

OHS FY22 Monitoring Kickoff

Glenna Davis: Hello, everyone, and welcome to the OHS Fiscal Year '22 Monitoring Kickoff. It is now my pleasure to turn the floor over to Dr. Bernadine Futrell. Dr. Futrell, the floor is yours.

Dr. Bernadine Futrell: Thank you, Glenna. Good afternoon and hello, everyone. Thank you all for joining today's webinar. We are excited to kick off the monitoring year. I want to thank our wonderful OHS team, who you will hear from later today for their great work and leadership in this. I do want to just start by saying thank you to the Head Start community. We are in a space and a time that we've never experienced together. And in this moment, over the past 19 months, as we've navigated as a Head Start community, I want to thank you because I know that you have been leading the way in partnering with children and families in new and unique ways that is really moving us forward.

And as we continue to do this work, the Head Start community only gets stronger. It is our commitment to continue to partner and ensure that we support the work that you're doing every single day locally to move our nation ahead. Today is our first webinar to kick off the FY 2022 monitoring year. This webinar is going to be available for future viewing on ECLKC. We're going to just get right into a conversation with our monitoring lead, Adia Brown, who has done a great job of organizing the Office of Head Start's monitoring activities over the years. We're going to have a conversation today, share some updates with you, and then engage in an opportunity for Q&A, if time allows. With that, I want to welcome Adia.

Adia Brown: Thank you, Dr. Futrell. Hey, Head Start. I can't see myself. I don't know if you can see me, but I hope that you can. I'm so excited to be here with you guys. We are here again. We're doing the FY 2022 Monitoring Kickoff, and it's going to be great. We got a lot of information to tell you. I'm just waiting for my people to change the slides. There you go. I want to tell you guys something. I'm growing all these beautiful, wonderful, hot peppers. They're fantastic. I'm growing ghosts, Carolina Reapers, all these different things. For lunch today, I had a little hummus with some dehydrated peppers sprinkled on top. You guys all know how I love to cook. When you finally do see me, if it looks like I'm glistening a little bit, it's because of those hot peppers. If anybody wants one, let me know, I'll send you some. But today, we're going to be not talking about hot peppers. We're going to be talking about monitoring. We're going to be talking about the highlights for the process.

I'm going to tell you a little bit about what we're going to do for FA1, FA2. I know everybody wants to hear about CLASS, so I'm going to talk about that. We're going to do some protocol highlights. We're going to talk about the report structure, the CARES Act, and we're going to talk about returning to in-person services. I hope that these are all the things that you want to hear about. If you want to hear about something else, put it in the chat. I'll try to on the fly talk about it. Can't promise that, but we're going to try to make this a session that is just for you. With that, Dr. Futrell's going to tell you a little bit about when we're going to start.

Dr. Futrell: Thanks, Adia. Again, we are excited to kick off the monitoring year. We recognize and know that this is a unique time. These are times that we've never been in before. We see promise in the vaccine. We see promise in many programs opening back up. We do want to make sure that our monitoring activities this year reflects what's happening locally and nationally, as related to the pandemic. The first point that I want to highlight is that our Focus Area Two reviews will begin in October.

Programs that will be engaged in that will be notified or have been notified on that. Our onsite reviews – and those will be virtual. I want to make that note – Onsite Focus Area Two reviews will begin January 2022. It's important to note around our onsite reviews for January 2022, and we'll talk about it a little bit later, but we will follow all of the COVID-19 safety protocols as advised by the CDC. I do want to share that given where we are in the pandemic and given just the uncertainty of the moment we're in, the CLASS reviews will not be conducted during the fiscal year 2022 monitoring season.

We will not be doing CLASS reviews as a part of the monitoring process. We have some opportunities to do some more information on CLASS, Adia will share later, but I want to make that clear to our Head Start community. The other point, just to lift up again, is as we monitor local conditions for each of the scheduled onsite reviews, we're going to follow the CDC recommendations. We're also going to lean into making sure that we are following the highest safety precautions possible as we enter different programs to do the monitoring.

Right now, we do not have any unannounced reviews planned for the year, but we do reserve the right to conduct any unannounced onsite or virtual reviews as needed. Adia?

Adia: Sure. Wow, all right. That was a lot of information. I see in the chat that you guys are really thankful that you got the slides, and they are there. They're also going to be posted on ECLKC, so you'll get them on ECLKC as well. Any question and answers that we provide, they'll be there too. Let's talk a little bit about the COVID-19 addendum. Anybody who paid attention to the monitoring protocol last year, you know that we had an addendum, and that addendum talked about all kinds of things that we need to know about COVID.

This year, we're not going to use the addendum on any questions that we have that we still need to answer. They will be in the protocols. You can look forward to the protocols. They're going to come out a little later after this webinar – a little later in the next few days, but you'll see all the changes there. Now, an important part that I want everybody to pay close attention to is that we have a truncated monitoring schedule this year. Everybody on this call knows that we typically start monitoring when we start coming out to visit your programs in October.

