

## **Updates to the Performance Standards: Nurturing the Promise**

**Glenna Davis:** Hello, and welcome everyone to the Updates to the Performance Standards: Nurturing the Promise webcast. It is now my pleasure to turn the floor over to our Head Start director, Khari Garvin. The floor is yours,

**Khari Garvin:** Glenna. Thank you so much. Good afternoon to many of you. Good morning to others. And thank you for joining us today.

By now, I'm sure that you're all aware that the Office of Head Start published updated Head Start Program Performance Standards last week. Many of you attended our announcement webinar on publication day, where I share my excitement for these changes. And I still have a lot of excitement even now, but I promise not to repeat everything that I said here, though you're welcome to watch recording of that webinar on the ECLKC website. But I will say that the excitement has not faded, and at the risk of being a little repetitive, I just can't pass up an opportunity to reflect on what a major step forward this is for Head Start as well as the early childhood field. As you know, Head Start is the national leader in providing high quality early education and other comprehensive services, particularly for children and families who are furthest from opportunity.

Our standards are the gold standard for early care and education. We have heard from you all, programs across the country, territories, tribal nations, that you have been facing unprecedented challenges in providing services to children and families. Many programs are struggling to recruit the staff that they need.

And even some programs that are fully staffed are having a hard time with retention. Head Start programs have lost teachers to other employers, including the food service and retail industries and other education programs. We know that staff find the work in Head Start to be rewarding, but it is also demanding work and it has only gotten more challenging in recent years.

Over this past decade, we've seen significant growth in the qualifications of Head Start staff, but unfortunately, in many programs, increases in compensation have not kept pace. Staff turnover in Head Start programs is at the highest point in 20 years, and research has shown us that low compensation and inadequate benefits are a major contributor to that.

For years, Head Start services have been expanded at the expense of low-paid workers, many of whom are black and brown women. And this just isn't equitable, and it's simply not sustainable. Programs are facing a significant staffing crisis. There are empty Head Start classrooms because programs cannot hire and retain qualified staff.

It's the Office of Head Start's job to ensure that we have a strong, stable, high-quality program that serves children and families. And that's what we've done with these updated standards. I'm joined by a few colleagues today from the Office of Head Start. We have our talented Office of Head Start Deputy Director Captain Tala Hooban and equally talented Office of Head Start Associate Deputy Director Shawna Pinckney, and also still the very talented, you probably see a theme here, Policy and Planning Director Jess Bialecki.

All are here with me to share more about the updates to our Head Start regulations. To start, I'd like to ask my colleague and friend, Shawna, to join me and sharing what we think this rule will mean for Head Start programs. Shawna, what do you think this rule means for Head Start programs?

**Shawna Pinckney:** Well, thanks for asking, Khari, and hello everyone. My name is Shawna Pinckney. I'm the Associate Deputy Director for the Office of Head Start. What does this rule mean for Head Start? I mean, I guess my question is, "How much time do you have?" Like you said, we're at a critical point for our beloved program. I think my primary hope is that this rule meets the urgent need to stabilize our workforce and as always that it provides essential services to those who are most in need.

Do you agree, Khari?

**Khari:** Of course, I agree. Absolutely. Head Start staff are the heart of this program, and we need to make sure they're supported. How can it be, by the way, that anyone working in an anti-poverty program is earning poverty wages? Again, how can that be that anybody who works in an anti-poverty program is actually earning poverty wages?

That's not right. I also think that these changes will improve program environments to make Head Start a better and safer place to work so children, families, and staff will get more intentional, proactive supports for their mental health and well-being.

**Shawna:** Right, I mean that's so important, and we're hearing there is also just a great need for that. Your mental health is always a key part of your overall health, and we think that these changes really make that clear.

**Khari:** And it isn't just that. I mean, we've taken a close look at all the different aspects of Head Start and made sure that our standards reflect the highest quality services across the board. I believe these changes will effectively and equitably meet the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

Now, we first heard or, pardon me, we first shared our ideas for updating the standards back in November when we published a notice of proposed rulemaking or NPRM for short, and the changes I'm sharing today are from the last step in the process for updating our standards. The final rule that we published last Wednesday, after we published the NPRM, staff from the Office of Head Start spoke to hundreds of people from programs across the country to hear what they thought of our proposals. We heard from a lot of people. Did we not, Shawna?

**Shawna:** Did we ever? I mean, we heard from over 1300 individuals and organizations who submitted comments and even did so during the holidays. We are truly, truly grateful for the many teachers, programs, program administrators, advocates, and even members of Congress who submitted comments that helped us get this just right.

**Khari:** Absolutely. The overwhelming, submitted sentiment that we heard in public comments was agreement about the need to better support the Head Start workforce and more

intentionally address the mental health needs of children, families, and staff, even if not everyone agreed about how to do that.

It was clear that programs are facing real challenges that demanded a response. Now, like I said, a lot of people had feedback on how our plans meet that challenge. We heard some really good feedback from the public, and we listened. We made significant changes to the proposed policies based on the rich feedback from all of you out there in the public.

**Shawna:** And that's exactly right, and I know that you shared, Khari, a lot in last week's webinar about how we listen to feedback from programs and how to support them as well and how we support them in meeting the needs in their individual communities. It is without question that these updated standards are stronger thanks to that partnership.

**Khari:** That is a really great word for us, Shawna. Partnership. That's what these standards reflect. The partnership between Head Start programs, our communities, and the Office of Head Start. We came together to find a way forward, just like we always do. The end result is a set of standards that is responsive to comments, questions, suggestions, and expertise from across the country and ensures that Head Start provides the highest quality services for children and families.

With that, let's turn to what is actually in the updated standards and to all of you who are participating out there on this webcast, I want you to know that we organized the changes into three main categories. First, we have the changes related to the workforce, which focus on wages, benefits, and other workplace requirements to ensure that Head Start staff are supported and compensated in a way that reflects their value.

Then we have mental health, which covers all the ways we are asking programs to integrate mental health supports throughout their services and focuses on a strength-based, preventative approach. And finally, we have a big category for quality improvements, and this includes everything from strengthening family partnership services, clarifications on eligibility, to changes to support the customer service experience.

So now I'm going to pass the mic to our trusted colleague, Tala, the Deputy Director for the Office of Head Start, who is going to be our tour guide, so to speak, as we walk through more details on these changes. Tala.

**Captain Tala Hooban:** Thank you, Khari. Hi, everyone. My name is Tala Hooban. I'm the Deputy Director for the Office of Head Start.

I am excited to be your emcee while we talk about these changes that everyone is very excited to hear about. I'm going to ask Shawna and Jess to help explain these new standards, and I know Shawna already introduced herself, but Jess, do you want to do that before we dive right in?

