

Department of Health and Human Services

**OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL**

**Status of Efforts to Increase
the Qualifications of
Head Start Teachers**



Inspector General

JANUARY 2004
OEI-07-01-00560

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

<http://www.oig.hhs.gov/>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OBJECTIVE

To assess factors contributing to Head Start's progress and programs' experiences in increasing teachers' qualifications.

BACKGROUND

With the passage of the Community Opportunities, Accountability, and Training and Educational Services (COATS) Act (P.L. 105-285) in 1998, Congress reauthorized Head Start through fiscal year (FY) 2003 and amended the Head Start Act. The amendments required more specific education performance standards and increased teacher qualifications. The COATS Act specifically mandates that by September 30, 2003, at least 50 percent of Head Start teachers *nationwide* in center-based programs must have an associate, baccalaureate, or advanced degree in early childhood education; or a degree in a field related to early childhood education, with experience teaching preschool children. According to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Head Start met this requirement with 51 percent of teachers nationwide holding appropriate degrees in FY 2002.

In addition, to the COATS Act, ACF established a self-imposed staffing goal for Head Start programs – that *each* program should strive to achieve 50 percent degreed teaching staff by the end of FY 2003. Teaching staff is defined as those staff members who are responsible for leading a classroom of children in daily activities.

A source of data we used in our analysis was ACF's Program Information Report (PIR). PIR is the only comprehensive national source of data available concerning the staffing levels and qualifications of Head Start teaching staff. We supported the PIR analysis with data collected from a random sample of 300 Head Start program directors and a separate stratified cluster sample of 444 current Head Start teachers. We limited our interviews to Head Start programs (excluding American Indian and Alaska Native, migrant, and Early Head Start programs). This limitation allowed us to make more uniform comparisons across programs.

FINDINGS

Several Factors Have Contributed to Head Start's Progress in Increasing Teachers' Qualifications

Head Start has made significant progress in increasing the qualifications of teachers. Directors of Head Start programs report hiring more degreed teachers to improve their teachers' qualifications. Directors and teachers also reported that their program supports current, nondegreed teaching staff in their pursuit of degrees. In addition, programs

reported using Quality Improvement funds to retain teachers. Finally, turnover rates for Head Start teachers remain low, below that for public schools and non-teaching professionals.

Data Reflect That Disparities Exist in the Percentage of Degreed Teachers

Although we recognize that Head Start is not a regionally or State-administered program, we note that specific regions, States, and program types have a lower overall percentage of degreed teachers. The lack of degreed teaching staff is particularly acute in 15, mostly southern, States. Additionally, American Indian and Alaska Native, migrant, and Early Head Start programs are well below the 50 percent program goal. We also analyzed program performance among programs within the same county, since programs in the same county are likely to face similar circumstances and staffing challenges. We identified a total of 72 counties that had at least 1 program meeting ACF's self-imposed staffing goal and 1 program not meeting the goal.

Directors' attitudes regarding the degreed teaching staff requirement may influence the percentage of degreed teaching staff in their programs. Directors we interviewed who had a positive attitude concerning the value of degreed teaching staff in Head Start also had a higher percentage of degreed teaching staff in their own programs.

RECOMMENDATION

Provide Targeted Assistance to Programs Who Have Not Met ACF's Self-Imposed Staffing Goal

ACF, in conjunction with their regional offices, needs to target assistance to those programs where the level of degreed teaching staff is below 50 percent. The first priority should be to assist programs in those regions and States that are having the most difficulty. Special attention also must be focused on American Indian and Alaska Native, migrant, and Early Head Start programs, most of which were well below ACF's self-imposed goal for degreed teaching staff.

AGENCY COMMENTS

In its written response to the report, ACF concurred with our recommendation to provide targeted assistance to programs which had not met ACF's self-imposed staffing goal of 50 percent degreed teachers with a degree in early childhood education or a degree in a field related to early childhood education *in each program* by September 30, 2003. It will prioritize these efforts in Head Start programs in Regions 4 and 6, States that are below 50 percent, as well as American Indian and Alaska Native, migrant, and Early Head Start programs.

We have made technical revisions to the report based on ACF's comments. The full text of ACF's comments is contained in Appendix D.

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INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVE

To assess factors contributing to Head Start's progress and programs' experiences in improving teachers' qualifications.

BACKGROUND

With the passage of the Community Opportunities, Accountability, and Training and Educational Services (COATS) Act (P.L. 105-285) in 1998, Congress reauthorized Head Start through fiscal year (FY) 2003 and amended the Head Start Act. The amendments required more specific education performance standards and increased teacher qualifications. The Act sought to:

- Increase the number of degreed teachers and teaching staff seeking degrees.
- Address issues that could affect teachers' recruitment and retention, such as salaries and benefits.
- Improve the school readiness of Head Start children.
- Foster collaboration between the Head Start program and other State and local entities involved in child care and/or programs for low income children and their families.

