

Hidalgo County Head Start Administrative Program Plan

The Hidalgo County Head Start Administrative Plan incorporates all procedures processes, philosophy, regulations, policies and recommendations included in **45 CFR Chapter XIII Office of Human Development Services, Department of Health and Human Services, Subchapter B The Administration of Children, Youth and Families, Head Start Program, Public Law 110-134 "Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007", Head Start Standards 1301 through 1311, Part 92 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Title 2 CFR Part 225 Cost Principles For Non-Profits Organization** (formerly referred to as OMB A-87) and **OMB Circular A-102 Grants Cooperative Agreements With State and Local Governments and Circular A-133 Audits of State, Local Governments, and Non-Profits Organizations.**

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program utilizes a management systems' approach to sustain quality services for its children and their families. This systems' approach ensures that the program staff is ready to provide quality services, to meet all program requirements, to address priorities and to insure that children served are "school ready," when they transition to the public schools. The delivery of services by each department is organized utilizing the ten systems: Program Governance, Monitoring, Communication, Human Resources, Record Keeping & Reporting, Program Planning, Self-Assessment, ERSEA (Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance), Facilities and Fiscal. This management process not only solidifies the framework for service delivery, but also seeks to produce successful outcomes for the children and families served. The staff is totally committed to the systems' approach and continuously reviews and analyzes data and results as each department engages in a revision, refinement and renewal of operational procedures, strategies and activities to meet program goals and objectives. There is constant attention to staff, parents and children's engagement, growth and development.

Hidalgo County Head Start Program is center based, where children attend a classroom type setting. This is offered to all three and four year old children who meet the Head Start requirements on a first come first served basis.

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The Hidalgo County Head Start Program's desired outcomes provide increased opportunities for children to develop school readiness skills and for family engagement and community involvement through advocacy, training and technical assistance. The Hidalgo County Head Start Program facilitates the employment of staff from the service area. Currently 39% of the Hidalgo County Head Start Program employees are current or former Head Start parents. Furthermore, Head Start joins hands with the community in making it possible for these children and their families to engage in developmentally appropriate practices for early childhood, which in turn, will bring about a greater degree of social competence.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program is a major change agent for the families served and the community at large. The Hidalgo County Head Start Program has developed and implemented a systematic, ongoing program planning process which includes consultation with the program's governing body, policy groups, program staff and community organizations that serve Head Start and other low-income families with young children, as reauthorized. The Head Start Program design includes an On-Going monitoring process which continuously assesses to meet the ever changing needs of children and families enrolled. The daily contact with all families creates the first step in the engagement process and sets the climate for close and interactive endeavors. Administration and staff, together with the families served, access appropriate program and community resources to generate a comprehensive and holistic approach to empowerment and development.

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SYSTEM: PROGRAM GOVERNANCE **45CFR1304.50**

The Hidalgo County Head Start Policy Council is structured to facilitate shared governance whereby parents can participate in policy making and in other activities to make decisions about the program.

The Policy Council is established at the grantee level, with Parent Committees, comprised exclusively of Head Start parents, at the center level. The process and procedures to elect the parents at the center level as well as community and parent representatives to the Policy Council are addressed in the procedures outlined in the **Family and Community Partnerships Procedures Manual** as well as in the **Policy Council By-Laws**.

In accordance to the By-Laws, the Policy Council shall be comprised of two types of representatives, parents of currently enrolled children and community representatives, with 51 percent of the members being parents of currently enrolled children (1306.3(h)). Community representatives are drawn from the local community businesses, public or private community, civic, and professional organizations, and others who are familiar with needs, resources and services for low-income children and families. All members are limited, as specified in Head Start regulations and Policy Council By-Laws, to a one (1) year term and may serve the maximum of three (3) years. Through the selection process the Grantee Board and Policy Council are not allowed to have identical memberships and functions.

The Policy Council works in partnership with key management staff and the governing body to develop, review and approve or disapprove policies and procedures for shared decision making, program planning, program philosophy, criteria for defining recruitment, selection and enrollment priorities in accordance with **45 CFR Part 1305 Appendix A**. The intentional use of the Management systems approach within this partnership secures a pivotal position for assessing whether what is currently in place should continue or determine if there is a need for change in direction. Administration gathers and provides data from all relevant sources during the year to facilitate this decision making process.