**Jessica Bialecki:** Sure, I'd love to. Hi, everyone. My name is Jess Bialecki. I'm the Director of Policy and Planning here at OHS. I'm so excited to be here and just want to do a special shout out to all of you who are joining during the first week of program year, school year. I

know it's a busy season for all of you as a former teacher and program director myself, so I really appreciate you taking the time to join us today.

**Tala:** Right. Thank you, Jess. Let's go ahead and dive right in.

**Jessica:** Sorry, I'm frozen.

**Tala:** We are going to start with the changes related to the Head Start workforce. These changes are all about making Head Start programs a better place to work, and the changes that make sure the Head Start workforce gets the holistic support that they need.

Jess, can you share more about the new standards for wages?

**Jessica:** Absolutely. These changes are really designed to promote competitive pay and reflect the value and commitment of Head Start staff as well as their qualifications and experience. We think of the new standards for staff wages as four interrelated standards, all of which will go into effect, meaning their compliance dates, in August of 2031.

First, our wage standards require programs to establish or update a pay structure for all staff positions. We assume most programs already have a pay structure. You might call it a wage ladder or a salary scale and likely have this in place. This standard requires programs to take a look at this pay structure and ensure it considers the responsibilities, qualifications, experience, and schedule for hours worked.

The intent of this change is really to promote competitive wages across all staff positions in the program. That's number one. Number two, in wage standards, we require programs to make significant, measurable progress to pay parity for Head Start education staff – make progress towards kindergarten through third grade teachers.

To achieve progress to parity, we require that by August 2031, programs must ensure each of their education staff members is paid an annual salary that is at least comparable to the annual salary paid to public school preschool teachers in their local or neighboring school district. To clarify, by education staff, we mean those Head Start staff who work directly with children in classrooms or homes as part of their daily job responsibilities.

That includes our Head Start teachers, assistant teachers, home visitors, and family childcare providers. When determining salaries for these staff, we want programs again to consider roles, responsibilities, qualifications, and experience. I really want to emphasize that point because I know that that was a little bit of a point of confusion from the NPRM.

Again, that's roles, responsibilities, qualifications and experience. Programs can also choose to benchmark their wages to 90% of kindergarten teacher salaries instead of public preschool teachers, should they choose. You do have that option to 90% of kindergarten teacher salaries. We know that in some areas that may be an easier benchmark to find than public preschool teachers.

All right, we've covered one, staff pay structure, salary structure. Two is the parity. Third, by August 2031, the minimum pay for all staff must be at least sufficient to cover basic cost of living in the program's local geographic area. And then four, lastly, we want programs to ensure that wages are comparable across Head Start preschool and Early Head Start staff for those, again, with similar qualifications and experience. That wraps up ...

**Tala:** OK.

**Jessica:** Those are the four ... That's the outline of the four parts of the wage standards.

**Tala:** All right. Thank you. I know the standards can be a little confusing. Do you mean that all Head Start teachers have to make the exact same amount as teachers in local school districts?

**Jessica:** Great question. No. Right now, and I love these graphics that got pulled up on the screen. I hope these are helpful. Right now, things in many places may look like the picture on the left. You might have two teachers with the same experience, the same degree, the same work schedule, but they're earning different amounts just because one teaches in public, school-based preschool, and one teaches in Head Start. We want to change that. And these changes require that these two teachers earn the same amount because they both, in this example, have 12 years' experience, they both have a bachelor's degree in early education, and they both work full-day, full-year schedules.

But we know that's not always true. There's often real differences between Head Start educators and public school educators. There's often differences within public schools and Head Start programs in terms of responsibilities, experience, qualifications, and schedule or hours worked. Programs can, and likely should, adjust salaries to account for that.

Let's bring up another example. In these examples, there are differences in the schedule and hours worked, which we know may happen. In the example on the left, the public school teacher has the same responsibilities, experience, education, and hours worked as the Head Start teacher. But the public school teacher – this is important – only works for traditional school year, while the Head Start teacher works year-round.

In this case, we adjust the salary up to reflect the longer schedule. The Head Start teacher should earn more than the public school teacher in this case for them to have pay parity if they're working the full year. Now in the example on the right, once everything is the same between the two teachers – once again, everything's the same – except this time they both work a traditional school year with summers off.

However, the public school teacher works a full day, while the Head Start teacher works a partial day, is on a partial schedule. Here, we adjust the salary down for the Head Start teacher to account for fewer hours worked. There is pay parity between the two teachers, even though the Head Start teacher is earning less.

I really just want to emphasize that parity doesn't always mean exactly the same if the experience, qualifications, or schedule worked are not the same. Programs can now, like we

said, look at their pay parity target. Whatever the appropriate comparison is for their community and then adjust the salary to be appropriate for their individual staff.

Programs can adjust salaries on roles and responsibilities, qualifications, experience, and schedule or hours worked. Again, I just want to emphasize this: If your Head Start teacher has the same degree, same schedule, but more experience, your program could pay them more than the public school teacher. Or, say the Head Start teacher has the same degree and experience, but only works a part day or part year, then their pay should be adjusted down to account for the hours worked.

Programs can also use some other methods in defining parity. You can use your public school salaries in a neighboring school district if those are higher than your local school district, or as I mentioned before, they can use 90% of kindergarten salaries as their benchmark for parity if they prefer.

**Tala:** Thanks, Jess. You didn't mention Early Head Start educators. Does this requirement cover them the same way?

**Jessica:** Yes. Early Head Start education staff are also covered by the parity standard, and that is very intentional. In addition to that, we have the fourth wage standard, like we mentioned, that requires comparable salaries for staff regardless of the age they serve.

You can see here that the two teachers with the same experience, qualifications, and schedule should not be earning different amounts just because one works in Early Head Start and one works in Head Start preschool.

**Tala:** Oh, nice. Now, does this all look pretty much like what we proposed last year in the Notice for Proposed Rulemaking, like Khari mentioned, or did anything change?

**Jessica:** Great question. We did make some ... We made several changes in response to comments on the NPRM, on the proposed rule from November of last year. First, we heard a lot of comments on the NPRM that there was confusion over how these wage requirements apply to contracted staff. In the updated standards, we clarify that the pay parity requirements apply to all teachers and education staff who are funded by Head Start, including both grant recipient employees and those whose salaries are funded by Head Start but through a contract. That's one.

Second, programs can use, as we mentioned, an alternative method – this was a change – to determine appropriate comparison salaries. They can use a benchmark that is equivalent to at least 90% of the annual salary of a kindergarten teacher in a public school setting.

Then finally, we added what we're calling a secretarial waiver authority. What does that mean? If the average annual increase in appropriations, the money that Head Start receives through Congress for the four prior years – here, we're initially talking 2024 to 2028 – if that average annual increase is less than 1.3%, then the Health and Human Services Secretary can establish a waiver process in 2028.

