

# OHS COVID-19 Updates

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[View the Latest Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Updates from the Office of Head Start »](#)

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has deeply impacted Head Start and Early Head Start programs, enrolled children and families, and their communities. This section is regularly updated with guidance and resources from the Office of Head Start (OHS) to help all programs support staff, children, and families during this challenging time.

## Latest Updates

**10/20/2020:** [Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation](#)

Temporary closures or reduced operations of a building and a reduction in water use can create hazards when it comes time for reopening. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has updated guidance with specific steps to minimize such risks. Head Start and Early Head Start programs can use it when preparing to reopen after a COVID-19-related closure.

**9/28/2020:** [Questions and Answers on Wages and Benefits](#)

In the spring of 2020, the OHS authorized programs to continue to pay wages and provide benefits for staff who would otherwise be employed but are unable to report to their full work duties during center closures. The ability of grantees to pay wages and benefits remains in effect through Sept. 30, 2020. Read these questions and answers about what comes next.

**9/24/2020:** [ACF-IM-HS-20-05: Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2021 Monitoring Process for Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees](#)

As a result of the 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.

**9/1/2020:** [Looking Forward to the 2020-2021 Program Year](#)

A letter of appreciation to Head Start and Early Head Start staff from Dr. Bergeron. She celebrates the work accomplished in the spring of 2020, and looks forward to the services programs will provide in the coming program year. It includes a brief overview of OHS resources available to grantees.

**8/5/2020:** [OHS CAMP: Session 6 \(Webinar\)](#)

The final session in the CAMP series featuring a conversation with five local grantee staff about offering Head Start and Early Head Start services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**7/29/2020: [OHS CAMP: Session 5](#) (Webinar)**

The fifth session in the CAMP series addresses questions and concerns about Subpart D – Health Program Services, 45 CFR §1302.

**7/22/2020: [OHS CAMP: Session 4](#) (Webinar)**

Watch the fourth session in the OHS CAMP series, which addresses questions and concerns about Subpart E – Family and Community Engagement, 45 CFR §1302. It also includes a walk-through of COVID-19 resources on the ECLKC.

**7/15/2020: [OHS CAMP: Session 3](#) (Webinar)**

The third session in the series addresses questions and concerns about Subpart C – Education and Child Development Program Services, 45 CFR §1302.

**7/8/2020: [OHS CAMP: Session 2](#) (Webinar)**

Watch the second session of this series, which includes a conversation on Subpart I Human Resources Management, 45 CFR §1302; Program Governance, 45 CFR §1301; and timelines in the HSPPS.

**7/1/2020: [OHS Collaborating Actively in Meaningful Planning \(CAMP\): Session 1](#) (Webinar)**

OHS started a six-week series to address questions and concerns about offering Head Start and Early Head Start services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Programs have done amazing and innovative work delivering services during this crisis. Moving forward will require continued innovation and agility. Explore this series for clear guidance, when possible, of grantee questions about meeting the HSPPS. Watch the first CAMP for information on breaking news, group sizes, ratios, staffing, locally-designed options, and ERSEA.

**6/30/20: [Helping Children Thrive During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)**

In this video, Dr. Bergeron is joined by Sangeeta Parikshak, mental health lead at OHS. They discuss how to help children feel loved and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. B and Sangeeta suggest ways to talk to children about COVID-19, as well as how to make this experience easier on them.

**6/22/20: [ACF-IM-HS-20-04 Head Start Transportation Services and Vehicles During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)**

School buses and allowable alternate vehicles are generally the safest mode of transportation for children. They are also necessary for many children and families to participate in Head Start programs. Implementing safe practices is essential when providing transportation services during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

**6/17/20: [Considerations for Head Start Transportation Services and Vehicles During the](#)**

## [COVID-19 Pandemic \(Webinar\)](#)

The Office of Head Start (OHS) leads a conversation with about Head Start transportation services and vehicles during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. School buses and allowable alternate vehicles are generally the safest mode of transportation for children. They are also necessary for many children and families to participate in Head Start programs. Implementing safe practices is essential when providing transportation services.

