

## **Head Start Program Performance Standards: Home-based Options**

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Sarah Merrill: Today we're going to be talking about the home-based program option. We're really going to be looking at three parts of the standards: Subpart B, Program Structure; Subpart C, which is the Education and Child Development Services; and Subpart I, the HR management, really related to staff qualifications and training and professional development. But for program structure I think what's important for programs providing this program option is that the service duration and frequency of visits and socialization are distinctly detailed for both Early Head Start and Head Start preschool. So for Early Head Start, they have to provide a minimum of 46 visits to each family who is enrolled in this option, and 22 group socializations over the program year. And they have a year, I think, to get up to the compliance for that. And for Head Start programs, they provide 32 visits to the families and 16 socializations.

Beth Meloy: Right, and one point of clarification is that the standards do point out explicitly that for home-based preschool, if you're providing the home-based option you really can only do that if you're also providing another alternative option, like the family child care or the center-based option, or even a locally designed program option.

Sarah: That is important to know. And it's also, the regulations specify that the socialization sites, they don't have to be licensed, but they do need to meet health and safety requirements, which are spelled out in 1302.47.

Beth: That makes sense.

Sarah: Case loads remain the same, I think that'll be familiar and bring comfort to those providing the program option, so home visitors average about 10 to 12 families, which help them provide individualized service and make some program decisions about how best to meet the needs.

Beth: That's right. And another clarification that's explicitly written into the standards now is that programs providing home visits really have to make up any, attempt to make up any home visits that are canceled by the family and try to make up all the home visits that are canceled by the program, and then also just makes really clear that you can't replace home visits with medical or social service appointments. You really can do those, but they don't count towards those minimum requirements of 46 home visits for Early Head Start and 32 home visits for Head Start.

Sarah: And I think the reason for that is because the home visits and the socializations are geared to helping families through the program's help and the home visitor's help think about their child's development, so it's really leading towards school readiness goals. And the home-based program services have been leading to child and family improved outcomes, and they focus on secure parent-child interactions, strong attachment --

Beth: think that's right, and you know, related to that, that's sort of our cross reference to the Subpart C, which is really new to the standards again is that we've explicitly written out what best practice is in terms of what education should look like in the home-based program option, and now those are specifically required. So things like making sure that you're using research-based, home-based curriculum, and that screening assessments are happening in the same way that they happen in a center-based or a family childcare option. And of course there's a delay in the effective date for that so that programs have a year to come up to speed with that requirement.

Sarah: Right. And the delivery of effective curriculum in home visits is a strong link with our human resources management, so we want home visitors to be knowledgeable and capable of doing their role. So 1302.91(e)(6) which is in subpart I speaks about the minimum qualifications, so home visitors will need a home-based CDA or a comparable credential, or they can also have equivalent coursework within a bachelor's or associate's or other type of degree. But programs also need to ensure that visitors demonstrate specific competencies, such as effectively planning and implementing learning experiences within the home visit, implementing the curriculum, and really building strong and positive relationships with the whole family.

Beth: Right. And one of the ways we try to make sure that programs are supporting home visitors and doing that is including them in our new requirements that every program have an intensive coaching strategy. Right? So home visitors are education staff and they need support in order to provide the kind of learning experiences and help the parent know how to provide learning experiences for the child.

Sarah: I think they'd welcome that, because home visitors are often going out to the field alone so it's kind of nice to connect with a colleague to make sure I've done a good job. I think that summarizes everything about the home-based option in a nutshell. Obviously going to want to look at the standards in a whole, but these are some of the nuances and highlights you might want to consider when providing home-based services. So, thanks for joining us!

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