



Head Start Action Toolkit

Protect High-Quality **Head Start** Services

What is happening?

The federal government is considering changes to Head Start that could **reduce or eliminate** some of the standards that currently help ensure children and families receive comprehensive, high-quality services. The proposed rule would affect areas such as family engagement, developmental screenings and assessments, classroom group sizes, teacher-to-child ratios, language of instruction, teaching practices, curricula, learning environments, workforce standards, and overall program accountability. MAAC supports thoughtful efforts to reduce unnecessary duplication and administrative burden. Many proposed changes **would remove** federal minimum standards that currently **protect** the comprehensive, consistent, high-quality nature of Head Start. Reducing unnecessary paperwork can be a worthwhile goal, but reducing the standards that protect quality and safety would shift a much greater burden onto local programs, educators, children, and families. Families rely on Head Start for coordinated education, health, nutrition, disability, family-engagement and safety services, not only classroom care.

Your comments are important. If you are a parent, educator, Head Start alum, community member, advocate or simply someone who believes in Head Start, your experience and perspective matter. **Help us protect families!**

[Click here to skip to the information on “How to Submit Your Comment.”](#)

Option 1:

General comment protecting Head Start quality



Why this matters

Head Start works because it provides more than early childhood education. Federal performance standards help ensure that children and families receive comprehensive services that support school readiness, health, nutrition, family engagement, developmental screenings, and safe learning environments. Many of the proposed changes would remove or weaken federal minimum standards that help maintain consistency and quality across programs. While reducing unnecessary administrative burden is an important goal, preserving strong standards helps ensure that children and families continue to receive the high-quality services they depend on.

Copy, Paste & Personalize Your Comment

I support efforts to reduce unnecessary paperwork and administrative burden. However, I am concerned that many of the proposed changes would remove important standards that help ensure Head Start provides high-quality services to children and families.

Head Start is successful because it combines education, developmental screenings, family engagement, health services, nutrition support, and strong accountability systems.

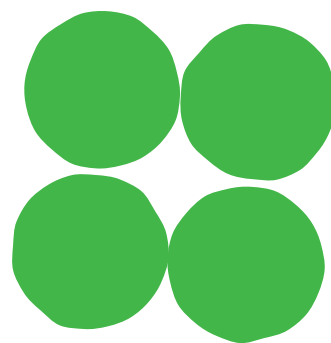
Reducing these protections may save paperwork but could also reduce consistency, quality, and access for vulnerable children and families.

I respectfully ask HHS to preserve the standards that protect comprehensive, high-quality Head Start services while identifying other ways to reduce unnecessary administrative burden.

Add your story

- Why is Head Start important to your family, community, or profession?
- What services or supports have made the biggest difference?
- How would children and families be affected if program quality or services were reduced?

Add 2-3 sentences describing your experience *or copy and paste as is.*



Option 2:

My child benefited from developmental screenings

Why this matters

Head Start currently requires developmental screenings to help identify learning, developmental, behavioral, and social-emotional concerns early. Removing minimum requirements for developmental screening, home visits, parent-teacher conferences, home-language support, and parent education would reduce the consistency of practices that support families with their child's learning and development. Early identification, shared goals and culturally responsive communication support participation and timely intervention. Timely intervention leads to better outcomes for children and cost savings for education and health systems in the long term.

Copy, Paste & Personalize Comment

I am the parent of a child who has benefited from developmental screenings.

Developmental screenings helped my family better understand my child's growth and development. Early screening gives children access to support before problems become more serious. I am concerned that reducing requirements for developmental screenings could delay identification of developmental concerns and reduce support for families.

Please maintain strong federal requirements for developmental screenings, parent participation, timely referrals, and follow-up services. Retain minimum frequencies, timelines and quality expectations with flexibility in delivery method.

Head Start works best when children and families receive support as early as possible.

Add your story

- Did your child receive speech services?
- Were you referred for an evaluation?
- Did a teacher identify a concern that helped your child?

Add 2-3 sentences describing your experience *or copy and paste as is.*



Option 3:

My family speaks a language other than English

Why this matters

Dual-language learner practices help children continue to develop their home language while learning English. Research shows the great benefits of speaking more than one language.

Copy, Paste & Personalize Comment

My family speaks a language other than English at home.

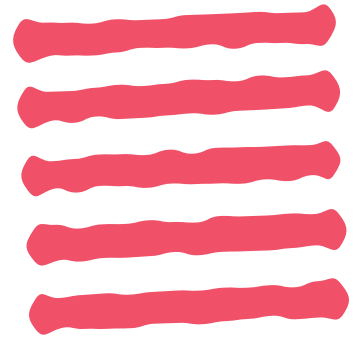
Head Start helps my child learn English while also respecting and supporting our home language and culture. Because the staff communicated with me in a way I could understand, I was able to participate in my child's education.

I am concerned that reducing language support requirements may make it harder for families like mine to stay informed and engaged. Research shows that being inclusive of home languages promotes better educational outcomes.

Please maintain strong requirements for language access, interpretation services, and support for dual-language learners.

Add your story

- What language does your family speak?
- How did bilingual staff help?
- How did your child benefit?



Option 4:

Head Start helped my family during a difficult financial time

Why this matters

Several proposals would remove or loosen federal protections around eligibility, the housing-cost adjustment, needs-based selection, and outreach. This will make it more difficult for families who need Head Start the most, especially those already affected by unstable housing, income, incomplete records, or language barriers, making it that much harder for them to qualify and enroll.

