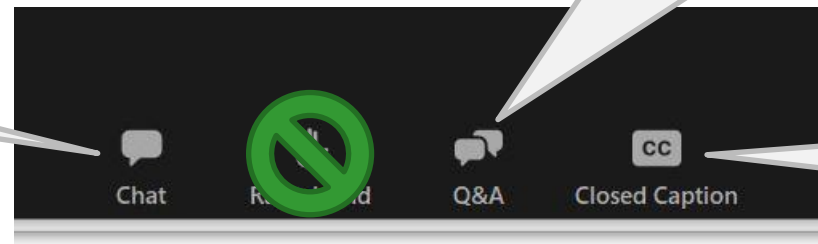# FY26 FA1 Information Session

December 16, 2025

ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Office of Head Start

Housekeeping Items

- All participants are in listen-only mode

- Closed Captioning is available

- Participate in discussion via the Chat

- Submit all questions via Q&A

Ask your questions here.

Participate in discussion with the presenters here.

Closed Captions can be turned on or off here.

ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Office of Head Start

Program Design, Management, and Improvement

Program Design and Strategic Planning

Program Governance

Staffing and Staff Member Supports

Fiscal Infrastructure

Budget Development, Implementation, and Oversight

Comprehensive Financial Management Structure and Systems

Facilities and Equipment Management Systems

FA1: Program Systems Review (FA1)
Content Overview

Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance

Eligibility

Selection

Enrollment

Supporting Safe and Healthy Learning Environments

Safe and Sanitary Learning Environments

Education and Child Development

Head Start

Focus Area 1: Program Systems Review (FA1) Overview

Through the FA1 Review, the Office of Head Start (OHS) will learn about the strength of each grant recipient's management systems. OHS is conducting its program systems review early in the five-year grant period to ensure that grant recipients have a solid foundation to provide high-quality program services. This document details the Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) key program systems included in the FA1 Review.

Program Design, Management, and Improvement

- Use of data to inform program design, planning, and improvement
- Governing body and policy council oversight of program operations
- Recruitment, supervision, and retention of a qualified staff team

Supporting Safe and Healthy Learning Environments

- Safety in staffing, facilities, and equipment
- Developmentally appropriate teaching and home visiting practices

Fiscal Infrastructure

- Budget development, implementation, and oversight
- Meeting the administrative and reporting requirements of the Head Start grant
- Internal controls to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse of Federal funds
- Adequate insurance for the Head Start program to mitigate identified risk

Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance

- Ensuring that families are eligible for Head Start services
- Selection of children and families who will benefit from Head Start services
- Maintaining full enrollment and promoting enrollment of children with disabilities

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What to Expect: FY26 FA1 Review

FA1 Review Approach

The FA1 Review is a three-day review event that includes on-site and virtual activities. All review events will be led by a Review Lead and a team of reviewers.

Before the Review

- Grant recipients will be notified in summer 2025 if they receive an FY26 FA1 Review. All notification will be sent through Head Start Enterprise System (HSES) Correspondence.
- OHS will confirm the date of the review 45 days in advance. A small number of reviews are unannounced and will not have a 45-day confirmation letter.
- A Review Lead will schedule a virtual planning touchpoint with the Head Start director and the fiscal officer. The planning touchpoint provides an opportunity to discuss questions, share requests for information, and confirm the three-day schedule.

During the Review

Grant recipients will showcase their strengths and practices through the FA1 Review activities, including:

Touchpoints with program leaders prior to the review and at the end of each review day

Kick-off meeting with director, fiscal officer, and program managers

Data testing to review fiscal transactions and eligibility files

Discussions with program staff members, the governing body, and the policy council

Data tours with directors, fiscal officer, and managers

Explorations in centers, classrooms, and home-based group socializations

After the Review

The FA1 Review ends with a final touchpoint on the last day of the review. All documentation must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on the final day of the review to be considered. Following the review, OHS will issue a report with information about the grant recipient's performance. OHS will use the review results to inform training and technical assistance support.

FY26 FA1
Monitoring
Review Guide
PDMI

FY26 FA1 Review Monitoring Review Guide
Program Design, Management, and Improvement (PDMI) Monitoring Review Guide

The *Program Design, Management, and Improvement (PDMI) Monitoring Review Guide* outlines what to expect on the upcoming Focus Area 1: Program Systems Review (FA2). This guide shares information about the key topics that review teams will explore and monitoring activities they will use during the FA1.

Through the PDMI content area, the Office of Head Start (OHS) will learn how grant recipients use data to inform program design, planning, and improvement. Grant recipients will also demonstrate how it supports and collaborates with its governing body and policy council to ensure effective oversight and governance of the Head Start grant. A third area of focus is approaches for staff member supervision and support across all service areas.

PDMI: Key Topics

This section shares the topics typically reviewed through the FA1 PDMI monitoring activities. Review teams may request additional information during the monitoring event, as needed.

★ *Program Design and Strategic Planning:* How the grant recipient uses data to inform program design, planning, and improvement. This includes:

  ✓ **Self-assessment and ongoing monitoring:** How grant recipients use program data (e.g., self-assessment and ongoing monitoring data) to monitor program performance, evaluate progress toward goals, and continuously improve their program

  ✓ **Community assessment:** How grant recipients use their community assessment data to understand and remain responsive to community needs

★ *Program Governance:* How the governing body and policy council use their expertise and experience to provide oversight and ensure the grant recipient provides quality services for children and families. This includes:

  ✓ **Governing body membership and active engagement:** Demonstrate how the grant recipient ensures the governing body maintains the required membership, provides training to members, and uses members' expertise to support the program

  ✓ **Sharing information with the governing body:** Show the types of data the grant recipient shares with the governing body, and how the governing body members use the data they receive to inform their oversight responsibilities

  ✓ **Policy council composition and active engagement:** Demonstrate how the grant recipient ensures the policy council maintains the required composition, provides training to members, and actively engages members in setting direction for the

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ALIGNED MONITORING SYSTEM

Head Start

Program Design, Management, & Improvement (PDMI)

PDMI: Key topics

This section shares the topics typically reviewed through the FA1 PDMI monitoring activities. Review teams may request additional information during the monitoring event, as needed.

PDMI includes 3 sections:

Program Design and Strategic Planning: How the grant recipient uses data to inform program design, planning, and improvement. This includes:

- ★ **Self-assessment and ongoing monitoring:** How grant recipients use program data (e.g., self-assessment and ongoing monitoring data) to monitor program performance, evaluate progress toward goals, and continuously improve their program
- ★ **Community assessment:** How grant recipients use their community assessment data to understand and remain responsive to community needs

Head Start

PDMI: Key Topics (continued)

Program Governance: How the governing body and policy council use their expertise and experience to provide oversight and ensure the grant recipient provides quality services for children and families. This includes:

★ **Governing body membership and active engagement:** Demonstrate how the grant recipient ensures the governing body maintains the required membership, provides training to members, and uses members' expertise to support the program

★ **Sharing information with the governing body:** Show the types of data the grant recipient shares with the governing body, and how the governing body members use the data they receive to inform their oversight responsibilities

★ **Policy council composition and active engagement:** Demonstrate how the grant recipient ensures the policy council maintains the required composition, provides training to members, and actively engages members in setting direction for the program

★ **Policy council information sharing:** Show the types of data the grant recipient shares with the policy council, and how the policy council members use the data they receive to inform their guidance of the program direction

PDMI: Key Topics (continued)

Staffing and Staff Member Supports: How the grant recipient recruits and retains a team of qualified staff members and provides effective supervision for staff members. This includes:

★ **Management structure:** How the grant recipient's leadership team provides effective management and oversight for every service area

★ **Ongoing supervision:** How the grant recipient regularly supervises staff members' performance and provides feedback to support their continuous improvement

★ **Staff qualifications:** Demonstrate that center-based Early Head Start teachers, center-based Head Start Preschool lead teachers, home visitors, and family services staff members possess the appropriate qualifications for their roles

What types of monitoring activities are included?