The COATS Act specifically mandates that, by September 30, 2003, at least 50 percent of Head Start teachers *nationwide* in center-based programs¹ must have an associate, baccalaureate, or an advanced degree in early childhood education; or a degree in a field related to early childhood education, with experience teaching preschool children.² According to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Head Start met this requirement with 51 percent of teachers holding appropriate degrees in enrollment 2002.

The COATS Act provided only part of the motivation related to the increase in teachers' qualifications. To further strengthen the educational achievement of Head Start teachers, ACF notified each program via Program Instruction that, "Although the statutory mandate is that 50 percent of Head Start teachers nationally have degrees, we expect that all

¹ Head Start programs are either center-based (services are provided at a facility) or home-based (services are provided at an individual's home).

² "Community Opportunities, Accountability, and Training and Educational Services Act of 1998," (P.L. 105-285), Sec. 115 [amended Sec. 648A of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9843a)].

programs will strive to achieve at least this level by the end of FY 2003.”³ An official with ACF’s Head Start Bureau acknowledged that it is unlikely that each program will meet the goal by the end of FY 2003, but Head Start expects the programs to do their best.⁴

Presidential Initiative for Early Childhood Education

The President has firmly supported the need for increased teacher qualifications. In his 2002 State of the Union Address, he stated,

“We need to prepare our children to read and succeed in school with improved Head Start and early childhood development programs. We must upgrade our teacher colleges and teacher training and launch a major recruiting drive with a great goal for America: a quality teacher in every classroom.”

In this address, the President proposed the early childhood initiative - *Good Start, Grow Smart* - to help States and local communities strengthen early learning for young children.

Concerns of Stakeholders and Advocacy Groups

We held discussions with key internal stakeholders and external advocacy groups (e.g., ACF Head Start Bureau, National Head Start Association, National Association for the Education of Young Children). Each strongly supported having more highly educated and better paid teachers. Yet they described what they believed were potential unintended consequences of the COATS Act. These concerns included the following:

- Head Start programs may need to hire outside the local community to find degreed teachers, with such “outsiders” lacking an understanding and appreciation of the local community and diminishing the bond between the program and the community it serves.
- Child Development Associate (CDA) staff – especially those with the knowledge of how to “navigate the system” – may be “pushed out” because of the need to hire degreed teachers. (CDA staff are those nondegreed staff who have a child development associate credential appropriate to the ages of the children in the program they work for, or those nondegreed staff who have a State-awarded certificate for preschool teachers that meets or exceeds the requirements of the CDA).
- Head Start pays for teachers to earn degrees, and those teachers then leave for higher paying positions in school districts or outside the teaching field.
- Training opportunities in early childhood education, especially in rural areas, may

³ *The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Program Instruction: ACYF-PI-HS-00-03*, December 22, 2000, p. 5.

⁴ Discussion with an official of ACF, Head Start Bureau, June 12, 2002.

be remote or unavailable, which would hinder programs' progress in attaining the 50 percent staffing goal for degreed teachers.

We explored these issues throughout the course of our study.

METHODOLOGY

Since 1987, ACF has used the Program Information Report (PIR) to capture information about Head Start programs. PIR is the only comprehensive national source of data available concerning the staffing levels and qualifications of Head Start teaching staff. (Teaching staff is defined as those staff members who are responsible for leading a classroom of children in daily activities.) This annual report collects program level data describing the children and families enrolled and the services provided. Over the past several years, the report has been modified to collect additional information, including teachers' qualifications, new hires, and staff turnover. To assess Head Start's progress in increasing teachers' qualifications, we used the PIR. We supplemented this data with information collected from a simple random sample of program directors and a random stratified cluster sample of Head Start teachers. We conducted a trend analysis of the PIR data for all Head Start programs for the 5 enrollment years ending in 1997 through 2001.⁵

We selected a simple random sample of 300 Head Start program directors, based on programs who submitted PIR data for Head Start enrollment year 2001. We excluded five programs after learning that the programs were solely home-based or were no longer active. We received responses from 263 directors, for an overall response rate of 89 percent (263/295). However, the response rate for individual questions varied. We received responses from at least 205 directors for the questions we analyzed.

From a stratified cluster sample of 444 current and 176 former teachers, we gathered information concerning their goals for obtaining degrees (if they did not have one), their experiences obtaining degrees, the challenges they faced, the support received from the Head Start program, and their motivations for remaining with or leaving the program. The overall response rate for the former teachers was only 25 percent, which prevented meaningful statistical analysis. Therefore, we dropped this group from our sample population. The response rate for current teachers was 94 percent (418/444).