We start October, September ... we really start visiting the programs at that time. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are not going to do that this year. As you heard Dr. Futrell say, we're not going to start until January, which means that we have a really short window to come out to visit the programs to do FA2s. Because of that short window, there will be times that we are going to conduct monitoring reviews when there are non-major holidays. Holidays like Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Martin Luther King, and President's Day – those holidays,

normally during those weeks, we wouldn't conduct the monitoring review. But because of the fact that we have such a truncated schedule, we may conduct monitoring reviews during those weeks. Additionally, folks have been really good with asking us for changes in the review schedule. You may have something that's happening in your program – maybe the director's going to be out, or the fiscal person's going to be out. People will generally send us a note and say, "Hey, we'd like to change the date of our monitoring reviews." This year, because the schedule is so tight, and we have so many grantees to do, we are not able to ... [Inaudible]

We're not going to reschedule any monitoring reviews. Please make sure that your calendar is really up to date. If you have anything like a surgery, or a vacation, or staff that's not going to be in, block those weeks off, because once you've gotten your announcement of the monitoring reviews, you cannot reschedule. I might say that more than once during this call, but if you have any questions, put it in the chat or put it in the question box. All right, Dr. Futrell.

Dr. Futrell: Thanks, Adia. Let's talk a little bit about the COVID-19 precautions. All of the reviewers that'll be going out to visit programs, as I mentioned, will follow the CDC guidelines and will be masked. They're also going to be fully vaccinated to conduct the reviews. We want to make the point that regardless of the state or local requirements, all of the reviewers going in will wear a mask. And we're asking that they stay socially distanced at least six feet apart, where possible, and sanitize and wash hands as frequently as possible. We know how important it is and how many measures you programs are taking to ensure that children are safe in your settings. We want to let you know that the monitoring team that's coming in will also follow the highest standards to ensure safety for children and the workforce, as we go through the monitoring process. Adia is going to talk a little bit about FA1 reviews.

Adia: I sure am. FA1, everybody, I hope you love FA1 reviews. These reviews are really exciting. They're an opportunity for you to really tell us where your program is going. It's an opportunity for you to set the stage for whatever your goals are in the program, how you plan to spend the funds over the next five years, and we do that virtually. We have a conversation with you and your staff. This review generally lasts for five days. We call you on the phone, and we have conversations with you. You get to set the schedule. You get to say which team members join that call. We really want to find out about the foundation of your program.

What is it that you want to share, brag, get some help with? This is your opportunity to talk to the reviewer and give them that information. We collect it all at the Office of Head Start. We review it, and we use that information to do things like provide you with TA if you need it. We also use it to give you areas of concern or things that, and these are not findings. They're different than findings. They're things that you can look at in your program. You can make some systemic improvements, and then you'll be better by the time we come back and do a FA2.

Let's talk about the FA2. I've been watching your question and answers. I know that there's a bunch of questions about the FA2s, and how and when we're going to do them. In January, we are planning, cross your fingers, to actually do onsite reviews. Last year, when we did the FA2s, we did it virtually because of the pandemic. This year, we're hoping that there's so many people that have gotten vaccinated, people are wearing the masks. That by the time we get to January,

we will see a slow down in the Delta variant and all those different things, and we'll be able to come out and visit your programs.

This is really important because right now it's been quite a long time since the Office of Head Start has been able to get into your programs, take a look at the things that you're doing, and really understand how you're operating in a pandemic. As Dr. Futrell said, we have worked with all our reviewers to make sure that they're meeting all of the mandatory requirements for safety. We will work with you. We're also going to keep watching the COVID-19 pandemic and see what's going on. But in January, we plan to be on site.

I see that people are saying that they're short staffed, all those different things. Those are things that happen in programs all the time. The goal of the Office of Head Start is for us to put our feet on the ground and really understand with a really clear view what's happening in your programs. It's very difficult for us to do that in a virtual setting. In January, we're going to try to get to your programs. We're going to send out reviewers, and we are going to notify you, as we always have, 45 days in advance that you will have a monitoring review.

Someone also asked, "How do you change your dates on your calendar?" Later, I will make sure that we send out that out in the FAQ. The FA2s, they are five days as well. The average team size is about four people. We do data tours, document reviews, classroom reviews, enrollment eligibility. All the things that we would typically do in a regular FA2 monitoring review, we're going to do it when we come in January. We're also going to have time to discuss things with your management team, and your staff, and your governing body. This is your opportunity to tell your story. This is the time for you to tell us about staff shortages, or to tell us about the things that you did to keep your program safe during the pandemic, or the ventilators that you had to buy for the classroom. Think about this FA2 as an opportunity for you, in-person, to tell the reviewers your Head Start story, and I think that's really important. It's important that we get out to see you, and we hope that you're looking forward to it. Next slide, please.

Dr. Futrell: Let's talk a little bit about changes to the protocol and additions to it. First, when you go through the reviews, you'll have an opportunity to share information around the strengths of your programs, creativity, and different approaches that you've taken to provide quality services for children and families. We know, as we all are trying to learn and grow together, it's so important to hear, as Adia mentioned, what's happening in programs so that we can amplify, lift it up, and learn from it so that we can continuously improve as a community.