The FA1 PDMI content area includes the following monitoring activities :

Management Team Kickoff
meeting with grant recipient leadership team and review team members to start the review event

Data tours
to review how managers track and use data relating to program design, human resources, supervision and ongoing monitoring across content areas

Discussions
with education staff, governing body, and policy council members to understand supervision, governance and oversight

These activities describe the ways the review team will engage with the grant recipient to learn about the FA1 Review's PDMI topic areas

Management Team Kickoff

Participants:
- ✓ Director(s)
- ✓ Service area managers
- ✓ Fiscal officer
- ✓ Monitoring team

Bring to meeting
- ✓ Organizational chart
- ✓ Community assessment data

Data Tours

PDMI topics are covered as part of the following:
- ✓ Human Resources
- ✓ Supporting Safe and Healthy Learning Environments
- ✓ Education and Child Development
- ✓ Family and Community Engagement
- ✓ Program Management

Discussions

3 Discussions:
- ✓ Education Staff – Teachers and home visitors observed during *Classroom Explorations* or *Socialization Explorations* participate
- ✓ Governing Body
- ✓ Policy Council

Head Start

FY26 FA1 Monitoring Review Guide - Fiscal

FY26 FA1 Review Monitoring Review Guide

Fiscal Infrastructure

The *Fiscal Infrastructure Monitoring Review Guide* outlines what to expect on the upcoming Focus Area 1: Program Systems Review (FA1). This guide shares information about the key topics review teams will explore and monitoring activities they will use during the Fiscal Infrastructure portions of the FA1.

Through the FA1 Fiscal Infrastructure content area, the Office of Head Start (OHS) learns how each grant recipient maintains integrity of fiscal operations and mitigates the risk of fraud, waste, and abuse. Grant recipients will demonstrate how they develop and implement their financial management system and the internal controls they have put in place to ensure accurate, timely, and efficient fiscal operations, oversight, and reporting.

Before the Review Begins

To support an efficient review, grant recipients preparing for the FA1 monitoring event will be asked to provide certain fiscal documentation before the beginning of the review, including:

- ✓ Most recent audit
- ✓ Subrecipient/delegate contracts
- ✓ Fiscal policies and procedures
- ✓ Detailed general ledger from the most recently completed program year

Grant recipients will receive details about how to provide these documents prior to the review.

Fiscal Infrastructure: Key Topics

This section shares the topics typically reviewed through the FA1 Fiscal Infrastructure monitoring activities. Review teams may request additional information during the monitoring event, as needed.

Budget Development, Implementation, and Oversight: The process the grant recipient uses for developing and maintaining its program budget. This includes:

- ★ *Budget development:* Demonstrate how the program develops its budget and engages others in the process
- ★ *Tracking budgeted to actual costs:* Show how the program identifies and manages variances between its actual and budgeted costs

Comprehensive Financial Management Structure, and Systems: The grant recipient's system for

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Fiscal Infrastructure: Key Topics

This section shares the topics typically reviewed through the FA1 FIS monitoring activities. Review teams may request additional information during the monitoring event, as needed.

Fiscal Infrastructure includes 5 sections:

Budget Development, Implementation & Oversight: The process the grant recipient uses for developing and maintaining its program budget. This includes:

★ **Budget development:** Demonstrate how the program develops its budget and engages others in the process

★ **Tracking budgeted to actual costs:** Show how the program identifies and manages variances between its actual and budgeted costs

Comprehensive Financial Management Structure & Systems: The grant recipient's system for maintaining financial records, generating reports and financial data information needed to manage the program, and safeguarding Federal funds. This includes:

★ **Accounting system:** Demonstrate how the grant recipient uses its accounting system to manage fiscal processes and document and report financial information

★ **Payroll records:** Review payroll records with the review team to show how the grant recipient ensures it accurately charges personnel costs to the grant award

★ **Financial record-keeping:** Share financial records to show how the grant recipient accurately tracks Head Start program expenses

Fiscal Infrastructure: Key Topics (continued)

Internal Controls: The policies, practices, and systems the grant recipient has put in place to maintain effective control over all funds, property, and assets. This includes:

★ **Qualifications:** How the fiscal officer's education and experience help provide effective fiscal oversight

★ **Policies and procedures:** Provide the written policies and procedures the grant recipient has put in place to reduce the risk of fraud, waste or abuse of Head Start funds. These should address topics such as fiscal standards of conduct; conflicts of interest; segregation of fiscal duties; whistleblower protection; and how key fiscal processes are carried out

★ **Payment Management System drawdowns:** Demonstrate how the grant recipient minimizes the amount of time between drawing down and spending Federal funds for the Head Start program

★ **Reconciliation:** Walk through the program's process for reconciling its accounts and provide the review team with a recent bank reconciliation

★ **Ongoing monitoring:** Show how the grant recipient monitors its own fiscal operations and financial management system and addresses issues it identifies

Fiscal Infrastructure: Key Topics (continued)

Allowable costs: The written procedures the grant recipient has implemented to ensure costs charged to the Head Start award are necessary, reasonable, and appropriately allocated. This includes:

★ **Cost allocation plan:** Share the grant recipient's written cost allocation plan and demonstrate the process for identifying shared costs, establishing a reasonable basis for costs allocated to the Head Start award, and implementing the plan

★ **Procurement:** Show the grant recipient's procurement policies and provide documentation to verify how procurement is conducted

Facilities & Equipment Management: How the grant recipient identifies and mitigates risk, including by maintaining appropriate property loss, casualty, and liability insurance. This includes:

★ **Insurance:** Share a summary of the grant recipient's insurance documents describing the insurance the grant recipient maintains

Before the review begins

To support an efficient review, grant recipients preparing for the FA1 monitoring event will be asked to provide certain fiscal documentation before the beginning of the review, including:

- ✓ Most recent audit
- ✓ Subrecipient/delegate contracts
- ✓ Fiscal policies and procedures
- ✓ Detailed general ledger from the most recently completed program year

What types of monitoring activities are included?

The FA1 FIS content area includes the following monitoring activities :

Fiscal Data Tour

Through this onsite data tour, the review team will ask the grant recipient to share the data, reports, and tools it uses to support its day-to-day oversight of the program's financial management systems and fiscal operations.

The grant recipient should be prepared to show real-time data and documents with review team members.

Transaction testing

The review team will also request to review actual transactions to understand how the grant recipient implements its policies and procedures.

The reviewer will complete this data testing independently but may reach out to the grant recipient's fiscal team for questions or clarifications.

These activities describe the ways the review team will engage with the grant recipient to learn about the FA1 Review's Fiscal Infrastructure topic areas

Data Tours

Participants:
- ✓ Fiscal officer
- ✓ Head Start director (Day 1)

Types of data shared:
- ✓ Financial management system
- ✓ General ledger
- ✓ Procurement procedures
- ✓ Budget-to-actual report
- ✓ Recent transactions
- ✓ Insurance documentation
- ✓ Personnel record-keeping system
- ✓ Fiscal policies and procedures
- ✓ Cost allocation plan
- ✓ Bank reconciliations
- ✓ Payment Management System (PMS) drawdowns

Transaction Testing

- ✓ Sample of transactions executed over the past 2 years
- ✓ Sample includes a variety of fiscal documentation (personnel)
- ✓ Review team will work independently to review transactions
- ✓ Reviewer may reach out for clarifications

FY26 FA1 Monitoring Review Guide - SSHLE

FY26 FA1 Review Monitoring Review Guide
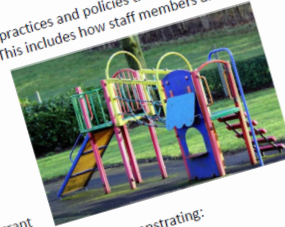### Supporting Safe & Healthy Learning Environments (SSHLE)

The *Supporting Safe & Health Learning Environments (SSHLE) Monitoring Review Guide* outlines what to expect on the upcoming Focus Area 1: Program Systems Review (FA1). This guide shares information about the key topics review teams will explore and monitoring activities they will use during the SSHLE portions of the FA1.

