

**Overview: Staff Qualifications**  
**Introducing the New Head Start Program Performance Standards**

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Beth Meloy: Hi, I'm Beth Meloy.

Sarah Merrill: And I'm Sarah Merrill.

Beth: And today we're going to be providing an overview of Section 1302.91 in subpart I, Human Resources. This section include staff qualifications and competency requirements, both for staff who manage and oversee program services, as well as the staff who provide services directly to children and families. Sarah, before we talk about the details of the specific requirements, do you wanna provide us a little bit of background in terms of the purpose and the rationale of the requirements?

Sarah: Sure, I'd love to. And I have to say that paragraph A is my very favorite part of this subpart, because it talks about what staff consultants and contractors need to have to be successful in their roles and responsibilities. And that's the primary purpose for this section, is making sure that quality services are being delivered to children and families. So elements including having sufficient knowledge, which include gaining that knowledge through credentials or degrees, having experience or competencies, which are also known as the skills and the behaviors. And it links PD supports to ensuring staff have these skills and knowledge, and making sure that they gain them but also put them into action. So the regulations speak to having qualifications as well as competencies. So Beth, why don't you kick us off and talk about the next part?

Beth: Sure. So just before we get into the details again, we just wanted to highlight that the new requirements in general provide program flexibility. So while sometimes requirements are fairly prescriptive because they're codifying requirements that were written into the Act, for example those related to education managers and teaching staff, many of the requirements actually allow for program flexibility. So because we know that program size, scope, services, and their staffing structures vary greatly from head start grantee to grantee, we really try to provide enough flexibility for programs to be able to meet their community needs, in terms of how they staff and the qualifications that their staff have. The standards also build in, especially for the new standards, build in some flexibility related to the timeline. So for some of the requirements, there are delayed compliance dates. So the compliance or the need to have those staff qualification requirements wouldn't kick in until August 1, 2017, or August 1, 2018. And then for other requirements, there are certain roles where, even though the effective date for that requirement is November 7, 2016, it's only going to apply to new hires. Or there's a built-in timeline of 18 months or two years for those staff to gain the credential once they're hired. So now that we've talked about sort of those overarching themes, Sarah, why don't you tell us a little bit about the specific requirements for our directors?

Sarah: Absolutely. And this is one of the roles that has, for the new hires, as Beth mentioned. So any director who's hired after November 2016, they must have a minimum of a baccalaureate degree. And they also need to have experience in these three things, supervision of staff, fiscal management, and administration. But programs have the flexibility to sort of determine what, the focus of the degree they want, what makes most sense at their local level, and as well as to provide some specifics around what

that experience might look at, like length of time or extra focus on what they might want that to define. So that's the overview of directors. How about the fiscal officers, Beth?

Beth: Sure. So programs also have a little bit of flexibility in meeting the requirements for fiscal officers. Specifically, what the requirements say is that a program must assess their staffing needs, considering the fiscal complexity of their organization, the applicable financial management requirements that apply to their program. And then they need to secure the regularly-scheduled or ongoing services of a fiscal officer who has sufficient education and experience to meet their needs. So there's actually a significant amount of flexibility built in there. But programs really need to consider what their program needs in terms of fiscal management, and make sure that that's being met. And that requirement is that all newly-hired fiscal officers have to meet that requirement. So as of November 7, 2016. They can also have a CPA or a minimum of a baccalaureate degree in accounting, business, fiscal management, or a related degree. So in addition to assessing their needs, programs have to make sure that at a minimum, their fiscal officer has a CPA or a BA degree in accounting, business, fiscal management, or a related degree. There's also some more flexibility built-in for management staff. Sarah, do you wanna tell us about that?

Sarah: Sure. I'm going to focus in on the management staff of family, health, and disability services. So these are the folks who provide oversight to those service areas. And we've talked about the variations, and these are written for the same thing because we know some programs need perhaps three distinct staff for each of those service areas, where others might roll them into one or two roles. Somebody might be over health and disability. Regardless, any staff who are hired after November 2016 need to have a minimum of a baccalaureate degree, and the standard state that is preferably related to one or more of the disciplines for which they oversee. So it provides flexibility. I'll let you talk about the other management role.