Again, that's a pretty low appropriation, historically low appropriation. To ensure that there is a plan in place if we do not receive the necessary appropriation, programs, in that case, if the waiver is established, then programs must meet quality benchmarks and be in a position where they need to reduce their enrolled Head Start slots to be eligible for that waiver.

They'd actually have to reduce enrolled Head Start slots in order to meet the wage standards to be eligible for the waiver. And if they receive that waiver, then they do get a waiver from the wage parity and the minimum pay requirement, but they must continue to make improvements over time on wages to the extent practical.

**Tala:** Jess, and that waiver won't exist for four years.

**Jessica:** That's right. Thanks for clarifying that. The earliest that the Secretary could establish that waiver is 2020 because it's going to look at four years of appropriations. That's again what Congress gives annually to fund the Head Start program, and it's going to look at the average over those four years.

**Tala:** All right, thank you. I see a lot of questions in the Q&A. We thought we could handle the amount of questions coming in; we will have to collect these for later, but I want to continue on to talk about the rest of the content. Now, when we talk about compensation, wages are just a piece of the issue.

The other piece that we have to talk about are the comprehensive benefits that should be provided to Head Start staff. We know that our staff sometimes leave our programs to take jobs in other industries because they can secure better benefits for their own families. We also know that some of our programs have robust benefits in place already for their staff, and that because of that, they're able to retain quality staff in their programs.

Jess, can you tell us a little bit about the new benefits requirements?

**Jessica:** Absolutely. You're completely right, Tala. Wages are part of compensation, but we also have benefits. The updated standards require programs to provide several benefits for full-time staff. We define that as those working 30 hours or more per week during the program year.

Now those benefits include, one, access to health insurance, either through an employer sponsored plan or by connecting staff to other health insurance options, which might be through the marketplace. Two, access to short-term behavioral health services at no or minimal cost to the employee. Then three – again, these are for full-time staff – paid leave. For part-time staff, programs must connect those staff with health insurance options, such as through the marketplace. And then finally, programs must facilitate connections to childcare subsidy programs and public service loan forgiveness for all staff, full or part time, who are eligible for those services.

**Tala:** Sounds great. And Jess, I know we got a lot of feedback on this from the public on our proposed benefits standards. Did anything change?

**Jessica:** That's right. We did make changes in response to public comments here as well, and I want to highlight those areas. We removed the paid family leave policy, though we strongly encourage programs that are already offering paid family leave to continue to do so, and encourage programs that do not offer those benefits to try to do so if feasible, but we removed it, from the proposal from the NPRM, when we released the final standards.

We made the paid leave policy more flexible for all programs in the standards, including allowing programs to pool types of leave. This is something we heard quite a bit on. People saying they don't necessarily offer sick and vacation separately, but they have one bucket of leave. This allows programs if they'd like to pool types of leave or to offer different systems of determining leave based on the practice that works best for their program.

We also ... I mentioned paid family leave ... There was a note. It was not in the proposed standards, but there were questions that we had asked about retirement. We had asked programs if they had comments on retirement to offer those and whether that would be feasible or should be included in the standards. Based on the feedback we received, we decided not to move forward with including retirement in the new standards.

Then we extend it for ... This is probably the biggest change with the benefits is we extended the implementation timeline for all the staff benefit requirements. Originally in our proposed standards, it was two years. It is now four years. So, 2028 is the compliance timeline for all benefits standards, and that's really just to allow more time for planning and implementation for all programs. Now, that does not mean that programs need or should wait. You know, four years, but it just gives time for a more gradual implementation over the course of those four years for benefits.

As a reminder, the wages was seven years so seven years for wages, four years for benefits.

All right, another change. A big change. We talked about the wages and benefits. Another big change from the NPRM for both wages and benefits when we release the final updated standards is what we're calling the small program flexibility or exemption. Now, small agencies – defined as those with 200 or fewer funded slots across all of their grants – are exempt from the wages and benefits requirements or most of the wages and benefit requirements.

This exemption is designed to recognize that small agencies may need additional flexibility to address wages and benefits in a sustainable way, given the lack of economies of scale in smaller agencies. Now, we remain concerned about the workforce in small Head Start agencies and what ongoing staff shortages might mean for children and families and already do mean for children and families in these programs.

For that reason, these small agencies are required to still improve benefits for staff over time and make progress toward achieving the benefits and wages requirements required of larger programs. Again, still making progress, but for those smaller agencies, not held to most of the requirement.

I saw this question in the Q&A pop up already and I think I've heard it in our prior webinar as well. We define small agencies very specifically as those with 200 or fewer funded slots



across all their grants. We know that many agencies may hold multiple grants, and those individual grants may have fewer than 200 slots. We're looking at the total agency size when those grants are combined.

**Tala:** Thank you, Jess, for that clarity. We know there are other important aspects of supporting the workforce, and we want to make sure that Head Start programs are a healthy and a positive place for staff to work, where they feel empowered and supported every day and give their best to children and families.

Now I'm going to ask Jess to discuss the changes that are designed to support a positive work environment and programs, to promote overall staff health and wellness, and to facilitate positive interactions between staff and children.

**Jessica:** We know many programs have already taken important steps in this space.

We do it naturally as program leaders and program staff, but we really wanted to take some of those best practices and include them intentionally and explicitly in our standard. First, we include a requirement that programs must support a culture of wellness promotion and staff empowerment in their program.

That's a big one. And I think we'll have a lot more to come on how do we get there and how can we share some best practices that, again, we know you're already doing to get to promote that culture of wellness and staff empowerment. Next, very concretely, programs must provide adequate breaks to staff during their workday.

I do want to note that this is an area where we received a lot of comments, and we made some adjustments from the NPRM to the final rule to the updated standard. Specifically, you may recall, there was a requirement in the NPRM for adult-sized furniture in classrooms, and we removed that requirement.

And we also made changes to staff breaks. We removed the requirement for the brief on scheduled breaks, and we also did not ... We chose not to specify the length of scheduled breaks. Again, that is to allow more flexibility for programs as you make this work in your local context. And then finally, one last thing on employee engagement. Last, but certainly not least, the final rule also requires a management style that engages and responds to employee feedback.

**Khari:** Tala. Can I jump in here for a second before we move on?

**Tala:** Yes, please.

**Khari:** I appreciate that. I just want to make just a point here as we continue on it and just thank you so much for the overview so far.

I know that these updated standards are seen as a big change for many programs, and this might even feel a little bit overwhelming for some programs, but I want to be as clear as I can that we have intentionally provided an extended implementation timeline for these standards.

We want to give programs time to thoughtfully plan for how to make these changes and to give Congress time to invest in Head Start even more.

