



Early Head Start Program Expansion *NEW IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY*

Background

The “stimulus package” (formally known as THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009¹) included significant new money for Head Start and Early Head Start. The Head Start funding will be awarded through existing grantees. Early Head Start (EHS) will be an open RFP process. There is \$1.1 billion in new Early Head Start funding. New York State is projected to receive \$67.4 million in Early Head Start funding. The EHS funding is dedicated to expansion of services.

There are currently a total of 39 Early Head Start programs in New York State serving 4,900 children birth to three and their families. The new money will more than double the services in New York State serving approximately 8,000 additional babies and toddlers and their families in EHS programs.

Similar to Head Start, Early Head Start programs provide four essential components - child development, family development, community partnerships, and staff development. Early Head Start programs provide family-centered services for low-income families, pregnant women and families with children under age 3. Programs also must reserve space for limited numbers of children with special needs.

The following information should assist you in your decision to apply for funds and is gleaned from previous EHS RFP's. We believe it reflects the current thinking about the program. More detailed information will be available once the RFP or federal guidance is provided.

¹ “American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009” pg 64-65
http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111_cong_bills&docid=f:h1enr.pdf

Who is eligible to apply for Early Head Start funds?

A very broad group of organizations are eligible to apply for these programs including but not limited to current Head Start grantees and delegates, Healthy Families New York, Nurse Family Partnership Programs, child care including center and family child care, other preschool programs and Even Start as well as family support organizations.

Eligible service providers include:

- (1) organizations operating Head Start programs; Indian Head Start programs or migrant or seasonal Head Start programs; and
- (2) other **public agencies, and nonprofit or for-profit private organizations, including community-based and faith-based organizations, capable of providing child and family services** that meet the standards for participation in programs.

Many programs have a good grounding to consider Early Head Start. It is important to begin early to think about community partners to build a comprehensive set of services required.

How will grant funds be distributed?

Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis to applicants identified as "eligible service providers" giving priority to entities with a record of providing early, continuous, and comprehensive childhood development and family services.

What program components are required?

Early Head Start programs must be designed to:

- (1) provide early, continuous, intensive, and comprehensive **child development and family support services** that will enhance the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of participating children (this can be achieved either directly or through referral);
- (2) **respond to changing family needs and circumstances;**
- (3) **promote positive parent-child interactions;**
- (4) **provide services to parents to support their role as parents** (including trainings in parenting skills and basic child development) and services to help the families move toward self-sufficiency (including educational and employment services, as appropriate);
- (5) **coordinate a comprehensive array of services** with services provided by programs in the State (including home-based services) and programs in the community (including programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities and programs for homeless infants and toddlers) to ensure a comprehensive array of services (such as health and mental health services and family support services);
- (6) **ensure that children with documented behavioral problems receive appropriate screening and referral;**

(7) **ensure formal linkages with local Head Start programs** in order to provide for continuity of services for children and families;

(8) **develop and implement a systematic procedure for transitioning children and parents** from an Early Head Start program to a Head Start program or other local early childhood education and development program;

(9) establish channels of communication between staff of the Early Head Start program, and staff of a Head Start program or other local providers of early childhood education and development programs, to **facilitate the coordination of early childhood programs**;

(10) **ensure formal linkages with providers of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities** including child abuse prevention

(11) meet such other requirements concerning design and operation of the program described in subsection (a) as the Secretary (of Health and Human Services) may establish.

(12) document unmet need in the community for EHS services

How are Early Head Start services provided?

Early Head Start programs can select alternative service options to meet children's needs. Programs decide which options to offer children and their families after completing an intensive community assessment of family needs. Programs reassess community needs every 3 years and may change available options accordingly.

The majority of programs provide services through one of the three following approaches:

(1) **center-based** providing all services to families through center-based child care and education, parent education, and a minimum of two home visits per year to each family. Some programs utilize family child care homes as the setting for working with children;

(2) **home-based** serving families through weekly home visits and at least two group socializations per month for each family;

(3) **mixed** providing center-based services to some families, home-based services to other families, or a mixture of center-based and home-based services, either at the same or at different times.

Most programs are choosing a center-based or mixed approach to providing services in order to ensure that families have a consistent and high quality child care while they work. If you decide that to submit an application for a home-based model, it will be very important to clearly state how you will help parents access high quality child care arrangements when needed.

For information on the research on the benefits of each approach, go to:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/ehs/ehs_resrch/reports/program_models/program_models.pdf

What are the staffing requirements?

There are specific education requirements for **Center-Based Staff** that will go into effect within three and half years.