We also want to hear about strategies where creating a workplace culture that really promote equity, diversity, belonging, and inclusion. You've heard us share a lot around prioritizing our workforce and ensuring that our children and families have safe, nurturing environments and that extends. We want to hear the strategies that you're doing to create those workplace cultures that really promotes these essential experiences that we want everybody to have when they show up at work or enter your program every day.

This is the time – this is the moment to hear about how your program is responding and adapting to COVID-19, the pandemic. Lots of great stories around virtual engagement with parents and families using different ways to document. Also, other family supports that have been provided during this pandemic. We want to hear that. We also want to hear, and we thank you for sharing, around how you're using the CARES Act funding really to move your program towards in-person services or to address any needs that you have in your communities locally. We want to know how you're using the CARES Act funding and the other funding, the ARP, or other funds that you have throughout this time, over this past year or so, to really help us understand. Always, strategies around continuous quality improvement and how you are determining what things you're going to create, or programs for child and family outcomes, to get towards those strong outcomes for children and families. We want to know about your CQI and what you're doing around that and the process that you're using to collect information, and make decisions, and to make improvements around the work that you're doing.

And then also want to hear about your enrollment selection, recruitment strategies when it comes to enrolling children and expectant mothers in Early Head Start and Head Start programs. This year, we really want to hear from you. We want to get a sense of what's happening in programs so that we can learn together, and then also identify areas where we can unify and continuously improve. With that said, Adia, can you share a little bit about the report structure?

Adia: Sure, of course. Leslie Callahan, thank you. Hopefully, this is better. If the feedback is gone, let me know. I put my headphones on, so hopefully I'm a lot clearer for you guys. Let's talk about the report structure. We're not changing anything, at least not this year. You know how we like to do a monitoring. We like to do updates, and changes, and all kinds of things, but this year we're not going to change anything. The report structure is going to remain the same. You will still get highlights and summaries.

You'll have opportunities for continuous improvement, areas of concerns, areas of non-compliance – I know people hope they don't ever get those – and deficiencies. I know you hope you don't get those either, and we do too. But that's the structure of the report. It's really simple. If you haven't seen one, you can always go to ECLKC. All of our reports are always posted so take a look there. Next slide, please. All right. Let's talk about the CARES Act oversight. There's a few things that we need to do because lots of people got funds related to CARES Act. We are going to do a study. People who've been around for a while, you know at the Office of Head Start, we do various studies about different things. We had the erroneous payment studies, we've had the ERSEA studies, lots of different studies. This particular study is just so that we can better understand how programs use their CARES Act funding. The review process is going to be collaborative. We're going to identify challenges that recipients have encountered in actually spending those funds. The study is going to be conducted remotely so you don't have to worry about another person coming on site.

The study – the researchers are going to use an approved sampling method. It'll be very similar to the sampling method that we use ... Well, I'll talk about that in a second. 80 participants will

be selected to participate. We're going to look across all of the regions and all the grantees, and select 80 people to be in this study. Can we go to the next slide? It will explain it a little better. The next slide talks about how we're going to do the study. Right now, we're going to draw a sample of 20 recipients from each of the four payment cycles. Once recipients have drawn down 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100%, we're actually going to then draw that sample and do 10 payments from each recipient. This is going to help us to really understand across all of Head Start how do people spend the funds, whether or not these funds were allocated appropriately? And then we can use that to determine how to best allocate funds and send out funds in the future. This study should be pretty painless for grantees. As you can see, there's not a lot of payments, but we'll probably look for payments that have a high dollar threshold.

I know that folks are going to ask, "How will you select?" The selection of grantees – this is a randomized study. We'll take the pool of all the grantees, which is every recipient who got CARES Act funding, and we will do a random selection of those grantees, and then notify you that you've been and selected for this particular study. Again, it's virtual, and we will ask you to submit files about your payments. Then we'll do an analysis and give you back some information. It's pretty simple. Next slide, please.

Dr. Futrell: Thanks, Adia. I do want to take a moment and recognize we understand, that as we go through talking about what the monitoring year looks like, and as you are working to open programs for the new school year, and getting to know children and families at this new year season, that there are a whole range of emotions and thoughts going on right now. What I want to share is that the notion of Head Start Forward is that we do it together. The notion is that we learn from where we've come from, and we move forward together. As we go into this monitoring season, and as we go into this program here, service delivery models may look different. Things are going to be different. We're coming out of a pandemic. There's still challenges around it. As we navigate the monitoring season, as we look towards getting back to in-person services, the word I want to always lift up for our Head Start community is that we are ramping towards getting back to in-person services, and ramping towards reaching more children and families through enrollment.