Through the SSHLE portion of the FA1, the Office of Head Start (OHS) learns how grant recipients provide children with safe and nurturing learning environments to support children's healthy development. The review team will monitor to ensure the physical environment is safe, including facilities, equipment and materials children use. The review team will also learn how staff members implement the program's safety and hygiene procedures. Finally, the FA1 Review will focus on how education staff members promote safe, healthy learning environments for children through responsive teaching practices that foster trust, emotional security, communication, and support the needs of all children.

SSHLE: Key Topics

This section shares the topics typically reviewed through the FA1 SSHLE monitoring activities. Review teams may request additional information during the monitoring event, as needed.

Safe and Sanitary Environments: This section focuses on how the grant recipient maintains safety in staffing, facilities, materials, and equipment through effective monitoring, policies, and procedures.

★ *Emergency preparedness:* Walk through the plans, practices and policies the grant recipient puts in place for managing emergencies. This includes how staff members are made aware of the plans, practices and policies they should implement in the event of an emergency.

★ *Background checks:* How the grant recipient tracks and completes all parts of background checks for all staff members within required timeframes

★ *Daily and ongoing safety checks:* How the grant recipient monitors its facilities, equipment and materials to ensure they are safe for children. This includes demonstrating:
- Grant recipient's approach to preventative maintenance
- ✓ Process for reporting incidents affecting children's health and safe
- ✓ Indoor and outdoor equipment and materials are clean and safe
- ✓ Facilities are free from pests, mold, pollutants, and safety hazards
- ✓ Grant recipient's current licensure meets state, local, and tribal regulations (as required)
- ✓ Grant recipient ensures children are not exposed to lead in water or paint
- ✓ How the grant recipient ensures children in any Head Start facilities

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SSHLE: Key Topics

This section shares the topics typically reviewed through the FA1 SSHLE monitoring activities. Review teams may request additional information during the monitoring event, as needed.

SSHLE includes 2 sections: Safe and Sanitary Environments & Healthy Learning Environments

Safe and Sanitary Environments: This section focuses on how the grant recipient maintains safety in staffing, facilities, materials, and equipment through effective monitoring, policies, and procedures.

★ *Emergency preparedness:* Walk through the plans, practices and policies the grant recipient puts in place for managing emergencies. This includes how staff members are made aware of the plans, practices and policies they should implement in the event of an emergency.

★ *Background checks:* How the grant recipient tracks and completes all parts of background checks for all staff members within required timeframes

SSHLE: Key topics (continued)

Safe and Sanitary Environments section continued:

★ *Daily and ongoing safety checks:* How the grant recipient monitors its facilities, equipment and materials to ensure they are safe for children *and* the grant recipient's approach to preventative maintenance
  - ✓ Process for reporting incidents affecting children's health and safety to OHS
  - ✓ Indoor and outdoor equipment and materials are clean and safe
  - ✓ Facilities are free from pests, mold, pollutants, and safety hazards
  - ✓ Grant recipient's current licensure meets state, local, and tribal regulations (as required)
  - ✓ How the grant recipient ensures children are not exposed to lead in water or paint in any Head Start facilities

★ *Safety and hygiene practices.* How the grant recipient implements safety and hygiene practices to keep children safe and healthy.
  - ✓ Hygienic practices and toothbrushing practices the grant recipient puts in place
  - ✓ How the grant recipient ensures safe sleeping environments for Early Head Start children
  - ✓ How staff members ensure awareness about children's food allergies
  - ✓ Types of active supervision practices the grant recipient implements to keep children safe

SSHLE: Key Topics (continued)

Education and Child Development: This section focuses on how the grant recipient provides safe, healthy learning environments through responsive, developmentally appropriate teaching and home visiting practices that meet all enrolled children's needs.

- ★ *Responsive teaching practices:* How education staff members provide responsive teaching practices that promote safe and healthy development and are tailored to meet the needs of all children. This includes demonstrating how education staff members:
  - ✓ Use teaching practices that foster trust and emotional security
  - ✓ Develop children's communication and language skills during learning experiences
  - ✓ Manage their classrooms in a way that supports children's engagement and social-emotional development
  - ✓ Provide developmentally appropriate schedules that enable children to have various experiences throughout the day

- ★ *Responsive home visits and socializations: (for home-based services)* Demonstrate how education staff members provide engaging home visits and group socialization experiences that promote parent engagement and extend children's learning. This includes showing how the grant recipient does the following:
  - ✓ Offers families the opportunity to help plan group socializations that are developmentally appropriate and align with the curriculum
  - ✓ Provides families with opportunities for meaningful shared experiences and to develop parenting skills during group socializations

Head Start

What types of monitoring activities are included?

The FA1 SSHLE content area includes the following monitoring activities :

Data tours with managers to learn about policies, practices and procedures programs put in place to maintain healthy and safe environments for children.

Discussions with education staff members to learn about the program's hygiene and safety practices and training.

Center, Classroom, and Socialization Explorations to observe how staff implement safety practices and create healthy learning environments for children.

These activities describe the ways the review team will engage with the grant recipient to learn about the FA1 Review's SSHLE topic areas

Data Tours

2 data tours address key topics
Staff are expected to share program data

- ✓ **Human Resources (HR)**
  HS director and HR manager participate; focus on background check process

- ✓ **Supporting Safe and Healthy Learning Environments**
  Health and/or facilities managers participate; focus on:
  - Safety plans & procedures
  - Procedures for reporting child health and safety incidents
  - Health and safety training plans
  - Ongoing monitoring

Discussions

Education Staff Discussion

- ✓ Education staff and home visitors participating in the various explorations participate in the Education Staff Discussions.

No preparation is needed for this discussion

Explorations

3 types of explorations

- ✓ **Centers**
- ✓ **Classrooms**
- ✓ **Socializations**

No preparation is needed for the explorations

Head Start

FY26 FA1 Monitoring Review Guide - ERSEA

FY26 FA1 Review Monitoring Review Guide
Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, Attendance (ERSEA)

The *Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) Monitoring Review Guide* outlines what to expect on the upcoming Focus Area 1: Program Systems Review (FA1). This guide shares information about the key topics review teams will explore and monitoring activities they will use during the ERSEA portions of the FA1 Review.
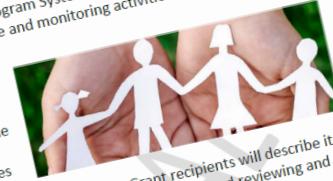
Through the ERSEA portions of the FA1 monitoring event, the Office of Head Start (OHS) learns about how each grant recipient recruits, selects, and enrolls eligible children and families into its Head Start program. The ERSEA component of the FA1 monitoring event focuses on grant recipients' efforts to accurately manage its eligibility and enrollment processes, including accurate documentation. Grant recipients will describe its policies and practices for selecting children and families who apply for the program and reviewing and documenting their information to determine eligibility to enroll in the Head Start program. The monitoring review also explores how grant recipients' policies help prevent fraudulent enrollment.

ERSEA: Key Topics

This section shares the topics typically reviewed through the FA1 ERSEA monitoring activities. Review teams may request additional information during the monitoring event, as needed.