Like Jess mentioned, we extended the compliance timeline for staff benefits to four years. We heard from you all that you needed more time to plan and implement new benefits policies. So we've added two more years to that timeline from what we originally proposed. Then, we still have a long timeline for wages.

For those standards, you don't have to be concerned about implementing right away. Programs don't have to be fully implemented, or those particular standards related to wages don't have to be fully implemented until seven years from now, meaning August of the year 2031.

All right, again, giving programs time to plan. You don't have to wait until August 2031, but you have that much time to make it work for your program. We do hope that you start planning now and that you begin making incremental progress towards these goals, but we recognize that change just doesn't happen overnight.

We'll talk more about this when we get to next steps and implementation, but I just wanted to pause for a second and make sure that you all knew that these weren't happening right away.

**Tala:** Thank you, Khari. Thank you, Jess. I am going to talk a little slower to see if we can catch up on the interpretation side.

We know change can be overwhelming. Truth. That's across the board. I'm glad that Khari was able to interject and share the incremental progress that's needed and the extended implementation timeline. Thank you for that. Let's shift now to the changes we proposed to emphasize the importance of mental health and to better integrate mental health supports throughout all of Head Start services.

These changes will help address the increasing rates of mental health needs and to facilitate a proactive approach to support the overall well-being of children, families, and staff. This time, I'm going to put Shawna in the hot seat. Shawna, can you share more about what it is in the updated ... What is in the updated standards for mental health?

**Shawna:** Of course. Thanks, Tala. I love that these changes really focus on a strength-based, preventative approach to mental health. First, we require each program to take a multidisciplinary approach to mental health because mental health is everyone's business, and we need program-wide mental health supports for children, families, and staff that includes securing ongoing mental health consultation services at least once per month and conducting an annual review of the program's mental health consultation services.

The requirements around the multidisciplinary approach have a compliance timeline of one year. What that means is that programs need to be ready to make these changes by about a year from now in August 2025. We also clarify that some of the standards ... We also clarify some of the standards around mental health consultation.

We're clear that the role of mental health consultation within programs is to build the capacity of adults in the program to support children's mental health. Now we are allowing programs to work with mental health consultants who are not licensed, as long as they provide those services under the supervision of another licensed mental health professional.

**Tala:** Thank you, Shawna. Can you tell us about the changes that we made based on the feedback that we received from the NPRM?

**Shawna:** We heard a lot of really helpful feedback about this during the public comment period, and we revised our standards to now require a multidisciplinary approach to mental health, which is different than a multidisciplinary team, which is what we had proposed. And we did this, again, because we heard you when you said that there were many ways to integrate mental health without mandating the specific staff role. We thank you as always for that feedback. And we also heard about the challenges programs face in obtaining mental health consultation services directly from mental health consultants each month.

While programs still have to have a mental health consultant, the monthly requirement can also be met by other mental health professionals or behavioral health support specialists that includes traditional practitioners recognized by their tribal government. Also, just to note here that if a program uses that flexibility, the program must ensure regular coordination and consultation with mental health consultants.

Finally, we integrate mental health more intentionally with other areas of program services. This includes family support services, supports for expectant families, and screening services. We include clear requirements. A little bit of a pivot here. We include clear requirements in our final rule for suspension, including the definition of what we mean by suspension.

Also, I will note that while we did not retain the proposal from the NPRM to update language around expulsion. Expulsion continues to not be allowed in Head Start programs. We are still really clear on that. And with that, Tala, I'll turn it back to you.

**Tala:** Thank you, Shawna. Now we will shift to our third bucket of changes, quality improvements, and we have lots of them.

Taken together, these changes are about helping Head Start programs effectively meet the evolving needs of the communities you serve and improving the quality of services Head Start programs are known for. First, let's talk about the changes to the services provided to families. As people know, a cornerstone of Head Start is our work with parents and families in our programs.

Jess, can you talk about the changes related to family partnership services?

Jess, you're on mute.

**Jessica:** Well, that's not going to work. All right. One of the things that I am most excited about with these changes is that we are seeking to strengthen the ability of our family service

workers to provide health, economic, parenting, and other individualized supports for families by promoting a reasonable workload for these staff.

To better engage with families, the updated standards require that no more than 40 families are assigned to work with an individual staff member who's providing family partnership services. I will say in response to feedback from the NPRM phase, we do clarify circumstances when programs may exceed the maximum caseload, and that includes establishing a waiver process to allow for other high-quality models and to allow temporary flexibility.

There's a waiver process and then separately temporary flexibility to exceed that ratio of 40 to 1 during a period of staff attrition or a natural disaster, for example. It's all really about determining the right balance depending on the needs of the families that you serve.

**Tala:** Jess, we are all about serving families, so that is great. Let's turn to changes related to the requirements for responsive, high-quality services for expectant families. Shawna, can you take this one?

**Shawna:** Of course, of course. First, we provide clear requirements for programs related to tracking and reporting on services for our expectant families.

Next, we clarify the intent of the newborn visit and the use of an appropriate curriculum with expected families to make sure services meet their unique needs. And then finally, we include a new requirement that asks programs to do their part to promote healthy birth outcomes and to help address disparities in racial and ethnic pre- and post-natal outcomes.

**Tala:** Thank you, Shawna.

The community assessment is a foundational part of program planning and the design of these services, but we also know the process of conducting the community assessment can be pretty cumbersome and that programs may be collecting more data than is necessary. Our goals with the changes to the community assessment are to really streamline the process for our programs.

So, Jess, can you talk about those please?

**Jessica:** Absolutely. Like you said, our goal here is streamlining. We made changes to require programs to more intentionally plan for their community assessment, including how they will use identified data to support the goals of their program. We also made changes to help reduce burden on programs.

This can include leveraging existing data sources that you could use in place of collecting new data that might be costly or challenging to collect. And finally, we only require an annual update when needed. That is when needed to identify significant shifts in the community that may impact program design and services.

That is a shift now, just requiring the annual update when needed.

**Tala:** Thank you, Jess. As our communities change, we should change our updates. We know that sometimes that families who need the Head Start services the most struggle to enroll or to attend the programs regularly, like those experiencing homelessness or those that lack access to reliable transportation.

Next we're turning to a set of changes that asks for programs to think about the barriers that their families may experience in enrolling in or attending their program. Shawna.

**Shawna:** First, we ask programs to consider barriers that children and families may face regarding engaging with our programs. Then we ask programs to consider why children who are selected actually don't end up enrolling or enroll but do not actually attend regularly. Two different pieces there. And where possible, we ask programs to address these barriers, for example, that could mean they decide to provide or to facilitate access to transportation.

Now, I do want to be really clear here. There was some area of confusion on this part. The new standards do not require all programs to provide transportation. I want to be clear about that. But we are clear in the final rule that we are encouraging programs to resolve the barriers that you identify, but we're not requiring it, and programs should consider what is feasible and appropriate to best meet the needs of their communities.