Finally, we reviewed the laws, regulations, and agency policies related to the increase of Head Start teacher qualifications. Further details concerning the methods used for this inspection are presented in Appendix A.

⁵ The enrollment year is defined by ACF as the period of time, not to exceed 12 months, during which a Head Start Program provides center or home-based services to a group of children and their families, PIR User's Guide, April 2002, p. 19. The enrollment year 2001 covers the period September 2000 through June 2001 and was the latest complete year available at the time of our review.

Limitations

The data in this report concerning the qualifications of Head Start teaching staff are based on the final PIR data reported to ACF by Head Start programs for enrollment year ending in 2001. We encountered challenges working with these data both in terms of how the data were collected year-to-year, and how the programs completed the PIR. An example of the problems we encountered was that response categories were not mutually exclusive, meaning that some teachers could have been counted more than once. Therefore, comparing the number of teachers in relation to degrees could not guarantee accuracy. Also, due to the unique nature of migrant programs and the clients they serve, information does not always “fit” into the reporting structure of PIR data elements. However, given that the PIR is the only comprehensive national source of data regarding Head Start teachers’ qualifications, and that the responses we received from Head Start program directors and teachers did not contradict the PIR data, our findings reflect PIR data despite its potential problems.

We also limited our interviews to traditional Head Start programs (excluding American Indian and Alaska Native, migrant, and Early Head Start programs). This limitation allowed us to make consistent comparisons across programs.

Inspection Standards

We conducted this inspection in accordance with the *Quality Standards for Inspections* issued by the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency.

FINDINGS

According to ACF, 51 percent of Head Start teachers held appropriate degrees in enrollment year 2002, effectively meeting the COATS Act mandate. This percentage is an improvement over the 34 percent of teachers who held appropriate degrees in 1997, the year before the passage of the COATS Act. Eighty-six percent (184/213) of the responding directors stated that having more degreed teaching staff has enhanced their programs. Ninety-two percent of degreed teachers and 83 percent of Child Development Associates (CDAs) agreed. As one CDA stated, “I always knew what to do as a teacher, but now I understand the theory of why I do it.”

Several Factors Have Contributed to Head Start’s Progress in Increasing Teachers’ Qualifications

Directors Hired Degreed Teachers to Fill Vacancies

Directors frequently hired degreed teachers to fill vacancies. From September 1998, through June 2001, directors reported hiring 1,374 degreed teachers and only 433 CDAs. This trend is supported by our examination of the national PIR data for all Head Start programs for enrollment years 1997 through 2001, which showed that the proportion of CDAs declined by 15 percentage points, while the proportion of degreed teachers increased by 11 percentage points (Table 1). Directors noted that hiring a degreed teacher is easier, takes less time, and costs less than training nondegreed staff.

Table 1 National Summary of all Head Start Programs 1997 through 2001¹ Percent of Increase of Teachers (Degreed and CDA) by Head Start Enrollment Year Source: Program Information Report Data						
Enrollment Year	Total Programs ²	Total Teachers	Total Degreed Teachers	Percent Degreed Teachers ³	Total CDAs	Percent CDAs ³
1997	1,889	35,709	12,167	34.1%	19,964	55.9%
1998	2,020	39,249 ⁴	12,585	32.1%	21,787	55.5%
1999	2,107	42,471	15,753	37.1%	20,695	48.7%
2000	2,210	43,364	17,549	40.5%	20,030	46.2%
2001	2,299	47,161	21,252	45.1%	19,299	40.9%

¹ At the time of our review, PIR data for enrollment year 2001 were the latest complete year available. PIR data for enrollment year 2002, which indicate that 51 percent of teachers held appropriate degrees, became available after completion of our field work.

² The numbers and percentages shown above are for those programs that are required to report teaching staff and had at least one teacher.

³ The sum of the percent of degreed teachers and the percent of CDAs does not equal 100 percent. Some CDAs were in training at the time the PIR was submitted, or their educational qualifications were not specified.

⁴ In 1998, family childcare providers were included in the total teacher count of the Head Start program.

Eighty-six percent of the responding directors (205/239) stated that they primarily hire from within their local community, and 70 percent of these directors (143/205) were able to obtain the required number of degreed teachers. Of the directors who noted challenges in recruiting from within the local community, none reported any ill effect on their program from hiring “outsiders.” Rather, we were told that hiring teachers from outside the community improved the quality of the program and brought in different perspectives and new ideas.

Programs Were Supporting Staff Efforts to Obtain Degrees

Teachers reported that programs were providing assistance to help them obtain their degrees. Seventy-seven percent of teachers holding CDAs were working toward their degree at the time of this review.⁶ Of these, 87 percent indicated that Head Start had provided assistance to them in the form of time off to attend classes, assistance with payment for books and tuition, and/or helping with transportation (e.g., payment of mileage). Rather than getting “pushed out,” these CDAs will further increase the percentage of teachers with degrees as they complete their educations.

