

The proposed changes would reduce the quality, scope and type of health services required to be provided by eliminating the health, mental health and dental service requirements.

Head Start NPRM Comprehensive Comment Template

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Submit via [Regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov)

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary of United States Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, D.C. 20528

**RE: Comment on Reducing Federal Burden for Head Start Programs (RIN: 0970-AD30;
Docket ID: ACF-2026-0595)**

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

I am writing on behalf of **xx** in response to the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS, or the Department) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM, or the Proposed Rule) to express our **strong opposition** to the changes proposed to the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS, or the Standards), published in the Federal Register on August 7, 2026. By eliminating the overwhelming majority of the HSPPS and adding new burdensome requirements, the proposed changes will diminish the quality, scope, and type of services that Head Start families receive, and undermine the ability of Head Start programs to meet the diverse needs of their communities. Indeed, although the preamble attempts to justify the proposal using the language of flexibility and parental rights, its impacts will be to add burden to Head Start programs and reduce the opportunities for parents to influence and be full partners in their child's education. The Proposed Rule, the Department acknowledges, will lead to larger class sizes, fewer teachers, coaches, and home visitors, shorter program days, and reduced health, dental, and mental health care, home visits, and other services. Further, these highly consequential changes have been proposed by HHS without the consultation required by Congress and contrary to the explicit requirements in the Head Start Act that govern the scope of the performance standards. We strongly urge HHS to withdraw the proposed regulation in its entirety.

The changes to the Standards in this Proposed Rule will cause real harm for: **[insert communities that are the focus on the comment].**

[INSERT paragraph(s) describing you or your organization and why this is urgent to you. Discuss your expertise, and the population or aspects of the Head Start program that you are particularly concerned about the effects upon.]

I. The Proposed Rule's Elimination of the Vast Majority of the HSPSS Guts the Core Principles of Head Start.

Head Start has been a powerful force in improving the outcomes for children furthest away from opportunity because the Standards ensure every Head Start program use research-based practices to provide comprehensive services, include children from all backgrounds and respond to their diverse needs, empowers parents, and provide pregnant women and infants the resources to support healthy development.

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The Proposed Rule will weaken Head Start and harm the children and families that the program serves by eliminating the vast majority of the Standards. Making such far-reaching changes to the Head Start program without adequately consulting with Head Start families, program leaders, local governments, or experts, demonstrates complete disregard for people who depend on Head Start. The Proposed Rule threatens to destroy Head Start through gutting the very provisions that make it successful.

Today, Head Start serves nearly 800,000 children birth to five and pregnant women in 20,000 locations across every state in the country as well as territories and Tribal Nations.¹ Nearly every community has a Head Start program: rural and remote, Tribal, urban centers, and agricultural hubs with specialized programs for the children of agricultural workers. Head Start's efficacy has been demonstrated over time: children who attend Head Start benefit throughout their lifetime, including higher educational attainment, improved health and economic self-sufficiency, and reduced inequality, with some studies even documenting positive effects that carry into participants' own children.²

A. Importance of the Standards to the Purpose, Integrity, and Effectiveness of Head Start

[INSERT: Information, experience you have regarding how the Head Start performance standards (a) reflect a research base and/ or (b) have influenced service delivery, programs, policy, or professional standards.]

In recognition of the core role of comprehensive, uniform, and clear Head Start standards, Congress mandated that the Secretary establish “program performance standards by regulation.”³ And ever since the Standards were first published in 1975, every Congress has repeatedly directed that any revision to the Standards must not result in standards that reduce or eliminate the quality, scope, or type of services that were required to be provided under prior versions of the Standards.⁴

¹ PIR Summary Report 2025. All programs included (HS, EHS, EHS-CCP, AIAN, Migrant & Seasonal).

² See generally, Chloe Gibbs, Head Start Evidence, [Head Start Impact — Chloe Gibbs](#) (last visited Aug. 1, 2026) (compiling studies).

³ 42 U.S.C. § 9836a(a)(1).

⁴ Pub. L. 95-568 § 20(i), 92 Stat. 2425 (1978) (“[a]ny revision in [performance] standards shall result in standards which are no less comprehensive than those in effect on the date of the enactment of the Economic Opportunity Amendments of 1978.”); Pub. L. 97-35, subchapter B, 95 Stat. 499 (1981) (section 651(b) of the Head Start Act) (same); Pub. L. 98-558, 98 Stat. 2878, 2880 (1984) (“Any revision in such standards shall not result in the elimination of nor any reduction in the scope or types of health, education, parental involvement, social or other services required to be provided under the standards in effect on November 2, 1978.”); Pub. L. 103-252, § 108, 108 Stat. 623, 632 (1994) (“ensure that any such revisions in the performance standards will not result in the elimination of or any reduction in the scope or types of health, education, parental involvement, nutritional, social, or other services required to be provided under such standards as in effect on November 2, 1978.”); Pub. L. No. 105-285 § 106, 112 Stat. 2702 (1998) (replacing “November 2, 1978” and inserting “the date of enactment of the Coats Human Services Reauthorization Act of 1998”); Pub. L. 110-134, 121 Stat. 1363 (2007) (“ensure that any such revisions in the standards will not result in the elimination of or any reduction in quality, scope, or types of health, educational, parental involvement, nutritional, social, or other services required to be provided under such standards as in effect on the date of enactment of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007”).

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By establishing a national baseline for the services and supports children and families can expect, regardless of where they live, the standards ensure that every child and family in Head Start receives high-quality services that will lead to greater success in school and in life. And by providing regulatory clarity and transparency the HSPPS ensures that Head Start agencies can run a high-quality Head Start program and that potential Head Start agencies understand operational requirements.

Furthermore, Congress enumerated in statute that the Secretary is required to undertake consultations and considerations “[i]n developing any modifications to standards.”⁵ These procedures and considerations confirm that Congress required the performance standards to be comprehensive and address all aspects of the Head Start program, including early childhood education and development, child health services and physical development, family services, transition to school, communication with parents, program administration and financial management.⁶ Congress also required that the standards address particular needs of children eligible for Head Start, including children who have disabilities and children who are homeless or in foster care, dual language learners, those living in rural areas, and those who are part of seasonal agricultural worker families.⁷

The HSPPS establish the required parameters within which *all* programs must operate to ensure programs incorporate both the structural and process features of quality that evidence shows lead to long-term positive impacts. As the Department has explained: the “Performance Standards are the foundation on which programs design and deliver comprehensive, high-quality individualized services to support the school readiness”⁸ of young children and have played a central role in the Head Start program since the 1970s.⁹

By establishing clear, uniform standards for quality, scope, and types of services provided in Head Start, the HSPPS also allow for mechanisms through which programs will be held accountable for meeting these requirements. Clarity and uniformity of the standards is important to establishing program quality, addressing state-to-state disparities, and developing standards for early childhood education overall.

The Proposed Rule fails to consider the benefits of regulatory clarity and transparency that are undermined by the proposed rule, fails to explain why the proposal is consistent with Congress’s direction for the Secretary to have comprehensive standards on a wide range of different topics, and entirely fails to “ensure” that its “revisions in the standards will not result in the elimination of or any reduction in quality, scope, or types of health, educational, parental involvement, nutritional, social, or other services required to be provided under such standards as in effect on the date of enactment of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007.”¹⁰ In fact, nowhere does the Department even acknowledge this obligation nor discuss

⁵ 42 U.S.C. § 9836a(a)(2).

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Head Start Performance Standards, 81 Fed. Reg. 61294, 61295 (Sept. 6, 2016).

⁹ Head Start Program, 61 Fed. Reg. 57186 (Nov. 5, 1996); *see* 40 Fed. Reg. 27562 (June 30, 1975).

¹⁰ 42 U.S.C. 9836A(a)(2)(C).

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what standards were “in effect on the date of enactment of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007.”

B. Research-Based Standards are Critical to High-Quality Programs

[Researchers and Experts, consider including here a section on why research-based standards of critical to high-quality programs. See *Source Material Pages 3-5.*]

C. Head Start programs and the communities they serve have relied on the existing standards for decades.

Having the rules and expectations about Head Start programs comprehensively laid out in one place enables Head Start agencies and their staff to meet the statutory requirements and deliver the goals and outcomes of the Head Start program. Head Start agencies rely on the HSPPS to understand both the requirements of the Act and how to operationalize those requirements. That has been the role of the HSPPS since they were first enacted in 1975.¹¹ Since the first HSPPS, Head Start programs have been instructed that the Standards are the directions, instructions, and operating manual on how to implement a Head Start program. The Standards establish minimal service requirements and provide the means by which programs understand whether they are in or out of compliance with the Head Start Act. These Standards are not “procedural mandates” as the Department says¹²; they establish the very substance of the Head Start program.

[INSERT: Any expertise, information, or experience you / your organization has with the HSPPS. For example: how does having uniform clear standards contribute to quality? Why is it important that that all Head Start programs meet the same base line of quality? How are the HSPPS useful for parents, etc. For programs, consider providing a specific example/situation where your program leadership or staff needed to consult the HSPPS to make a decision or inform how you provide services– what question did the HSPPS help answer and what was the end result for the family/ies involved?]

It would be a significant and confusing change in practice for there to be requirements for Head Start programs that do not appear in the HSPPS. Given the decades of reliance on the HSPPS, the predictable result is that those things that are eliminated from the Standards will be less likely and less consistently provided by Head Start agencies, even if they are required elsewhere. Indeed, the Department appears to appreciate that one of the roles of regulatory guidance is “highlight the importance” of an issue.¹³ And the Department has long recognized that providing clear standards that are easy for Head Start agencies to use contributes to quality

¹¹ Head Start Programs Performance Standards, 40 Fed. Reg. 27562, 27562 (June 30, 1975) (purpose of the regulations is to provide “program performance standards necessary and required to attain those objectives” of the Head Start program).