The families with the greatest need are also the families most likely to face documentation and access barriers.

Copy, Paste & Personalize Comment

Head Start helped my family during a difficult time when we needed affordable, high-quality services.

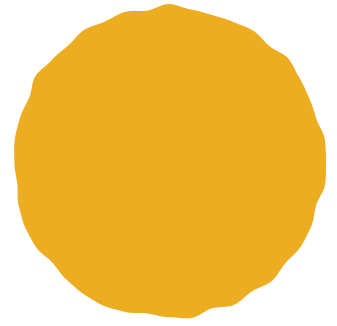
I am concerned that changes to eligibility requirements could create barriers for families who are already struggling with housing costs, unstable employment, or other financial challenges.

Head Start should continue prioritizing families with the greatest need and maintain flexibility for documenting eligibility. Preserve alternative verification, housing-cost flexibility, needs-based selection, and active outreach.

Please preserve policies that help vulnerable families access services quickly and fairly.

Add your story

- Did you struggle to find child care?
- Did Head Start help you work or attend school?
- Did you experience housing instability?



Option 5:

My child's teacher made a difference

Why this matters

Rescinding wage and benefit standards without an alternative workforce strategy may intensify vacancies and turnover. Removing staff to child ratios, training, coaching, and credential expectations may also weaken safety, consistency, and competency. Children benefit from consistent relationships with caring and experienced educators. Stable, prepared staff support consistent relationships, classroom availability, safety, and service quality.

Copy, Paste & Personalize Comment

My child's teachers are one of the most important reasons Head Start has been successful for our family.

Children thrive when they have stable relationships with qualified and caring teachers. Frequent turnover can disrupt learning, trust, and consistency for young children. It is important that teachers in the classroom have the support needed to maintain quality care and safety for children.

I am concerned that reducing workforce standards without providing another strategy to support recruitment and retention could make staffing challenges worse. Not having federally established ratio and group-size standards and relying on varying state requirements will affect classroom consistency, quality, and safety.

Please protect policies that support a stable and qualified Head Start workforce. Pair flexibility with adequate funding, phased standards, regional labor-market recognition, and targeted waivers that protect enrollment.

Add your story

- How long has your child known their teacher?
- How has that relationship helped your child?



Option 6:

I served on Policy Council or Parent Leadership

Why it matters

Greater local discretion requires stronger transparency, not weaker governance. Policy Council, governing body, fiscal reporting, internal controls and continuous-improvement systems help ensure decisions remain centered on children and families. Parents need meaningful influence over program design, budgets, and service changes.

Copy, Paste & Personalize Comment

I have participated in parent leadership and believe families should continue to have a meaningful voice in Head Start programs.

Parent participation helps ensure decisions remain focused on children and families. Accountability and transparency are essential when public funds are used to provide services.

I am concerned about reducing governance and accountability requirements that support parent involvement.

Please maintain strong parent governance and accountability protections including reporting, monitoring, and corrective action requirements.

Add your story

- Did Policy Council help you become involved?
- Did you learn leadership skills?
- Did you help improve program services?

Submit Your Comment!

How to Submit Your Comment

Comments must be submitted by October 6, 2026

Docket ACF-2026-0595 | RIN 0970-AD30

Click Here: [Reducing Federal BClurden for Head Start Programs](#)

1 Open the Proposed Rule

Reducing Federal Burden for Head Start Programs

A Proposed Rule by the Children and Families Administration on 08/07/2026

This document has a comment period that ends in 47 days. (10/06/2026)

SUBMIT A PUBLIC COMMENT

2458 comments received. [View posted comments](#)

2 Complete the Comment Form

You are submitting an official comment to Regulations.gov.

regulations.gov
close comment form

Thank you for taking the time to create a comment. Your input is important.

Once you have filled in the required fields below you can preview and/or submit your comment to the ACF for review. All comments are considered public and will be posted online once the ACF has reviewed them.

You can view [alternative ways to comment](#) or you may also comment via Regulations.gov at <https://www.regulations.gov/commenton/ACF-2026-0595-0001>

Comments are due 2026-10-06.

Change Comment Recipient

Comment *

Upload File(s)

+ Add a file

Note: You can attach your comment as a file and/or attach supporting documents to your comment. [Attachment Requirements.](#)

Copy (Ctrl + C) and paste (Ctrl + V) the comment you would like to leave above and edit to customize your response.

2 Complete the Comment Form (continued)

The screenshot shows a web form for submitting a comment. At the top, there is an "Email" field with a red arrow pointing to it. Below the field is a note: "this will NOT be posted on regulations.gov". Underneath is a checkbox labeled "Opt to receive email confirmation of submission and tracking number?". Below this is a section titled "Tell us about yourself! I am... ★" with three radio button options: "An Individual" (circled in red), "An Organization", and "Anonymous" (circled in red). Below these options is a privacy statement: "You are filing a document into an official docket. Any personal information included in your comment text and/or uploaded attachment(s) may be publicly viewable on the web." Below the statement is a checkbox labeled "I read and understand the statement above." (circled in red). At the bottom, there is a red arrow pointing to a "SUBMIT COMMENT" button, which is also outlined in red. To the right of the button is a "Preview Comment" link.

Input your email and check the box to opt into receiving email confirmation.

Click the box as an individual or anonymous if you would prefer your comment remain anonymous.

Check the privacy statement box and **click SUBMIT COMMENT**.