★ **Selection Criteria:** Demonstrate how the grant recipient used the needs it identified through its current community assessment to develop its selection criteria for the current program year. Also show how grant recipient uses the selection criteria to rank children currently on the waitlist.

★ **Training:** Share the training plan and specific examples of ensuring staff members received on the program's ERSEA practices, including expectations for ensuring staff members only enroll eligible children and families into the program.

★ **Preventing fraud:** Share the policies and practices the grant recipient has put in place to deter fraudulent or erroneous enrollment of children and families who are not eligible to receive Head Start services.

★ **Eligibility:** Demonstrate the tracking system the grant recipient uses to monitor the percentage of children and expectant families that fall into the respective income eligibility categories. This includes ensuring staff members following the following guidelines (for non-Tribal programs):

✓ Maintains fewer than 10 percent of enrolled children or expectant families who may benefit from services but do not meet other eligibility requirements

✓ Maintains fewer than 35 percent of enrolled children or expectant families whose incomes were between 100 percent and 130 percent of the poverty line

ERSEA: Key Topics

This section shares the topics typically reviewed through the FA1 ERSEA monitoring activities. Review teams may request additional information during the monitoring event, as needed.

★ *Selection Criteria:* Demonstrate how the grant recipient used the needs it identified through its current community assessment to develop its selection criteria for the current program year. Also show how grant recipient uses the selection criteria to rank children currently on the waitlist.

★ *Training:* Share the training plan and specific examples of the training staff members received on the program's ERSEA practices and expectations for ensuring staff members only enroll eligible children and families into the program.

★ *Eligibility:* Demonstrate the tracking system the grant recipient uses to monitor the percentage of children and expectant families that fall into the respective income eligibility categories. This includes ensuring staff members following the following guidelines (for non-AIAN programs only):

   ✓ Maintains fewer than 10 percent of enrolled children or expectant families who may benefit from services but do not meet other eligibility requirements

   ✓ Maintains fewer than 35 percent of enrolled children or expectant families whose incomes were between 100 percent and 130 percent of the poverty line

ERSEA: Key Topics (cont'd)

★ *Enrollment:* How the grant recipient ensures full enrollment across program options, including the enrollment of children with disabilities. The manager will share how the grant recipient:

- ✓ Identifies, tracks, and fills program vacancies within 30 days
- ✓ Maintains at least 10 percent of the program's actual enrollment with children eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- ✓ Collaborates with local early intervention and special education services to support enrollment of IDEA-eligible children
- ✓ Accurately reports monthly enrollment to the Office of Head Start in the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES)

★ *Preventing Fraud:* The policies and practices the grant recipient has put in place to deter fraudulent or erroneous enrollment of children and families who are not eligible to receive Head Start services.

What types of monitoring activities are included?

The FA1 ERSEA content area includes the following monitoring activities :

ERSEA Data Tour

The review team will ask program leaders to share the data, reports, and other tools they use to select and enroll families and document how families meet Head Start program eligibility requirements.

Monitoring also will focus on the policies and practices programs have put in place to track the percentage of families meeting various parts of the eligibility requirements and to ensure information is accurately reviewed and recorded.

Eligibility File Review

The review team will review a sample of client files to validate that the grant recipient accurately tracks ERSEA data and enrolls children and families who are eligible for Head Start services.

The ERSEA Eligibility File Review activities are not conducted with Tribal programs.

Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) 4 of 4

Data Tour

Participant:
- ✓ ERSEA Manager

Types of data shared:
- ✓ Eligibility tracking system
- ✓ Enrollment vacancy tracking
- ✓ Eligibility training records
- ✓ ERSEA policies and procedures
- ✓ Selection criteria
- ✓ Waitlists
- ✓ Attendance data
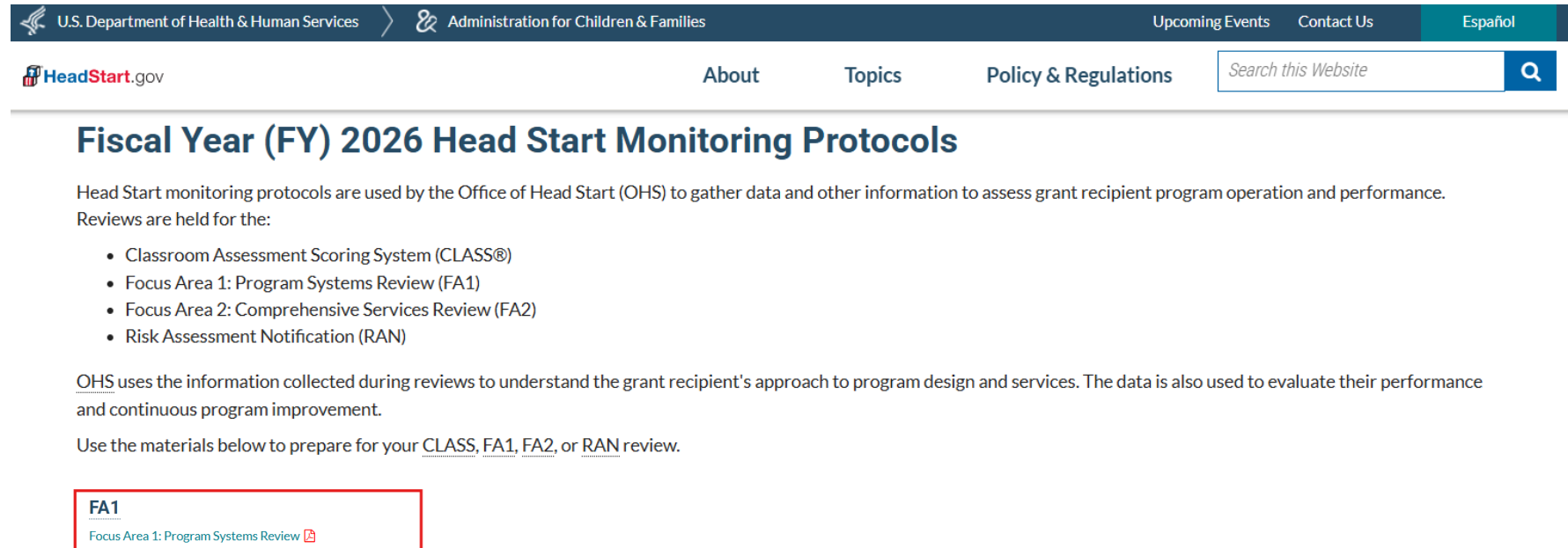- ✓ Sample child files (not applicable to Tribal programs)

Eligibility File Review

- ✓ ERSEA manager or staff member familiar with eligibility files should participate in the File Review.
- ✓ Review team checks sample of files to validate the grant recipient accurately tracks ERSEA data and enrolls eligible children and families
- ✓ Eligibility File Review activities are not conducted with Tribal programs

What's Next

Fiscal Year 2026 Monitoring Resources

HeadStart.gov:
- ✓ FA1 and FA2 Monitoring Protocols
  - ▪ Updated format for FY26
- ✓ CLASS® Review Field Guide and AIAN CLASS® Self-Review Field Guide
- ✓ Sample Incident Reporting Form and RAN Review Protocol

Thank You

The *Program Design, Management, and Improvement (PDMI) Monitoring Review Guide* outlines what to expect on the upcoming Focus Area 1: Program Systems Review (FA1). This guide shares information about the key topics review teams will explore and monitoring activities they will use during the FA1.

Through the FA1 PDMI content area, the Office of Head Start (OHS) learns how grant recipients use data to inform program design, management, and improvement. Grant recipients will also demonstrate how they support and collaborate with their governing body and policy council to ensure effective oversight and governance of the Head Start grant. A third area of focus is approaches for staff member supervision and support across all service areas.

