



January 20, 2023

Administration for Children and Families
Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation
300 C Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20201
Attn: Mary B. Jones, ACF/OPRE Certifying Officer

RE: Submission for Office of Management and Budget Review; Case Studies of Child Care and Development Fund Lead Agencies' Consumer Education Strategies (New Collection)

To whom it may concern:

On behalf of the Head Start community, the National Head Start Association (NHSA) welcomes the opportunity to provide input on the proposed Submission for Office of Management and Budget Review: Case Studies of Child Care and Development Fund Lead Agencies' Consumer Education Strategies (New Collection) ([Federal Register, Vol. 87, p. 78687, December 22, 2022](#)). NHSA is a nonprofit organization committed to the belief that every child, regardless of circumstances at birth, has the ability to succeed in life. NHSA is the voice for more than 800,000 children and their families, 250,000 staff, and 1,600 Head Start grant recipients.

NHSA supports efforts to gather additional qualitative data about how and why parents make specific child care and early education (CCEE) choices for their children. The proposal presents an important opportunity to analyze consumer education strategies aimed at parents, and the additional data will add important context that can help programs and policymakers understand and reach families from diverse backgrounds and with differing needs. We are writing to **request that at least one of the six planned case studies includes a Head Start program that also utilizes CCDF funding.**

In order to have a full understanding of how parents choose a particular early learning setting for their children, it is important that a complete set of their options is examined. This includes Head Start and Early Head Start ("Head Start") for children ages birth to five. With a federal budget of \$12 billion per year, Head Start serves 822,000 children in every corner of the country.

As currently drafted, the proposal appears to be overlooking Head Start as one of the most widely-utilized early learning options that parents consider when making their CCEE decisions. It is

important to note that many Head Start programs leverage CCDF funding to expand their hours and days of service to better meet the needs of working parents.

Partnerships between Head Start and CCDF can be found across the country; braiding and blending of funding increases the options available for parents while also leveraging scarce CCEE dollars in an efficient way. Strict eligibility criteria have driven many Head Start programs to seek creative ways to recruit children and families; whether it is community events, social media, partnerships with pediatricians and health clinics and much more, the breadth of tactics used by Head Start to reach and inform parents is vast. Coordinated intake with CCDF and state-funded programs has become more common as well as more nuanced, able to appropriately inform parents of their options in many states and localities.

Examples of Head Start programs that utilize CCDF and provide innovative ways of reaching out to parents include:

- In Texas, the urgent need to help essential workers identify available CCEE slots for their children at the start of the pandemic drove a rapid creation of a unified portal for parents that includes both child care as well as Head Start. Parents in need of early learning services are able to enter the criteria that matter to them, such as location and hours, and find available options. Head Start programs in that community integrate CCDF funding to expand hours of service to meet the needs of working parents. The portal was a significant step forward for both parents and early learning providers, and a next-generation 2.0 version of the web portal is currently in process.
- In Minnesota, most children eligible for Head Start also qualify for its Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), which is state-led but administered through counties. Head Start programs apply to become eligible CCAP providers and have access to the unified state online system (MNBenefits), which they use to help families fill out applications and monitor the progress of the applications.
- In south Florida, one large grant recipient uses Florida's CCDF program (called School Readiness) funding in its Head Start program along with state voluntary pre-k funding. Their social service staff works with parents during the Head Start / Early Head Start intake process, showing them how to also apply for School Readiness, which enables longer days so that parents can go to work.

In short, Head Start is a significant and trusted choice that parents consider as they navigate the larger universe of CCEE. This reality supports the inclusion of a Head Start perspective in this proposal to provide a greater breadth of CCEE sites in order to attain a better understanding of the spectrum of promising practices within the field.

Further, the Head Start program structure is well-equipped for the types of qualitative interviews proposed in this information collection. One of the hallmarks of Head Start is continuous family engagement, in which staff work to identify and address the needs of families, and design family engagement plans that support each family's well-being and offer knowledge and skills about child

development and parenting. Head Start programs are also required to have parent advisory committees composed of parents of currently enrolled children in the program. These individuals are already active in the Head Start program and ideally placed to participate in the focus groups described in the proposal.

The proposed case studies seek to gather examples that illustrate not only how parents are educated about the CCEE choices available to them, but also what resonates with them in the process, and why they make the choices they do. NHSA believes the scope and breadth of these case studies should go beyond strictly CCDF funding and include others who provide CCEE services to families. Head Start plays a significant role in doing this across the country, while also utilizing CCDF funding, and its perspective and strategies can contribute to a fuller understanding of parental choice and decision-making. As such, **NHSA requests that at least one of the six planned case studies includes a Head Start program that also utilizes CCDF funding.**

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed CCEE qualitative research project. If you have questions or would like more information on Head Start programs that would be a good fit for this research project, please contact me at yvinci@nhsa.org.

Sincerely,

/ Yasmina Vinci /

Yasmina Vinci
Executive Director
National Head Start Association