

Head Start Program Performance Standard 1302.51 (b) Technical Assistance Resource

Parent activities to promote child learning and development, 45 CFR § 1302.51 (b):

A program must, at minimum, offer opportunities for parents to participate in a research-based parenting curriculum that builds on parents' knowledge and offers parents the opportunity to practice parenting skills to promote children's learning and development. A program that chooses to make significant adaptations to the parenting curriculum to better meet the needs of one or more specific populations must work with an expert or experts to develop such adaptations.



Background

Positive parent-child relationships are fundamental to the goal of promoting child learning and development. This program performance standard represents ideas that have emerged in recent research related to supporting parental confidence. Research has shown that preschool programs can positively impact parenting when they go beyond simply providing parenting information. There are greater benefits to parents and children when programs offer parents experiences that model positive interactions and give parents opportunities to practice with feedback.¹ In addition, these intentional offerings give parents opportunities to interact with staff, form peer relationships, and access information to support parental confidence.

Parenting Curriculum Decision-Making Checklist

A parenting curriculum should include the following characteristics:

- Structured, sequenced learning activities for parents that focus on two or more of the following domains of learning:
 - Nurturing (warmth, responsiveness, and sensitivity)
 - Discipline (providing limits, teaching self-control, handling challenging child behaviors)
 - Teaching (conveying information or skills)
 - Language (conversations)
 - Supervision (watchfulness)
- A manual or guide that describes what learning domains to deliver, how to present them, and in what order
- Available for public use
- Two or more sessions
- Delivered in a time-limited or ongoing manner
- Delivered to parents as the intended and primary audience
- Includes an opportunity for parents to practice skills
- Able to be implemented in early childhood settings or community-based organizations
- Research-based

¹ Yoshikawa, H. Testimony to the Senate HELP Committee- Full-Committee Hearing on Supporting Children and Families through Investments in High-Quality Early Education, February 6, 2014.

Understanding What We Mean by Research-Based Curriculum

There are three categories of research-based curricula. All three of these categories meet the related performance standard. The figure below illustrates these categories:

Research-Based:

- ▶ Is *founded* on solid research about parenting concepts, skills and practices; and
- ▶ Promotes activities that have been previously shown to have positive effects on parenting/child outcomes; and
- ▶ Has a preliminary or descriptive evaluation of the curriculum itself, but has not necessarily confirmed that any changes in desired parenting/child outcomes were related to or caused by the curriculum.

Promising Research-Based:

- ▶ Includes everything in the Research-Based category, and
- ▶ Has at least one quasi-experimental study that influences the desired parenting/child outcomes.

Evidence-Based:

- ▶ Includes everything in the Research-Based and Promising Research-Based categories; and
- ▶ Has more than one strong, quasi-experimental and or random assignment study (or set of studies) that influences or causes changes in desired parenting/child outcomes.

Research Design Terms

- ▶ **Solid Research:** Research studies that are designed to demonstrate causal links (i.e., that the intervention causes the outcomes that are measured.)
- ▶ **Quasi-experimental:** A type of research design that compares groups of people who participate in an intervention to those who do not participate. Participants are not assigned randomly (by chance or random assignment) to the groups. They are systematically assigned to participate in one of the groups.
- ▶ **Random Assignment/Randomized Control Trial (RCT):** A type of experimental research design that compares groups of people who participate in an intervention to those who do not participate. Participants are assigned randomly (by chance or random assignment) to the groups. RCTs are considered the best way to show that an intervention causes the outcomes that are measured.



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