PDMI: Key Topics

This section shares the topics typically reviewed through the FA1 PDMI monitoring activities. Review teams may request additional information during the monitoring event, as needed.

Program Design and Strategic Planning: How the grant recipient uses data to inform program design, planning, and improvement. This includes:

* ★ *Self-assessment and ongoing monitoring:* How grant recipients use program data (e.g., self-assessment and ongoing monitoring data) to monitor program performance, evaluate progress toward goals, and continuously improve their program
* ★ *Community assessment:* How grant recipients use their community assessment data to understand and remain responsive to community needs

Program Governance: How the governing body and policy council use their expertise and experience to provide oversight and ensure the grant recipient provides quality services for children and families. This includes:

* ★ *Governing body membership and active engagement:* Demonstrate how the grant recipient ensures the governing body maintains the required membership, provides training to members, and uses members' expertise to support the program
* ★ *Sharing information with the governing body:* Show the types of data the grant recipient shares with the governing body, and how the governing body members use the data they receive to inform their oversight responsibilities
* ★ *Policy council composition and active engagement:* Demonstrate how the grant recipient ensures the policy council maintains the required composition, provides training to members, and actively engages members in setting direction for the program
* ★ *Policy council information sharing:* Show the types of data the grant recipient shares

with the policy council, and how the policy council members use the data they receive to inform their guidance of the program direction

Staffing and Staff Member Supports: How the grant recipient recruits and retains a team of qualified staff members and provides effective supervision for staff members. This includes:

★ *Management structure:* How the grant recipient's leadership team provides effective management and oversight for every service area

★ *Ongoing supervision:* How the grant recipient regularly supervises staff members' performance and provides feedback to support their continuous improvement

★ *Staff qualifications:* Demonstrate that center-based Early Head Start teachers, center-based Head Start Preschool lead teachers, home visitors, and family services staff members possess the appropriate qualifications for their roles

What types of monitoring activities are included?

The FA1 PDMI content area includes the following monitoring activities:

Management Team Kickoff
meeting with grant recipient leadership team and review team members to start the review event

Data tours
to review how managers track and use data relating to program design, human resources, supervision, and ongoing monitoring across content areas

Discussions
with education staff, governing body, and policy council members to understand supervision, governance, and oversight

How can we prepare for the Management Team Kickoff?

Who participates in this meeting and what will we discuss?

The Head Start director(s), managers responsible for overseeing each service area, and the fiscal officer should participate in the on-site Management Team Kickoff. The Head Start director(s) should bring a copy of the organizational chart and the most recent community assessment to the meeting. The Management Team Kickoff includes:

✓ *Introductions:* Introduce the review team members and the grant recipient's management team

✓ *Organizational structure:* Discuss the organizational chart and the management team's roles and responsibilities

✓ *Community assessment:* Discuss the most recent community assessment, provide examples of community data used to develop the community assessment, and share how the grant recipient uses the results to inform the Head Start program design and offerings

Which discussions occur in PDMI and how can we prepare for them?

The PDMI content area includes the *Education Staff Discussion,* the *Policy Council Discussion,* and the *Governing Body Discussion.* These discussions support the review team to gain insight from different stakeholder perspectives across the program. The review team will coordinate with the Head Start director(s) to find the most convenient time for each discussion. Discussions will be held on-site whenever possible; however, virtual meeting options are available for participants who cannot join in-person.

Education Staff Discussion

✓ **Who joins the discussion?** The **education staff members** providing classroom instruction and home visiting services join the discussion. The lead teachers whom the review team observed during *Classroom Explorations* should participate in this discussion. Other education staff members may join discussions if the group size allows, with typically 10 participants total per group. Home visitors should participate in this discussion if no group socialization occurs during the review week. If the review team has observed a group socialization, the review team will ask questions one-on-one during that event. Program managers will be invited to share their perspective during data tours, and do not need to join this discussion.

✓ **What should education staff bring to the discussion?** There is no need to prepare documentation for this discussion. Education staff members will have the opportunity to share their experiences with the training, supervision and feedback, and support they receive.

Governing Body and Policy Council Discussions

✓ **Who joins the discussion?** All **governing body** and **policy council members** who are available are invited to participate in the respective *Governing Body Discussion* and *Policy Council Discussion.* Head Start directors and program managers will have separate opportunities to share their perspective during the monitoring review and do not need to join these discussions.

✓ **What should members bring to the discussion?** Members are encouraged to bring any reference material that will help them feel comfortable describing their work to the review team. This may include any previous packets or handouts the program provided to members in preparation for meetings. The discussions are an opportunity for the governing body and policy council members to share how they carry out their roles. This includes showing the review team the types of data and information the members receive from the grant recipient and how they have used these data, their own expertise, and community relationships to support the program.

Which data tours occur in PDMI and how can we prepare for them?

The PDMI content area includes multiple data tours, where the Head Start director(s) and program managers will showcase how they use data to perform ongoing monitoring and program improvement, and how they supervise and support program staff members.

Human Resources (HR) Data Tour: PDMI highlights

✓ **What PDMI topics are included?** The HR Data Tour includes several PDMI topic areas: Supervision, Management Structure, and Staff Qualifications. The **Key Topics** section of this guide describes each of these topic areas.
Note: The HR Data Tour also includes topics from other content areas in the FA1 monitoring event.

✓ **Who joins this data tour and what do they need to do?** The review team will ask the **Head Start director(s)** and **HR manager** (where applicable) to walk through examples, data, reports, and other information to demonstrate the program's system for regular and ongoing supervision, including supervision and oversight of program managers. The review team will also ask for details about how the management structure supports oversight of the Head Start program, including subrecipients and partners. In addition, the review team will request the completed Staff Qualification Tracking Form. This document will be provided to the Head Start director(s) to fill out prior to the review event. The review team will explore how the program monitors professional development plans for any staff members who do not possess the required qualifications for their roles.

Supporting Safe and Healthy Learning Environments (SSHLE) Data Tour, Education and Child Development (ECD) Data Tour, and Family and Community Engagement (FCE) Data Tour

✓ **What topics are included?** Each of these data tours explores the same two PDMI management systems: *Ongoing Monitoring* and *Supervision.* The review team will ask how the manager of each service area monitors the consistency and quality of the services provided to children and families. The review team will also learn how each manager assesses staff members' job performance and how they support each staff member's development.

✓ **Who joins these data tours and what do they need to do?** The **Health and Facilities manager(s)**, **ECD manager**, and **FCE manager** will participate in their respective service area data tour. The managers will have the opportunity to demonstrate the data they use to monitor learning environments and health, education, and family engagement services. The review team will also explore the data managers use to understand staff member performance and ongoing development needs. Managers may invite other staff to participate in their respective data tours, as appropriate, given their roles in supporting the managers.

Program Management Data Tour

✓ **What topics are included?** This data tour focuses on the following topics: *Governing Body Membership and Active Engagement, Policy Council Composition and Active Engagement, Ongoing Supervision,* and *Self-Assessment and Ongoing Monitoring.* The **Key Topics** section of this guide describes each of these topic areas.

✓ **Who joins this data tour and what do they need to do?** The **Head Start director(s)** participates in this data tour. This data tour gives the Head Start director(s) the opportunity to showcase how the program trains, supports, and leverages the expertise of the governing body and policy council members to make informed recommendations and decisions that support the program. The Head Start director(s) will be asked to share how the program provides regular and ongoing supervision to support staff members' individual development and delivery of quality services. The Head Start director(s) will also demonstrate how the program uses its self-assessment and ongoing monitoring data to understand how well the program is performing and to make adjustments for continued improvement.

