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Addressing Issues with the Payment Management System: A Guide for Head Start and Early Head Start Grant Recipients

Interacting with the Payment Management System (PMS) is not as straightforward as it once was, making it imperative that Head Start programs are ready to take action promptly if they encounter difficulties.

Suggestions for Submitting Funding Drawdown Requests in the Payment Management System

While there is no one solution for getting funding requests through PMS in a timely fashion, programs have reported using these tips successfully:

- Submit for the exact amount of funds needed, without rounding up or down.
- Expect delays – submit your PMS requests earlier and be sure not to hold the funds in excess of three days.
- Don't submit the same request multiple times if your initial request doesn't go through.
- Inform the Office of Head Start in advance if you have an unusual payment request. OHS has the opportunity in the Defend the Spend system to review your request and make comment.

If you are experiencing a delay in receiving your funds

The reason for the payment delay is often unclear, which is why it's important to be ready to act quickly and marshal additional resources to help get the problem resolved before the delay impacts services. If your program has submitted a request for funding that has been denied, has only been partially approved, or has not yet received a response, please reach out to leaders at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and your members of Congress immediately.

- **Be prepared in advance** to act promptly with the necessary documentation, program information, and key points of contact.
- **Keep the Office of Head Start (OHS) fully informed**, including what the impact of the delay will be.
 - Send communication to OHS early and often, using the HSES Correspondence Tab. You may also want to consider sending an email to ACF Deputy Assistant Secretary of Early Childhood Education **Laurie Smith-Todd** (Laurie.Smith@acf.hhs.gov) and Acting Director of the Office of Head Start **Tala Hooban** (Tala.Hooban@acf.hhs.gov).
 - Maintain copies of all your outreach to document.
 - Clearly state when you requested the funds, when you anticipated receiving the funding, and the consequences of not receiving funds (i.e. when you will have to reduce and/or cease operations, how many children could be impacted, how many staff will be laid off).
- **Fill out this [form](#) to alert the National Head Start Association** about your problem. Your information will be used to make NHSA aware of the situation and help them partner with you in advocating for your program.
- **Contact your state and regional Head Start associations** to also make them aware of your situation.
- **Communicate with staff and parents** if you anticipate that the funding delay will impact program operations.

- **Contact your Members of Congress.** This is the time to get loud, your Congressperson and Senators need to hear about what's going on so they can potentially help. This also will help establish a connection to your elected officials that you can build off of in the future.
- **Communicate with community partners and other important local voices** to bring attention to the issue you are encountering. These could include local officials, other local leaders, vendors you work with, etc.

More info to come: Toolkit on how to reach out to members of Congress, sample text, and additional resources.