Beth: Yep, so in contrast to the management of those service areas, the education manager has slightly more prescriptive requirements. And they must follow the requirements that were written into the act in 2007, which is that they must have a bachelor's degree or advanced degree in early childhood education, or a bachelor's degree or advanced degree and equivalent coursework in early childhood education. And then they also must have early education teaching experience. So if you have a manager who's overseeing both education and one of the other service areas, you have less flexibility because they still have to meet these requirements of an education manager specifically. So do you wanna go ahead and turn to the child and family services staff qualifications?

Sarah: Absolutely, and they're also sometimes in layman's terms known as direct service staff. What's I think important to remember is what the standards talk about for infant-toddler teachers or preschool teachers, and even assistant preschool teachers, will not be new to programs. They basically codify what's listed in the Head Start Act and clarify whether an equivalent or a comparable credential is also relevant for specific roles. So they, too, are examples of specific requirements. There's not flexibility at the program level because, as far as timing provisions. So staff who are being hired have to meet these credentials or degree requirements. So I'll start with the infant-toddler teacher. And they need, as a minimum, either a CDA credential or a comparable credential. And they also have to have training or equivalent coursework that focuses on early childhood development with infant-toddler nuances, or a focus. And this is applicable for all infant-toddler teachers, whether you have two teachers to eight

children or three teachers to nine children, because each of those teachers is responsible for providing education services for their small subgroup.

Beth: Absolutely. So for preschool teaching staff, it's a little bit different. Preschool teachers have to have at least an associate's degree in child development, early childhood education, or equivalent coursework. We also have a nationwide requirement that at least 50 percent of all of our head start preschool teachers must have a bachelor's degree. But we are proud to say that we well exceed that requirement. In contrast to the early head start teachers, preschool assistant teachers are allowed to have a minimum of a CDA or being enrolled in a CDA or degree program. So there is a timeframe for achieving that CDA or that degree, and that's a minimum of two years within the time of hire.

Sarah: And for family child care providers, and these are staff who provide education services for children within their homes, they have to have previous early child care experience before being hired. And at a minimum, they often have to be enrolled in either a credential or a degree program. So if it's a CDA program or a state equivalent, they need to earn that credential within 18 months of hire to meet this requirement. And the child development specialist who provides support and oversight to the family child care providers, as well as make sure quality services are taking place within their home settings, they need to have a bachelor's degree in child development, in early childhood education, or in a related field. And there is a time provision on this. By August 1, 2018 is when all the child development specialists need to meet this requirement.

Beth: Okay. So in addition to those staff qualifications for our education staff, we also have new requirements that are related to demonstrated competencies. So for infant-toddler and preschool teachers, as well as preschool assistant teachers and family child care providers, we have the same list of competencies that those staff need to demonstrate. So programs have to ensure that the teaching staff can demonstrate competencies to provide effective and nurturing interactions, which we know are so important to early childhood and learning. And they also have to demonstrate the ability to plan and implement learning experiences that ensure effective curricular implementation, as well as an effective use of assessment to individualized instruction. Finally, they have to show competency to be able to promote progress across the head start Early Learning Outcomes Framework for all children, including children who are dual-language learners or children with disabilities, as applicable. So Sarah, do you wanna tell us about the home visitor requirements?

Sarah: Sure, sure. And there's going to be some similar threads back to this, because the home visitors who are considered, again, as part of the education staff, but their role is really to help the parent implement the learning experiences in the home. And this provision is for those, or is needed to be acquired by August 1, 2018. So they need to have a minimum of a home visitor's CDA credential or a comparable credential. And there's another caveat. Or they could have a degree and make sure that there's equivalent coursework as part of their degree. They, too, need to have demonstrated competencies that relate to effective practices within the home visiting and home-based interactions, really to help, again, aid the parents in supporting their child's growth and development. So the competencies need to be around planning and implementing home-based learning experiences. And these experiences need to be tied with a home visiting curriculum, as well as promote progress for the children across the ELOF, or the Early Learning Outcomes Framework for all children. And I know as Beth mentioned before, with children who are dual-language learners, children who have disabilities. And home visitors often serve children who are birth to five. So we'll think about that. And another

important competency for home visitors is the ability to build respectful, culturally-responsive, and trusting relationships with families, because that's going to be key for positive outcomes for both the children and the families.