Quality Improvement (QI) Funds Were Instrumental in Retaining Teachers

Specific QI funding is available for Head Start programs to increase staff qualifications and retain experienced staff. In FY 2001, programs received QI funding of \$355.5 million.⁷ Programs must use at least 50 percent of QI funds to improve the compensation (including benefits) of classroom teachers and other staff, unless the program is unable to do so (e.g., salaries are tied to the local school district, and the program cannot exceed those salaries).

Directors stated QI funds are instrumental in the retention of teaching staff and the overall improvement of the program. They cited using QI funds to enhance salaries, increase staff, improve benefits, and provide resources for teaching staff to obtain college degrees. Seventy-three percent (172/235) of the responding directors reported using 50 percent or more of their QI funding to enhance salaries and/or benefits. The remaining 27 percent (63/235) also used this funding for salary and/or benefits; however, for reasons similar to that described above, the program either could not use the full 50 percent to increase salaries and benefits, or the responding agencies did not always know exactly how the parent agency spent the QI funds.

Teacher Turnover Rates Were Low

Our analysis of the PIR data for all Head Start programs for enrollment years 1997 through 2001 found the teacher turnover rate did not substantially change in those

⁶ Percentages cited for degreed teacher and CDA responses were based on weighted responses (Appendix B).

⁷ ACF, Head Start Bureau, July 9, 2002.

years, remaining at approximately 7 percent.⁸ In comparison, the turnover rate in public schools was approximately 13 percent, and the turnover rate for non-teaching professionals was 11 percent.⁹ As such, concerns about teachers leaving the Head Start program may be less of an issue than anticipated.

Stakeholders believe salaries to be a key factor in teacher turnover, especially as teachers earn degrees. However, of those teachers who reported that they may leave within the next 3 years, only 6 percent of degreed teachers and 5 percent of CDAs stated that salary would be a factor in such a decision. Overall, 83 percent of degreed teachers and 89 percent of CDAs stated they planned to remain with Head Start for the next 3 years. Factors influencing teachers decisions to remain with Head Start are listed in Appendix B.

Data Reflect That Disparities Exist in the Percentage of Degreed Teachers

In addition to the COATS Act, ACF further strengthened the educational requirement for Head Start programs through its self-imposed initiative that all programs would strive to achieve at least 50 percent degreed teachers by the end of FY 2003.

Specific Regions, States, and Program Types Attained Lower Overall Percentages of Degreed Teachers

We recognize that Head Start is not a regionally or State-administered program. Nonetheless, for the purposes of assessing programs' success in increasing the qualifications of teachers, we grouped programs based on ACF regional offices' jurisdiction, by States, and by type of program (*i.e.*, traditional Head Start, American Indian and Alaska Native, migrant, and Early Head Start). Table 2 on the following page contains regional/program-type breakdowns. The table shows that Regions 4 and 6 have a majority of those programs that fall short of ACF's self-imposed goal. Although Region 7 had a majority of programs meeting ACF's goal, the overall percentage of teachers with degrees is below 50 percent. In addition, American Indian and Alaska Native, migrant, and Early Head Start programs are well below 50 percent both in terms of individual programs and teachers overall. Appendix C lists the ACF regional office responsible for Head Start programs in each State.

⁸ ACF, PIR reports for Head Start enrollment years 1997 through 2001. Comparison of teachers hired due to staff turnover to total teacher staff.

⁹ Viadero, Debra (April 10, 2002). Researcher Skewers Explanations Behind Teacher Shortage. Education Week on the Web. Retrieved July 10, 2002 from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/newstory.cfm?slug=30aera.h21&keywords=Teacher%20Shortage>

Table 2
Head Start Enrollment Year 2001
Progress of Programs in Achieving ACF's Staffing Goal for Degreed Teachers
 ■ = Regions in Which the Majority of Programs Have Not Met ACF's Goal
 Source: Program Information Report Data