**Tala:** That's great. And I know it's Jess's turn to go next, but on that note, before she comes on, I want to give Khari a chance to talk about one of his favorite new standards. Khari, would you like to talk about the changes related to family income?

**Khari:** Tala, you know I do. You know I do. This is really one of my favorite parts of the standard.

I love them all. I do. But this is one of the favorites. But anyways, we know as a Head Start community that one of the main ways that we determine Head Start eligibility is based on family income. And we know also that the definition of income that is part of the previous standards and ones that we're most familiar with can sometimes be confusing.

And then on top of that, we know that in some areas of the country, particularly in big cities, families have a higher cost of living driven largely by expensive housing. We revised the definition of income in the updated standards in a way that provides a clear list of possible sources of family income, and only those sources should be considered.

And we also added a new standard that says that if a family spends an excessive amount of their income on housing, then the excessive costs can be deducted from the family's income for eligibility purposes. Now, excessive housing costs are defined in our new standards or in our updated standards as anything over 30% of their annual income. This change promotes consistency across federal, means-tested programs and how we determine eligibility. There are many other federal programs that consider high cost of living in determining eligibility for services. Now at Head Start, we're following suit. I know a lot of you had questions about how to calculate excessive housing costs, and maybe, just, maybe, I can convince Jess to walk us through an example of how to do that. You up to it, Jess?

**Jessica:** I'd love to. I can't say I love this one. I mean, I don't think anybody loves this one as much as you do, Khari. But I'm a big fan of this one, so we'd love to break it down. Just going to pause a second, make sure that our Spanish translation is caught up.

Follow me here. We've got some animation on the slide. We're going to look at an example, and we're going to take, for example, a family of five, on the screen, that makes \$40,000 per year. To determine eligibility, we would typically look at the 2023 federal poverty level, which is \$35,140 in annual income for a family of five.

And again, to determine eligibility if we're looking at income eligibility, we know there's other categorical forms of eligibility. According to our old standards, this family is not below 100% of the federal poverty line and therefore would not be eligible for Head Start services under this criteria, under the federal poverty level eligibility criteria.

But let's say this family spends \$20,000 in housing costs per year. Which again, they make 40k a year so that's 50 percent of their total gross income.

Under the new standards, a program can consider, as Khari said, deducting any amount of housing expenses that are over 30% of a family's income. Let's do a little math. For this example, 30% of the family's income would be \$12,000. Now to determine the total deduction, the program should take the total the family spends on housing, that \$20,000, minus \$12,000, which is 30% of their total income.

And that total deduction is going to be \$8,000. Now what that means is the program can deduct \$8,000 from their family's total income to determine their new adjusted income for eligibility purposes. Let's go and look at what that means in the next slide. Again, this family makes \$40,000 a year. That was originally above that federal poverty line.

They now have an adjusted income of \$32,000. We took that \$8,000 off. And because that adjusted income is now below 100% of the federal poverty level for a family of this size, the family would be eligible for Head Start services using that income-based determination. All right. Got it. I think we got it.

I will say that I see in the chat people asking for tools and supports on this one, and this is absolutely one that we want to prioritize getting additional support and TA resources out for you.

**Tala:** Thank you, Jess. I know that was a lot, but I'm seeing some positive reactions, so I love it. I want to shift now to the changes we made in the standards with respect to tribal and migrant seasonal Head Start eligibility so that we can align with the statutory changes that were made in March of this year. Shawna, can you share those updates with us?

**Shawna:** Yes, certainly. I'll start with the changes for tribal, and then I'll turn to our migrant and seasonal Head Start programs. Tribal programs can determine a pregnant woman or child in their service area as eligible for Head Start services regardless of income.

In our migrant and seasonal Head Start programs, they can determine that any pregnant women or child in their service area is eligible for Head Start services if at least one family member's income comes primarily from agricultural employment. The other thing to note is that with these changes, that they were effective immediately back, again, in March 2024 when they were enacted in statute. While this shouldn't be new for our tribal programs or migrant and seasonal Head Start programs, they are now part of our final rule because we have updated those requirements to align with our statute.

**Tala:** Thank you, Shawna. Let's shift to our technical change that we made related to the percent of slots filled with children – filled by children with disabilities. Jess?

**Jessica:** We made a change.

[Crosstalk]

**Jessica:** There you go. We made a change in the standard to align with the Head Start Act because there was an inconsistency that understandably caused confusion. Our previous standards required that programs ensure at least 10% of their funded enrollment is filled by children with disabilities.

What we did with the updated standard was change that term “funded” to “actual” as this is actually what is in the Head Start Act. Now programs must ensure that at least 10% of their actual enrollment is filled by children with disabilities.

**Tala:** All right. Thank you, Jess. Next, we're going to turn over to some changes we made to promote the health and safety of children. It's important that our programs do everything they can to protect children from exposure to toxins like lead because we also know that lead exposure in early childhood can be really harmful to children's development.

Shawna, can you tell us more about the new requirements around lead?

**Shawna:** Sure thing. This is one area that looks pretty different from what folks saw in the NPRM. It's a good opportunity to talk about it. We heard loud and clear from folks that you want to protect kids, and we also want to ensure kids are protected from exposure to lead in our Head Start programs.

But we also heard that there are many different requirements, depending on your state and local context. We've established a standard designed to protect children from lead that also allows programs to do so in a way that is appropriate for their specific setting. We're requiring that programs have a plan in place to inspect and test for lead, as well as to conduct remediation and abatement activities, if needed.

**Tala:** Thank you, Shawna. Now let's stay with child health and safety as a topic because it is critical that Head Start programs take a proactive approach to safety. Jess, can you share more about the other changes we have made in this space?

**Jessica:** Absolutely. There are a few of them so I'm going to walk through them one at a time.

First, I want to note that the changes to the standards include a focus on increasing a program's capacity to promote child health and safety and take a really a preventative approach as well. In particular, the standards require that staff are trained annually on mandated reporting of child abuse and neglect.

Here we're talking about understanding your state, local, and tribal laws related to child welfare reporting, as required under federal legislation, such as the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, sometimes called CAPTA. Now, we also require annual training on positive strategies to support social and emotional development.

As we know, and again, as a teacher and a director, we know that most of the work to promote child health and safety happens in everyday interactions and relationships that we have. The standards also clearly state who is responsible for following safety practices. In addition to staff and consultants, the updated standards also require contractors with some exceptions and volunteers must follow all that ... Contractors with some exceptions and volunteers must follow all safety practices. I want to mention that because it has been a source of confusion.

