



Our mission is to coalesce, inspire, and support the Head Start field as a leader in early childhood development and education.

---

November 4, 2022

TO:

Katie Hamm  
Acting Director  
Office of Head Start

CC: Tala Hooban, Deputy Director, Office of Head Start  
Adia Brown, OHS Monitoring Lead, Office of Head Start

RE: ACF-IM-HS-22-08 Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Monitoring Process for Head Start and Early Head Start Recipients

Dear Ms. Hamm,

On behalf of the Head Start community, I am writing to request that participation in the CLASS video pilot outlined in ACF-IM-HS-22-08: Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Monitoring Process for Head Start and Early Head Start Recipients be optional for programs receiving CLASS reviews in FY2023.

**Given the workforce crisis in Head Start and Early Head Start, we request that you allow programs to opt-out of the pilot in favor of a traditional on-site CLASS review if the pilot would cause undue burden in time or resources.**

We believe the use of video for CLASS observations is a good idea and many grant recipients are excited about it, but the timing of this pilot poses a significant challenge for many other recipients. The pilot will require programs to have additional staff and technology resources available at a time when baseline staffing needs are not being met and it does not appear that additional resources will be made available to grant recipients to conduct and submit the video.

According to a [September 2022](#) survey, we estimate that 17% of Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms nationwide were unable to open, mostly due to staff shortages, at the start of this program year. Many programs find themselves unable to fill staff vacancies, with few candidates applying, many not appearing for their scheduled interviews, and some even failing



Our mission is to coalesce, inspire, and support the Head Start field as a leader in early childhood development and education.

---

to show once hired. As programs continue to lose existing staff due to the difficult working conditions, the problem only continues to grow and staff are spread thinner than ever.

To be clear, the Head Start community is not looking to avoid monitoring and we are excited that the Office of Head Start is experimenting with new technology and processes. However, at this time when grant recipients are struggling to find the staff needed to meet the needs of their community's most vulnerable children and families, many simply cannot take on the additional burden of reallocating staff to conduct the video pilot.

We recently heard the following directly from a grant recipient in response to the pilot, and this is not the first or only program to contact us with concerns.

*"I just got off a meeting with Dayna and Teachstone. I love the idea of a CLASS pilot but the burden for recording and uploading video is going to be a great burden for programs. The steps are labor intensive and cumbersome. I don't think OHS knows how bad it really is."*

The same person elaborated on the logistical and resource issues the pilot poses:

*"We are being asked to use our own technology with the exception of a microphone being mailed to us by Teachstone. We are being told to use laptop or tablet cameras for recording. We also have to have a certain bandwidth to upload the videos. We have many partners with poor internet. We were told to set up our own hot spots. I have one IT person for 982 children. Teachstone's solution was to let the teacher set up the technology and do the uploads! What a joke! We are understaffed and our teachers are stretched to the limit."*

Programs are very grateful that OHS will limit the use of CLASS scores this program year for program improvement; however, for some programs to assume the responsibility to conduct the videotaping is more than they can manage. We hope that, for these programs, the Office of Head Start could leverage the existing federal contract in place to conduct annual CLASS reviews on-site.

**Therefore, we reiterate our request to allow programs selected for the CLASS video pilot this program year to freely opt-out of this experience.** With the option for other programs to opt-in, as specified in the Information Memorandum, we hope this will allow for an adequate number of pilot participants while not assigning the extra cost, time, and effort to all programs.



Our mission is to coalesce, inspire, and support the Head Start field as a leader in early childhood development and education.

---

We appreciate all the flexibility you have afforded programs as they navigate these tough times and we hope you will consider this request to ease the burden of those programs who are struggling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Yasmina Vinci'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot above the 'i'.

Yasmina Vinci  
Executive Director  
National Head Start Association