¹² 91 Fed. Reg. at 51250.

¹³ Reducing Federal Burden for Head Start Programs, 91 Fed. Reg. 51248, 51269 (Aug. 7, 2026) (explaining “Prescriptive requirements pertaining to nutrition are proposed in contrast to the otherwise de-regulatory approach of this NPRM to highlight the importance associated with healthy eating.”).

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services.¹⁴ The Department fails to explain why it no longer believes Standards are important for quality. It also does not explain why Standards are important for nutrition but not Head Start's other components including education, parental involvement, and health.

Contrary to the Department's argument that the Standards are largely duplicative of statutory requirements and unnecessary, and that rescission will reduce administrative burdens for programs, the Proposed Rule would result in increased administrative burdens and costs for Head Start programs and participants.

[INSERT What are the expected harms, costs, and burdens of eliminating the Standards for Head Start programs and participants, even if they exist in statute – such as increased confusion about mandatory requirements (and corresponding costs and burdens to identifying remaining requirements), programs with conflicting/differing standards within the same state or region, increased administrative costs and burdens for technical assistance or service delivery, etc.? How does the rescission of the Standards result in increased burden for programs, rather than decreased burden (as ACF argues)?]

D. The Standards are the Basis of Monitoring for Quality and Safety

[Add Expertise / Experience with monitoring and designation renewal]

The Proposed Rule undermines Congress's instruction that HHS use monitoring and a designation renewal system to ensure Head Start agencies are offering high-quality programs by assessing whether agencies are meeting the standards.¹⁵ Because under the proposal the Standards would no longer establish requirements for providing a high quality and comprehensive Head Start program—monitoring for the compliance with the Standards as changed by the proposal would no longer ensure high-quality programs.

[See **Source Material Pages 5-7** for more on monitoring.]

E. The Proposed Changes Eliminate the Guarantee that Head Start Programs will have Funding to Provide Comprehensive Services and Threaten Their Capacity to Operate Program at all.

Funding for each Head Start program is based on “the approved costs of the assisted program or activities.”¹⁶ The Head Start Act requires that the Secretary “shall establish by regulation, criteria for determining... the total costs of such program.”¹⁷ The HSPSS do this by instructing Head Start agencies to “Determine the costs to develop and administer its program” and “categorize total costs as development and administrative or program costs.”¹⁸ Program costs

¹⁴ See e.g., Head Start Program, 61 Fed. Reg. 57186, 57190 (Nov. 5, 1996); *id.* at 57191 (noting that “having the regulations located together, along with cross-referencing, will assist readers in better comprehending the full body of standards.”).

¹⁵ 42 U.S.C. § 9836a(c); 42 U.S.C. § 9840a(g).

¹⁶ 42 U.S.C. § 9835(b).

¹⁷ 42 U.S.C. § 9839(b).

¹⁸ 45 C.F.R. §1303.5(a)(2)(i), (ii).

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are defined as “costs incurred in accordance with an approved Head Start budget which directly relate to the provision of program component services, including services to children with disabilities, *as set forth and described in the Head Start Program Performance Standards* (45 CFR part 1304).”¹⁹ Therefore, under the current Standards, Head Start programs must be funded for the costs necessary to provide the program as described in the HSPPS. And that means children and families are guaranteed that their Head Start program will be able to provide all services described in the HSPPS.

The Proposed Rule eliminates from the Standards the “criteria for determining... the total costs of such program.” Not only does this appear to conflict with the Head Start Act’s requirements, it also leaves Head Start agencies with no understanding of how the Department will determine the total allowable costs of their program. The proposal’s new definition of “program costs” says that they are the approved costs “which directly relate to the provision of program component services”—but remove any definition of what program component services include.²⁰ Therefore, it appears that under the proposal, the Department would be able to exercise complete discretion over what services to fund for each program. Although the NPRM repeatedly states that programs may choose to provide services that the Standards would no longer require, the preamble language binds no one. Nothing in the Proposed Rule would require the Department to fund services because a Head Start program believes that is what is best for their community.²¹ And because there is no guarantee that services not required by the HSPPS will continue to be funded, Head Start children and families may be deprived of the comprehensive services they currently are provided, even where a Head Start program believes those services should be continued.

Additionally, the Proposed Rule’s new 5% cap on funding that can be used to develop and administer a Head Start program threatens the capacity of Head Start programs to continue to operate at all. Head Start programs use administrative funding for the functions necessary to have a program that is staffed, has working and secure technology, and is fiscally responsible. Administrative costs include human resources, which is the capacity to recruit, screen, and hire teachers and home visitors; IT, which help programs communicate with families and each other; data analysis, which allows tailoring to individual communities; and fiscal, such as audits and grant administration.

The Head Start Act provides that up to 15 percent of total program costs may be used for developing and administering the program.²² If “[i]n any case” the Secretary determines that the cost of administering a program is “excessive” even though it does not exceed 15 percent, the Secretary can “require the recipient of such financial assistance to take such steps prescribed by the Secretary as will eliminate such excessive administrative cost, including the sharing by one

¹⁹ 45 C.F.R. § 1305.2 (emphasis added).

²⁰ Proposed Rule § 1301.20.

²¹ See *generally* 2 C.F.R. § 200.403(a) (allowable costs must be “necessary and reasonable for the performance of the Federal award”).

²² See 42 U.S.C. § 9839(b).

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or more Head Start agencies of a common director and other administrative personnel.”²³ The current regulation implements the Act’s 15 percent ceiling.²⁴

The Proposed Rule would establish a blanket cap for administrative and development costs of just 5 percent of total program costs, which include both federal and non-federal funds.²⁵ This is a massive change. The preamble acknowledges that currently, only 3.7 percent of programs operate at or below a five percent administrative cost threshold. The Department does not explain its basis for believing that 5 percent cap on development and administrative costs is adequate for Head Start programs.

The Department says that “[r]ather than representing a direct reduction in overall program costs, this policy is expected to shift how funds are allocated within programs, including toward direct services that promote the health, safety, and well-being of children and families”²⁶—but that incorrectly assumes that Head Start agencies will be able to continue to operate Head Start programs at all if the total amount they can spend on the development and administration of the program is capped at 5 percent. The Department appears to believe that “other provisions of the final rule may affect administrative expenditures,” and if these are “considered collectively” may allow programs to change the structure of their operations.²⁷ But the Department does not identify what changes it is relying on and admits it assessed these changes as “having marginal fiscal impact.”²⁸ Nor does the Department identify how these changes would affect how “programs allocate administrative resources and structure operations” in a manner that would drastically reduce their need to spend on development and administrative costs.

[INSERT:

- information on what programs use administrative costs for and why not having enough may mean they can no longer function at all.
- Explain why administrative costs are not about administrative paperwork that would be reduced by the rule.]

F. The Proposed Rule Undermines Consistency and Continuity.

The Department incorrectly asserts that the Standards are “overly prescriptive [and] constrain flexibility.”²⁹ However, one of the successes of the Head Start program is that because there are comprehensive, clear, and uniform program performance standards there is consistency across the nation even though the program is carried out by thousands of different organizations. That consistency enables measurable outcomes for the Head Start program. It allows for federal monitoring that ensures quality and safety, and that complies with the Head Start Act’s requirement that the Secretary ensure reviews “are conducted in a manner that evaluates program

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ 45 C.F.R. § 1303.5(a).

²⁵ Proposed Rule § 1301.14.

²⁶ 91 Fed. Reg. at 51299.

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.* at 51248.

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performance, quality, and overall operations with consistency and objectivity.”³⁰ It means that families who move between communities and states can transition between programs and families can know what they can expect from a Head Start program. This is particularly important for children who move frequently, including when their families are involved in seasonal agricultural work or are experiencing homelessness. And it means that agencies that operate Head Start programs in multiple communities or multiple states can have one consistent set of standards that apply to all of their programs.

As a [program/organization/participant], [we/I] understand firsthand the importance of consistency and continuity provided by the existing Standards. [Provide specific information about why consistency and continuity matters for Head Start programs – for example, does consistency and continuity help to support the stability or quality of Head Start programs, service delivery, and program participation – and if so, how? For example, if you are a Head Start program, do you serve communities that move with greater frequency between programs who would benefit especially from cross-program consistency and continuity?]

G. The Proposed Rule Increases Instability of Head Start Programs that Families and Communities Depend On.

Through this proposal the Department gives to *itself* more discretion to determine whether Head Start agencies will be able to maintain their designation as a Head Start program, and decreases the transparency of how Head Start programs can ensure they remain in good standing. For example, the proposed rule would give the Department the authority to trigger a competition for a Head Start program’s grant not only for the seven currently enumerated conditions³¹ but also for “any other measure as specified in the Head Start Act.”³² The NPRM also states that the Department will hold Head Start programs accountable through monitoring for compliance with the Head Start Act but eliminates the guidance on what, in the Department’s view, the Act requires. And although the NPRM acknowledges that it is likely to change the “monitoring protocols” which may influence how it assesses designation renewal conditions, and the outcomes of that process, it does not even try to “predict or quantify” these changes.³³ The proposal also removes the procedural guardrails for when and how the Department can suspend Head Start programs.³⁴ These changes make Head Start programs less stable and increase opportunities for bias and favoritism.