The review team looks forward to meeting you and learning about your program. The Review Lead for your upcoming Focus Area 1: Program Systems Review will reach out to you in advance of your review to discuss and work together to schedule each of the monitoring activities described in this guide.

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Fiscal Infrastructure

The *Fiscal Infrastructure Monitoring Review Guide* outlines what to expect on the upcoming Focus Area 1: Program Systems Review (FA1). This guide shares information about the key topics review teams will explore and monitoring activities they will use during the Fiscal Infrastructure portions of the FA1.

Through the FA1 Fiscal Infrastructure content area, the Office of Head Start (OHS) learns how each grant recipient maintains integrity of fiscal operations and mitigates the risk of fraud, waste, and abuse. Grant recipients will demonstrate how they develop and implement their financial management system and the internal controls they have put in place to ensure accurate, timely, and efficient fiscal operations, oversight, and reporting.

Before the Review Begins

To support an efficient review, grant recipients preparing for the FA1 monitoring event will be asked to provide certain fiscal documentation before the beginning of the review, including:

✓ Most recent audit
✓ Subrecipient/delegate contracts
✓ Fiscal policies and procedures
✓ Detailed general ledger from the most recently completed program year

Grant recipients will receive details about how to provide these documents prior to the review.

Fiscal Infrastructure: Key Topics

This section shares the topics typically reviewed through the FA1 Fiscal Infrastructure monitoring activities. Review teams may request additional information during the monitoring event, as needed.

Budget Development, Implementation, and Oversight: The process the grant recipient uses for developing and maintaining its program budget. This includes:

★ *Budget development:* Demonstrate how the program develops its budget and engages others in the process

★ *Tracking budgeted to actual costs:* Show how the program identifies and manages variances between its actual and budgeted costs

Comprehensive Financial Management Structure, and Systems: The grant recipient's system for

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maintaining financial records, generating reports and financial data information needed to manage the program, and safeguarding Federal funds. This includes:

★ *Accounting system:* Demonstrate how the grant recipient uses its accounting system to manage fiscal processes and document and report financial information

★ *Payroll records:* Review payroll records with the review team to show how the grant recipient ensures it accurately charges personnel costs to the grant award

★ *Financial record-keeping:* Share financial records to show how the grant recipient accurately tracks Head Start program expenses

Internal Controls: The policies, practices, and systems the grant recipient has put in place to maintain effective control over all funds, property, and assets. This includes:

★ *Qualifications:* How the fiscal officer's education and experience help provide effective fiscal oversight

★ *Policies and procedures:* Provide the written policies and procedures the grant recipient has put in place to reduce the risk of fraud, waste or abuse of Head Start funds. These should address topics such as fiscal standards of conduct; conflicts of interest; segregation of fiscal duties; whistleblower protection; and how key fiscal processes are carried out

★ *Payment Management System drawdowns:* Demonstrate how the grant recipient minimizes the amount of time between drawing down and spending Federal funds for the Head Start program

★ *Reconciliation:* Walk through the program's process for reconciling its accounts and provide the review team with a recent bank reconciliation

★ *Ongoing monitoring:* Show how the grant recipient monitors its own fiscal operations and financial management system and addresses issues it identifies

Allowable costs: The written procedures the grant recipient has implemented to ensure costs charged to the Head Start award are necessary, reasonable, and appropriately allocated. This includes:

★ *Cost allocation plan:* Share the grant recipient's written cost allocation plan and demonstrate the process for identifying shared costs, establishing a reasonable basis for costs allocated to the Head Start award, and implementing the plan

★ *Procurement:* Show the grant recipient's procurement policies and provide documentation to verify how procurement is conducted

Facilities and Equipment Management: How the grant recipient identifies and mitigates risk, including by maintaining appropriate property loss, casualty, and liability insurance. This includes:

★ *Insurance:* Share a summary of the grant recipient's insurance documents describing the insurance the grant recipient maintains

What types of monitoring activities occur?

Fiscal Data Tour: Through this onsite data tour, the review team will ask the grant recipient to share the data, reports, and tools it uses to support its day-to-day oversight of the program's financial management systems and fiscal operations. The grant recipient should be prepared to share real-time data and documents with review team members.

Transaction testing: The review team will also request to review actual transactions to understand how the grant recipient implements its policies and procedures. The reviewer will complete transaction testing independently but may reach out to the grant recipient's fiscal team for questions or clarifications.

How do the Fiscal Data Tour and transaction testing work?

Who participates in the Fiscal Data Tour and transaction testing?

✓ OHS expects the **fiscal officer** (e.g., Chief Financial Officer, head of the fiscal department, or individual holding responsibilities for this function) to participate in all components of the FA1 Fiscal Data Tour and Transaction Testing.
✓ The **Head Start director(s)** should engage in the Fiscal Data Tour on the first day of the FA1 monitoring event. The director(s) are welcome to join any additional discussions and transaction testing, as needed.
✓ **Other staff members** responsible for specific fiscal functions can participate in the aspects of the activities relevant to their scope of accountability.

Those participating in these monitoring activities will need to access the automated financial management system and financial records for the full duration of the fiscal components of the review.

What should we expect during the Fiscal Data Tour and transaction testing?

The review team will ask the fiscal staff members to show data, reports, and systems they use to manage, track, and monitor financial transactions, operations, and reporting. The fiscal management team will share how they manage and oversee fiscal staff members and fiscal operations. The review team may also request copies of electronic versions of information shared during the review. The review team will also ask to view supporting documentation for a sample of the program's executed transactions.

What type of data will the review team request and when does it need to be available?

Examples of the real-time data and documentation that the review team will ask to see during the Fiscal Data Tour includes but is not limited to the following:

- ✓ Financial management system
- ✓ General ledger
- ✓ Procurement procedures
- ✓ Budget-to-actual report
- ✓ Recent transactions
- ✓ Insurance documentation
- ✓ Personnel record-keeping system
- ✓ Fiscal policies and procedures
- ✓ Cost allocation plan
- ✓ Bank reconciliations
- ✓ Payment Management System (PMS) drawdowns

OHS expects the grant recipient to have all documentation available at the start of the FA1 monitoring event. As described above, certain fiscal documentation will be requested before the beginning of the review.

Delays in sharing the current general ledger and supporting documentation significantly impacts the review team's ability to complete the review. This issue may also reflect on the effectiveness of the grant recipient's financial management system. If the grant recipient does not share information in a timely way during the review, this concern may result in one or more findings.

How does transaction testing work?

Transaction testing provides an opportunity to examine how the grant recipient executes and documents transactions. The fiscal reviewer will request documentation for a sample of transactions the grant recipient has executed over the past two years. The sample will include a wide variety of fiscal documentation to understand how the grant recipient executes and records transactions.

For which time periods does the review team want to see my financial data?

Most of the data the review team will request will be from the current grant year and the most recently closed grant year (if applicable). You should ensure you are familiar with obtaining policies and procedures, data, and/or reports from the current grant year and the most recently closed grant year. The review team may request information from a different time period as needed.

The review team looks forward to meeting you and learning about your program. The Review Lead for your upcoming Focus Area 1: Program Systems Review (FA1) will reach out to you in advance of your review to discuss and work together to schedule each of the monitoring activities described in this guide.

The *Supporting Safe and Healthy Learning Environments (SSHLE) Monitoring Review Guide* outlines what to expect on the upcoming Focus Area 1: Program Systems Review (FA1). This guide shares information about the key topics review teams will explore and monitoring activities they will use during the SSHLE portions of the FA1.

Through the FA1 SSHLE content area, the Office of Head Start (OHS) learns how grant recipients provide children with safe and nurturing learning environments to support children's healthy development. The review team will monitor to ensure the physical environment is safe, including facilities, equipment, and materials children use. The review team will also learn how staff members implement the program's safety and hygiene procedures. Finally, the FA1 Review will focus on how education staff members promote safe, healthy learning environments for children through responsive teaching practices that foster trust, emotional security, communication, and support the needs of all children.

