

ACF Administration for Children and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES	
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	3. Originating Office: Office of Head Start	
	4. Key Word: Head Start Service Duration; Duration Requirements	

PROGRAM INSTRUCTION

TO: Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees and Delegate Agencies

SUBJECT: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Secretary Azar Lowers Head Start Service Duration Requirement to 45%

INSTRUCTION:

This Program Instruction (PI) notifies programs that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Secretary has exercised his authority under Head Start Program Performance Standard [45 CFR §1302.21\(c\)\(3\)\(ii\)](#) to lower the requirement that a program provide 1,020 hours of planned class operations by August 1, 2021, from 100% of center-based funded enrollment to 45%.

Head Start Center-based Service Duration Requirement

The final rule at 45 CFR §1302.21(c)(2)(iv) states a program must provide 1,020 annual hours of planned class operations over at least eight months per year for 100% of its center-based funded enrollment by August 1, 2021.

The final rule also includes a provision that allows the Secretary to lower the percentage of Head Start center-based slots that must operate at 1,020 annual hours (45 CFR §1302.21(c)(3)(ii)). This decision must be based on an assessment of the availability of sufficient funding to mitigate a substantial reduction in Head Start-funded enrollment.

The Secretary has determined that current Head Start appropriations are not sufficient to support the requirement for 100% of each Head Start program's center-based slots to operate for 1,020 annual hours. It was concluded that if the 100% requirement goes into effect without additional funding, it will result in a substantial reduction in Head Start center-based slots. Therefore, to mitigate a substantial reduction in children served, the requirement is lowered to 45%. Lowering the 1,020 annual hour requirement from 100% to 45% of center-based funded enrollment slots reflects prior Congressional appropriations. The most recent appropriations allowed Head Start programs operating less than 45% of center-based slots at 1,020 hours to apply for funding to increase service duration so that up to 45% of their center-based slots operate for 1,020 hours.

Programs may elect to provide 1,020 annual hours of planned class operations for more than 45% of their center-based funded enrollment. We believe lowering the requirement to 45% affords programs more flexibility to meet the needs of their communities.

Waiver of 45% Service Duration Requirement

Programs may request a waiver of the 45% service duration requirement. In order to receive a waiver, a program must demonstrate that their proposed program design effectively supports children's development and progress in early learning outcomes and better meets the needs of their community ([45 CFR §1302.24](#)). If the waiver of the 45% service duration requirement is approved, or in the case of a double session variation, a program must meet the requirements described in 45 CFR §1302.21(c)(2)(i) or (ii).

The [Federal Register notice](#) announcing this determination with additional details is available for review. If you have questions regarding this PI, please contact your Regional Office.

Thank you for the work you do on behalf of children and families.

/ Dr. Deborah Bergeron /

Dr. Deborah Bergeron
Director
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