[INSERT: explain why stability of Head Start programs is important]

II. The Proposed Rule Makes Drastic Changes to the Standards.

As a program/organization that __ [describe nature of work that you do] __, we are extremely concerned that the changes will diminish the rights of children and families in our communities/that we serve and limit access to the program.

³⁰ 42 U.S.C. § 9836a(c)(2)(G).

³¹ 45 CFR 1304.11

³² Proposed Rule § 1301.16

³³ 91 Fed. Reg. 91 Fed. Reg. at 51315.

³⁴ 91 Fed. Reg. 51279 (citing 42 U.S.C. 9841(a)(2), (5)); Proposed Rule § 1301.19

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[For another resource that analyzes changes made by the NPRM please see this Education Counsel [DEEP DIVE: Unpacking the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to Overhaul the Head Start Program Performance Standards - Google Docs](#)]

A. The Proposed Rule’s Changes to the Standards that Ensure Programs Identify, Recruit, and Enroll Children with the Highest Needs

By contradicting and eliminating longstanding regulations that implement Congress’s direction to tailor programs to children the most in need, the Proposed Rule removes established protections on which Head Start programs and participants have relied for decades. The changes sow confusion as to whether current practices aimed to support children from particular communities are still required, or, in some instances, even permitted.

1. The Proposed Rule’s Changes to Community Review and Assessment Requirements

From the initial conception of Head Start, experts recognized that the program “should be tailored to the needs of the individual community and the individual child.”³⁵ The Head Start Act codifies this insight by requiring Head Start agencies to undertake “a communitywide strategic planning and needs assessment,”³⁶ and that the Secretary must “ensure that reviews” of Head Start agencies include “a review and assessment of whether programs have adequately addressed population and community needs.”³⁷

The Proposed Rule entirely eliminates the current Standards on conducting community assessments, including, but not limited to, requirements to collect and utilize specific categories of data that describe community strengths, needs, and resources.³⁸ For example, the Proposed Rule removes Section 1302.11’s requirement for programs to conduct community assessments at least once over the five-year grant period and to review and, where needed, update such assessments on an annual basis to identify populations most in need of services, inform the program’s design and ensure “equitable, inclusive, and accessible service delivery that reflect needs and diversity of the community,” inform the enrollment, recruitment, and selection process to prioritize the enrollment of those populations most in need of services, identify the strengths and resources of the community that can be leveraged for the program, and identify the communication methods and modalities that best engage with families in “accessible ways.”³⁹ The Proposed Rule also removes Section 1302.11’s requirement to collect and utilize demographic data about eligible children and expectant mothers; the education, health, nutrition, and social service needs of eligible children and their families; typical work, school, and training schedules of parents with eligible children; other child development, child care centers, and family child care programs that serve eligible children; resources available in the community to

³⁵ Dr. Robert Cooke et al., *Recommendations for a Head Start Program*, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1965), <https://www.headstart.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/cooke-report.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/R6W-67DC>].

³⁶ 42 U.S.C. § 9836a(c)(2)(D); 42 U.S.C. § 9835(g)(1)(C).

³⁷ 42 U.S.C. § 9836a(c)(2)(C).

³⁸ See 91 Fed. Reg. at 51263-64, 51308.

³⁹ 45 C.F.R. § 1302.11.

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address the needs of eligible children and their families; strengths of the community; and gaps in community resources relevant to the needs of eligible children and their families.⁴⁰

In addition, the Proposed Rule would eliminate Section 1302.14's existing requirements for programs related to the selection process, including the requirement for programs to annually establish selection criteria that weigh the prioritization of selection of participants based on the community needs identified in the assessment set forth in Section 1302.11, and including family income, whether a child is homeless or in foster care, the child's age, whether the child is eligible for special education and related services, and other relevant family or child risk factors.⁴¹ The rescinded provisions also provide similar requirements for Indian tribes that operate Head Start programs, programs that serve migrant or seasonal families, and programs operating where Head Start Preschool eligible children can enroll in high-quality publicly funded pre-kindergarten for a full school day.⁴² The removal of these provisions interfere with programs' ability to tailor their services to the needs of the families in their communities, as required by the Head Start Act.

[INSERT:

- For advocates / researchers: Add any expertise or examples about how conducting community assessments in compliance with the current HSPPS is important in responding to the needs of communities.
- For those directly involved in Head Start programs: Describe why community assessments that meet the current standards (e.g. utilize demographic data, reviewed annually, barriers to program participation, typical schedules of parents, changes related to children and families experiencing homelessness, etc.) are important to Head Start programs meeting community needs, and why conducting community assessments without these elements would be inadequate to respond to community needs.
 - Describe the consequences for you, for families and children, for the community as a whole if you did not respond to your community's needs]
- The Department argues that existing standards related to assessments are duplicative, overly prescriptive, and increase administrative burdens. Do you have any examples of how the Standards related to assessments provide helpful guidance that is not found in statutory requirements, or how removing these Standards would make it more difficult or costly to do your work?]

2. The Proposed Changes to Recruitment and Enrollment

The Proposed Rule eliminates the current Standards provisions concerning recruitment of children without proposing any alternative standards. Notably, the Proposed Rule rescinds the existing requirements for programs to “develop and implement a recruitment process designed to actively inform all families with eligible children within the recruitment area of the availability of program services,” and include “specific efforts to actively locate and recruit children with disabilities and other children in need, including children experiencing homelessness and children in foster care” for the program.⁴³ In doing so, ACF acknowledges “there may be costs to

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ 91 Fed. Reg. at 51264.

⁴² See 45 C.F.R. § 1302.14.

⁴³ 45 C.F.R. § 1302.13.

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children and families,” without addressing what those costs are or how programs can avoid such costs.⁴⁴ The removal of Section 1302.13 will undermine programs’ recruitment efforts and obligations, with particularly devastating impacts on already-underserved communities.

[INSERT:

- For advocates/researchers: Include any expertise, information, views, on why it is important for Head Start programs to have active recruitment strategies
- For those involved in programs: describe how the program you are involved with carries this out and why it is important. Are there any increased costs or burdens to your programs or to participants that you expect as a result of the removal of these recruitment standards? Are Head Start programs overall less likely to recruit harder to reach children and families if they are no longer required to do so?]

The Proposed Rule rescinds the existing provisions governing eligibility set forth in Section 1302.12 and proposes several new burdensome requirements that undermine the core purpose and mission of Head Start. For example, proposed Section 1301.02 provides that self-attestation would no longer “satisfy the eligibility requirements,” while estimating that “approximately eight percent of children may currently be enrolled in Head Start that would otherwise no longer be eligible for enrollment under this proposed policy change” unless their family members can satisfy the new documentation requirements.⁴⁵ Additionally, programs would no longer be allowed to “to account for excessive housing costs” when determining eligibility⁴⁶—with the consequence that fewer children will be eligible for Head Start and programs will be less able to meet the needs of their community.⁴⁷

Moreover, the Proposed Rule would impose several burdensome requirements for eligibility determination records, including, but not limited to, requiring programs to report staff who violate eligibility determination regulations to OHS and requiring programs to turn over its records to HHS upon request.⁴⁸ Contrary to the Department’s reasoning that changes “would strengthen risk reduction strategies and mitigate the misuse of funds,” these changes would harm Head Start programs and participants without any meaningful benefit for program integrity and risk reduction.⁴⁹

[INSERT:

- For advocates/researchers: Include any expertise or experience on the use of why the availability of self-attestations is important for some families, why requiring programs to report on staff would be harmful, and why requiring programs to turn over enrollment records to HHS upon request would be harmful.

⁴⁴ 91 Fed. Reg. at 51308.

⁴⁵ 91 Fed. Reg. at 51262, 51307.

⁴⁶ 91 Fed Reg at 51308 (“The proposed rule also would remove the option to adjust families’ income for housing costs for purposes of eligibility determination”). Although the NPRM claims that this provision “exceeded statutory authority,” *id.*, but fail to explain this abrupt reversal in position. *See* 89 Fed. Reg. at 67763 (adding flexibility to allow programs to adjust for excessive housing costs in determining eligibility).

⁴⁷ 89 Fed. Reg. at 67763.

⁴⁸ 91 Fed. Reg. at 51262-63.

⁴⁹ 91 Fed. Reg. at 51262.

The proposed changes would reduce the quality, scope and type of health services required to be provided by eliminating the health, mental health and dental service requirements.

- For those involved in programs: describe if you have families who rely on self-attestations to enroll their children and why this is important. Describe why the new requirement that require programs to report on staff would be harmful to your program. Describe why having to turn over records to HHS “upon request” rather than as part of monitoring reviews would be burdensome, whether it would expose more confidential information of your families, and whether you expect that policy will deter families from enrolling.
- If possible, please provide expertise or information on why these changes are unlikely to “reduce risk” or prevent misuse of funds, including examples of existing program integrity measures.]

B. The Proposed Rule’s Changes to Standards that Ensure Head Start Programs Meet the Diverse Needs of Children.

The Proposed Rule undermines one of the core elements of Head Start: prioritizing children from families who are most removed from opportunity to help them succeed in school and in life. That core element requires tailoring Head Start’s services to the needs of different children, including children from diverse cultural backgrounds, children who are dual language learners, children with disabilities, children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, and children performing agricultural work.⁵⁰ The Standards establish expectations for how Head Start programs can and must effectively serve all of Head Start’s diverse children.