As part of this change, this means that people in your programs who are working with children. That's why we say with some exceptions on the contractor; we're not talking about the roof contractor who comes in when children aren't there or not working directly with children. They must report suspected or known child abuse and neglect to the appropriate state or tribal child protection authority.

So that's the first part there, Tala.

**Tala:** Thank you. I do want to shift to important changes to the requirements and the standards of conduct related to child maltreatment and endangerment of children. I know we received a lot of comments about this specifically, and we made changes we hope to provide greater clarity. Jess.

**Jessica:** That's right. The goal with this set of requirements is to be very clear about what behaviors we consider to be inappropriate with interacting with and caring for children. The updated standards align with four major categories and definitions of child maltreatment, and these include, and I typically don't read off the slides, but I think it's really important to understand these four categories.

Corporal punishment or physical abusive behavior, which is defined as intentional use of physical force that results in or has a potential to result in physical injury. Sexually abusive behavior, defined as any completed or attempted sexual act, sexual conduct, or exploitation. Emotionally harmful or abusive behavior defined as behaviors that harm a child's self-worth or emotional well-being.



And the last one, neglectful behavior, which is defined as a failure to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs, including access to food, education, medical care, appropriate supervision by an adequate caregiver, and safe physical and emotional environments. We do include examples of each category in the standard.

And we intend for that ... We wanted to make sure that those examples help to clarify what we meant by each category but also want to be sure to point out that these are not exhaustive examples. This is not an exhaustive list. We also clarify that it is violations of this specific part of the Standards of Conduct that require an incident report to the Office of Head Start.

And we heard in the comments that this was unclear in the NPRM.

**Tala:** Thank you, Jess. The other really important area to discuss is the requirement, requirements related to incidents that need to be reported to the Office of Head Start. The policy goal here is to clearly outline expectations for reporting incidents to the Office of Head Start in a timely manner.

I know you touched on this just now. [Inaudible] Jess, can you continue talking about the requirements for reporting?

**Jessica:** To step back. The way I think of this section of the standard is that it describes the who, the where, the what, and the when for reporting incidents to OHS. And we really heard the feedback from the comments on the NPRM, and I think that it lays it out quite a bit more clearly.

The updated standards require programs to report incidents to OHS immediately but no later than seven calendar days following this incident. This time frame is consistent with the IM, the information memoranda, that we issued on this in September of 2022, but it is a change from the NPRM. The changes also clarify which significant incidents that affect children's health and safety are reportable to OHS.

And they include in those lists – they include those that ... In that list, it includes those that occur in settings where Head Start services are provided. Right, that's that "where." And the "who" involves staff, contractors, or volunteers who participate in a Head Start program or classroom at least partially funded by Head Start regardless whether the child involved receives Head Start services or is a child that participates in a classroom at least partially funded by Head Start.

The updated standards add four types of reportable incidents to that list. We're really trying, again, to add clarity here. One, any maltreatment or endangerment of a child. Those are defined in the standards of conduct, and those are the ones that we showed on the previous slide. Two, serious harm or injury resulting from a lack of preventative maintenance. Three, serious harm, injury, or endangerment resulting from a lack of supervision. Then lastly, any unauthorized release.

I just want to say this list is intended to hit the right balance between making sure that we're reporting important things but also recognizing that we are not reporting every single thing

that happens in a Head Start program. We want to hit that balance right, and we've heard that loud and clear from you – the importance of doing so.

One final note is that the updated standard also require that a program's management system ensure that all staff are trained to implement the Office of Head Start reporting procedures, for instance. Got to make sure our staff are trained in this. We hope that these updates help clarify something that has been confusing, we recognize, to many people.

But we also recognize this is just a starting point, and we really look forward to continuing to support programs in this area.

**Tala:** Thanks, Jess. Next, we have ... We know that some of our previous standards have caused some confusion for the field, and we want to make sure our expert expectations are clear across all aspects of program delivery.

Shawna, can you tell us about the clarifications we made for the family childcare programs?

**Shawna:** Sure thing. We know the ratio requirements for our family childcare homes have often been confusing for programs, so we really looked to clarify those standards. We are also clear that in family childcare settings, staff that count towards the ratio must meet the qualifications for a family childcare provider.

The ratio clarifications have a 60-day compliance timeline, but the change related to the qualification requirements for our FCC providers have a yearlong compliance timeline, and this gives our program some time to plan. This also reminds me while I'm here, I also wanted to mention that thanks to your helpful feedback, and we truly do mean and hope you have heard how helpful and impactful your feedback has been.

We did not retain the NPRM proposal for, one, lowering ratio and Early Head Start for our youngest children served. We did not retain that change, and we did not re change the retain the proposal for 46 weeks for Early Head Start center-based duration. Again, thank you for your feedback.

**Tala:** Thank you, Shawna.

Let's go ahead and shift gears to the changes that were made related to Head Start program participation in the State Quality Rating and Improvement Systems. Jess, back to you.

**Jessica:** Thanks, Tala. The updated requirement for QRIS, the Quality Rating and Improvement Systems, clarifies that Head Start programs should participate in QRIS to the extent practicable if the state system has strategies in place to support their participation.

The previous standard was that programs, except for our AIAN, our tribal Head Start program ... It previously was they must participate if three conditions were met. The revised requirement is intended to reduce duplication of effort and reduce burden on programs.

**Tala:** Thank you. I know we're throwing a lot at you right now.

We're getting close to the end, everybody. I told you we had a lot of quality improvement changes and hopefully these are good. These changes are really focused on how we talk about Head Start and how we communicate with families. We've established some definitions of the overall Birth-to-Five Head Start Program along with the different program types.

We're also asking programs to take a look at the way in which they engage and communicate with families to improve the customer service experience, so to speak. Shawna, can you tell us more about these changes?

**Shawna:** These are small but really impactful. First, we include a new definition for Head Start that means the entire Birth-to-Five Head Start Program.

Think about the big umbrella that encompasses all of the different program types offered in our Head Start ecosystem. That means we are now going to be using Head Start Preschool to refer to services provided to our preschoolers. And, of course, we're going to continue to use Early Head Start for our programs that serve expectant families, infants, and toddlers.

Finally, we also have several program changes focused on how programs communicate with families. To start, we're asking programs to use modern technologies, and I know many of our programs are already doing this, when you recruit families to reduce burden in the application and enrollment process. We also include requirements that programs must identify and use the best communication avenues available to engage prospective and enrolled families of all abilities.

**Tala:** Shawna, I forgot to mention this baby's face is infectious, makes me happy every time. The last one, and we really won't have enough time to get this topic justice, just like I feel like we've skirted over everything to give you what you need. Jess, can you share the highlights from our changes around facilities?

**Jessica:** Yes, absolutely. Like I said, I'll probably run through this pretty quickly, but I want to highlight a couple of changes we made to the facilities standards. First, changes to the definition of major renovation. In these standards, we increase the threshold for major renovation from \$250,000 to \$350,000.