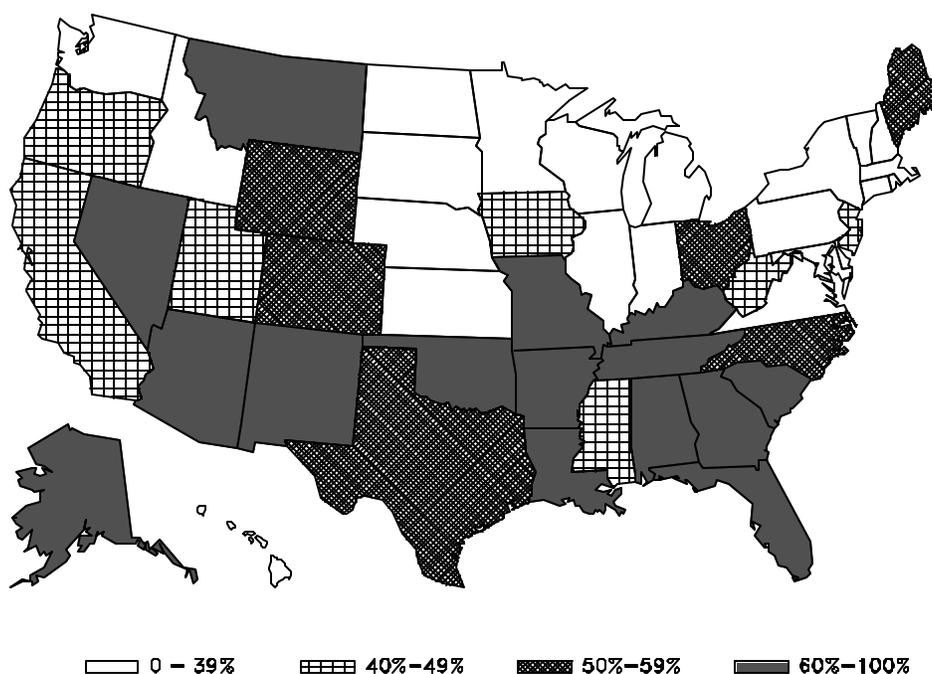
Region	Total Number of Programs In the Region ¹	Number of Programs Not Meeting ACF's Goal for Degreed Staffing	Percentage of Programs That Have Not Achieved ACF's Goal for Degreed Staffing	Total Number of Teachers In the Region	Percentage of Teachers In the Region with Degrees ²
1	88	22	25.0%	1,690	59.1%
2	237	38	16.0%	4,449	70.4%
3	176	50	28.4%	3,080	65.1%
	274	199	72.6%	8,105	34.2%
5	329	102	31.0%	5,989	57.8%
	201	133	66.2%	6,078	32.3%
	85	39	45.9%	1,571	43.3%
8	86	42	48.8%	1,086	52.9%
9	168	81	48.2%	5,597	49.7%
10	62	29	46.8%	1,395	52.8%
Subtotal:	1,706	735	43.1%	39,040	
American Indian and Alaska Native	130	93	71.5%	1,105	23.4%
Migrant	63	48	76.2%	3,097	20.3%
Early Head Start	400	224	56.0%	3,919	32.0%
Nationwide:	2,299	1,100	47.8%	47,161	45.1%

¹ American Indian and Alaska Native, migrant, and Early Head Start programs have been excluded from the regions' total and identified separately.

² The numbers and percentages shown above are for those programs that are required to report teaching staff and had at least one teacher.

The lack of degreed teaching staff is particularly acute in 15, mostly southern, States (see the map on the following page). These States had total degreed teaching staff of less than 40 percent in Head Start during enrollment year 2001. In contrast, programs in 14 States and the District of Columbia achieved rates of 70 percent or more degreed teaching staff. Details concerning Head Start programs' reported progress in achieving ACF's goal (by State) for enrollment year 2001 can be found in Appendix C.

Percentage of Head Start Programs Not Meeting ACF's Self-Imposed Staffing Goal - By State



Note: Territories are Not Displayed on Map

National Total of Programs Not Meeting ACF's Goal = 47.8% Percent

Source: ACF Program Information Report - Head Start Enrollment Year 2001

PIR Data Reflect that the Percentage of Degreed Teachers Varied Among Programs Within Same County

Although it is easy to generalize about the successes and failures in increasing teacher qualifications based on the Nation, region, or State, our analysis suggests it is important not to lose sight of individual programs. We compared Head Start programs within the same counties to explore the progress of individual programs facing similar circumstances (e.g., percent urban/rural population, educational opportunities, competition for potential employees). We identified a total of 72 counties that had at least 1 program meeting ACF's self-imposed staffing goal and 1 program not meeting the goal. The number of programs and the percentage of degreed teachers within these counties varied greatly, as demonstrated in the following example. One New England county has a total of seven Head Start programs. Teaching staff (degreed and CDA) in these programs range from 8 teachers to more than 40. The percentages of degreed teaching staff in these programs are as follows:

- One program has 88 percent.
- Three programs range from 60 to 67 percent.
- One program has 50 percent.
- One program has 48 percent.
- One program has 13 percent.

The above illustration suggests that although some programs may have experienced barriers to increasing the percentage of degreed teachers, other programs in the same local areas overcame these barriers.

