Professional Development Plan

It is the intent of Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council, Head Start/Early Head Start program to provide well qualified staff in order to ensure the delivery of high quality comprehensive services to children and families. The quality of these services depends on the qualifications of program staff. The agency goal is to make every effort to employ staff who possess the qualifications relative to his/her position.

Continuing education is of prime importance, not only to adhere to changing mandates and regulations, but to meet each staff’s personal goals that directly relate to his/her capabilities and job performance. Funds are included in the Head Start and Early Head Start budget specifically for this purpose.

Based on the Head Start Reauthorization Act, each employee is required to complete an Individual Professional Development Survey reflective of his/her current position. This document reflects the current professional qualifications for each position, a statement regarding the employee’s current qualifications which may or may not meet program or ACF requirements. The employee must also indicate if he/she desires to pursue further professional development. Employees are given the choice of whether or not to set and work toward a professional goal. An individual conference with the compliance manager may be requested to discuss methods and timeframes for meeting the individual’s professional development goals and how their decision will impact compliance and the organizational structure of the program. The form also indicates if the staff is currently enrolled in a program/course, the name of the institution, number of credit hours required to obtain the desired degree/certification and the number of relevant credit hours completed to date. The compliance manager will recommend whether or not the plan is feasible and addresses job-related requirements, and the Head Start/Early Head Start Director will approve or disapprove the recommendation.

Professional development for certain staff will be reflective of requirements that are included in the Head Start Act (December 12, 2007) and/or by the Northwest Tennessee HS/EHS program. Note – quote from the Head Start Act is in italics.

* **Head Start Classroom Teacher** – Each classroom will have one teacher who has demonstrated competency to perform functions that include:

  a) planning and implementing learning experiences that advance the intellectual and physical development of children, including improving the readiness of children for school by developing their literacy, phonemic, and print awareness, their understanding and use of language, their understanding and use of increasingly complex and varied vocabulary, their appreciation of books, their understanding of early math and science, their problem-solving abilities, and their approaches to learning;

  b) establishing and maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment;

  c) supporting the social and emotional development of children; and

  d) encouraging the involvement of families of the children in the Head Start program and supporting the development of relationships between children and their families.
**Degree Requirements** – No later than September 30, 2013, Head Start center-based teachers must have:

a) a baccalaureate or advanced degree in early childhood education; or
b) a baccalaureate or advanced degree and coursework equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education, with experience teaching preschool-age children.

**Continuing Education** - Effective September 30, 2009 Head Start teachers must have 15 clock hours annually of professional development. Management staff will ensure that the annual training plan incorporates training opportunities to meet this requirement.

Effective October 1, 2011 all Head Start teachers must have

a) an associate degree in early childhood education;
b) an associate degree in a related field, coursework equivalent to a major, and experience in teaching pre-school age children;

*Early Head Start Teachers* - Effective September 30, 2010 Early Head Start teachers must have:

a) an infant and toddler child development credential; or
b) be trained in early childhood development

*Additional Staff* – No later than September 30, 2013 all Head Start education coordinators, including those that serve as curriculum specialists, nationwide in center-based programs will:

a) have the capacity to offer assistance to other teachers in the implementation and adaptation of curricula to the group and individual needs of children in a Head Start classroom; and
b) have a baccalaureate or advanced degree in early childhood education; or
c) a baccalaureate or advanced degree and coursework equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education, with experience teaching preschool-age children.

*Teaching Assistants* – No later than September 30, 2013 Head Start teaching assistants must have:

a) at least a child development associate credential;
b) be enrolled in a program leading to an associate or baccalaureate degree; or
c) be enrolled in a child development associate credential program to be completed within 2 years (new staff).

**Service Requirements** – As mandated in the Head Start Act, Section 648 C.6, individuals who receive financial assistance to pursue a degree shall:
(a) teach or work in a Head Start program for a minimum of 3 years after receiving the degree; or
(b) repay the total or a prorated amount of the financial assistance received based on the length of service completed after receiving the degree (Example: Program pays $3,000; staff works 2 years after receiving financial assistance, employee would be required to pay back $1,000).

A statement to this effect is included on the Individual Professional Development Request Form that is signed by the employee seeking Training/Technical Assistance (T/TA) financial assistance from the program.

Center coordinators/area specialists will counsel and document with center staff who do not have or are approaching the deadline for meeting position qualifications as outlined in the Head Start Act. The counseling documentation will be submitted to the compliance manager for follow-up.