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Administrative staff facilitates the process for the Grantee Board (Commissioners' Court) to understand, recognize and practice its fiscal and legal responsibilities for the Hidalgo County Head Start Program. Both Policy Council and Grantee Board are provided on-going training to insure that both entities are able to function under the roles and responsibilities as summarized and defined in **Section 1304.50 Appendix A: Governance and Management Responsibilities of the Head Start Standards**. The intent of the training is to strengthen their leadership skills and bring collaboration and cooperation as each contributes to set the program design and offer direction for service delivery to the children and families enrolled. Together with the program staff, each contributes to access any and all community resources to bring forth success as children become "school ready." Through the formal agenda for each entity, administration shares appropriate and timely information and promotes open discussion to address issues impacting the Program and to facilitate the decision making process. Strong working relationships are promoted and cultivated among program administrative staff, parent committees, the Grantee Board and the Policy Council to sustain effective communication and positive engagement. The engagement of both governing entities with the program staff to develop, implement and revise the School Readiness Plan, Strategic Plan, Program Plans, Continuation Application Budget Plan, the Training and Technical Assistance (T-TA) Plan, Corrective Action Plans and the Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework is secured and sustained. Their active role in the utilization of the systems approach is also pivotal especially if new data/information requires a change in direction, process, procedure or strategy.

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SYSTEM: PROGRAM PLANNING

45 CFR Part 1304.51(a)

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program follows a systematic, ongoing program planning process which relies heavily on the use of program data collected from different sources and for different purposes with the focus remaining on improving the quality of services to children and families enrolled in the Program. The process includes consultation with the Program's governing body, policy groups and program staff, and with other community organizations that serve Head Start children or other low-income families with young children. The *Program Planning Cycle Graphic* developed by the National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations is being used to demonstrate the Program Planning process and to communicate how the quality of services may be improved by using data and a systems approach. (See Program Planning System)

The Program Planning process includes the following steps:

1. Information and data is collected through different sources including the Community Assessment, the Annual Self-Assessment and data collected and maintained by each service department using PROMIS (Program Resources and Outcomes Management Information System), MIS (Management Information System), ABRA (Program Name), LAP-D (Learning Accomplishment Profile Diagnostic Addition), informal and formal monitoring tools and collected yearly, quarterly, monthly, weekly, biweekly, etc.
2. The information and data is analyzed at the appropriate level and by the designated participants, including parents, staff, and community members.
3. Priorities are defined; plans are developed with corresponding goals, objectives and activities. Responsible individuals are identified and timelines are developed and followed.
4. All plans are subject to approval by the Grantee Board, the Policy Council. The major plans requiring approval include the following: the Strategic Plan, the Program Plans, the Training and Technical Assistance Plan, the Continuing Application and Budget and Corrective Action Plans when required.

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5. Financial plans or budgets are developed to correspond to the approved plans and the department needs to carry out the operational procedures.
6. Implementation steps are followed to accomplish defined long and short term goals and objectives, results are analyzed and corrective steps are taken to insure success in the delivery of services.
7. The On-Going Monitoring Plan and corresponding assessments serve to evaluate the implementation process for each service area and to validate data.
8. Data gathered is reviewed again and validated changes are made when needed and the cycle begins once more, insuring that there are opportunities for intermittent corrective actions to be taken as needed.

Community Assessment

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program conducts a comprehensive **Community Assessment (CA)** once every three years with yearly updates, to assess community strengths, needs and resources. The data/information generated serves as the basis for multi-year long range goals and objectives (The Strategic Plan), as a factor in the determination of the Program options best suited to the needs of the children and the families served. The **CA** is conducted in collaboration with University of Texas Pan American.

The Policy Council reviews the **CA** to assure that as many Head Start eligible children are served within the recruitment areas. The areas served have been determined to be those which have the greatest need for the Head Start services.

A long range multi-year Strategic Plan is developed for the program along with short term Program Plans for each content area, utilizing the **CA** information in order to determine the scope of services most needed and to implement the appropriate program options.

The **Community Assessment** also includes the information regarding the service area; other child development and child care programs; services and resources provided to children with disabilities; information regarding education, health, nutrition, social services available to Head Start children and families; demographic information regarding the service area; statistics by families and population; and community resources that address the needs of Head Start

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children and their families.

Program options are presented annually to the Policy Council and the Grantee Board for their review and approval during the months of May and June. Program options are based on an updated **CA**. Based on the **CA** information, the Policy Council will review and determine if there is a need to change the criteria for recruitment and selection of children.

The program options that were selected based on the **CA** are as follows:

- *Center Based Option
- *Actual Days of operation: Monday- Friday 172 days
- *Full Day Services: 7:45am to 5:15pm

The service area for the Hidalgo County Head Start Program is the County of Hidalgo and all of the municipalities and rural areas within the County.

