions and comments in the chat room to the right to connect with your colleagues, as well as the content area experts.