That said, to maintain alignment with a threshold that it's a bit technical, but the National Defense Authorization Act, if that legislation increases that threshold, so will too our threshold increases in our definition. Just a special note for our tribal programs: The definition of major renovation outlines that tribes that jointly apply to use both tribal CCDF funds and Head Start funds may comply with the CCDF threshold if it's higher.

At this point in time, the CCDF and the Head Start thresholds are the same, \$350,000, but we do not expect that they'll necessarily always be the same, particularly because the CCDF threshold has an inflationary increase. Just wanted to note that piece that the Head Start, tribal Head Start programs may comply with the CCDF threshold if it's higher.

Another change, last one I want to highlight, is that once programs receive approval to use federal funds to submit an application for reasonable fees and costs necessary associated with facility project. These are often soft costs. The funds are allowable regardless of the outcome of that application.

Now, this is an area where I recommend grant recipients look really closely at the track changes document, we posted on the ECLKC. The updated standards also made some changes to the application requirements in the 1303 Standards that we don't have time to get into right now, but you'll clearly see it in the track changes version. And then, as with everything, we'll be offering additional training and technical assistance.

**Tala:** All right, that officially wraps up our overview of the changes. And I know the first thing on your mind is wondering when you need to be ready to make these changes. Khari, would you like to walk us through implementation timelines?

**Khari:** I'm happy to do it, Tala. And again, I told you, everyone, we got a talented team here who's done so much for us.

Thank you for all of those who presented so far. I don't want anyone to panic again about these changes. We have a plain set of plans in place to support programs during this period of change. And we don't want anyone rushing to make big changes that they aren't ready for. Please take me at my word when I say that.

You can see here which of the new standards have a 60-day compliance timeline. That means these are things you might want to do sooner rather than later. This includes a lot of the changes around ERSEA, again, eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance. This also includes changes to the qualification requirements for mental health consultants and some of the changes that relate to your overall approach to working with children and families.

It's our hope that most of these earlier policies are things you are already doing or at least excited to implement quickly. These are the earlier ones, but then we have those policies that have a slightly longer timeline, such as the multidisciplinary approach to mental health. This also includes changes to the qualification requirements for the FCC workers, formerly considered to be assistant providers.

That's the family childcare, of course, and then the requirements around community assessment and identifying barriers to enrollment and attendance. We know these things will likely take a little longer to plan, and we want to give you time to do that. Then finally, we have some policies that have an even longer timeline.

These are the policies that we know will take some thoughtful planning and maybe even some restructuring to make them work. For example, this includes things like the family assignment maximum for family partnerships service staff or the requirement to provide adequate breaks for staff, and, of course, the wage and benefit requirements portions of the updated standards.

Now, I know this can all feel a bit overwhelming. I've said it earlier today, and I'm just sort of letting you know that we're still with you. But listen, I am confident in the ability of Head Start programs to adapt and to come out stronger on the other side. So, Tala, I'm going to call on you one more time.

Can you share just a little bit about where programs should start working on the new standards?

**Tala:** Absolutely. Programs should start by taking a look at what you're already doing. Some of you might already be doing some of this stuff that's on the longer implementation timeline, the one that Khari just shared in the last slide. Take a second and reflect on the services you're already providing to children and family.

How have you integrated mental health into your program? How are you supporting your staff and making them feel empowered? Have you already improved your benefits package packages to be a more competitive employer? If you aren't sure if you're meeting any of these standards already, talk to your program specialist.

Remember that they're here to help you, and I know they're ready and excited to help you think about ways that you are already meeting these new standards. The next step is to look at what changes remain. I'd encourage programs to look at two things: First, look at which standards have the earlier compliance timeline. And second, look at those standards that are going to require some advanced planning. Only you can prioritize what changes to tackle first in your program, but that may be where I would start. Any other advice you have, Khari?

**Khari:** I think these are great places to start, but I do have one more thing to add.

I just want to make sure again that we all take the step together. A lot of you have asked along the way if more funding comes with the updated standards. The short answer is no. Only Congress can decide to increase funding for this federal program or any other federal program, which by the way, they have historically done time and time again for Head Start. Programs have long been stretching their resources to serve as many children as possible.

But I just think that we've stretched beyond the boundaries of sustainability. These standards reflect what we need to do to provide a stable program that can be maintained for another 60 years. That means that if we do not receive additional funding from Congress, again, if we don't receive additional funding from Congress, Head Start programs may need to restructure their budgets and even restructure some parts of their program designs over the coming years to ensure that your model remains sustainable. That might mean offering fewer slots to children in the future years, especially if those slots are currently empty.

It might also mean exploring new options for blending and braiding Head Start funds with other sources of funding that are available. Each individual program will have different needs, and we know that, and each individual program will have to sort of take, slightly different approaches, probably, in enacting these new standards.

Many programs have already taken big steps towards these changes, and others we know face unique challenges in their community. But programs should consider where they want to be in the next seven years. You want to think about where do you want your program to be and how do you want it to be situated?

How do you want it to be working and thriving in the year 2031? Then develop a plan by working backwards from those goals that you have for the seven-year outlook. While Congress may choose to invest more in Head Start, and we all hope they do, I'd ask programs to imagine how they might achieve their longer-term goals within their existing budgets.

We just want to make sure that you continue to think carefully about the way that you are approaching the funding landscape. Again, I say there may be an opportunity through Congress to appropriate additional funds, funding for our program. But if not, just be reminded that we want you to take a broad view.

We want you to ... You've heard us, and me in particular, talk through the course of the year about being innovative and creative and being thoughtful about adapting new approaches. Let's think about what else might be available to us. Maybe it's blending your funding with state pre-K funds, or CCDF funds, childcare funds, or funding from private philanthropy.

There are just ... There are other options to us beyond what we have available here. I just want to remind you of that. I also want to remind you that we want to, that I want to encourage you strongly to pace yourself and to make incremental changes. You don't want to, just ... This is not a light switch proposition where, your program is set up one way today and literally tomorrow, you've made a sweeping change. You want to gradually make changes so as to not shock the system.

All right. I know these are tough questions and tough things to wrestle with, but that is why we've included a longer runway so that you can plan, but I'm confident that Head Start programs are up to the task. Tala.

**Tala:** That's the truth. Head Start programs are so incredibly resilient. Actually, I have a question for Jess to offer some clarity to some of the terms we've thrown at you about timelines related to the new standards. We've used effective dates, compliance dates, implementation timelines, and other things, I'm sure.

Can you please explain the difference of those things to us, Jess, who aren't reading regulations all day long?

