

Head Start Program Performance Standards Transition Services

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Kiersten Beigel: Welcome, thanks for joining us. My name is Kiersten Beigel.

Sarah Merrill: And I'm Sarah Merrill, and today we'll be talking about transition services.

Kiersten: So that's Subpart G in the program operations section of the Head Start Program Performance Standards. It really focuses predominately on how we support families and children as they transition from different program settings and early learning environments. There are a couple of places in the Head Start Performance Standards where you might find other transition language. Today we're going to talk with you a little bit about Subpart G and we want to break down the three sections that make up Subpart G and give you a little bit of an overview and Sarah's gonna get us started.

Sarah: Absolutely. So as Kiersten mentioned, there are three pieces, subparts, in this section. 1302.70 speaks about transitions out of Early Head Start, 1302.71 speaks about transitions from Head Start into Kindergarten, and 1302.72 speaks about transitions between programs. A couple of overarching themes that I think are important to raise is that the rationale behind this is that when families engage in activities prior to a new school setting, it has a stronger link with school success for children. The majority of the regulations in these three subsections or subparts are not going to be new. Rather they're organized for clarity and to provide sort of a one stop shop for these. There's a still a focus on ensuring that families are really engaged about knowing about their child's developmental and learning progression, supports for children who are on individualized education plans or individualized family services plan, and children and family who are dual language learners.

Kiersten: So let's start with 1302.70 and that is a section that really focuses on programs as they support children and families who are leaving Early Head Start, completing Early Head Start. We know that continuity of care is a really important element of these standards and that children need to have a sort of continuity across birth to five wherever we can help it. We want to ensure that families with very young children are not having disruptions or too many transitions. This section also helps kind of programs ... It gives programs ideas about what they should be focusing on in the Early Head Start transition so for example, thinking about the timing of the transition, thinking about how they collaborate with families, and then also how they can collaborate with Head Start programs to ensure that wherever possible families with very young children are able to move into a Head Start program. And a bit about timing in this section, there are standards here that are not new but that do allow for some flexibility. So the first thing is that programs need to be thinking about that transition for the child six months before their third birthday. And then a second kind of timing piece in this has to do with when children turn three, making it fairly flexible. Again not new, but that children can stay in the programs for a limited number of additional months. Again, in order to support continuity and taking into account family circumstances, child development, and the availability of other opportunities and options for children in the community. So that's 1302.70, Early Head Start to the next step.

Sarah: An I'll take it from there. 1302.71 speaks about the transition from Head Start into the local school or the Kindergarten setting and we know Head Start programs have been supporting this transition for many of years. We've been engaging in families in local school districts to set up activities and collaborating and sharing pertinent information to support that transition. I think what might be new for programs to think about in these standards are for programs who don't operate summer programming, to work with their local school districts to determine availability of some summer options that allow for that smoother transition between Head Start and the school and that really allows for local communities to think about continuity of learning and continuity of services for the children who most need it. Obviously programs are to implement strategies and activities that best prepare their Head Start children for entering school and supporting the parents and exercising their rights and their responsibilities to keep advocating and supporting their children when they enter the school, the elementary setting. Program staff communicate with their counterparts in the school

districts to make sure pertinent information is transitioned up so that that continuity of learning can continue. As you notice, continuity is a thread throughout these subsections.

Kiersten: Yeah. 1302.72 is about continuity also and it really relates to families who are moving or transitioning into other early learning environments so there are three provisions here, all which are new. The first one is really to support families who are transitioning, well they may be leaving the community per se, so they're leaving the program for various reasons and so the program is required to help that family locate Early Head Start or Head Start or another early learning program as the case may be to support the continuity for the child and family and you had asked us to, in the public comment period, to make sure to explicitly mention children experiencing homelessness and children who are involved in the foster care system in this particular section given the vulnerability for these particular children, so we added that. The second area here has to do with families who are leaving the Head Start program prior to kindergarten and requiring that programs help these families locate other early childhood services and also consider some of those activities as sort of family engagement opportunities with parents and the school or the place that the child may be attending next. As was the case with what Sarah was mentioned previously in 1302.71. And then lastly, the third provision that's new is to pay particular attention to our migrant and seasonal Head Start children and families as they leave the community and move for work or other reasons, to really look for opportunities to link them to other Early Head Start, Head Start programs and other migrant seasonal Head Start programs. So that's 1302.72.

Sarah: Well thanks for joining us. We have just completed our rapid tour of our three subparts or subsections within Subpart G, transition services. Before you leave us today, we recommend that you check in with the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center or the ECLKC. You'll find some tools and strategies to help you think about your approach to transition services and most importantly we just wanted take this opportunity to thank you for everything you do for the children and families in your local communities.

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