While we're in this moment, what we want to reflect on is the lessons that you've learned from the pandemic. Understanding what we can glean from that to make adjustments, and also, what we can study to understand around improvement, and the new ways that children and families have been supported. I see a lot in the chat about using digital ways to access using technology differently. All of those things are important. All of those things are very valuable in this moment. It's not about getting back to what we did before pandemic because the monitoring season is starting again. It's about leaning into everything that we've learned that's made us great during this time, to really understand how that can impact and help to move Head Start forward. How are you supporting children and families, and how are you engaging your board, and policy council, and community stakeholders?

I understand from conversations with many Head Start programs is that it's different. It's different than previously, but it may be richer. It may be deeper. All of those pieces are things

that are strengths that we want to lean into. And we also don't want to shy away from roadblocks, or barriers, or things that we've come on because we want to come together to have creative solutions for that. As we're marching towards getting back to in-person services, moving Head Start forward with our enrollment campaigns, and all of those things,

I really want us to center this on an opportunity to move forward together. To learn together. To pull in the lessons that we've learned and really use those as strengths. When the reviews happen, when the conversations happen, that's what we want to hear. We want to hear how you address complex issues. How you were able to navigate a pandemic. How you were able to keep your children safe, your family safe, and make great decisions for your program around reopening, around virtual hybrid options, all of those things. That's the spirit of this Head Start Forward. That's kind of embedded into our vision and our approach, as we get into them monitoring season. As we close out this information part of it and transition to a Q&A, I'm going to ask Adia just to lift up a few of those reminders that we've highlighted as a part of the changes for this year's monitoring review. Adia?

Adia: Sure. Dr. Futrell, I was busy in the question and answer box answering all the easy questions. The reminders this year is lots of people in the question and answer in the chat are asking when are we going to get the protocols? The protocol, this is September 2021. That tells you that FA1 protocol is going to be put out in the next couple of days. There's a lot of people here on the DLH staff, who are during the final edits, cleaning it up, and they will post that on ECLKC. You can always find that right under the monitoring tab, so it'll be there for you.

The FA2 protocol will be posted in November, so look forward to that. We'll post it, and we'll also send an e-blast out to remind everybody that we actually put that up on the site, so you won't miss it. We're going to do a couple of other things that we always do, and one is we're going to launch the FY22 – we're going to launch the Virtual Expo. Everybody loves the Virtual Expo. It's like a little conference. You can go and get resources, dates, learn how to change your calendar, figure out things that you need to expect during the monitoring review. All of that stuff is on the Virtual Expo, and there're tons of recipient resources. Please make sure that you check that out when it gets launched in October.

All right, we want you to stay tuned. We're going to try to answer some of your questions before we get into this. But we have this really cool CLASS video pilot that we're going to be doing during the FY 2022 program year. Now, somebody in the question answer, they said, "Did I hear correctly? You're not doing CLASS?" You did hear that correctly. We're not going to be doing CLASS reviews during the FY 2022 program season. Instead, we are going to be doing some pilots. These pilots are going to be so beneficial to the program. This is your opportunity to learn more about yourself. We're not going to be using CLASS scores from those pilots. We're going to be using the pilots to understand how to use videotaping in the classroom, whether or not that's valid and reliable. But because we are doing that pilot, we're going to offer you some benefits if you are one of the participants that get selected.

But before I go there, so don't go anywhere, don't get bored. I wish I could see everybody, because if I could see your faces, I could see what you're doing. Are you multitasking? Are you

feeding the cat? I can't see. But if you're doing all of that, stay tuned because right after I answer some of these questions, we're going to play that video for you. Dr. Futrell, you game to answer some questions with me?

Dr. Futrell: I am, Adia. I see a lot of questions around staff. Maybe we can start with that one?

Adia: Sure. You want to tackle them?

Dr. Futrell: Yes. You want to start, or I can start?

Adia: No, you can start, go ahead. I'm going to keep chatting while you talk.

Dr. Futrell: There we go. I'm looking at the chat and again, feel free to put it in the Q&A. We're going to try our best to answer what we can here. I will say when it comes to some questions around staffing, I know that during the pandemic, a lot of people left employment. There was a lot of concerns. This is across industry, and I know it is especially happening in our Head Start community and our early childhood education community. It's not lost on us that those are challenges. What I would say, our priority is health and safety for children and families. If there is reduction in classes or things like that, we want you to work with your program specialists to identify paths forward around enrollment strategies and things like that. We're not coming to look for what looks OK but isn't the best, in terms of protocols for children and families when it comes to health and safety. I understand that means that there may be some classrooms that are closed if there is an impact from COVID-19. I understand that there may be fewer classrooms when it comes to eligible staff that are available.

We are taking that into consideration. We can't answer every, single question that came in through staffing. I do want to make that statement to you all. It's about health and safety of children and families first, and the health and safety of our staff as well. We think about this, we want to make sure that those who've been so committed over the past 19 months of a pandemic are prioritized and supported. And we also want to recognize that we know that there are gaps. And we know that there're opportunities to recruit and onboard new team members for our Head Start communities, and that may or may not happen before your review. That is the lens that we are taking, and Adia can talk more specifically about what that looks like when we get to the monitoring – the technical answer. That's the perspective that we're taking when we think about these reviews and we think about the impact of the workforce, as related to the pandemic. Adia, do you want to add to that one?