The proposal eviscerates these important Standards—making it less likely that services will be tailored to the needs of diverse children—and it adds new requirements that are diametrically opposed to the goal of meeting the different needs of Head Start children.

[Below are short summarize of some of the changes the Proposed Rule will make to Standards that are targeted at children with different needs. The **Source Material Document at pages 7-18** has more information and explanation of the changes for particular groups of children, and suggestions for what to add to your comment if you include this subsection. The relevant pages of the Source Material Document for each subsection are included below.]

1. Children and Pregnant Women from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds Including Dual Language Learners

The proposal’s new English-only mandate⁵¹ is contrary to robust research that shows that dual language learners who receive high quality instruction in their home language, alongside English, have better and faster English-language acquisition trajectories and higher gains in their academic skills, then dual language learners in English-only programs.⁵² And the new

⁵⁰ 42 U.S.C. § 9836(d)(2)(L), (d)(2)(K).

⁵¹ Proposed Rule § 1301.04(a).

⁵² Jennifer L. Steele et al., *Effects of Dual-Language Immersion Programs on Student Achievement: Evidence from Lottery Data*, 54 American Educational Research Journal 282S, 282S-306S (2017); Ellen J. Serafini, Nadine Rozell & Adam Winsler, *Academic and English Language Outcomes for DLLs as a Function of School Bilingual Education Model: The Role of Two-Way Immersion and Home Language Support*, 25 International Journal of Bilingual

The proposed changes would reduce the quality, scope and type of health services required to be provided by eliminating the health, mental health and dental service requirements.

English-only mandate would undermine the ability of parents to be involved in their child's education, as well as program flexibility to determine how best to serve the communities they work with. The Proposed Rule also would eliminate the vast majority of existing standards concerning personnel policies that help to support children of diverse backgrounds and their families.⁵³ The combined effect of eliminating requirements for bilingual personnel and cultural competence while requiring all education to be only conducted in English may reduce participation, weaken family engagement, delay identification of developmental concerns, and undermine school readiness outcomes for dual-language learners.

[For more information on these changes and suggestions for what to include in a comment see Source Material Pages 7-11]

3. Children with Developmental Delays and Disabilities.

The Proposed Rule shockingly eliminates all standards for meeting the needs of children with disabilities and replaces them with a single sentence: "A program must comply with all applicable Federal and state statutes and regulations regarding providing services for children with disabilities."⁵⁴ This proposal would reduce the scope of services Head Start programs have to provide to children with disabilities and developmental delays, such as providing individualized services while a child is being evaluated for IDEA eligibility, assisting parents to obtain services under the IDEA, and providing transportation for children with disabilities.⁵⁵ The Department acknowledges that the Proposed Rule will bring the agency out of compliance with the Head Start Act, which requires the Secretary of HHS to establish policies and procedures to ensure children who may have disabilities receive early support services.⁵⁶

[For more information on these changes and suggestions for what to include in a comment see Source Material Pages 11-13]

4. Children Experiencing Homelessness and In Foster Care.

Education and Bilingualism 552, 552–570 (2022); Ilana M. Umansky & Sean F. Reardon, *Reclassification Patterns Among Latino English Learner Students in Bilingual, Dual Immersion, and English Immersion Classrooms*, 51 American Educational Research Journal 879, 879–912 (2014); see W. Steven Barnett et al., *Two-Way and Monolingual English Immersion in Preschool Education: An Experimental Comparison*, 22 Early Childhood Research Quarterly 277, 277–293 (2007); Carola Olivia-Olson, *Dos Métodos: Two Classroom Language Models in Head Start: Strengthening the Diversity and Quality of the Early Care and Education Workforce Paper Series*, Research Report. Urban Institute (2019), <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/dos-metodos-two-classroom-language-models-head-start> [<https://perma.cc/9WH2-H7J8>]; Lisa B. Hsin et al., *Relationship Between Classroom Practices and Language and Development Among Dual Language Learner Infants and Toddlers*, First 5 California Dual Language Learner (2022), <https://californiadllstudy.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Instruction%20Brief%204%20Infants%20Toddlers.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/BP3M-VT9U>].

⁵³ 45 C.F.R. §1302.90.

⁵⁴ Proposed Rule § 1301.10.

⁵⁵ 45 C.F.R. § 1302.62; *Id.* § 1303.75.

⁵⁶ 91 Fed Reg. at 51271.

The proposed changes would reduce the quality, scope and type of health services required to be provided by eliminating the health, mental health and dental service requirements.

Similarly, the Proposed Rule eradicates the Standards which require Head Start programs identify and prioritize children experiencing homelessness and in foster care. The proposal would make it more difficult for children experiencing homelessness to enroll, including by adding new documentation requirements⁵⁷—and the new prohibition on self-attestations will in some cases make it impossible for these children to enroll. It also would mean programs are no longer required to locate and recruit homeless children,⁵⁸ no longer allowed to reserve a seat for a homeless child or a child in foster care,⁵⁹ and no longer guarantee that a child experiencing homelessness or in foster care can remain enrolled in Head Start if they move.⁶⁰

[For more information on these changes and suggestions for what to include in a comment see Source Material Pages 13-16]

5. Children from Families Performing Agricultural Work

The Proposed Rule also undermines the Standards that help programs meet the needs of children whose families migrate to perform agricultural work, providing the necessary labor to feed our nation. Under the proposal, the Standards would no longer require Head Start programs “to support effective transitions to other migrant or seasonal Head Start” programs⁶¹ when children move seasonally. Nor will teachers be required to “make every effort to conduct home visits to engage the family in the child’s learning and development.”⁶²

[For more information on these changes and suggestions for what to include in a comment see Source Material Pages 16]

6. Pregnant Women, Infants and Toddlers

Congress created Early Head Start in 1994 to establish a Head Start program for pregnant women, infants and toddlers, in recognition that “the time from conception to age three is a critical period of human development, as change occurs more rapidly than in any other period of the life span. Growth in these early years establishes the basic foundation for future development.”⁶³ The Standards tailor the Head Start program to the unique needs of infants and toddlers,⁶⁴ and establish specific requirements for pregnant women and newborns.⁶⁵ The proposal eliminates the vast majority of these standards.

⁵⁷ Proposed Rule removes 45 C.F.R. § 1302.16(c)(1); *id.* § 1302.15(e); *id.* § 1302.12(i)(3).

⁵⁸ Proposed Rule removes 45 C.F.R. § 1302.13; § *id.* 1302.53(a)(2)(vi).

⁵⁹ Proposed Rule removes 45 C.F.R. § 1302.15(c).

⁶⁰ Proposed Rule removes 45 C.F.R. § 1302.15(b)(3).

⁶¹ 45 C.F.R. § 1302.72(c).

⁶² *Id.* § 1302.34(b)(8).

⁶³ *The Statement of the Advisory Committee on Services for Families with Infants and Toddlers*, Department of Health & Human Services at 6 (Sept. 1994), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED395676.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/46M9-VFL6>].

⁶⁴ *See, e.g.*, 45 C.F.R. § 1302.31 (teaching and learning environment); *id.* § 1302.44(a)(2) (nutrition); *id.* § 1302.91 (teacher qualifications); *id.* §§ 1302.21(b) (staff child ratios), 1302.21(c) (center-based service duration); *id.* § 1302.22(c) (home based service duration); *id.* § 1302.70 (transitions); *id.* § 1302.80(d) (infant health); *id.* § 1302.81(a) (information, education, and services that address infant care and safe sleep practices).

⁶⁵ 45 C.F.R. § 1302.80.

The proposed changes would reduce the quality, scope and type of health services required to be provided by eliminating the health, mental health and dental service requirements.

[For more information on these changes and suggestions for what to include in a comment see Source Material Pages 17-18]

C. The Proposed Rule's Changes to Standards that Establish the Quality, Scope, and Type of Comprehensive Services that Head Start Programs are Required to Provide

The Head Start Act requires Head Start agencies to “provide such comprehensive health, education, parental involvement, nutritional, social, and other services as will enable the children to attain their full potential and attain school readiness.”⁶⁶ Core to the Head Start program is its “whole child” approach, built on scientific research⁶⁷ that shows children’s health, social and emotional development, and the parent-child relationship are all important aspects for subsequent development and that they have complementary and mutual influences that support cognitive development.⁶⁸ The Head Start Act therefore requires Head Start agencies to “provide such comprehensive health, education, parental involvement, nutritional, social, and other services as will enable the children to attain their full potential and attain school readiness.”⁶⁹

To implement this directive, the Secretary must provide performance standards by regulation on “health, parental involvement, nutritional, and social services, transition activities . . . and other services.”⁷⁰ These performance standards ensure the scope and quality of these services nationwide through establishing clear and measurable expectations for what services must be provided, the qualifications necessary for staff to effectively provide these services, and the training, professional development, and data analysis to support continuous improvement.⁷¹

The Proposed regulation is far more ambiguous than the current version and removes specific school readiness goals, learning frameworks, health and safety practices, reporting guidelines, and more. Moreover, the Department’s assertions that these changes would restore state authority, return authority back to parents, reduce unnecessary burden and duplication, and maintain statutory accountability are inaccurate and misplaced.⁷²

- Included below are short summaries of some of the changes the Proposed Rule will make to Standards that establish the requirements for Head Start programs to provide comprehensive services for all children and families (Specifically, there are subsections on safety, education services, health/nutrition, parental involvement, transition activities, suspension/expulsion).

⁶⁶ 42 U.S.C. § 9833; *see also* 42 U.S.C. § 9831.

⁶⁷ 42 U.S.C. § 9832(23), (22) (defining the terms “scientifically valid research” and “scientifically based reading research”).