### **6/9/2020:** [Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Early Childhood Education Staff During COVID-19](#)

Join Dr. Robin H. Gurwitch, PhD, in this “Ask the Expert” series webinar to explore strategies to help staff manage their own mental health needs during this pandemic.

### **6/5/2020:** [Home at Head Start: Strategies for Supporting Families Experiencing Homelessness and Housing Instability During COVID-19](#) **(Email)**

### **6/5/2020:** [Tips and Resources for Disability Services Staff: Supporting Children with Disabilities, Families, and Education Staff from a Distance](#) **(Email)**

### **6/4/2020:** [CARES Act Gives Extra \\$750 Million for Head Start Program](#) **(Email)**

### **6/2/2020:** [Social Distancing in Early Care and Education: Feasible or Impossible?](#)

Explore issues around social distancing in ECE programs. Hear from Danette Glassy, MD, FAAP, pediatrician, about guidance from the CDC. Discover practical strategies for implementation in a variety of early care programs.

### **5/29/2020:** [ACF and HRSA Joint Letter to Promote Family Strengthening and Virtual Primary Prevention](#) **[PDF, 62MB]**

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) issue a joint letter to colleagues on how to support families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **5/29/2020:** [Fiscal Management During the COVID-19 Emergency: A Follow-Up Conversation](#)

OHS leadership responds to grantee questions regarding fiscal management while responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **5/28/20:** [Supporting Children and Families When Programs Are Closed](#)

Learn strategies teachers and family child care providers can use to stay engaged with children, families, and colleagues. Discover ways to support children's continued growth and development and take care of yourself during times of stress.

**5/28/2020:** [Communication and Connectivity: Family Supports for Remote Service Delivery \(Email\)](#)

**5/28/2020:** [Disabilities Services Newsletter No. 35: Resilience and Wellness in Trying Times \(Email\)](#)

**5/27/2020:** [Caring for Children with Special Health Care Needs During COVID-19](#)

Children with special healthcare needs are experiencing unique barriers to care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Join Jessica Foster, MD, FAAP, to learn about challenges and strategies to providing supports and care to children with feeding, developmental, and disability concerns.

**5/22/2020:** [Fiscal Management During the COVID-19 Emergency](#)

OHS leadership discusses dissemination of the CARES Act supplemental funds. They also address strategies and flexibilities for fiscal management programs should employ while responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**5/21/2020:** [Responding to Head Start Grantee Questions on COVID-19: Volume May 21, 2020](#)

OHS is empowering grantee leadership to make decisions that support Head Start children and families first during the COVID-19 pandemic. Review questions and answers from grantees seeking approval for local decisions about operations.

**5/21/2020:** [ACF-PI-HS-20-04 Update to Funding for FY 2020 Supplemental Funds in Response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

Review updated funding instructions that provide greater flexibility so all grantees can respond to the unique and constantly evolving circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic. This supersedes ACF-PI-HS-20-03.

**5/21/2020:** [ACF-IM-HS-20-03 Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Fiscal Flexibilities](#)

This Information Memorandum (IM) describes how OHS is implementing each item from ACF Grant Flexibilities in Conducting Human Service Activities Related to or Affected by COVID-19. Please note that some items are implemented by OHS as issued by ACF and others are implemented with noted program-specific guidance.

**5/19/2020:** [Helping Parents Manage Stress During COVID-19](#)

Families who are sheltering in place during the COVID-19 pandemic may be experiencing additional stress. It is important that ECE providers continue supporting families to the extent possible. Discover strategies for connecting with and supporting families.

**5/15/2020:** [Supporting Home Safety During COVID-19](#)

Even while many ECE programs are closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, they continue to support

families. Home safety may be a prime concern for families during times of social distancing. Discover strengths-based safety messages and resources to share with families.