Adia: No, I think you're exactly right, Dr. Futrell. I think your answer was spot on. I'm busy in the answer session, answering a bunch of housekeeping questions. You're probably not in there looking, but I'm looking at all these like, "When will we know that our review will happen? Are we really not getting CLASS?" One question I want to answer out loud is somebody asked, "I'm in my fifth year, and I was supposed to get CLASS. Does that mean I have to re compete?" I want to actually say this answer out loud. The thing I want people to know is that there is an interim final rule.

You can look up the interim final rule that talks about what the Office of Head Start can do in the case of an emergency when we cannot get all of the data that we need to make a DRS competition recommendation. In this case, we actually are using that interim final rule so that we know that programs are going to have issues with staffing, with masking, with children coming back to the program. Nothing in the Head Start program is going to look or be as consistent as it normally would be.

Therefore, doing CLASS, we don't think that right now it's a good idea to do CLASS and try to get valid and reliable scores. Because of that, when we don't have all the data that we need to make a DRS decision, we can make that decision with the data that we have. We are going to do FA2 reviews. We're going to do FA1 reviews. We'll have lots of data about your programs to make the DRS competition decisions. For this particular season and this cohort, we won't have those CLASS determinations. We'll make the decision anyway. I hope that's helpful to people.

There're other things in the box that I'm answering. I said earlier that we may do a review during a non-major holiday. Well, it doesn't mean that you have to cancel your holiday. If you do Columbus Day or President's Day, and you're not there, that's OK. It means that we're just going to start on Tuesday. Instead of us starting on Monday, we'll come, and we'll start your review on Tuesday. I don't think there'll be many programs who are going to be in that category, because we're going to try to stay away from those holidays. But depending on how squished the schedule is, we may do a four-day instead of a five-day review. I hope that helps people with that particular question.

Dr. Futrell: Thanks, Adia. I'm looking at the chat and the QA.

Adia: Yeah, grab anyone that you want to answer, Dr. Futrell.

Dr. Futrell: There are some questions around local health guidance. If there are safety protocols that a program has that may be different from the ones that we would have, we certainly would follow the protocols at the local conditions. But the point we want to make is that we are going to follow what we think is the highest standards, and that's the masking, ensuring people are vaccinated, and the distancing. If there are different protocols, I saw one around testing, Adia, I don't know if you can speak to that specifically. One program is asking people to be tested before entering a program for their workforce. Would that be something that the monitoring team would also adhere to?

Adia: That's something that I would have to get back to the program on. It's not one of the things that we have listed. However, I will talk to DLH and see whether or not that's something that's going to be a part of our protocol. Right now, we're making sure that everybody is masked, that everybody is vaccinated. All of those things are the things that we solidly know that we're going to do for reviewers, but we haven't required that all reviewers get tested before they come to programs.

Dr. Futrell: Thanks, Adia.

Adia: You're welcome. There's another good question that was in the chat. It's gone now because I answered it. The person was asking this is the first time we're going to have staff members who may not come back because they don't want to be vaccinated, and they've been our staff for 15, 20, 30 years. They have good reasons for not wanting to be vaccinated, and there's no way to replace those staff. I felt sort of this urgency and anxiety from the person about not being able to have staff available to do the review.

I want everybody to understand that when we do these reviews, they are individualized to your programs. Every program has the opportunity to talk with a review lead and tell the review lead what your circumstances – what's going on in your program. Are you short staffed? Are you having problems bringing back staff? All of those things are really important for us at the Office of Head Start to understand just in general and also for a review. Our job is to come out and visit your program, see how you're handling it without those staff being there. It doesn't necessarily mean that you're going to get a bunch of findings. It means that we want to understand how programs are operating in this particular pandemic and under those conditions. We do know that some programs are going to be short staffed. We recognize that. We want to work with each program individually to understand more about how you're operating under those conditions. I hope that that helps people. Dr. Futrell, you want to add anything or answer another question?

Dr. Futrell: I think it's important to track and have documentation for any decisions that are not ... I'm looking in the chat, Adia, and connected to what you just shared. There's a lot of questions, a lot of different scenarios that are very specific to programs and different decisions that programs may make. Again, Head Start is about empowering and supporting our local programs to make the best decisions based on the local conditions that you have. That means different things to different programs.

What I want to encourage, while we're talking about the monitoring space, is to ensure that we're documenting and we're putting down why decisions are being made and why adjustments are being made, as related to either staffing or qualifications, or any of those things that are unique to the program based on your needs. We just need to make sure they're documented, and then ensure that you're working very closely with your program specialists in the region and the Office of Head Start's regional offices, so that you can get the guidance on the best way to document it so that if the question comes up during your review, you have that as well.

Adia: I think that's right, Dr. Futrell, I'm actually ... [Inaudible]

Dr. Futrell: Adia?

Adia: Yes. Can you hear me?

Dr. Futrell: Yes. I don't know if I froze or you froze, but I hope you guys heard me say talk to the program specialists and ensure everything's documented. Thank you.