The Director's Attitude May Influence Percentage of Degreed Teaching Staff

We compared directors' interview responses regarding the degreed teaching staff requirement to the PIR data. Those directors who had a positive attitude concerning the value of degreed teaching staff in Head Start had a higher percentage of degreed teaching staff in their own programs.¹⁰ Correspondingly, directors who responded that this requirement was detrimental to Head Start had lower percentages of degreed teaching staff.¹¹

One director who was not pushing to meet ACF's self-imposed staffing goal gave the following statement about his program's efforts to increase the proportion of degreed teaching staff: "Even if I don't get 50 percent, Head Start programs that exceed the 50 percent level will bring up those programs that are below 50 percent."

¹⁰ This is statistically significant with a p-Value of <0.05 at the 95 percent confidence level.

¹¹ This is statistically significant with a p-Value of <0.03 at the 95 percent confidence level.

RECOMMENDATION

Overall, there was an increase in the number of Head Start teachers with degrees and in the number of programs that had met ACF's self-imposed staffing goal in the enrollment years that we studied. Directors and teachers believed that the increase in teaching staff qualifications had strengthened the program. However, some programs had limited or no success in increasing the number of degreed teaching staff. Given the need to provide children with the best "Head Start" possible, it is important that ACF ensure that all programs are making positive progress in their efforts to increase the number of degreed teaching staff. To this end, we make the following recommendation to ACF.

Provide Targeted Assistance to Programs that Have Not Met ACF's Self-Imposed Staffing Goal

ACF, in conjunction with its regional offices, needs to target assistance to those programs where the level of degreed teaching staff is below 50 percent. The first priority should be to assist programs in those regions and States that are having the most difficulty. Special attention also must be focused on American Indian and Alaska Native, migrant, and Early Head Start programs, most of which are well below ACF's self-imposed staffing goal.

AGENCY COMMENTS

In its written response to the report, ACF concurred with our recommendation to provide targeted assistance to programs which had not met ACF's self-imposed staffing goal of 50 percent degreed teachers with a degree in early childhood education or a degree in a field related to early childhood education *in each program* by September 30, 2003. It will prioritize these efforts in Head Start programs in Regions 4 and 6, States that are below 50 percent, as well as American Indian and Alaska Native, migrant, and Early Head Start programs.

We have made technical revisions to the report based on ACF's comments. The full text of ACF's comments is contained in Appendix D.

Methodology

Data Collection and Analysis

Use of ACF Program Information Report (PIR) Data

We obtained final PIR data from ACF for all Head Start programs for enrollment years 1997 through 2001. The numbers and percentages shown throughout this report are for programs that are required to report teaching staff and had at least one teacher.

We converted the PIR Microsoft Access[®] files obtained from ACF into Statistical Analysis Software (SAS[®]) to assess national progress in meeting the COATS Act mandate to increase Head Start teacher qualifications. The SAS[®] data were merged with United States Census Bureau urban and rural population statistics by county, allowing us to assess the percentage of urban and rural populations in the county where the Head Start program is located.

Sample of Head Start Directors

We contacted 300 Head Start programs, based on a simple random sample of programs that submitted PIR data for Head Start enrollment year 2001. We limited our interviews to traditional Head Start programs. This limitation allowed us to make uniform comparisons across programs. We excluded five programs after learning the programs were solely home-based or were no longer active when we contacted them. We received responses from 263 directors, for an overall response rate of 89 percent (263/295). However, the response rate for individual questions varied. We received responses from at least 205 directors for the questions we analyzed. All information gathered from Head Start directors was encoded to Microsoft Access[®] and converted into SAS[®] for detailed data analysis.

Sample of Head Start Teaching Staff

We selected a random clustered sample of Head Start programs based on PIR data for Head Start enrollment year 2001, limiting the sample to traditional Head Start programs. We grouped all Head Start programs into geographic clusters, based on their zip code. Each cluster contained five programs. We then randomly selected 16 of these clusters in 3 geographic strata: 4 clusters from the Western United States, 5 clusters from the Central United States, and 7 clusters from the Eastern United States. We used a random stratified cluster sampling methodology to select teaching staff for interviews. We chose this sampling methodology in order to project our findings to the universe of Head Start teaching staff. Within each sample cluster, we stratified teaching staff into four strata:

- Current teaching staff with an associate degree or higher
- Current teaching staff with a CDA only

- Former teaching staff with an associate degree or higher, who resigned from the program between October 1, 2000 and June 30, 2001
- Former teaching staff with a CDA only, who resigned from the program between October 1, 2000 and June 30, 2001

Within each cluster, we randomly selected 15 teaching staff from each of the 4 strata. If a stratum contained fewer than 15 teaching staff, we selected all staff in the stratum. We then attempted in-person or telephone interviews with all sampled teaching staff. The rate of response from former teachers (degreed and CDA) was low because many of them could not be located. Therefore, we did not perform statistical analysis on these sampling groups.