### **5/12/2020:** [Stay Connected to Decrease Family Stress in Difficult Times](#)

In this video, Dr. Bergeron is joined by Kiersten Beigel, family and community partnerships specialist at OHS. They discuss how to partner with families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Offering compassion, connection, and care can decrease parental stress. Addressing immediate stressors related to food, rent support, or healthcare can also help. Dr. B and Kiersten suggest ways programs can find out what is going on with children at home.

### **5/11/2020:** [Supporting Food Security for Families](#)

Many Head Start families are struggling with food insecurity during the COVID-19 emergency. To meet the needs of school-aged children, the USDA is coordinating several efforts which may apply to siblings of Head Start children.

### **5/08/2020:** [Keeping Our Children Well During COVID-19](#)

Early care and education (ECE) programs can support families' access to needed medical care. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends children under 24 months maintain their Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) immunization schedule to prevent the breakout of communicable diseases. Many pediatricians are conducting well-child visits through telehealth appointments. However, families may be struggling to access these services. Join former AAP president, Colleen Kraft, MD, FAAP, for a discussion on how ECE providers can support families' medical care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **5/6/2020:** [Caring for Children in Group Settings During COVID-19: A Follow-up Conversation \(Webinar\)](#)

This question-and-answer chat is a follow-up to the [Caring for Children in Group Settings During COVID-19](#) webinar. Michele Cheung, MD, FAAP, a pediatric infectious disease expert, joined Marco Beltran from OHS to apply available guidance to ECE programs.

### **4/28/2020:** [COVID-19 Check-In](#)

In this video, Dr. Bergeron shares the unique and creative ways Head Start staff are supporting children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. She also delves into some Early Head Start program strategies and encourages staff to take care of themselves during this difficult time. Encouraging parent-child relationships is key, as well as communicating with simplicity and engaging in routine activities. Comfort, love, and support are the best remedies for children who might regress in achieving goals as a result of COVID-19. As always, Dr. B shares a love note to workers making a difference in the lives of babies and toddlers all over the country.

### **4/24/2020:** [Caring for Children in Group Settings During COVID-19 \(Webinar\)](#)

Early care and education (ECE) programs have many questions about how to keep children and staff healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic. Guidance for open programs is now available from the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and the [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#).

This webinar also highlights the guidance and best practices in preventing the spread of disease from [Caring for Our Children](#) . [Register again](#) to view the webinar replay.

**4/23/2020: [ECLKC Resources to Support Professional Development for Education Staff](#) (Email)**

Discover resources on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) that education staff can use to support their professional development during center closures and while social distancing.

**4/23/2020: [Supporting Emergency Child Care During the COVID-19 Crisis: How Head Start and Early Head Start Programs Can Help](#) (Email)**

Find clarification on how programs can support, when possible, the use of closed Head Start centers as temporary child care centers for medical personnel and essential workers. By law, Head Start funds can only be used to provide Head Start services to eligible children and families. However, Head Start facilities, equipment, materials, and supplies can be used to support emergency child care, subject to cost reimbursement or replacement. Head Start staff may also have the option to support emergency child care operations in addition to the work they are doing to continue Head Start services.

**4/21/2020: [Partnering with Families to Improve Economic Stability During and After COVID-19](#) (Email)**

Many Head Start and Early Head Start families are affected with job loss and other community impacts related to COVID-19. Learn more about the steps programs can take, now and in the future, to improve families' financial stability.

**4/20/2020: [Full Enrollment Policy Questions and Answers \(Q&As\)](#) (Email)**

**4/14/2020: [ACF-PI-HS-20-03 FY 2020 Supplemental Funds in Response to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)**

This Program Instruction (PI) provides information about supplemental funds available for Head Start programs in response to COVID-19. It describes the purpose, eligibility, and application process for supplemental summer programs and one-time activities in response to COVID-19.

**4/6/2020: [Update to Wages and Benefits Flexibility During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (Email)**

In recognition of the unique circumstances associated with COVID-19, OHS is directing programs to continue to pay wages and provide benefits for staff unable to report to work during center closures necessary to address COVID-19. This directive does not apply to non-COVID-19 related program closures during which employees would not otherwise be paid, such as summer breaks.