Adia: Yeah, we heard you. I think that's really good. I'm going back and forth between the questions and answers and the chat. They're all over, everybody's talking and it's great. Somebody asking here, there are a lot in the chat about very specific situations. I want everybody to know we've trained the RLs to talk to you. One person was really talking about their 50% vaccination rate and that their staff is really divided. How will this scenario inform our review outcomes? You know what? One of the things that we want programs ... I can't say this enough.

We understand that this is a different time for Head Start programs. And as Dr. Futrell said, we are all in this together. One thing I really tried to work on during my whole career in monitoring everybody who's on the screen, who's ever met me, who knows me, knows that I really work to make monitoring something that is not an "I got you" situation. We're not monitoring your program to try to figure out every single thing that you're doing wrong or everything that you can't do because of the pandemic, and then we're going to ding you for those things.

We are not going to do that. We want to come into your program. We want to understand what's happening in the program. We want to talk to you. We want to make sure we have some priorities that we think are really important. One, we want to make sure that kids are safe. There's no negotiating on whether or not you have the safety that exists in your programs. We still come in. We still look at facilities. We still want to make sure that you don't have mold in the program, or paint, or lead, or any of those things. That is still super important in all Head Start programs.

The Office of Head Start has a responsibility to come and visit the sites to make sure that those things are happening. We want to make sure that you are fiscally responsible, that you're financially responsible. We have a job to do. We have to come out and ensure that you're spending your funds appropriately, you're allocating that money properly. That all the money that we provide to you through the grant is actually being used in your program systematically to the regulation. Our job, as the oversight managers of your program, is to ensure that's still happening. We still need to do those things.

We also need to see how your managers and your staff are strategizing. Part of the regulations in Head Start talk of about how you and your managers work together to deal with your community needs, which in the pandemic, your community needs change. Staffing changes, what kids need changes, and we want to know how you're strategizing and planning for that and how you pivot. We also want to know that the staff that come into your program, they're also safe. We want to look at things like are the staff in your program vaccinated? We also want to look to see whether or not they have background checks. We also want to see whether or not they have the qualifications.

We know that in the situation, you may have staff that don't. We are going to be looking for things like professional development plans so that we know that you are still working with the staff who are in the programs to ensure that they're getting the qualifications that they need, but we know that they may not have them right now. There's lots of things that as an oversight agency, we still need to do for your program, regardless of the pandemic or whether or not you

have staff. There's also places where we know that we have to get some understanding and flexibility because you may not have the staff.

We'll learn things about how you deal with teacher-child ratios without the staff. Do you make the classrooms smaller? Do you have floaters? Do you have substitutes? Do managers pitch in? We're going to learn a lot of different things about the program. I don't want people to feel like that monitoring is an "I got you." It's an opportunity for us to learn. It's an opportunity for you to hear about the things that you may need to improve over time. I hope that helps. Dr. Futrell?

Dr. Futrell: No, that's good. I'm just trying to find questions or themes to address. I know there are a few – not all together, so feel free to add more – but questions around the vaccine requirement and when to implement that, and how to implement that, and when guidance will come out. We are going through, what's called, well, you all know this, the interim final rule process on that to provide the very clear guidance for programs on that. Until that goes through appropriate channels to be published, what we can share right now is that program should be the building towards if individuals are not vaccinated, we encourage you to get vaccinated.

Once that is published, we will make it readily available on the OHS website. We have a prominent place on our homepage to really lift up and highlight all of the resources about vaccinating staff, including the support that are available in the American Rescue Plan Funds, like paying for time off or recovery for those who received a vaccine. As we get closer to the fall, we'll be able to share more information. I do want to let you all know the goal is for our workforce to be vaccinated. When the IFR is published, there may be some information in there around different exemptions, but the highline or the top line goal is for the Head Start workforce to be vaccinated so that our children and families are safe. Then we also want to make sure that as individuals are working in programs, they're all also insulated around others that are vaccinated.

Adia: Very good, Dr. Futrell. I actually see two comments in the chat that are very interesting. Let me try to get to one. One person asked about whether or not they need to have two paid staff in the classroom. Will considerations be made for that? Yes. We understand that there is a staff shortage and that programs are going to need to put into place different systems to make sure that kids are safe, that they have the best opportunity, and they get the best quality that you can offer them in your programs. We also understand that means that you may have to shift staff and do some other things in order to make that happen.

One thing we want programs to do is just talk to us about what you're doing, document it, and help us to understand how you're making it work in your program. Every Head Start is not a cookie cutter. We just want to make sure that you're doing the things that make sense for your community and that they keep the children safe in your program. That's most important. Somebody wrote something in here, which was really, really interesting. They said, "In this together, but federal staff members are still working from home, while programs are operating face-to-face with vaccinated children."