Supervisory personnel, management, and the human resources administrator will be made aware of the outcome of this process and will assist in recommendation to transfer to another position for which he/she is qualified, if available, or to recommend termination.

Northwest Tennessee Head Start/Early Head Start will make every effort to ensure that all program staff has an opportunity to attain their individual professional development goal that, dependent on his/her position, may or may not be required in the Head Start Act. To facilitate this endeavor, a professional development committee will be appointed and will meet periodically to set priorities for providing financial assistance to those staff who submit an Individual Professional Development Survey indicating a desire to increase their professional qualification and to review program progress in meeting Head Start Act and program goals. This committee will:

- examine current staff qualifications (numbers and positions – not people)
- determine number of staff who are currently enrolled in a program or coursework
- establish criteria for staff electing not to meet the required qualifications and propose alternatives
- determine number of staff who have requested additional professional development
- make recommendations to prioritize implementation based on program requirements, Head Start Act requirements and availability of funds
- determine schedule and method of repayment as required by the Act.

Every effort will be made to hire staff who already meets the professional qualification for the position. In the event there is not an applicant with the required credential the voluntary professional development process will be explained to him/her. The center coordinator or area specialist will complete a counseling form at new hire that indicates his/her understanding of the required qualification. The counseling form will be signed by the center coordinator/area specialist and the new staff. Periodic counseling forms will be completed to monitor progress. New staff must request T/TA assistance to obtain the required credential beginning the first semester following his/her employment upon written recommendation of the center.
coordinator/area specialist. If the probationary period ends in the middle of a semester, the staff must complete a Professional Development Request indicating his/her intent to take specific courses with a start date of the next semester. Staff requesting specific courses to meet the eighteen (18) early childhood credit hours, courses to meet the requirement for the Child Development Associate (CDA) renewal, or any other desired course outside of an associate (AA) or bachelor’s (BS/BA) program in early childhood must attach a copy of each course description and syllabus to the professional development request for T/TA assistance. This will be reviewed to ascertain that the course meets the classroom age setting requirements. Staff taking courses at their own expense should consult with the early childhood education manager to be sure their selected course meets the same requirement.

The timeframe for new staff to obtain requirements are:

- CDA – 18 months from date of hire (PreSchool or Infant/Toddler)
- AA ECE – 3 years from date of hire or after receiving CDA
- 18 credit hours ECE – 2 years from date of hire
- **BS/AS Degree – 3 years from date of hire or after receiving AA ECE**

In return for tuition/fees paid on behalf of the degree/qualification seeking student, the enrollee will agree to do the following:

- Apply for available grant monies and apply grant funds toward tuition and books; provide the program with document on grant application, statement of application for grant monies and receipt of funds.
- Search for lowest book prices (when applicable).
- Enroll in classes that are scheduled outside of working hours.
- Attend all classes.
- Provide the program with grades at the end of each semester or course.
- Refund the program for course costs of grade is below “C”.

Local state colleges and universities will be utilized to the extent possible; i.e. Jackson State Community College, Dyersburg State Community College, University of Memphis and University of Tennessee at Martin.

Each employee will be responsible for submitting his/her final grades as courses are completed, as well as the complete transcript and degree when awarded. Qualification status will not be recognized until documentation is received. Pay rates associated with credential changes will be effective at the beginning of the next program year. Staff on disciplinary probation will not be approved for T/TA assistance. From the date of professional development plan amendment a salary will not be paid above a BS/BA for a Head Start Teacher; an AA for a Head Start Assistant Teacher or Early Head Start Teacher/Family Advocate; and a CDA for a Floater.

The Head Start/Early Head Start Compliance Manager is responsible for implementing professional development activities, working with area colleges and universities to establish or enhance existing collaborative efforts to meet professional development targets. The compliance manager works with the education specialist, area specialists and center coordinators to monitor progress toward individual goals. Center coordinators complete regular, on-going professional development counseling forms for each staff engaged in a program to attain qualifications. In addition to educational goals, individual staff improvement plans formulated during the annual
performance evaluations are utilized to assess both individual and program training needs. A professional development file is maintained for all teaching and center supervisory staff at the Head Start central office.

Failure to adhere to the requirements of the Head Start Act professional development qualifications based on the schedule provided in this plan and in the counseling statement will result in the employee being allowed to resign, and if the opportunity to resign is not taken the employee will be terminated by June 1 of the year of the requirement deadline date.