This flexibility remains in effect through June 30, 2020 or the date upon which programs reopen for center-based services, and employees return to regularly scheduled onsite work, if sooner. OHS will continue to monitor program closures and may adjust the effective date of this flexibility as needed.

**4/6/2020: [CARES Act Funding to Support Head Start Children, Families, and Programs](#) (Webinar)**

Watch as OHS leadership discuss new funding to support needs related to COVID-19. They respond to questions about the purpose of these funds and how to apply.

**4/2/2020: [Responding to Grantee Questions on COVID-19: Updated March 31, 2020](#)**

Explore these questions and responses to common grantee concerns regarding program closure, staff pay and benefits, available flexibilities, and program monitoring.

**4/1/2020: [Serving Needs Beyond Head Start](#) (Email)**

Many grantees are asking questions and seeking approval for local decisions about operations. OHS is empowering grantee leadership to make decisions that support Head Start children and families first, and also help others in need.

**3/31/2020: [ACF Grant Flexibilities in Conducting Human Services Activities Related to or Affected By COVID-19](#) (Email)**

With this email, the Administration for Children and Families is transmitting [IM-ACF-OA-2020-01](#) [PDF, 192KB] dealing with grant flexibilities in conducting human service activities related to or affected by COVID-19.

**3/24/2020: [MyPeers Can Support Virtual Work During COVID-19](#) (Webinar)**

Watch this webinar to discover ways to minimize face-to-face contact and travel as your program responds to COVID-19.

**3/24/2020: [Temporarily Repurposing Head Start and Early Head Start Centers: Partnering to Support Emergency Child Care During the COVID-19 Crisis](#) (Email)**

OHS has received many inquiries about temporarily repurposing Head Start and Early Head Start centers closed due to COVID-19 to provide child care primarily for children of medical staff and others engaged in responding to the COVID-19 emergency. To support programs in their decision-making about taking on responsibilities beyond their Head Start population, OHS has developed a set of frequently asked questions, which address some regulatory issues, health and safety concerns, and matters of capacity and liability.

**3/18/2020: [MyPeers Can Support Virtual Work During COVID-19](#) (Email)**

Discover ways to minimize face-to-face contact and travel as your program responds to COVID-19. [MyPeers](#) can help program management and staff work remotely by creating a private workgroup for your agency. Use it to hold group chats, share documents and resources, post questions, and even screenshare from the privacy of your own home. Members can access MyPeers via desktop or use the app on their smartphone or tablet.

**3/17/2020: [Supporting Grantee Leadership Regarding Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-](#)**

## 19) (Webinar)

Hear from OHS leadership as they discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on grantee operations. They offer clarifying information and respond to questions from the Head Start community on recently published (at the time of the webinar) COVID-19 prevention and response information.

### **3/13/20: Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Flexibilities (Email)**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has waived its group setting meal requirement for closed schools and [authorized special flexibilities](#) for many states. Grantees may work with their state CACFP agency to determine whether similar flexibilities that can support the ongoing availability of meals and snacks for enrolled children are available during Head Start and Early Head Start program closures.

### **3/13/2020: Managing Infectious Disease (Video blog)**

Dr. Bergeron and Dr. Marco Beltran discuss strategies for managing infectious disease. Head Start programs can follow local guidance and use federal guidance to support their decision-making.

### **3/13/2020: COVID-19 Wages and Benefit (Email)**

In addition to the general flexibilities in [ACF-IM-HS-19-01](#), OHS is providing the additional flexibility regarding wage and benefits for employees impacted by COVID-19 closures.

### **3/12/20: Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) COVID-19 Funding and Guidance (Email)**

A number of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) divisions, including OHS, are releasing COVID-19-related information on funding and guidance. Review information on key issues to keep you up to date (at the time of release).

Topic: [About Us](#)

Keywords: [COVID-19](#), [Diseases](#)

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