

Head Start Regulations Relating to Hearing Screening

The Head Start Program Performance Standards (45 CFR 1301–1311) outline the mandatory regulations that grantees and delegate agencies must implement to operate a Head Start or Early Head Start program. The Performance Standards define the objectives and features of a quality program and provide a structure for monitoring and enforcing quality standards.

[http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/Head Start Requirements](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/Head%20Start%20Requirements)

Performance Standard § 1304.20 Child health and developmental services.

(b) Screening for developmental, **sensory**, and behavioral **concerns**.

(1) In collaboration with each child's parent, and **within 45 calendar days of the child's entry into the program, grantee and delegate agencies must perform or obtain** linguistically and age **appropriate screening procedures to identify concerns regarding a child's** developmental, sensory (visual and **auditory**), behavioral, motor, language, social, cognitive, perceptual, and emotional **skills** (see 45 CFR 1308.6(b)(3) for additional information). To the greatest extent possible, these screening procedures must be sensitive to the child's cultural background

Performance Standard § 1308.11 Eligibility criteria: Hearing impairment including deafness.

(a) A child is classified as deaf if a hearing impairment exists which is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, and learning is affected. A child is classified as hard of hearing who has a permanent or fluctuating hearing impairment which adversely affects learning; or

(b) Meets the legal criteria for being hard of hearing established by the State of residence; or

(c) Experiences recurrent temporary or fluctuating hearing loss caused by otitis media, allergies, or eardrum perforations and other outer or middle ear anomalies over a period of three months or more. Problems associated with temporary or fluctuating hearing loss can include impaired listening skills, delayed language development, and articulation problems. Children meeting these criteria must be referred for medical care, have their hearing checked frequently, and receive speech, language or hearing services as indicated by the IEPs. As soon as special services are no longer needed, these children must no longer be classified as having a disability.

Performance Standard § 1308.6 Assessment of children.

(a) The disabilities coordinator must be involved with other program staff throughout the full process of assessment of children, which has three steps:

(1) All children enrolled in Head Start are screened as the first step in the assessment process;

(2) Staff also carry out on-going developmental assessment for all enrolled children throughout the year to determine progress and to plan program activities;

(3) Only those children who need further specialized assessment to determine whether they have a disability and may require special education and related services proceed to the next step, evaluation. The disabilities coordinator has primary responsibility for this third step, evaluation, only.

(b) Screening, the first step in the assessment process, consists of standardized health screening and developmental screening which includes speech, hearing and vision. It is a brief process, which can be repeated, and is never used to determine that a child has a disability. It only indicates that a child may need further evaluation to determine whether the child has a disability. Rescreening must be provided as needed.

(1) Grantees must provide for developmental, hearing and vision screenings of all Early Head Start and Head Start children within 45 days of the child's entry into the program. This does not preclude starting screening in the spring, before program services begin in the fall.

(c) Staff must inform parents of the types and purposes of the screening well in advance of the screening, the results of these screenings and the purposes and results of any subsequent evaluations.

(e) The disabilities coordinator must arrange for further, formal, evaluation of a child who has been identified as possibly having a disability, the third step.

(vi) Tests used with children with impaired sensory, manual or communication skills must be administered so that they reflect the children's aptitudes and achievement levels and not just the disabilities.

(vii) Tests and materials must assess all areas related to the suspected disability.

(viii) In the case of a child whose primary disability appears to be a speech or language impairment, the team must assure that enough tests are used to determine that the impairment is not a symptom of another disability and a speech or language pathologist should be involved in the evaluation.

(3) Parental consent in writing must be obtained before a child can have an initial evaluation to determine whether the child has a disability.

POLICY CLARIFICATIONS

Policy Clarifications provide answers to frequently asked policy questions submitted to the Office of Head Start through the ECLKC. Reviewing these clarifications helps establish a consistent understanding of all Head Start policies and is an important first step in understanding the intent of many Head Start regulations and requirements.

[http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/Policy Clarifications and FAQs](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/Policy%20Clarifications%20and%20FAQs)

OHS – PC – B – 025 Does using a paper screening tool to assess a child’s vision and/or hearing within 45 days meet the requirements of the Head Start Program Performance Standards?