⁶⁸ The evidence is robust that cognitive stimulation, preventive health care, and nutrition early in life are critical for long-term skill development and positive health outcomes. *See, e.g.,* From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development (Jack P. Shonkoff & Deborah A. Phillips eds., 2000). Research about early childhood interventions across multiple sectors (*i.e.*, health, nutrition, education, child protection, social protection) supports the importance of multi-faceted interventions that address multiple areas and risk factors simultaneously. *See, e.g.,* Pia R. Britto et al., *Nurturing care: promoting early childhood development*, 389 *The Lancet* 91, 91-102 (2017).

⁶⁹ 42 U.S.C. § 9833; *see also* 42 U.S.C. § 9831.

⁷⁰ 42 U.S.C. § 9836a(a)(1)(A).

⁷¹ 45 C.F.R. §§ 1302.102, 1302.30.

⁷² 91 Fed. Reg. at 51249-50.

The proposed changes would reduce the quality, scope and type of health services required to be provided by eliminating the health, mental health and dental service requirements.

The **Source Material Document at pages 18-44** has more information and explanation on many of these subsections, and suggestions for what to add to your comment if you include that subsection. The relevant pages of the Source Material Document for each subsection are included below.

- We suggest you begin by considering which of the subsections are most relevant to you or the communities that your organization serves or issues that your organization addresses. **Please note that you need not include every sub-section and should only include those sections where you have something to add.** For those directly involved Head Start Program: decide whether you want to address all of these services or whether you want to choose to focus on one or a few.
- All: For those subsections that you do include, describe your expertise, experience, and reasons for being concerned about changes to the subsections you include.
 - Explain why it is helpful to have federal regulatory standards that set out these standardized requirements, such as providing clarity for programs and families, ensuring consistency and continuity across programs, and reducing administrative costs and burdens on Head Start programs.]
 - Provide information or examples of areas where these Standards help to fill in gaps where there are no state/local standards or support high-quality programs where state/local standards are different, decrease burdens or costs for programs and participants, and otherwise support family and parent engagement.

1. Safety

The Proposed Rule eliminates the existing safety standards. Under the proposal, no longer will the Standards require all staff, consultants, contractors and volunteers abide by a code of conduct that prohibits “engag[ing] in behaviors that maltreat or endanger the health or safety of children,” including corporal punishment or physically abusive behavior, sexually abusive behavior, emotionally harmful or abusive behavior, and neglectful behavior,⁷³ and “ensure that no child is left alone or unsupervised.”⁷⁴ Nor would Head Start programs be required to ensure facilities are free from firearms, pollutants, and drowning hazards; conduct staff background checks; train staff on safety; and create a disaster preparedness plan.⁷⁵ Other than lead exposure, the Proposed Rule leaves all other safety issues up to states and CCDF.⁷⁶

Moreover, the Proposed Rule – specifically, proposed Section 1301.03 – would significantly curtail existing requirements concerning attendance that help to support the safety and well-being of enrolled children and their families. For example, the Current Rule requires programs to implement a process to “ensure children are safe when they do not arrive at school,” as well as strategies to promote attendance through providing information, supporting families, conducting home visits, and examining barriers to regular attendance.⁷⁷

⁷³ 45 C.F.R. § 1302.90(c)(ii).

⁷⁴ *Id.* § 1302.90(c)(vi).

⁷⁵ *Id.* § 1302.47.

⁷⁶ Proposed § 1301.09

⁷⁷ *See Id.* § 1302.16.

The proposed changes would reduce the quality, scope and type of health services required to be provided by eliminating the health, mental health and dental service requirements.

For safety, the current standards require that Head Start programs ensure “there is at least one bus monitor on board at all times, with additional bus monitors provided as necessary.”⁷⁸ The Proposed Rule would remove this requirement – because it is “overly specific and detailed.”⁷⁹ The Department estimates that as a result of the NPRM Head Start programs will reduce bus monitors by **50 percent**.⁸⁰ Although “ACF acknowledges that programs may choose to continue employing bus monitors to comply with applicable state or local requirements,” it does not say programs can choose to continue employing bus monitors when not required by state or local law.⁸¹

[INSERT:

- Information on why requiring all adults (staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers, to abide by a code of conduct is important
- Information on why it is important to require Head Start program to train staff on safety and create a disaster preparedness plan, is important
- Information on why bus monitors are important for safety.

7. Education Services

The HSPPS lay out the elements that each Head Start program must provide in order to meet their statutory obligation to deliver “scientifically based and developmentally appropriate education performance standards related to school readiness that are based on the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework to ensure that the children participating in the program, at a minimum, develop and demonstrate” skills across a range of learning and developmental domains.⁸² The Standards identify for Head Start programs the practices that research shows affect outcomes for children and families. Through Standards on staff to child ratios, minimum program operating hours, minimum staff qualifications and competencies, curricula implementation, screening and assessments, teaching and learning environment, and home visitors, the HSPPS ensure that agencies are able to maintain the quality and comprehensiveness of education services for all Head Start children and families. The Proposed Rule eliminates the vast majority of these standards and will lead to larger class sizes and fewer adult-child interactions, shorter program days, less qualified teachers and staff, less effective use of screenings and assessments, diminished teaching and learning environment, and lower-quality home visiting.

[For more information on these changes and suggestions for what to include in a comment see Source Material Pages 18-29]

8. Health

The HSPPS ensure that Head Start agencies “provide high-quality health, oral health, mental health, and nutrition services that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically

⁷⁸ *Id.* § 1303.72(a)(4).

⁷⁹ 91 Fed. Reg. at 51270.

⁸⁰ *Id.* at 51292.

⁸¹ *Id.*

⁸² 42 U.S.C. § 9836a(a)(1)(B).

The proposed changes would reduce the quality, scope and type of health services required to be provided by eliminating the health, mental health and dental service requirements.

appropriate and that will support each child's growth and school readiness."⁸³ For each of these categories, the Standards establish the minimum requirements for the scope, type, and quality of services that Head Start programs must deliver for enrolled children and pregnant women. Additionally, the standards ensure that in providing these services "programs must collaborate with parents as partners"⁸⁴ in a linguistically and culturally appropriate, timely, and effective manner. As a result of the proposal, the Department estimates *\$111.3 million less* will be spent on health and mental health services every year.

[For more information on these changes and suggestions for what to include in a comment see Source Material Pages 29-35]

9. Nutrition

[For more information on these changes and suggestions for what to include in a comment see Source Material Page 35]

10. Parental Involvement

Head Start recognizes that families are central to children's school readiness. The Standards protect this central role for parents by giving parents formal governance authority over program design and operation, encouraging parent and family engagement, requiring high-quality family partnership services, and helping families access social services necessary for security and stability. The proposal would weaken the role of parents in Head Start by reducing their role in governance, eliminating the standards on family engagement and family partnership services, and removing requirements to support family security stability through connections with social services.

[For more information on these changes and suggestions for what to include in a comment see Source Material Pages 36-40]

11. Transition Activities

[For information on these changes and suggestions for what to include in a comment see Source Material Pages 40-41]

12. Suspension and Expulsion

[For more information on these changes and suggestions for what to include in a comment see Source Material Pages 41-44]

D. The Proposed Changes Diminish Confidentiality and Parent Control Over Disclosure of Children's Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

⁸³ 45 C.F.R. § 1302.40(a).

⁸⁴ *Id.* § 1302.41(a).

The proposed changes would reduce the quality, scope and type of health services required to be provided by eliminating the health, mental health and dental service requirements.

The Head Start Act states that the "The Secretary, through regulation, shall ensure the confidentiality of any personally identifiable data, information, and records collected or maintained under this subchapter by the Secretary and any Head Start agency."⁸⁵

The proposal removes "current 1303 Subpart C—Protections for the Privacy of Child Records"⁸⁶ which "describe[s] provisions programs must follow to protect the privacy of child records and to share data,"⁸⁷ including providing "requirements for parental consent and instances where disclosure of children's personally identifiable information (PII) without parental consent is allowable."⁸⁸ In establishing these Standards, the Department aligned the standards with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) but explained that "a direct replication of FERPA would not be appropriate."⁸⁹ For example, "a list of names, addresses, photographs, and other information that may fall under directory information [in FERPA] can be harmful if disclosed without parental consent for the vulnerable population we serve."⁹⁰ Thus, the HSPPS provide limits on disclosure of child information that are absent from FERPA.

Under the proposal parents and children would lose these protections; instead "programs would be required to establish policies, protections, and rights equivalent to those in FERPA, 20 U.S.C. 1232g, for the confidentiality of any personally identifiable information (PII) in child records."⁹¹ This change would provide less protection. For example, FERPA's protections only apply to "education records," which contain numerous exceptions,⁹² whereas the HSPPS protect *all* "child records."⁹³ Under the current Standards but not FERPA, parents have an opportunity to challenge or refuse disclosure of information to other programs or schools in which the child is or seeks to enroll.⁹⁴ And Head Start programs would no longer be required to "maintain[] oversight with respect to the use, further disclosure, and maintenance of child records" and the "the destruction of the PII when no longer needed for the purpose of the disclosure" when disclosure is made without parental consent to a federal or state entity.⁹⁵

No longer would programs be required to "explain to the parent that the granting of consent is voluntary on the part of the parent and may be revoked at any time[;]"⁹⁶ limit disclosure to the minimum information necessary for the purpose;⁹⁷ allow parents to review written agreements with third-parties;⁹⁸ ensure web-based child-record systems are adequately

⁸⁵ 42 U.S.C. § 9836a(b)(4)(A).