**Jessica:** Of course, happy to. And you're right that they can be pretty confusing terms in this context. In my opinion, I think the first one is the most confusing. When we say the new standards are effective or have an effective date of August 21st, we don't want people to panic.

The effective date just refers to when the updated standards officially become part of the federal government record. These changes are now officially part of the Code of Federal

Regulations, and you can view them on the Federal Register. There's a link to that on, on our website on the ECLKC, and we'll put that in the chat.

That's all we mean when, for example, we say in the program instruction, we recently released that the standards are effective as of last Wednesday. Now, that also does mean you can start doing everything described in the updated standards if you want. These changes are officially allowable, and I saw a lot of questions, especially regarding the housing adjustment for that.

You can start doing it. But that is different than the compliance date, which we also sometimes referred to as a compliance timeline or implementation timeline. The compliance date is when programs are legally responsible for meeting a regulation. And now I want to be really clear here that programs are responsible for meeting all of the Head Start performance standards.

But that does not mean that we monitor on all of the performance standards. As you know, we have a lot of standards, and we always monitor on a subset of requirements, and that is the case for various reasons. I think what probably many of you probably really want to know, again, I've been a program director, is when you will be monitored on the new changes.

So, Khari, I'm wondering, could you say a little bit about what programs can expect from monitoring as it relates to the updated standards?

**Khari:** Happy to do it, Jessica. Just to give programs time to implement these new requirements, programs will not be monitored on new requirements published in the final rule during this program year.

Let me say that one more time. To give programs more time to implement the new requirements, you will not be monitored on new requirements published in the final rule during this program year or for this upcoming program year, which we refer to as the FY25 or the fiscal year 2025 monitoring cycle.

Monitoring on the new standards will begin in the next program year, which would be fiscal year 2026 monitoring cycle. That is to say, the cycle that will or the program year that would begin in the fall, usually of next year, 2025. Monitoring on the new standards will begin in the next program year, which is again, FY2026 monitoring cycle for standards that have compliance dates prior to that time.

Now, the distinction here is that if something is an existing requirement that was already part of the Head Start Program Performance Standards, and all we did through this process is clarify something about it, like for example, the changes related to eligibility for tribal and migrant and seasonal eligibility, we will continue to monitor for those because there were already a set of eligibility requirements on the books for migrant, seasonal, and tribal programs. We're going to continue monitoring for those. But if we are introducing something brand new to the standards, the brand-new things will not be monitored in the upcoming monitoring season for this program year.

I really hope that's clear. Another example, by the way, relates to our standards on child health and safety, specifically, the standards of conduct and incident reporting requirements. Standards of conduct and incident reporting are not new to the Head Start Program Performance Standards, but through the final rule process, we did clarify some things about those standards.

We will monitor on these standards for the upcoming program year, but we will align language in the monitoring process with the updated standards, and we will use the language from the updated standards and monitoring to help minimize confusion. Finally, in this program year's monitoring process, we will include areas where the updated standards give programs more flexibility than the previous requirements to ensure that programs are able to fully utilize these new flexibilities.

Let me give you an example: Monitoring will account for programs that begin to deduct excessive housing costs from a family's income when determining eligibility. Now, we may also collect data related to the implementation of the updated standards from a sample of grant recipients during this program year's monitoring cycle as a way to pilot questions on new requirements.

We will share more information about the plans for monitoring through upcoming webinars and final rule-related resources. We know that change takes time, and we look forward to partnering closely with Head Start programs to understand and successfully implement the new standards. Tala, do you want to tell us a bit more about how we're going to support programs moving forward?

**Tala:** Absolutely. My favorite part. We're really excited for the plans for our supports for you. We're rolling out the updated standards as part of our Nurturing the Promise campaign, which you see on my Zoom background, which I always do the wrong way. It's the branding that will be on all the events and resources that we share to support the updated standards.

Our purpose for this is that we can clearly signal to you when we are sharing information relevant to the updated standards. Keep your eyes out for this logo moving forward. Two other notes about what to expect. First, the reason I noted that we're continuing to develop resources is because we want to build in flexibility to tailor our supports to what you need most.

The questions you've raised through these webinars and to our program specialists will help inform and shape the guidance, the TA resources, and any other materials we develop. And that brings me to my next point. We're also planning roundtables around the country for this fall and other opportunities to hear directly from you so that we can ensure that the content we develop is responsive to your needs.

Keep an eye out on – for more details on those. A couple of other notes about what's coming next. We know September is an extremely busy month, and it's apparently next week, and you all are underway with a new program year, but we also know that many of you are eager for more information on the updated standards.



We're going to start by asking Khari to star in some short videos about these changes. Our goal is to make it easy for you to quickly understand what's going on and what we have coming. You can expect to see those in the coming weeks. In October, we will start to headline specific topics from updated standards so we can dig even deeper.

We'll focus on a different topic each month, beginning with child health and safety. We also know that a lot of you want more – to learn more about the new workforce requirements specifically, while a lot of you are also swamped with starting up your programs. We want to make sure you all have the information you need without overwhelming you during a busy time.

We're trying to find ways to get you more information on the workforce requirements sooner rather than later, but we're also going to repeat that information as well as have more related resources. Later this year, when the workforce is our headline topic for Nurturing the Promise, we want information to be available for those of you who are ready for it, but we do not want to add extra pressure during a busy time.

We'll make sure we are clear about what content you can skip now, if you're busy, because we'll revisit it another time. Meanwhile, you should know that OHS is hard at work. We're training all of our OHS staff to support a common understanding of the new standards and so that everyone can provide you top-notch customer service when you have questions.

We are thinking big picture about all the changes these updated standards require in other aspects of the Office of Head Start, including our regional office processes, our data systems, training and technical assistance, and of course, monitoring, so that we can clearly communicate these changes to you.

I want to remind all of you that we're already have a lot of content up on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center website, ECLKC. Some of the highlights are listed here on the slide. And I think someone's dropped the link. And as a reminder, the recording of this webinar will be available using the same link as you use to register within two to three hours from now. Khari.

**Khari:** Thank you everyone for joining us today. We're racing to the finish. I hope it provided you with a helpful overview of the updated standards. To close, I just want to say to you all again that Head Start program staff are the foundation of our mission to provide high quality early childhood education and comprehensive services to children and families.

The work of each and every person in Head Start, each and every one of you, makes a difference in the lives of children and families in need. We have the opportunity to make sure that while we work hard to break the cycle of poverty for children and families that no one that works for Head Start is earning poverty level wages.

That's just not acceptable. This is an opportunity to meaningfully improve the lives of those who we serve, as well as those who generously dedicate their lives to Head Start children and families. I am proud of the step forward Head Start has taken and the partnership we have, and I'm eager to see what the future has in store for us.

I know that we have the right team, so to that I say, "Go team." Thanks everybody so long.  
Thanks for joining us today.