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**COMPONENT: DISABILITIES**

**SUBJECT: DEVELOPING AN INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)**

**PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:** To ensure that an individualized education program is developed for children who are eligible to receive special education and related services.

**OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE:**

The Local Education Agency (LEA) has the legal responsibility for providing special education and related services. When Head Start provides for the evaluation, the multidisciplinary evaluation team makes the determination whether the child meets the Head Start eligibility criteria. The Multi-disciplinary Team (m-team) must assure that the evaluation findings and recommendations, as well as information from developmental assessment, observations and parents reports, are considered in making the determination whether the child meets Head Start eligibility criteria.

Every child receiving services in Head Start who has been evaluated and found to have a disability and in need of special education must have an IEP before special education and related services are provided to ensure that comprehensive information is used to develop the child's program.

When the LEA develops the IEP, a representative from Head Start must attempt to participate in the IEP meeting and placement decision. The Health and Disability Manager or designee and the child's lead teacher will make every effort to attend the IEP meeting.

If Head Start develops the IEP, the IEP must take into account the child's unique needs, strengths, developmental potential and the family strengths and circumstances as well as the child's disability. The IEP must include:

- A statement of the child's present level of performance, and the identification of needs in areas requiring specific programming.
- A statement of annual goals, including short term objectives for meeting these goals.
- A statement of services to be provided by each Head Start component that are in addition to those services provided for all Head Start children, including transition areas.
- A statement of the specific special education services to be provided to the child and those related services necessary for the child to participate in the Head Start program. This includes services provided by other agencies and non-Head Start professionals.
- The identification of personnel responsible for the planning and supervision of services and for the delivery of services.

- The projected dates for initiation of services and the anticipated duration of services.
- A statement of objective criteria and evaluation procedures for determining at least annually whether the short-term objectives are being achieved or need to be revised.
- Family goals and objectives related to the child's disabilities when they are essential to the child's progress.

When Head Start develops the IEP, the team must include:

- The Head Start Health and Disability Manager, designee
- The child's teacher or home visitor,
- One or both of the child's parents or guardians, and
- At least one of the professional members of the m-team which evaluated the child.
- A representative from the LEA must be invited in writing.
- Any other persons requested by the parent to attend the meeting may be invited.

A meeting must be held at a time convenient for the parents and staff to develop the IEP within 30 calendar days of a determination that the child needs special education and related services. Services must begin as soon as possible after the development of the IEP.

Head Start must make vigorous efforts to include the parents in the IEP process. Head Start must:

- Notify parents in writing the purpose, attendees, time and location of the IEP meeting far enough in advance so there is opportunity for them to participate;
- Make every effort to assure the parents understand the purpose and proceedings and that they are encouraged to provide information about their child and their desires for the child's program;
- Provide interpreters, if needed, and offer the parents a copy of the IEP in the parents' language of understanding after it has been signed;
- Hold the meeting without the parents only if neither parent can attend, after repeated attempts to establish a date or facilitate their participation, and documentation is on file.

Head Start must initiate the implementation of the IEP as soon as possible after the IEP meeting by modifying the child's program in accordance with the IEP and arranging for the provision of related services.