⁸⁶ 91 Fed. Reg. at 51274.

⁸⁷ 81 Fed. Reg. at 61363.

⁸⁸ *Id.* at 61362.

⁸⁹ *Id.* at 61363.

⁹⁰ 81 Fed. Reg. at 61363. FERPA allows public disclosure of "directory information" as long as parents are provided notice and time to object. 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(a)(5).

⁹¹ 91 Fed. Reg. at 51273; Proposed § 1301.12(b).

⁹² 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(a)(4), (5).

⁹³ 45 C.F.R. § 1303.22; *Id.* § 1305.2 (Terms).

⁹⁴ *Id.* § 1303.22(b).

⁹⁵ *Id.* § 1303.22(c)(2).

⁹⁶ *Id.* § 1303.22(a)(4).

⁹⁷ *Id.* § 1303.22(f) ("[a] program must only disclose the information that is deemed necessary for the purpose of the disclosure").

⁹⁸ *Id.* § 1303.23(e).

The proposed changes would reduce the quality, scope and type of health services required to be provided by eliminating the health, mental health and dental service requirements.

protected and maintained according to current industry security standards;⁹⁹ nor destroy child records within a reasonable timeframe.¹⁰⁰

Importantly, the proposal appears to create a mandate that Head Start programs make records of child eligibility “available to HHS upon request.”¹⁰¹ The preamble says this change is to “safeguard Federal funds” but also acknowledges that “programs already share data with HHS upon request through monitoring reviews.”¹⁰² The Department does not explain why this new mandate is necessary.

[INSERT:

Based on your expertise or experience why are the protections for child records that the HSPPS require that are beyond what FERPA requires important? For example,

- Why is it important that personally identifiable information cannot be provided in a directory without express consent of a parent? For example, for families experiencing domestic violence this might be important to not compromising safety.
- When disclosures are made of PII without parental consent to a federal or state entity, why is it important that the Head Start program maintain oversight over the use of that data and ensure the destruction of the PII when it is not longer needed for the purpose of the disclosure?
- Why is it important that Head Start programs ensure web-based child-record systems are adequately protected?

Additionally, please explain, why based on your experience and expertise, turning over Head Start eligibility records to HHS “upon request” is unnecessary to safeguard funds, would add additional burden to programs, and potentially chill families from enrolling.]

III. The Impacts and Harms of the Proposed Rule to Head Start Children and Families, Head Start Programs and Teachers, and Entire Communities.

The Proposed Rule will cause harm to the children, families, educators, employers, communities, and other stakeholders that have, since the program’s inception, depended on the quality, scope, and range of Head Start services. The Proposed Rule does not address the damage to these serious and established reliance interests.

Each HSPPS is a key building block to ensure high quality Head Start programs and promote the wellbeing of Head Start families and their communities. Remove just one and the foundation suffers. Remove as many as the Proposed Rule calls for, and the entire building crumbles.

⁹⁹ *Id.* § 1303.24(b).

¹⁰⁰ *Id.* § 1303.24(a) (“child records... must be destroyed within a reasonable timeframe after such records are no longer needed or required to be maintained”).

¹⁰¹ *Compare* Proposed § 1301.02(e) with 45 C.F.R. § 1302.12(k); 91 Fed. Reg. at 51308 (“Under the proposed rule, programs would be required to share eligibility data with HHS upon request”).

¹⁰² 91 Fed. Reg. at 51262, 51308.

The proposed changes would reduce the quality, scope and type of health services required to be provided by eliminating the health, mental health and dental service requirements.

[INSERT: Identify which of the below types of harms you want to address and include information about your expertise/experience/interest/narratives with respect to these types of harm.]

A. Devastating Impacts on the Educational, Health, Social-Emotional, and Economic Outcomes of Children.

Children rely on consistent, responsive, nurturing early education and care to support the rapid development they undergo, particularly during the first five years of life. Research shows that Head Start children attending programs governed by the HSPPS wind up completing more years of schooling, earning more, being healthier, and may be less likely to engage in criminal behavior.¹⁰³ These benefits pass on to the next generation—having a parent who attended Head Start leads to positive outcomes among their children as adults, including educational attainment, lower teen pregnancy, and lower criminal behavior.¹⁰⁴

The proposed changes will disrupt children’s access to that very education and care and have devastating consequences. Children enrolled in Head Start will suffer severe harms to their development, learning, physical and mental health, self-esteem, sense of stability, and overall well-being from losing access to critical pieces of the program or to the program entirely.

1. New 5% Administrative Cap Undermines Head Start Programs’ Ability to Provide High-Quality Services—and to Stay Open.

The NPRM’s proposal to limit the amount that Head Start programs can spend on development and administrative costs to 5 percent threatens the ability of Head Start agencies to stay open. Contrary to the Department’s assertion that the administrative cap aims to “direct a greater share of Head Start resources toward services for children and families,” the proposed administrative cap would undermine Head Start programs’ ability to serve children and families.

- [INSERT: Explain or give examples of the harm of including a 5% cap on administrative costs. For those involved with Head Start programs include: What would that cap force you to change? Would you have to reduce services or staff? Would you be able to stay open?]

¹⁰³ David Deming, *Early Childhood Intervention and Life-Cycle Skill Development: Evidence from Head Start*, 1 *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 111, 111-34 (2009), <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/app.1.3.111> [<https://perma.cc/KK4C-KD28>]; Eliana Garces, Duncan Thomas & Janet Currie Garces, *Longer Term Effects of Head Start*, 92 *The American Economic Review* 999, 999-1012 (2002); Rucker C. Johnson, *School Quality and the Long-Run Effects of Head Start* (2013); Jens Ludwig & Douglas L. Miller, *Does Head Start Improve Children's Life Chances? Evidence From a Regression Discontinuity Design*, 122 *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 159, 159-208 (2007), https://harris.uchicago.edu/files/inline-files/QJE_Headstart_2007_0.pdf [<https://perma.cc/99A8-7ZD7>]; Monique De Haan & Edwin Leuven, *Head Start and the Distribution of Long-Term Education and Labor Market Outcomes*, 38 *Journal of Labor Economics* 727, 727-765 (2020); Pedro Carneiro & Rita Ginja, *Long-Term Impacts of Compensatory Preschool on Health and Behavior: Evidence from Head Start*, 6 *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 135, 135–73 (2014).

¹⁰⁴ Andrew Barr & Chloe R. Gibbs, *Breaking the Cycle? Intergenerational Effects of an Antipoverty Program in Early Childhood*, 130 *Journal of Political Economy* 3253, 3253-3285 (2022), <https://par.nsf.gov/servlets/purl/10567229> [<https://perma.cc/F5NF-PFZ9>].

The proposed changes would reduce the quality, scope and type of health services required to be provided by eliminating the health, mental health and dental service requirements.

The proposal is particularly likely to make it difficult for small Head Start agencies to keep their doors open. “The Department acknowledges that this change it may have a particularly significant impact on Head Start programs classified as small entities” and that the impact “may be more pronounced for smaller programs.”¹⁰⁵ “About half of Head Start grants (about 50 percent) serve 200 or fewer children, representing smaller-scale operations that may have more limited ability to distribute fixed administrative costs.”¹⁰⁶ Despite recognizing these likely harms, and having authority from Congress to “establish special or simplified requirements for smaller agencies or agencies operating in rural areas,”¹⁰⁷ the Department rejected alternatives that would be less burdensome, such as exemption of small entities from the new cap, without any explanation.¹⁰⁸

Instead of explaining the impact that the cap will have on Head Start programs—particularly smaller programs—and why the benefits of such a drastic change outweigh the harms, the proposal waives the “availability of waivers (proposed § 1301.18), which *may* allow programs to address specific circumstances where compliance with the administrative cap of 5 percent would present undue operational challenges.”¹⁰⁹ However, the proposal gives programs no guidance on *which* “specific circumstances” or “undue operational challenges” would justify a waiver—nor the process or timing for receiving a waiver. Nor does the proposal explain how the Department will possibly consider and decide requests for waivers in a timely manner, considering since laying off 60% of the Office of Head Start staff, likely unlawfully, the Department has been unable to fulfill its basic obligations for the administration of Head Start in a timely manner.¹¹⁰

13. Weakening Head Start’s Standards Would Negatively Impact Children’s Learning and Developmental Outcomes.

Weakening or eliminating existing evidence-based educational standards threatens the overall quality of the services offered in Head Start programs and risks undermining the positive learning and developmental outcomes evident in children participating in the program. The quality of early environments and relationships matter – and Head Start’s standards have been intentionally designed to align with the core elements of quality early childhood practice, including ratios and group sizes that support responsive relationships between teachers and children, effective teaching and use of curricula, well-prepared educators, engaged families, and especially important for children growing up in poverty served by Head Start – comprehensive services that address the needs of the whole child and family.

The Proposed Rule would increase class sizes, decreases hours of operation, reduce the qualifications, competencies, support, and coaching of teachers and staff, eliminate requirements for effective teaching and learning environments, home visiting, and parental involvement. These

¹⁰⁵ 91 Fed. Reg. at 51285.

¹⁰⁶ *Id.*

¹⁰⁷ 42 U.S.C. § 9839(c).

¹⁰⁸ 91 Fed. Reg. at 51285.

¹⁰⁹ 91 Fed. Reg. at 51285 (emphasis added).