Universe, Sample, and Response Rate for Current and Former Teachers				
Type of Teacher	Universe for the 16 Sampling Clusters	Total Sample for the 16 Sampling Clusters	Total Responses	Response Rate
Current Degreed	984	237	221	93.2%
Current CDA	771	207	197	95.2%
Former Degreed	124	116	29	25.0%
Former CDA	61	60	15	25.0%
Total:	1,940	620	462	

We purposively selected 6 of the 16 sampled clusters for in-person visits, varying both the percentage of urban population in the cluster and their geographic locations. We conducted on-site visits to the following clusters:

- Cluster 02-Southern California
- Cluster 06-Texas
- Cluster 08-Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee
- Cluster 09-Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky
- Cluster 10-Florida
- Cluster 11-New Hampshire, Vermont

For all sampled teachers, we gathered:

- Pertinent information on their educational opportunities
- Possible barriers they faced in obtaining their degree
- Incentives offered to continue their education
- Salary and benefits offered by their Head Start employer
- Availability of professional development opportunities since the implementation of the COATS Act
- Factors that influenced their decision to remain with Head Start
- Factors that may cause them to consider leaving the program

All information gathered from teachers was encoded to Microsoft Access® and was

converted into SAS[®] for detailed data analysis. For current teachers, we performed an analysis based on a computed sample weight of each sampling cluster as compared to the Nation. We examined issues relating to salary, benefits, and factors that teaching staff considered important in their decision to either remain with Head Start or seek other employment.

Confidence Intervals - Reported Teacher Data

Key Estimates	Affirmative Response Point Estimate	
Are you working toward a degree?	77% - CDAs	+/- 11%
Has Head Start provided any assistance to help you in obtaining your degree?	88% - CDAs	+/- 5%
Do you believe the effort to have more degreed teachers in Head Start has helped the program and the children it serves?	83% - CDAs	+/- 8%
	92% - Degreed Teachers	+/- 3%
Do you believe degreed teachers are better able to address the needs of children?	50% - CDAs	+/- 15%
	57% - Degreed Teachers	+/- 11%
Do you plan to remain with Head Start for the next 3 years?		
Yes	89% - CDAs	+/- 7%
	83% - Degreed Teachers	+/- 6%
No	11% - CDAs	+/- 7%
	17% - Degreed Teachers	+/- 6%
What are the factors that are influencing your decision to <i>remain</i> with the program?		
Salary	40% - CDAs	+/- 20%
	41% - Degreed Teachers	+/- 11%
Health Insurance (Self)	34% - CDAs	+/- 18%
	39% - Degreed Teachers	+/- 14%
Health Insurance for Family Members	16% - CDAs	+/- 9%
	19% - Degreed Teachers	+/- 8%
Retirement Plan	35% - CDAs	+/- 13%
	38% - Degreed Teachers	+/- 13%
Working Conditions	50% - CDAs	+/- 13%
	55% - Degreed Teachers	+/- 9%
Family Considerations	41% - CDAs	+/- 14%
	30% - Degreed Teachers	+/- 6%
Training and Educational Opportunities	56% - CDAs	+/- 13%
	46% - Degreed Teachers	+/- 11%

**Traditional Head Start Programs'
Reported Progress in Achieving At Least
50 Percent Degreed Teaching Staff
for Head Start Enrollment Year 2001 - by State**

States	Responsible ACF Regional Office	Number of Programs During Enrollment Year 2000 through 2001 ¹	Number of Programs At or Above 50% Degreed Teachers	
Alabama	4	28	3	
Alaska	10	6	0	
Arizona	9	22	5	
Arkansas	6	19	1	
American Samoa	9	1	0	
California	9	129	75	58%
Colorado	8	40	20	50%
Connecticut	1	23	16	70%
Delaware	3	5	3	60%
D.C.	3	9	8	89%
Florida	4	63	18	
Federal States of Micronesia	9	3	0	
Georgia	4	37	5	
Guam	9	1	0	
Hawaii	9	5	5	100%
Idaho	10	7	5	71%
Illinois	5	91	80	88%
Indiana	5	39	24	62%
Iowa	7	20	11	55%
Kansas	7	27	18	67%