Well, not for long. We're going to be out there, coming to visit you, seeing you, and being in your programs. I'm one of those people. I'm a federal staff worker, but I'm also really excited about getting my mask on. I've gotten vaccinated and getting out to Head Start programs this fall, so that I can actually be in this with you and understand what's happening on the ground with Head Start programs. I don't want people to feel like we're living in a glass house. There's many of us who, as a matter of fact, a bunch of my colleagues are out, and they're doing ORR work with the refugees and resettlement. Lots of federal workers are out there and in the trenches, just like you are. We plan on getting out there even more.

Dr. Futrell: Thanks, Adia. I do want to add to that. I know I've been spending time in Head Start programs, and you said there's no program that's cookie cutter. I will say even within the same building, it's differences in classrooms. That's the lens that we're taking. We understand every single day that you leave your house, the feelings that you have. A lot of the things that we talk about that are impacting – we talk a lot about our goals are always around Head Start children and families. I know a lot of that is at your door as well. We're not immune to what's happening around us.

We extend that and know that. That's why we're approaching this with this lens of how do we learn, grow, and make great decisions while keeping health and safety top priority for children and families? I do see some more comments coming in around workforce and staffing. Just so that you all know, we are thinking a lot about what we can do to support the workforce. To make it, I guess, easier to onboard and bring in great talent to really support the work. We know that, again, as I mentioned earlier, that there was an impact with the pandemic, and we know that it's going to continue until we can get stability there.

We're grateful and hopeful for things that are coming through, like the American Rescue Plan and other opportunities for financial resources and support, but we're also really thinking deeply about this as the office of how we can offer additional support. I see your questions. I just want to recognize that I see it, we hear it. We feel it with you, and we're committing to do our best on that as well. Adia?

Adia: Hey, I'm still here. One of my colleagues sent me something.

Dr. Futrell: Adia, I don't know if I'm freezing or you're freezing.

Adia: I wasn't necessarily frozen, but I got some great colleagues that are in the background, and they were giving me some extra information about the CLASS. Not all grantees scheduled for CLASS this year are going to get the DRS determination without CLASS. Many will not. It all depends on where they are in the grant cycle. We still have to make decision with Colleen and Theresa for all individual grants. It really depends on where you are in the grant cycle. Many grantees are already at that very end, so my comment was really for grantees who are at the end of their grant cycle, and we are in the position where we have to make determinations without CLASS. I don't want people to think that everybody's going to get a pass on CLASS DRS determinations. But those grantees who are in the very end may not have the information to use CLASS to make your determination. The colleague who's sending me the text, please make

sure I got that right. I do appreciate you for giving me a little heads up on my phone. Love that. Love that. All right, I got it.

Dr. Futrell: Yes, you did. Gold star.

Adia: Thank you. Thank you. All right. Well, there have been so many questions that have come in. The monitoring webinar is always super popular with you guys. I appreciate how many people get on this call, and spend the time, and ask the questions. And because of that, we can never answer them all during the session. We are going to make every effort to get to as many questions as we possibly can after the session and post them. I hope I got to the most important ones that everybody wanted to hear. I tried my best. I tried to answer them in public. And what I really want people to know, and I can't say this enough. I know people say that they love my spirit. I'm the monitoring lead and I try to make sure that every reviewer comes out with the same spirit because for me, I love Head Start. I love the work that you do. I used to be a teacher in the trenches, just like you guys were. I was a director, a teacher. I worked for NAEYC. I've spent my entire career loving children, loving this work. I know you guys do. From the Office of Head Start, I know that my job is accountability, but I also believe in being supportive. We want to support you. We want to come out and see you. I want to it out there and see you.

And just like everybody else, I can admit that I'm nervous as heck sometimes when I go out in public now, but this job is so important to me, and what you do is so important to me, that I'm willing to put that mask on, get that shot in my arm, and get to your programs, and try to get in there, and see what you're doing, and see where we can be the most helpful to you. With that, I'm going to let Dr. Futrell say anything she wants to do, and I'm going to play that video. Dr. Futrell, do you have anything else you want to say to these folks?

Dr. Futrell: Lots to say. I do want to just lift up again, I know there are a lot of emotions and feelings right now, and we say Head Start Forward is about bringing it together. We have a strong, united Head Start community, and we want to lean in together and consider the Office of Head Start a part of that community. Reach out to your program specialist. Reach out to the Office of Head Start if you have questions. We've tried our best to like go through the live questions today, and we'll push out more information as appropriate.

But the goal here, again, is for us to make decisions and do what works best for children and families based on local conditions and really support your leadership in doing that. And I also want to just encourage us in this moment that remembering you're not alone, even though it can feel that way, especially for those of us who are getting back out there. I took my children to school in the morning, and I feel something from that, but I'm also grateful that they're in nurturing and rich environments – learning environments. I know that is the same for many families that you are really creating these conditions for so they can have those experiences every single morning and feel great about what their children are experiencing and even feel great about their interactions. I want to thank you for that. In my thank you, to let you know that it's also important that we prioritize our health, your health, as leaders working across your

community to really make change and make the impact. You have to be healthy. Healthy leaders lead healthy organizations.