¹¹⁰ [Report on delays Head Start programs are experiencing]

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changes, collectively and individually, threaten the eviscerate the improvements in both school readiness and long-term educational outcomes of Head Start children.

[INSERT: This is an important place to highlight the overall harms that you see for children’s learning and education from a weakened and lower quality Head Start.]

[For more information on these changes and suggestions for what to include in a comment see **Source Material Pages 45-46**]

14. Removing the Standards on Health Will Jeopardize Children’s Health Outcomes.

Health, mental health, and oral health services are a critical component of the comprehensive services Head Start programs provide in service of school readiness. Head Start’s comprehensive services are grounded in the idea that children thrive most when their holistic needs are addressed, acknowledging the key connection between health and learning.¹¹¹ Every year, through following the Standards, Head Start programs improve health outcomes for hundreds of thousands of families.¹¹² These services have a demonstrated impact on child health outcomes such as increasing children’s access to preventive care and dental check-ups, increasing healthy eating, and improving mental health.¹¹³ By removing the HSPPS on health, the Department undermines the quality of a core component of Head Start’s comprehensive services model. Under the proposal, it is more likely that children will be off schedule with critical well-child visits and other medical services, delays in health and developmental screenings that would identify health conditions or developmental delays will be delayed, health disparities will be exacerbated, and inconsistency in information and supports for families will be created. The proposed elimination of health standards is likely to compromise child health, result in decreased trust in the Head Start program, and increase confusion for families.

[INSERT: Explain how the reduction/ watering down of the HS performance standards will harm the health of children, families, and communities based on your expertise or experience. For Example: Why is timing important for health service? Why is having standardized requirements helpful in establishing trust with families?]

¹¹¹ Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Overarching Competencies 1, 2, 3, and 7: Fundamental Values, Knowledge, and Skills to Manage Health Services, National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness: Head Start Health Servs. Competencies Course Transcript, <https://headstart.gov/sites/default/files/learning-modules-resources/fundamental-values-transcript.pdf> [https://perma.cc/7MJS-CWFD] (last visited July 23, 2026).

¹¹² For example, in 2024, the Program Information Report shows 102,478 families received mental health services, 37,404 received training on substance abuse prevention and 9,746 families received substance abuse treatment, 372,851 families received education on preventative medical and oral health, 110,395 families received education on health and developmental consequences of tobacco product use, 347,160 received education on nutrition, and 36,739 received education on postpartum care. See Office of Head Start, Services Snapshot: National All Programs (2024-2025), [https://www.headstart.gov/sites/default/files/PIR%20Links/All%20Programs%20\(2024-2025\).pdf](https://www.headstart.gov/sites/default/files/PIR%20Links/All%20Programs%20(2024-2025).pdf).

¹¹³ Taryn Morrissey, *The Effects Of Early Care And Education On Children’s Health*, Health Affairs (April 25, 2019), <https://www.healthaffairs.org/content/briefs/effects-early-care-and-education-children-s-health>.

The proposed changes would reduce the quality, scope and type of health services required to be provided by eliminating the health, mental health and dental service requirements.

[For more information on these changes and suggestions for what to include in a comment see Source Material Pages 46-47]

15. The Proposal Will Make Head Start Programs Less Safe.

By removing Standards on safety practices, bus monitoring, and child to adult ratios, the Proposed Rule would make children less safe.

Each state defines child abuse under its own law, and prohibitions on corporal punishment are not standard across states and localities. HHS indicates that the “proposed regulations remove restrictive Federal process mandates and provide programs greater flexibility in developing personnel policies and standards of conduct that reflect local community needs.” However, the current standards of conduct related to child safety allow the Office of Head Start to hold a grantee accountable for these behaviors even when the conduct does not meet the criminal definition of abuse in the state, locality, or Tribe where the program operates.

Removing bus monitors and child to adult ratios will also make Head Start children less safe. Head Start programs often serve children who require increased supervision due to their young age, language needs, and disability status. It is not possible to increase ratios and eliminate bus monitors without increasing risk to children.

B. Loss of Access to High-Quality Head Start Services Will Have Dire Consequences for Children Who are the Most Marginalized.

The Proposed Rule will cause immediate and most severe consequences for those who are furthest away from opportunity – the very children, pregnant women, and families who Head Start was designed to help.

[NOTE:

- Included below are short summaries of harms to different specific communities (Specifically, children with developmental delays and disabilities, immigrant families, Black and brown children, pregnant women, infants, children and pregnant women experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, and children living in rural communities). The **Source Material Document at pages 47-70** has more information and explanation on many of these subsections, and suggestions for what to add to your comment if you include that subsection. The relevant pages of the Source Material Document for each subsection are included below.
- **Please note that you need not include every sub-section and should only include those sections where you have something to add.** For each subsection you do include, please include as much detail and specific examples as possible about the harms of the changes.]

1. Children with Developmental Delays and Disabilities

Children with suspected or confirmed developmental delays and disabilities who are not eligible for services under IDEA will be left without needed supports, and staff will not receive the necessary skills to serve them. The benefits of Head Start are also clearly evident for children with disabilities, which is particularly important at a moment where schools are seeing an

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increasing number of students with individualized special needs. Head Start participation has been demonstrated to significantly reduce the need for special education services in elementary school as compared to students without quality early childhood experiences.¹¹⁴

[For more information see *Source Material Pages 47-51*]

16. Immigrant Families

The Proposed Rule's English-only requirement will harm the acquisition of English language skills of children who are Dual Language Learners and will undermine their overall academic achievement.¹¹⁵ It will also exclude parents from forming strong family partnerships, which are key to children's well-being and learning.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Huafang Zhao & Shahpar Modarresi, *Evaluating Lasting Effects of Full-day Prekindergarten Program on School Readiness, Academic Performance, and Special Education Services*, Montgomery County Public Schools, Office of Shared Accountability (2010), <https://ww2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/sharedaccountability/reports/2010/10.04.30%20Pre%20K%20Report.pdf> [https://perma.cc/Q34S-45YV].

¹¹⁵ Jennifer L. Steele et al., *Effects of Dual-Language Immersion Programs on Student Achievement: Evidence From Lottery Data*, 54 *American Educational Research Journal* 282S–306S (2017), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/0002831216634463>; Ellen J. Serafini, Nadine Rozell & Adam Winsler, *Academic and English Language Outcomes for DLLs as a Function of School Bilingual Education Model: the Role of Two-Way Immersion and Home Language Support*, 25 *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 552, 552–570 (2019), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13670050.2019.1707477>; Ilana M. Umansky & Sean F. Reardon, *Reclassification Patterns Among Latino English Learner Students in Bilingual, Dual Immersion, and English Immersion Classrooms*, 51 *American Educational Research Journal* 879, 879–912 (2014), <https://edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/umansky-reardon-2014-reclassification-patterns-among-latino-english-learner-students-in-bilingual-dual-immersion-and.pdf> [https://perma.cc/J2WG-QQ85]; see W. Steven Barnett et al., *Two-Way and Monolingual English Immersion in Preschool Education: an Experimental Comparison*, 22 *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 277, 277–293 (2007), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2007.03.003>; Carola Oliva-Olson, *Dos Métodos: Two Classroom Language Models in Head Start*, Urban Institute: Research Report (2019), <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/dos-metodos-two-classroom-language-models-head-start> [https://perma.cc/W9QX-YAY8]; Lisa B. Hsin et al., *Relationship Between Classroom Practices and Language and Development Among Dual Language Learner Infants and Toddlers*, First 5 California: Dual Language Learner (2022), <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/First-5-DLL-Instruction-Brief-4-Infants-Toddlers-June-2022.pdf> [https://perma.cc/BJ5C-LR9A].

¹¹⁶ Gillian Baxter & Anna Kilderry, “We Are Not Able to Speak English, so We Don't Know What is Happening:” *Missed Opportunities for Families' Engagement in Their Children's Learning*, Teaching and Teacher Education, at 1-10 (2024), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0742051X24003172/pdf?md5=a6fe84d3dafa002d111b6be921963357&pid=1-s2.0-S0742051X24003172-main.pdf> [https://perma.cc/4VV5-5MXH]; Carla Estefanía Vargas Valdés & Alejandra Falabella, *Being the Outsider: a Systematic Review of the Links Between Migrant Families and Early Childhood Education and Care Centres*, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* (2025), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/14639491251392691>. Susan M. Sheridan et al., *A Meta-Analysis of Family-School Interventions and Children's Social-Emotional Functioning: Moderators and Components of Efficacy*, 89 *Review of Educational Research* 296, 296-332 (2019), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0034654318825437>.

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Additionally, the proposal's new mandate that Head Start programs make records of child eligibility "available to HHS upon request"¹¹⁷ may chill immigrant families from enrolling their children. Given the many recent efforts of the federal government, including ACF, to use sensitive personal data collected about program participants for purposes other than verifying eligibility for the program in which they are enrolled, including sharing personal data with other federal agencies,¹¹⁸ this new mandate may deter families from enrolling in Head Start. This may result in many qualified families being chilled from participation because they fear that HHS will share their data with other agencies—particularly DHS—which will use that information to engage in immigration enforcement against them or their family members.¹¹⁹

[For more information see *Source Material Pages 51-52*]

17. Black and Brown Children

For Black and brown children, who face racial stereotyping and implicit bias and for whom learning environments that culturally reflect their own homes is critical, the Proposed Rule will threaten proven positive outcomes in academic achievement and overall wellbeing.¹²⁰ High-quality early childhood education is linked to improved outcomes for all children, and especially for Black and Hispanic children.¹²¹ Head Start has been shown to narrow racial disparities in educational achievement, particularly for Black children.¹²² Research shows that Head Start causes social, emotional, and behavioral development that becomes evident in adulthood measures of self-control, self-esteem, and positive parenting practices for all participants, and particularly among African Americans.