States	Responsible ACF Regional Office	Number of Programs During Enrollment Year 2000 through 2001 ¹	Number of Programs At or Above 50% Degreed Teachers	
Kentucky	4	43	9	
Louisiana	6	45	16	
Maine	1	13	6	
Marshall Islands	9	1	0	
Maryland	3	29	19	66%
Massachusetts	1	31	23	74%
Michigan	5	73	55	75%
Minnesota	5	27	18	67%
Mississippi	4	19	10	53%
Missouri	7	22	6	
Montana	8	13	3	
Nebraska	7	16	11	69%
Nevada	9	4	1	
New Hampshire	1	6	6	100%
New Jersey	2	30	17	57%
New Mexico	6	15	5	
New York	2	169	155	92%
North Carolina	4	46	21	
North Dakota	8	10	7	70%
Northern Mariana Islands	9	1	1	100%
Ohio	5	67	29	
Oklahoma	6	20	3	
Oregon	10	21	11	52%
Pennsylvania	3	59	47	80%
Puerto Rico	2	37	27	73%
Palau	9	1	0	
Rhode Island	1	8	8	100%
South Carolina	4	14	2	
South Dakota	8	8	7	88%
Tennessee	4	24	7	
Texas	6	102	43	
Utah	8	8	4	50%

States	Responsible ACF Regional Office	Number of Programs During Enrollment Year 2000 through 2001 ¹	Number of Programs At or Above 50% Degreed Teachers	
Vermont	1	7	7	100%
Virginia	3	50	37	74%
Virgin Islands	2	1	0	
Washington	10	28	17	61%
West Virginia	3	24	12	50%
Wisconsin	5	32	21	66%
Wyoming	8	7	3	
Total:		1,706	971	57%
<p>¹ The numbers and percentages shown above are for those programs that were required to report teaching staff and had at least one teacher.</p> <p>² This analysis is based on traditional Head Start programs only, allowing for comparison of more “similar” programs. Had American Indian and Alaska Native, migrant, and Early Head Start programs been included, the total programs would be 2,299, the number of programs not meeting ACF’s self-imposed staffing goal would be 1,100, and the overall percentage of programs not meeting ACF’s goal would be 47.8 percent.</p>				

Agency Comments



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
Office of the Assistant Secretary, Suite 600
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20447

DATE: NOV 20 2003
TO: Dara Corrigan
Acting Principal Deputy Inspector General

FROM: Wade F. Horn, Ph.D. *Wade F. Horn*
Assistant Secretary
for Children and Families

SUBJECT: OIG Draft Report: "Status of Efforts to Increase the Qualifications
of Head Start Teachers," OEI-07-01-00560

Attached are the Administration for Children and Families' comments on the above-referenced OIG draft report.

Should you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact Windy M. Hill, Associate Commissioner of the Head Start Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families at (202) 205-8573.

Attachment

IG	_____
EAIG	_____
PDIG	_____ /
DIG-AS	_____ /
DIG-EI	_____ /
DIG-OI	_____
DIG-MP	_____
OCIG	_____ /
ExecSec	_____ /
Date Sent	12-2

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2003 DEC -2 PM 8:55
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GENERAL

COMMENTS OF THE ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (ACF) ON THE OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL'S DRAFT REPORT: "STATUS OF EFFORTS TO INCREASE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF HEAD START TEACHERS," (OEI-07-01-00560)

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the OIG draft report.

OIG Recommendations:

Provide Targeted Assistance to Programs that Have Not Met ACF's Self-Imposed Staffing Goal

ACF, in conjunction with its regional offices, needs to target assistance to those programs where the level of degreed teaching staff is below 50 percent. The first priority should be to assist programs in those regions and States that are having the most difficulty. Special attention also must be focused on Alaska Native/Native American, migrant, and Early Head Start programs, most of which are well below ACF's self-imposed staff goal.

ACF Comments:

ACF is pleased that OIG agrees with us that it is important to ensure that all programs are making positive progress in their efforts to increase the number of degreed teaching staff.

In response to the OIG recommendation, ACF agrees to work with our regional offices to provide targeted assistance to programs which by September 30, 2003, had not met ACF's self-imposed staffing goal of 50 percent of Head Start teachers *in each program* having an associate, baccalaureate, or an advanced degree in early childhood education; or a degree in a field related to early childhood education, with experience teaching preschool children.

OIG notes that ACF achieved the Congressional mandate that by September 30, 2003, at least 50 percent of Head Start teachers *nationwide* must have met this requirement, with 51 percent of teachers holding appropriate degrees in FY 2002. However, ACF's self-imposed goal has not been met.

ACF supports the President's early childhood initiative, "Good Start, Grow Smart," and firmly supports efforts to ensure an increase in the quality of Head Start teachers. As OIG suggests, our priorities in this effort will include programs in Regions IV and VI, and States that are below 50 percent, as well as our American Indian and Alaska Native, migrant and Early Head Start programs.

Technical Comment:

- On pages ii, 7, and 11, "Alaska Native/Native American" programs should be identified as American Indian and Alaska Native programs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was prepared under the direction of Brian T. Pattison, Regional Inspector General for Evaluation and Inspections in the Kansas City Regional Office and Gina C. Maree, Assistant Regional Inspector General. Other principal Office of Evaluation and Inspections staff who contributed include:

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