Take the time you need to prioritize mental health wellness. Use the resources in the American Rescue Plan Fund to prioritize something for your teams around wellness, because that's a part of the plan to get back to in-person services. Making sure that we are OK. We like to say our people are OK. As leaders in your teams, or you're part of a team, I just encourage you and want to amplify that. Great examples across the board of programs really doing this work. I know it can feel like not the thing to talk about because we sometimes want to think about ourselves last.

And I say “ourselves,” because we're talking about our Head Start community, and I'm talking to you, all of you. I want you to think about yourself early and first so that you can be strong and healthy as we go throughout this new program here, as we go throughout building back better to stronger outcomes for children and families. I appreciate you, Adia. Thank you. This has been a great webinar to engage in. I know we're going to talk about the CLASS pilot and there's some great information in there. As we close out with this webinar, again, continue to reach out to the Office of Head Start, work with your program specialist.

Reach out, put your comments in the chat. If you have something that we didn't get to, we'll do our best to review them and share out any comments on any themes that we might see. Again, thank you all so much for joining. Please stay. We're going to share the information on the CLASS pilot right now. I do want to thank you for being here and being in this moment, and helping us build towards stronger outcomes for children and families, as we move Head Start forward. Thank you.

Adia: All right, Cynthia. Let that video ...

[Video begins]

Adia: Hey, everybody. We just got finished with that great webinar on monitoring, and I'm sure you still had some questions about CLASS, right? You heard during the video that we're not actually doing CLASS in FY2022. So many reasons why – so many good reasons. But what we are doing is a great CLASS pilot. You may be asking, "Why are we doing a CLASS pilot anyway?" Well, one of the things that we want to do and know is OHS is super committed to continuously improving and being innovative when it comes to CLASS.

COVID showed us the important and value of having flexibility in CLASS data collection. This video pilot gives us an opportunity to understand how to do that while we have monitoring postponed. There's some research questions that we really hope to answer during this pilot. One is, “What is the best way for us to capture high quality video?” We know we tried this before in the past, and we want to make sure that we get this exactly right. We want to get high quality videos from you guys. We want to make sure that we know how to do it. The pilot will help us to do that.

We also want to know, “What's the best protocol for how to score these videos,” and this pilot will help us to do that. We also are interested in, “Do the scores in-person change when you do video?” By doing a pilot, we'll be able to understand a difference between in-person observations and video observations. We're glad that you guys are game for this, and we're excited to do this in the FY 2022 school year. What can selected grantees expect, right? You want to know what's going to happen if you get selected and how is this going to really work in your program?

Well, just like we're going to do some two hour observations in your classroom. There'll be a camera set up for that whole two hour video. There'll be another observer, who will review and score the video footage later. There will be some feedback that's shared with the program. Teachstone has been really great about working with us to make this beneficial to you as Head Start programs. We want to make sure that we are doing the pilot to learn some things, and you get to learn some things about yourself. What kind of feedback will the programs receive? Well, you know what? This is really going to be great.

If you decide to participate, we select you, you say yes, and we do it, you're going to get things like the domain and dimension level CLASS data for each of your classrooms. We're also going to give you feedback based on indicator ranges. We're also going to include some overview information on CLASS and how CLASS works. This is a real benefit to your program. Once you're selected, you're going to get some pretty cool things. We're hoping that this is going to make us all better in the CLASS realm over time. How long is this pilot going and how is it going to be set up? Well, we're going to do this in three phases, and we're going to start as early as October.

It's going to go through March and maybe a little longer. Teachstone and OHS is really working together to make sure that we have great phases for the classroom starting in October and through December. We want to do about 25 classrooms just to kind of get our feet wet and see how this works. Then in phase two, we're going to open this up and do about 150 more classrooms to test some consistency to get a broader scale. Then finally, we want to do a third phase where we'll do about 350 classrooms. We're going to take this nice and slow, and nice and easy, and make sure that everybody who gets the opportunity to experience this really has a great time and that we all learn a lot from this.

How will OHS select programs and who will be selected? I know that everybody out there is raising their hand like, “Pick me, pick me. I want to do this. This sounds fantastic. It's going to be great.” What we're going to do is OHS and Teachstone, we're going to reach out to some selected grantees and confirm their participation and ask some additional questions. We're also committed to ensuring that the selected grantees represent different program sizes, student-teacher representations, and different regions. Hopefully, we're going to be out in all the regions, and you will get an opportunity to participate.

One group that we are doing a different pilot with is AIAN, so we won't be selecting those grantees for this particular pilot. And we will not be selecting migrant and seasonal programs just because of the timeframe by which we actually work with those programs. I'm really excited about this great opportunity and the future and forward thinking that we're doing to try

to make sure that we can do things that really help you improve your programs. We can learn about your programs, and we believe that this is going to be critical to helping every student succeed in the future.

I'm glad that you guys stayed tuned for this little infomercial that we're doing on our CLASS pilot, and I hope I answered a lot of your questions. I'll see you guys the next time. Have a great afternoon.

[Video ends]

Adia: Have a great afternoon, Head Start. We'll see you soon. Thanks for staying on.