[For more information see *Source Material Pages 52-55*]

¹¹⁷ Compare Proposed § 1301.02(e) with 45 C.F.R. § 1302.12(k); 91 Fed. Reg. at 51308 ("Under the proposed rule, programs would be required to share eligibility data with HHS upon request").

¹¹⁸ See, e.g., 91 Fed. Reg. at 37409 (authorizing a disclosure of TANF recipients' and their family members' personal information without prior consent "to another federal or grantee agency or entity engaged by ACF (e.g., DHS or TANF program administrators), to assist ACF with program integrity reviews or projects, to verify whether TANF grantee agencies are complying with TANF program requirements, including verifying citizenship or immigration status."); see also *League of Women Voters v. U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, No. CV 25-3501 (SLS), 2026 WL 1784297, at *2-4 (D.D.C. June 22, 2026).

¹¹⁹ See Pls' States Mem. ISO Motion for Prelim. Inj. & Stay Under 5 U.S.C. § 705 at 13-14, *New York v. Admin. for Child. & Fams.*, 1:26-cv-02726-JEB (D.D.C. Aug. 5, 2026), Dkt. No. 31-1; see also *id.* (declarations cited therein).

¹²⁰ Abigail N. Walters, Pamela Joshi, & Leah Shafer, *Who Can Afford Child Care? A National and State Analysis of Affordability for Working Parents*, BU School of Social Work; Institute for Equity in Child Opportunity & Healthy Development (2026), https://www.diversitydatakids.org/sites/default/files/file/DDK_Who_Can_Afford_Child_Care_A_National_and_State_Analysis_of_Affordability_Feb162026_Final.pdf [https://perma.cc/52H7-XU9M].

¹²¹ Nadia Nittle, *Study Shows Excellent Preschool Experience Can Narrow Racial Achievement Gap*, The Imprint (July 12, 2020), <https://imprintnews.org/education/study-shows-excellent-preschool-experience-can-narrow-racial-achievement-gap/> 45195 [https://perma.cc/E2NA-3F87].

¹²² Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach & Lauren Bauer, *The Long-Term Impact of the Head Start Program*, Brookings Institution (2016), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-long-term-impact-of-the-head-start-program> [https://perma.cc/62QU-Y7ZY].

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18. Pregnant Women

The Proposed Rule would undermine the health of pregnant women and exacerbate existing inequities. By eliminating the Standards on the services, information, and referrals that Early Head Start programs are required to provide to enrolled pregnant women, the Proposed Rule undermines maternal health, which is foundational to the health and well-being of young children. HHS's rule will create meaningful inconsistencies in how maternal health supports, referrals, and programming are implemented. This is particularly problematic for pregnant and postpartum women because the timing of many aspects of medical and mental health care is critical to protecting the health of pregnant and postpartum women and their infants. Further, the elimination of these evidence-backed standards will create inconsistencies in how Early Head Start – a key federal maternal health program – is administered. The proposal will likely exacerbate issues of access and outcomes for all moms, with the potential to more deeply affect moms who are members of populations with outcomes that are already far below those of the general population, including those in Black and brown communities, tribal communities, rural communities, and those living in health care deserts.

[For more information see *Source Material Pages 55-58*]

19. Infants

The proposed elimination of Standards governing maternal health, infant health, child to staff ratios, and developmental screening will combine to be particularly harmful to vulnerable infants and negatively impact their development and well-being.

Maternal health before, during, and after pregnancy is foundational to the health and well-being of both parents and young children, and is closely linked to children's healthy development. Science-based evidence shows that timing of many aspects of medical and mental health care is critical to protecting the health of pregnant and postpartum women and their infants. Additionally, the earliest days, months, and years of life are when development is at its most rapid, and delayed services result in missed opportunities and lost time for promoting child development, such as secure attachment. Thus, the Standards, which the Proposed Rule eliminates, ensure that prenatal and postpartum health needs for mothers and infants are met during the specific periods necessary to promote the well-being and healthy development of infants.

Eliminating the child to staff ratios which determine how many children one adult can supervise is particularly unsafe and harmful for infants. Infants and toddlers are particularly vulnerable to health and safety risks and adequate adult supervision is critical to protecting their health and safety. For example, infants are susceptible to choking and potential allergic reactions to new foods that require fast adult identification and response or their very lives could be at stake. Infants are dependent on their adult caregivers to meet all of their basic needs—such as diaper and feeding. Additionally, babies learn and grow in the context of relationships with

The proposed changes would reduce the quality, scope and type of health services required to be provided by eliminating the health, mental health and dental service requirements.

responsive, consistent caregivers, so ratios that ensure educators have adequate time to attend to the individual needs of each child is essential.¹²³

[INSERT Explain how in your experience, the impact on infants of weakening the HS performance standards will be dangerous, harmful.]

20. Children and Pregnant Women Experiencing Homelessness

Children experiencing homelessness will face additional barriers when the HSPPS related to serving them is rescinded. The new eligibility criteria will add bureaucratic paperwork requirements that will be especially burdensome on unhoused families and may lead to their exclusion. These changes will impede Head Start agencies' ability to meet their statutory obligation to prioritize these families.

[For more information see *Source Material Pages 58-61*. In addition please see SchoolHouse Connections' in depth analysis on impacts for children experiencing homelessness, available at <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/article/proposed-head-start-rule-eliminates-critical-protections-for-children-experiencing-homelessness>]

21. Children in Foster Care

By removing the Standards meant to provide access to Head Start programs to children in foster care, the proposal will decrease access for these children. Under the Proposed Rule, Head Start programs will no longer be required to make specific efforts to locate and recruit children in foster care,¹²⁴ prioritize those children for enrollment,¹²⁵ nor make efforts to maintain a child's enrollment even if the child moves.¹²⁶ Nor will Head Start agencies have the authority to reserve spots for children in foster care.¹²⁷

22. Children Living in Rural Communities

Head Start plays an especially important role in rural communities, where Head Start slots make up the majority of the early education and child care supply. In some places, Head Start is the only center-based program that exists. Therefore, the impacts of the Proposed Rule, including the reduced quality and destabilized program, will be felt especially by children living in rural areas.

[For more information see *Source Material Pages 61-63*]

C. Creating Worse Working Conditions for Head Start Educators Would Further Destabilize the Workforce and Decrease Slots for Children

¹²³ *Ratios and Group Sizes in Child Care Matter for Babies*, ZERTO TO THREE (2025), https://www.zerotothree.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/ratios_brief-1.pdf [<https://perma.cc/X9QM-BB4X>].

¹²⁴ 45 C.F.R. § 1302.13.

¹²⁵ *Id.* § 1302.14(a)(1).

¹²⁶ *Id.* § 1302.15(b)(3).

¹²⁷ *Id.* § 1302.15(c).

The proposed changes would reduce the quality, scope and type of health services required to be provided by eliminating the health, mental health and dental service requirements.

[For information see *Source Material Pages 63-65*]

D. The Proposed Rule will Cause Instability, Confusion and even Closure for Head Start Programs.

[For information see *Source Material Pages 65-66*]

E. Destabilizing Head Start will have Cascading Harms to Other Beneficiaries, Stakeholders, and Broader Communities.

[For information see *Source Material Pages 66-70*]

By destabilizing Head Start, a pillar of the early education and childcare infrastructure, the Proposed Rule would result in widespread harms to communities, including parents, employers, and other stakeholders in our educational system. If a significant number of Head Start programs are forced to close or reduce services, parents and caregivers will lose childcare, risking missed work, unemployment, forced dropouts from school and training programs, and inability to pay life expenses and support their families. This harm will fall most harshly on women, who bear a disproportionate amount of childcare responsibilities. Parents' and caregivers' loss of access to Head Start services will also cause instability for employers, many of which cannot meet their staffing needs unless workers have reliable access to childcare.

This degradation of Head Start will also have a severe impact on the educational system as a whole. Early childhood education as a field will lose an important model that states and non-Head Start providers rely on to raise the standards for other early childhood education programs and identify evidence-based practices that ensure children are ready for school. And K-12 school districts – many of which are already stretched for resources – will face the burden of addressing the resulting educational and developmental gaps.

Ultimately, communities in every corner of the nation are dependent on Head Start providing high-quality services to the nation's poorest and most vulnerable, and the impact of denigrating these services will have cascading effects.

1. *Parents and caregivers*

[For information see *Source Material Pages 66-68*]

2. *Early Childhood Education as a Field*

[For information see *Source Material Pages 68-69*]

23. *K-12 school districts*

[For information see *Source Material Pages 69-70*]

24. *Communities.*

[For information see *Source Material Pages 70*]

Conclusion

The proposed changes would reduce the quality, scope and type of health services required to be provided by eliminating the health, mental health and dental service requirements.

We urge the Department to immediately withdraw its current proposal and instead dedicate its efforts to advancing policies consistent with the statute that strengthen—rather than undermine—the ability of Head Start to effectively prepare children from low-income families to succeed in school through its evidence-based comprehensive services model.

This comment includes numerous citations supporting research and relevant documents, including direct links for the benefit of the Department’s review. We request that the full text of each of the items cited, along with the full text of this comment, be considered part of the administrative record in this matter for purposes of the Administrative Procedure Act.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this regulation.

Sincerely,

NAME

ORGANIZATION (if relevant)