SSHLE: Key Topics

This section shares the topics typically reviewed through the FA1 SSHLE monitoring activities. Review teams may request additional information during the monitoring event, as needed.

Safe and Sanitary Environments: This section focuses on how the grant recipient maintains safety in staffing, facilities, materials, and equipment through effective monitoring, policies, and procedures.

★ *Emergency preparedness:* Walk through the plans, practices, and policies the grant recipient puts in place for managing emergencies. This includes how staff members are made aware of the plans, practices, and policies they should implement in the event of an emergency.

★ *Background checks:* How the grant recipient tracks and completes all parts of background checks for all staff members within required timeframes.

★ *Daily and ongoing safety checks:* How the grant recipient monitors its facilities, equipment, and materials to ensure they are safe for children. This includes demonstrating:
   - ✓ Grant recipient's approach to preventative maintenance
   - ✓ Process for reporting incidents affecting children's health and safety to OHS
   - ✓ Indoor and outdoor equipment and materials are clean and safe
   - ✓ Facilities are free from pests, mold, pollutants, and safety hazards
   - ✓ Grant recipient's current licensure meets state, local, and tribal regulations (as required)
   - ✓ How the grant recipient ensures children are not exposed to lead in water or paint in any Head Start facilities

★ *Safety and hygiene practices:* How the grant recipient implements safety and hygiene practices to keep children safe and healthy. This includes:
- ✓ Hygienic practices and toothbrushing practices the grant recipient put in place
- ✓ How the grant recipient ensures safe sleeping environments for Early Head Start children
- ✓ How staff members ensure awareness about children's food allergies
- ✓ Active supervision practices the grant recipient implements to keep children safe

Education and Child Development: This section focuses on how the grant recipient provides safe, healthy learning environments through responsive, developmentally appropriate teaching and home visiting practices that meet all enrolled children's needs.

★ *Responsive teaching practices:* How education staff members provide responsive teaching practices that promote safe and healthy development and are tailored to meet the needs of all children. This includes demonstrating how education staff members:
- ✓ Use teaching practices that foster trust and emotional security
- ✓ Develop children's communication and language skills during learning experiences
- ✓ Manage their classrooms in a way that supports children's engagement and social-emotional development
- ✓ Provide developmentally appropriate schedules that enable children to have various experiences throughout the day

★ *Responsive home visits and socializations (for home-based services):* Demonstrate how education staff members provide engaging home visits and group socialization experiences that promote parent engagement and extend children's learning. This includes showing how the grant recipient:
- ✓ Offers families the opportunity to help plan group socializations that are developmentally appropriate and align with the curriculum
- ✓ Provides families with opportunities for meaningful shared experiences and to develop parenting skills during group socializations

What types of monitoring activities are included?

Data tours with managers to learn about policies, practices, and procedures programs put in place to maintain healthy and safe environments for children.

Discussions with education staff members to learn about the program's hygiene and safety practices and training.

Center, Classroom, and Socialization Explorations to observe how staff implement safety practices and create healthy learning environments for children.

How can we prepare for the data tours?

The SSHLE component of the FA1 Review includes two data tours: Safe and Sanitary Environments Data Tour and Human Resources Data Tour. In these data tours, the review team will ask managers to share the data, reports, and information they use to do their routine work relating to the key topics outlined previously.

Safe and Sanitary Environments Data Tour: The health and/or facilities manager(s) will have the opportunity to share the plans, policies, and practices the grant recipient has put in place to keep children healthy and safe. Types of information the review team will request include but are not limited to:

- ✓ **Safety plans and procedures:** Share safety protocols associated with the key topics outlined previously (e.g., emergency management/disaster preparedness and response plan, preventative maintenance plans/system, and plan for monitoring for lead in water and paint, etc.)
- ✓ **Procedures for reporting child health and safety incidents:** Disseminate procedures to appropriate program staff members for reporting such incidents to OHS within the required timeframe
- ✓ **Health and safety training plans and examples:** Share the types and schedule of trainings provided to staff members, including topics covered (e.g., hygiene practices, equipment safety, the program's supervision practices, etc.)
- ✓ **Ongoing monitoring:** Walk through the data the grant recipient uses to monitor its facilities, equipment, and learning environments. This includes showing how the manager(s) analyze and use these data and how they ensure the data are accurate.

  Note: The health manager will also contribute to the Program Design, Management, and Improvement (PDMI) section of the FA1's ongoing monitoring assessment. Here, the health manager will show how the grant recipient tracks and monitors its health services (e.g., medical and oral health determinations, vision and hearing screenings, insurance status, mental health consultation services, etc.).

Human Resources (HR) Data Tour: The SSHLE component of the HR Data Tour focuses on the grant recipient's background check process. **Note:** The HR Data Tour includes topics covered under other content areas (not only SSHLE topics). During the review event, the grant recipient will only participate in one HR Data Tour to cover all included topics.

During the HR Data Tour, the review team will ask the **Head Start Director** and **HR Manager** (where applicable) to share how the grant recipient manages the background check process. The review team also will review the completed Criminal Record Check Tracking Sheet.

The review team would have provided the tracking sheet to the Head Start Director prior to the review event to allow time for completion. The review team will follow up as needed with questions about specific data provided on the tracking sheet.

How do education staff members prepare for the explorations?

What types of explorations are included in the FA1 Review?

Three possible explorations are part of the FA1 Review: Center, Classroom, and Socialization.

- ✓ **The Center and Classroom Explorations** are conducted when a grant recipient provides Head Start Preschool and/or Early Head Start center-based services as part of its grant.
- ✓ **The Socialization Exploration** is conducted when a grant recipient provides Head Start Preschool and/or Early Head Start home-based services as part of its grant.

What is the purpose of each exploration?

- ✓ *Center Explorations* allow the review team to observe the implementation of safety and hygiene practices that keep children safe and healthy.
- ✓ *Classroom Explorations* allow the review team to observe teaching practices within the classroom environment that promote children's healthy development.
- ✓ *Socialization Explorations* allow the review team to observe home visiting practices within the socialization environment that promote parents' skills to support their children's development and facilitate shared experiences among families.

What happens if no socialization is scheduled during the review event?

A program should follow its established socialization schedule during the review event.

- ✓ If a socialization is scheduled to occur at the time of the review, then the review team will conduct an observation.
- ✓ If a socialization is not scheduled to occur, then the review team will conduct an interview with home visiting staff members.

What activities should I do with the children during the Classroom Exploration?

There is no need to adjust the classroom schedule or planned activities when a Classroom Exploration occurs. The review team will observe how your established teaching practices and classroom environment support children's learning and development.

What activities should we plan to do during the Socialization Exploration?

There is no need to adjust the socialization schedules or planned activities when a Socialization Exploration occurs. The review team will observe your established home visiting practices and socialization environment to promote parents' skills to support their children's learning and development and facilitate shared experiences among families.

What will we talk about during the Socialization Exploration?

Home visitors will be asked to share the socialization planning process and how the activities align with the program's home-based curriculum as well as the opportunities that families are provided to promote their parenting skills and engage with each other.

What should we bring to the explorations?

There is no need to prepare documentation for explorations. Home visitors will have the opportunity to share their experiences and engagement with families during the Socialization Exploration. Education staff members will also have the opportunity to share their experiences during the Education Staff Discussion.

How do education staff members prepare for the Education Staff Discussion?

Who joins the discussion?