- Not later than September 30, 2010, all teachers providing direct services to children and families participating in Early Head Start programs located in Early Head Start centers, will have a minimum of a Child Development Associate credential, and have been trained (or have equivalent coursework) in early childhood development.

There are separate requirements for **Home Visitor Staff**. The standards for training, qualifications and the conduct of home visits for home visitor staff in Early Head Start programs will be established in the near future. New program applicants are encouraged to consider incorporating these aspects of home visiting into their proposals.

- structured child-focused home visiting that promotes parents' ability to support the child's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development;
- effective strengths-based parent education, including methods to encourage parents as their child's first teachers;
- methods to help parents promote emergent literacy in their children from birth through age 3, including language skills for children who are limited English proficient;
- ascertaining what health and developmental services the family receives and working with providers of these services to eliminate gaps in service by offering annual health, vision, hearing, and developmental screening for children from birth to entry into kindergarten, when needed;
- strategies for helping families coping with crisis; and
- the relationship of health and well-being of pregnant women to prenatal and early child development.

How has research influenced the design of Early Head Start programs?

Research has been an integral component of the program from the very beginning. As part of the initial authorization, it was stipulated that Early Head Start be studied using a randomized trial design. The final report, detailing the impacts Early Head Start had for children and families when children were three years old, was published in June 2003. For more information on research, please go to <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc>

The Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (EHSRE) concluded that program effectiveness was enhanced in several ways:

1. Frequency and quality of program (i.e., home visits conducted 2-3 times per week; center-based services offered full day and full year)
2. Begin services early, during pregnancy if possible
3. Child care needs meet Head Start Performance Standards
4. A focus on child development (vs. family support, for instance) and the parent-child relationship (vs. a family support focus)
5. Programs
 - o adjust as family needs change
 - o work to increase father involvement and
 - o engage parents in parenting education and group socialization
6. Incorporate staff development designed to meet the needs of staff and program.
7. Contribute to building coordinated systems and supportive community.

Is there money in the grant for training and technical assistance?

Yes. Funds will be granted directly to Early Head Start agencies to use at their discretion, and may include such activities as the establishment of local or regional agreements with community experts, institutions of higher education, or private consultants, for training and technical assistance activities in order to make program improvements identified by the Early Head Start agencies. In addition, a state-based training and technical assistance system, or a national system, including infant and toddler specialists, will be supported by the federal Office of Head Start to improve the quality of Early Head Start programs. For the purposes of supporting a State-based system that will meet the needs of Early Head Start agencies and provide high-quality, sustained, and intensive training and technical assistance on programming for infants and toddlers to Early Head Start agencies, the Secretary shall use funds to provide for a minimum of 1 full-time specialist with demonstrated expertise in the development of infants and toddlers

How much money is available for individual programs?

Average grants in the past are approximately \$1.1 million per year. Grants can be expected to range from \$650,000 to \$2 million based on the number of children and families to be served.

When will the grant application be posted?

It is expected that a Request for Proposals (RFP) will be issued in the next few months.

Resources

In-depth information regarding Early Head Start is posted on the Early Childhood Knowledge and Learning Center, ECKLC (e- click) website <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc> . All the program requirements are posted on the left tab listed under the heading "Head Start Performance Standard" and "Head Start Act". This website is the official website of the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start. In addition to the program requirements this website

will provide key announcements related to programming including the date for a Office of Head Start webinar regarding the Early Head Start Competition.

The Early Head Start grant synopsis, announcement and application will be posted on the Grant.gov (www.grants.gov). For a sample of what to expect, view the Early Head Start Expansion synopsis posted April 2, 2009. This opportunity is only available to existing grantees, but it will allow you to preview a similar posting to the competitive RFP.

This information was prepared by the New York State Early Care and Learning Council, CCI, the New York Zero-to-Three Network and Winning Beginning NY. The Council provides leadership and support to child care resource and referral agencies across New York State and coordinates the seven Infant Toddler Resource Centers. CCI is a New York City based child care resource and referral agency and manages the New York City Infant and Toddler Resource Center. The Zero-to-Three Network is a New York City based organization promoting quality services for babies and toddlers and their families. Winning Beginning NY is a statewide advocacy coalition. Each is committed to expanding the opportunities available to New York City and State's children and families.

EHS is a comprehensive service and calls upon the best in agencies to build coordinated linkages and offer quality options to families.

Some Next Steps

1. Share this communication with partners and providers in your region.
2. Make sure you understand the basic requirement for delivering Early Head Start.
3. Investigate the relevant websites to determine your program interest in pursuing Early Head Start.
4. Identify potential community partner for linkages.