



Criteria in the Designation Renewal System

Overview

Prior to the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, Head Start agencies received continuous grant funding for an indefinite period, except in cases of extremely poor performance.¹ However, the 2007 legislation instated the Designation Renewal System (DRS) which limits the grant funding period to five years, with continued funding contingent upon program performance. This system was implemented in 2011 and is in the midst of a transition period in which the Office of Head Start (OHS) gradually transitions all Head Start agencies onto five-year grant awards. All Head Start agencies that wish to obtain their next five year grant without competition are now required to submit a request to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) one year before the end of their current five year grant period. Only agencies with high performing programs, as determined by DRS criteria, are eligible for a renewed five year grant without competition. Any agency that meets one or more of the below criteria is considered underperforming and is required to re-compete. The DRS ensures that, “for the first time in the history of Head Start, individual grantees whose programs fall short of certain standards will be required to compete with other organizations to continue receiving funding.”²

Designation Renewal System: Criteria that require an agency to re-compete for further funding upon completion of its current grant³

| General Category | Description | Timeframe |
|--|---|---|
| Any deficiencies | One or more deficiencies on any single monitoring review. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition period: review occurs at any point during three year transition period (Dec 9, 2011 to Dec 9, 2014) to determine if criteria have been met since June 12, 2009. Post-transition period: review occurs during the fourth year of the agency’s grant to determine if criteria have been met during the period of the current grant. |
| School Readiness specific deficiencies | Lack of established appropriate school readiness goals or steps taken to achieve these goals on any single monitoring review. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals must be age appropriate, established with parent input, aligned with certain guidelines, and include specific domains of child development. Steps must include collecting, analyzing, and using child assessment data three times per year to inform stakeholders and improve the program. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition period: review occurs during the last two years of the three year transition period (Dec 9, 2012 to Dec 9, 2014) to see if criteria have been met since December 9, 2011. Post-transition period: review occurs during the fourth year of the agency’s grant to see if criteria have been met during the period of the current grant. |
| Quality – CLASS assessment | Poor performance on any of the following three CLASS: Pre-K evaluation domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, Instructional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition period: review of most recent CLASS: Pre-K evaluation occurs during the last two years of the three year transition period (Dec 9, 2012 to Dec 9, 2014) to see |

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| | <p>Support. Poor performance entails that the average score across all observed classrooms is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Below the minimum threshold (scores of 4, 3, and 2 respectively), or • In the lowest 10% among all agencies currently being reviewed (unless the score is equal or above the standard of excellence score of 6). | <p>if criteria have been met since December 9, 2011.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-transition period: review of most recent CLASS: Pre-K evaluation occurs during the fourth year of the agency’s grant to see if criteria have been met during the period of the current grant. |
| License revocation | <p>Revocation of license to operate a Head Start or Early Head Start program by a state or local licensing agency, and the revocation is still standing at the time of grant competition.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition period: review occurs at any point during three year transition period (Dec 9, 2011 to Dec 9, 2014) to see if criteria have been met since June 12, 2009. • Post-transition period: review occurs during the fourth year of the agency’s grant to see if criteria have been met during the period of the current grant. |
| Suspension | <p>Suspension of the Head Start or Early Head Start program by ACF, with the suspension still in effect at the time of funding competition, unless there is a pending appeal and the agency has not had a chance to dispute the suspension.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition period: review occurs at any point during three year transition period (Dec 9, 2011 to Dec 9, 2014) to see if criteria have been met since June 12, 2009. • Post-transition period: review occurs during the fourth year of the agency’s grant to see if criteria have been met during the period of the current grant. |
| Debarment | <p>Debarment from receiving federal or state funds or disqualification from the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), but has not yet been terminated by ACF.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition period: review occurs at any point during three year transition period (Dec 9, 2011 to Dec 9, 2014) to see if criteria have been met since June 12, 2009. • Post-transition period: review occurs during the fourth year of the agency’s grant to see if criteria have been met during the period of the current grant. |
| Risk of failure to function | <p>A determination that the agency has been at risk of failing to continue to function during the 12 months preceding the DRS review.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition period: review occurs at any point during three year transition period (Dec 9, 2011 to Dec 9, 2014) to see if criteria have been met in the 12 months preceding the review. • Post-transition period: review occurs during the fourth year of the agency’s grant to see if criteria have been met in the 12 months preceding the review. |

Note: If an American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start (AI/AN) or Early Head Start agency meets one of the above criteria, a plan will be determined with the Tribal government to improve the quality of the program. A second evaluation will be conducted within six months and if program quality is still insufficient, there will be an open competition to select a grantee. The new grantee must be an AI/AN Head Start or Early Head Start agency, unless there are none available, in which case a non- AI/AN Head Start or Early Head Start agency may serve as a substitute until an AI/AN agency becomes available.⁴

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Sources & notes:

¹ Zigler, E. & Styfco, S.J. (2010). *The hidden history of Head Start*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2010, September 21). U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (2010). HHS announces national effort to reshape and raise quality in Head Start programs. [News Release]. Retrieved from <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2010pres/09/20100921a.html>.

² Office of Head Start (n.d.) *Report to congress on the final Head Start program Designation Renewal System*. Retrieved from http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/mr/rc/Head_Start_Designation_Renewal_System_Final_Rule.pdf.

³ Policies and procedures for designation renewal of Head Start and Early Head Start grantees, Basis for determining whether a Head Start agency will be subject to an open competition, 45 CFR §1307.3. Retrieved from <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/Head%20Start%20Requirements/1307#1307.3>.

⁴ Policies and procedures for designation renewal of Head Start and Early Head Start grantees, Tribal government consultation under the Designation Renewal System for when an Indian Head Start grant is being considered for competition, 45 CFR § 1307.6 (2011). Retrieved from <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/Head%20Start%20Requirements/1307#1307.6>