No. The Head Start Program Performance Standards (45 CFR 1304.20(b)) require programs to perform or obtain screening procedures to identify developmental, sensory (visual or auditory), behavioral, motor, language, social, cognitive, perceptual, and emotional skills. **A sensory screening tool must be used to identify potential vision or hearing concerns. Paper screening tools used to assess a child’s development are not considered sensory screening tools.**

Requirement 45 CFR 1304.20(b); 1308.6(b)(3)

July 31, 2007

OHS – PC – B – 038 If a child receives sensory screenings during a well child visit, is the Head Start program required to screen the child within 45 days of their entry into the Head Start program?

45 CFR 1304.20(b) requires Head Start grantee and delegate agencies to perform or obtain linguistically and age appropriate screening procedures to identify concerns regarding a child’s developmental, sensory (visual and auditory), behavioral, motor,

language, social, cognitive, perceptual, and emotional skills within 45 days of entry into the program. If a parent provides the Head Start program with documentation that a linguistically and age appropriate sensory screening took place during the well child visit, it is not necessary to repeat this screening within 45 days of the child's entry into the program.

Head Start programs should consider, however, that the population they serve is considered to be high risk, and that **it may be more efficient and effective for them to provide for the uniform screening of all children's hearing and vision using objective screening instruments.** Programs may consult with their Health Services Advisory Committee for assistance in identifying linguistically and age appropriate objective screening instruments that would be most appropriate for use in their program, given the children they are serving.

Requirement 45 CFR 1304.20(b)

November 20, 2007

OHS – PC – B – 039 What is a Head Start program's responsibility if a parent provides documentation from the child's most recent well child examination and there is no information about whether the child received sensory screenings during the visit?

45 CFR 1304.20(a)(ii)(A) requires Head Start programs to assist the parent in bringing their child up-to-date on a schedule of well child care according to the state Medicaid Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) program. If there is no evidence that the child received sensory screenings during the well child visit, the program must work with the parent to obtain the necessary documentation from their child's health care provider. In some instances, the Head Start program and the parent may call the provider's office to see if there is additional documentation that can be sent showing the child received sensory screenings. If it is determined that the screenings did not take place, the Head Start program may decide it is more efficient for them to provide the sensory screenings at the Head Start program rather than sending the child back to the health care provider's office. The program's Health Services Advisory Committee may assist the program in developing program policies on screening Head Start children. The Head Start program may also meet with local health care providers to explain to them the Head Start Program Performance Standards requirements and the state EPSDT requirements for well child care in their state.

Requirement 45 CFR 1304.20(a)(ii)(A)

November 20, 2007

OHS – PC – C – 002 Must a Head Start child in the child’s second year of Head Start be re-screened for developmental concerns?

No. A child must receive the initial screening for developmental, sensory and behavioral concerns “within 45 days of the child’s entry into the program” (45 CFR 1304.20.b.1). Thereafter, the Head Start program must conduct ongoing assessments of each child's development throughout the child’s enrollment (See 45 CFR 1304.21(c)(2) and 45 CFR 1304.3(a)(1). The program must demonstrate that it conducts on-going assessments of each child’s development, including those returning for a second or third program year in Head Start.

For such developmental domains of language, cognition, and mental health/behavioral, a program’s ongoing assessment tools should be designed to help staff decide whether a child’s development remains “on-track” or should be referred for a professional evaluation. To accomplish this, a program’s ongoing assessment procedures may include use of standardized screening measures. Given this ongoing assessment, grantees and delegates would not be required to repeat the “initial screenings” administered to children upon entry to the program.

For sensory domains such as vision and hearing, screening procedures should be re-administered on the periodicity schedule required by State EPSDT schedule, or more frequently if recommended by the Health Services Advisory Committee.

Requirement

45 CFR 1304.20(b)(1); 45 CFR 1304.20(d); 45 CFR 1304.21(c)(2) ; 45 CFR 1304.3(a)(1)

May 1, 2007