Beth: Right. And similarly, there are new requirements for family service staff that we didn't have before. And these are specifically for staff who are working with families on the family partnership services. So we know that often, family service worker is a catch-all for programs, for staff that do a number of different jobs within the program. But the requirements are really specific to those who are working directly with families on the family partnership process, including the family partnership agreement. And this is only a requirement for those family service workers who are newly-hired as well, so hired after November 7, 2016. Specifically, they must earn a credential in social work, human services, family services, counseling, or in a related field. And they must do that within 18 months of hire. So only new hires, and then they have 18 months to actually acquire that credential. There's also, there are a number of credentialing programs available for family services staff that can be accessed through national or state programs. And the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement is working on the Credentialing and Degree Programs Family Service Workers Database, which will be accessible via the ECLKC and should be a really helpful resource for programs as they're seeking to meet this requirement.

Sarah: Absolutely. The standards also speak about health professional qualifications, and they break them up into three different parts. So programs need to ensure that all health procedures are performed by only a licensed or a certified health professional. As well as mental health consultants, they need to be licensed or certified in the mental health field. And when available in the local community, make sure that these consultants have knowledge and experience with serving and working with young children and their families. But we know sometimes it's harder to find, so there's an if available clause in there. Also, staff or consultants who are supporting the nutrition services in your programs, they need to be either registered dietitians. Did I say that right?

Beth: Dieticians.

Sarah: Dieticians, thank you. I apologize for that. Or they can be nutritionists with appropriate qualifications. So programs should confer with your state or local requirements to help you understand what appropriate qualifications are for these roles.

Beth: Right, that's really helpful. And then finally, we do have one additional requirement, and that's really related to a new requirement in the professional development section also in subpart I. And it's related to coaches. So coaches that are providing the services, the intensive coaching specifically described in 1302.92(c), that coordinated coaching strategy, those staff must have a baccalaureate degree in early childhood education or a related field in order to meet the coordinated coaching strategy regulation. And so because that regulation is delayed until August 1, 2017, coaches only need to have this qualification as of August 1, 2017. And if you have coaches that are providing coaching services that aren't part of your coordinated coaching strategy as described in 1302.92, those staff don't have to meet this qualification.

So Sarah, do you want to --

Sarah: Sure. I love the flexibility of making it really localized and pertinent. In summary, I'm going to talk about some of these timing issues. Remember to look in the appendix for the delayed compliance dates, which are relevant for child development specialists, for our home visitors, and for our coaches who are part of that coordinated coaching strategy. Also, there are varying time provisions for the qualifications for our directors, our fiscal officers, our family health and disability managers, and our family service staff who work on the family partnership process. And these are for staff who are hired after November 7, 2016. And again, we have a few staff roles who need to earn their credential or degree within a certain timeframe after hire. And that would be our preschool assistant teachers, who need to get their CDA or their degree within two years, and our family child care providers, who need to earn their credential within 18 months of hire. And our family service staff, and again, those are the ones working on the the family partnership process, need to earn their credential within 18 months.

Beth: That is a super helpful summary, Sarah. Thank you. So thank you for joining us for this video. In conclusion, just remember that programs really do have some flexibility in terms of how they define types of degrees, work experiences, and how they think about measuring and supporting staff competencies. Also, we wanna encourage you to visit the ECLKC, which has some resources that can really help you, especially in terms of keeping track of all of those timelines and when staff have to meet those qualifications. So, thank you for joining us. And we hope this was helpful.

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