

ACF Administration for Children and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES	
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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

TO: All Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Monitoring Process for Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees

INFORMATION:

Sec. [641A](#) of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 requires the Office of Head Start (OHS) to implement ongoing monitoring of all programs receiving federal funds. As a result of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and public health emergency, all monitoring reviews for the 2020–2021 school year will be conducted virtually. This decision was based on two principles that have driven OHS's decisions and guidance to programs throughout this period: (1) taking decisive actions to support each program's success and (2) keeping the safety of children and staff paramount.

While prevalence or risk of COVID-19 varies from community to community, OHS recognizes that each program's energies are focused on making innovative programmatic changes in a fluid environment to serve as many children and families as safely as possible. OHS does not wish to distract from those critical efforts by adding the burden of planning and accommodating an on-site federal review team. OHS believes a virtual monitoring protocol more appropriately balances the need for monitoring with the on-the-ground challenges to which programs are actively responding at this time. Secondly, and as important, OHS is committed to protecting the health and safety of children and staff in OHS programs. It understands that having outside monitors visit programs, in some locations, may increase the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Limiting visitors to Head Start facilities is consistent with guidance on best practices from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on safely providing child care in group settings during the pandemic. Given the availability of a suitable virtual alternative, on-site OHS monitoring reviews as a general practice present an unnecessary risk at this unique time. However, OHS reserves the right to conduct special off-site or on-site reviews if they are determined to be necessary.

FY 2021 Monitoring Overview

Review Type	FY 2021 Implementation	Start Date
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Focus Area 1 (FA1)	FA1 reviews will continue to be conducted using a virtual format.	November 2020
Focus Area 2 (FA2)	FA2 reviews will be conducted virtually for the 2020–2021 program year.	January 2021
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®)	OHS plans to suspend CLASS® reviews for the 2020–2021 school year.	Not Applicable
Follow-up	Follow-up reviews will be conducted virtually by your Regional Office.	Start dates will coincide with the end of the corrective action period.
American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) Reevaluations	AIAN reevaluation reviews will be conducted virtually by the applicable Regional Office.	Start dates will coincide with the Tribal DRS Consultation process and Plan to Improve Quality.

OHS will begin virtual monitoring of grantees in November 2020. Grantees who will receive a monitoring review in FY 2021 will receive a notification letter at least 45 days prior to the start of their review event. Grantees can expect a planning call with their assigned review lead to discuss the virtual schedule. It will include conversations on:

- Program Design and Management.
- Education and Child Development.
- Health Program Services.
- Family and Community Engagement.
- Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA).
- Fiscal Infrastructure.

During the FA1 and FA2 review processes, grantees will be asked questions about the use of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding. They will also be asked about any adjustments made to program service delivery in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. OHS will request information regarding grantee service delivery model (e.g., in-person services, virtual services, or a hybrid of both) with the understanding that these operations may change throughout the program year.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding FY 2021 monitoring, please contact your Regional Office.

Thank you for your work on behalf of children and families.

/ Dr. Deborah Bergeron /

Dr. Deborah Bergeron
Director
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Office of Early Childhood Development