- ✓ The **education staff members** providing classroom instruction and home visiting services join the discussion. Specifically, the lead teachers whom the review team observed during *Classroom Explorations* should participate in this discussion. Other education staff members may join discussions if the group size allows, with typically 10 participants total per group.
- ✓ **Home visitors** should participate in this discussion if no group socialization is scheduled during the review week. If the review team has observed a group socialization, the review team will ask questions one-on-one during that event.
- ✓ Program managers will be invited to share their perspective during data tours and do not need to join the Education Staff Discussion.

What will we talk about?

Education staff members will be asked to share the types of training they have taken that have helped them understand different hygiene and safety practices the program uses to keep children healthy and safe.

Note: The Education Staff Discussion includes other topics that focus on the PDMI section's key topics. During the review event, education staff members will participate in a single discussion that covers all included topics.

What should we bring to the discussion?

No documentation is needed for this discussion. This is an opportunity for education staff members to share their experiences.

The review team looks forward to meeting you and learning about your program. The Review Lead for your upcoming Focus Area 1: Program Systems Review will reach out to you in advance of your review to discuss and work together to schedule each of the monitoring activities described in this guide.

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Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, Attendance (ERSEA)

The *Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) Monitoring Review Guide* outlines what to expect on the upcoming Focus Area 1: Program Systems Review (FA1). This guide shares information about the key topics review teams will explore and monitoring activities they will use during the ERSEA portions of the FA1 Review.

Through the FA1 ERSEA content area, the Office of Head Start (OHS) learns how each grant recipient recruits, selects, and enrolls eligible children and families into its Head Start program. The ERSEA component of the FA1 monitoring event focuses on grant recipients' efforts to accurately manage their eligibility and enrollment processes, including accurate documentation. Grant recipients will describe their policies and practices for selecting children and families who apply for the program. They will also demonstrate their process for reviewing and documenting children's and families' information to determine whether they are eligible to enroll in the Head Start program. The monitoring review also explores how grant recipients' policies help prevent fraudulent enrollment.

ERSEA: Key Topics

This section shares the topics typically reviewed through the FA1 ERSEA monitoring activities. Review teams may request additional information during the monitoring event, as needed.

★ *Selection criteria:* Demonstrate how the grant recipient used the needs it identified through its current community assessment to develop its selection criteria for the current program year. Also show how the grant recipient uses the selection criteria to rank children currently on the waitlist.

★ *Training:* Share the training plan and specific examples of the training staff members received on the program's ERSEA practices and expectations for ensuring staff members only enroll eligible children and families into the program.

★ *Preventing fraud:* The policies and practices the grant recipient has put in place to deter fraudulent or erroneous enrollment of children and families who are not eligible to receive Head Start services.

★ *Eligibility:* Demonstrate the tracking system the grant recipient uses to monitor the percentage of children and expectant families that fall into the respective income eligibility categories. This includes ensuring staff members adhere to the following guidelines (for non-AIAN programs only):

- ✓ Maintains fewer than 10 percent of enrolled children or expectant families who may benefit from services but do not meet other eligibility requirements

- ✓ Maintains fewer than 35 percent of enrolled children or expectant families whose incomes were between 100 percent and 130 percent of the poverty line

★ *Enrollment:* How the grant recipient ensures full enrollment across program options, including the enrollment of children with disabilities. The manager will share how the grant recipient:

- ✓ Identifies, tracks, and fills program vacancies within 30 days

- ✓ Maintains at least 10 percent of the program's actual enrollment with children eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

- ✓ Collaborates with local early intervention and special education services to support enrollment of IDEA-eligible children

- ✓ Accurately reports monthly enrollment to the Office of Head Start in the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES)

What types of monitoring activities occur?

ERSEA Data Tour: In this data tour, the review team will ask program leaders to share the data, reports, and other tools they use to select and enroll families, and document how families meet eligibility requirements for participating in the Head Start program. Monitoring also will focus on the policies and practices programs have put in place to track the percentage of families meeting various parts of the eligibility requirements and to ensure information is accurately reviewed and recorded.

Eligibility file review: The review team will check a sample of client files to validate that the grant recipient accurately tracks ERSEA data and enrolls children and families who are eligible for Head Start services. **Note:** The ERSEA Eligibility File Review activities are not conducted with Tribal programs.

How does the ERSEA Data Tour work?

Who participates in the ERSEA data tour?

The **ERSEA manager** will be the lead participant in this data tour.

What do ERSEA managers do on a data tour?

The review team will ask the ERSEA manager to show (e.g., on their computer screen) data, reports, and systems they use to manage, track, and monitor various services. These conversations will provide the ERSEA manager with an opportunity to demonstrate how they manage and oversee staff members and ERSEA functions.

The review team will ask the manager to share real-time data and documentation in areas including but not limited to:

- ✓ Eligibility tracking system
- ✓ Enrollment vacancy tracking
- ✓ Eligibility training records
- ✓ ERSEA policies and procedures
- ✓ Selection criteria
- ✓ Waitlists
- ✓ Attendance data
- ✓ Sample child files (not applicable to Tribal programs)

How does the ERSEA manager share data?

The ERSEA manager will meet with a review team member to share the program's data on a computer screen.

How can ERSEA managers prepare for their data tour?

The purpose of each data tour is for the review team to get a sense of how program leaders do their daily work. The intention is to walk through the data that the ERSEA manager uses on a day-to-day basis in the system or however they typically access and use the data to support them in doing their jobs. The ERSEA manager is discouraged from preparing data reports, binders, or presentations in advance of the review.

For which time periods does the review team want to see my data?

Most of the data the review team will request will be from the previous 12 months. You should ensure you are familiar with obtaining data and/or reports from the 12 months prior to your review event. If a different time period is requested, the review team will clarify.

For which enrolled children and families does the review team want to see data?

The review team would like to see all data that apply to Head Start-funded children and families. If your program also serves other children or families funded by a source other than Head Start, you should exclude their data from the data you share.

⭐ **Tip:** Many data platforms allow you to choose which data you pull into your reports. Spend time understanding your data system before the event to understand its reporting capabilities!

How does the ERSEA Eligibility File Review work?

Through a review of a sample of client files, the review team will validate that the grant recipient accurately tracks ERSEA data and enrolls children and families who are eligible for Head Start services.

Who participates in the ERSEA Eligibility File Review?

The **ERSEA manager** or another **staff member familiar with the eligibility files** should participate in the ERSEA Eligibility File Review.

What occurs prior to the ERSEA Eligibility File Review?

Grant recipients will receive information on how to submit a Program Enrollment Roster of enrolled children and families as a part of the ***45-Day Monitoring Review Notification,*** which recipients receive 45 days prior to their scheduled FA1 monitoring event*.*

Grant recipients must provide a Program Enrollment Roster without personally identifiable information. This will be used to determine the eligibility file sample. Program Enrollment Rosters should be uploaded in the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES) within the pre-review documents section at least 30 days prior to the review.

⭐ **Tip:** Grant recipients should submit Program Enrollment Rosters in an editable Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Program Enrollment Rosters should only include currently enrolled Head Start-funded children and families.

What will occur during the ERSEA Eligibility File Review?

Reviewers will determine a sample of eligibility files to review and share the requested sample with the grant recipient. A reviewer will work with grant recipient staff members to review each sampled file, which can be either electronic or paper files.

How can program managers prepare for the ERSEA Eligibility File Review?

Program managers should ensure they have a way to accurately obtain a list of currently enrolled children. During the review event, the program manager or staff members participating in the ERSEA Eligibility File Review should be sure they are familiar with their files and be prepared with the sampled files (whether electronic or hard copy).

The review team looks forward to meeting you and learning about your program. The Review Lead for your upcoming *Focus Area 1: Program Systems Review (FA1)* will reach out to you in advance of your review to discuss and work together to schedule each of the monitoring activities described in this guide.