Program Plans

Department Directors from each content area develop a Program Plan for their respective area during the months of March, April and May. The Plans are first presented to Advisory Committees which are comprised of parents, staff, and professionals from the community. The Policy Council reviews the plans and any modifications recommended are incorporated into the plans. The final Program Plans are presented to the Advisory Committees for review and recommendations. Finalized Program Plans are then approved by the Policy Council and the Grantee Board.

Training and Technical Assistance Plan

This Plan is developed using data to identify staff and organizational needs from such sources as employees' performance appraisals, surveys, children's performance and school readiness needs, Office of Head Start requirements/mandates, etc. The Plan is reviewed and approved by both the Policy Council and the Grantee Board.

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Continuing Application Budget Plan

This Plan is prepared annually and is developed during the Application process, involving staff, parents, and community members at different times during the development process. This Plan is reviewed by the Policy Council Budget Committee before it is approved by the Policy Council, once it is approved by the Policy Council; it is reviewed and approved by the Grantee Board.

Corrective Action Plans

Corrective Action Plans are prepared and submitted for approval by the Policy Council and the Grantee Board for any Self-Assessment area on non-compliance. These plans are monitored and the status of compliance is reported to the Office of Head Start as required.

When Corrective Action Plans are prepared to respond to Texas Child Care Licensing Standards' violations, the plans are also submitted to the Policy Council and the Grantee Board for approval and the required follow-up is completed.

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SYSTEM: COMMUNICATION

45CFR 1304.51(b)(c)(d)(e)

The hierarchal structure relative to supervisory and operational responsibilities of all program personnel is delineated in the Program's organizational chart. This instrument facilitates the flow of information across organizational boundaries. It also clarifies roles and responsibilities through the job description for each funded position in the program.

The Hidalgo County Head Start program maintains an ongoing communication system which ensures that timely and accurate information is provided to parents, policy groups, staff and the community in general.

At the Policy Council level, the formal instrument for communication is the agenda. Agendas are developed with input from the executive director and the chairperson of the Policy Council. The agenda is certified by the county clerk and posted for public viewing at the Administrative Offices of the County and at Head Start Centers. The agenda then is forwarded to the Grantee Board at posting time. All agenda items are presented to the Policy Council during the regular meeting scheduled on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. Agenda items are then submitted to the Grantee Board for approval at a regularly scheduled meeting. All Grantee Board meetings are broadcasted over the local PBS station and may be accessed on the county's website, www.co.hidalgo.tx.us.

Program Plans outline short term goals and objectives for all content areas and facilitates the distribution of tasks and activities to achieve the goals and objectives. Program Plans are shared with all staff on a yearly basis.

The Policy Council monthly meetings are attended by representatives from the Grantee Board (Commissioners' Court). This allows for the most current information from the Policy Council meetings to reach the Grantee Board immediately. In the week following the Policy Council monthly meeting, specific Policy Council Agenda items are sent to the Grantee Board for approval prior to final action and/or implementation.

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Agendas and minutes of Policy Council meetings are sent for posting to each Center as well as posted at the Central Office for public viewing. Copies of minutes are also sent to the Grantee Board after every Policy Council meeting.

Monthly Center Committee meetings, parent workshops, parent conferences, parent progress reports, are used to share information or to communicate important issues to the Head Start Parents.

Monthly meetings with administrative personnel and Center Managers are held following the Policy Council meetings. The actions taken by the Policy Council are communicated to all personnel in order to carry out the functions of the program at the central office and at the centers.

Center Managers are then required to meet with center staff to share the information from the Policy Council Meeting as well as from the management meeting. Center meetings are held monthly or more frequently based on need.

The community at large is informed through the use of the Program's website at www.hchsp.org, quarterly newsletters, memoranda, banners and announcements placed with local agencies, classified advertisement in local area newspapers, public service announcements and advisory committee meetings. The Annual Program Report is presented on the website.

Any and all official communication from the Head Start Executive Director to the Grantee Board or the Policy Council is in writing.

Admission Review and Dismissal (ARD) meetings with a multi-disciplinary team and parents are held to discuss and develop the Individual Education Plan (IEP) in order to meet the needs of special children.

Correspondence is appropriately disseminated to the staff. All memoranda to Center Managers or other center staff requires review and approval of Executive Director or the two Assistant Directors as appropriate. The Executive Team and Center Managers meet on a monthly basis. Meetings are also held on an as needed basis.

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All policy statements or directives received from Health and Human Services or other federal agencies which are relevant to the conduct of Head Start business, are forwarded to the Head Start Executive Director for distribution to staff, Policy Council Members and to the Grantee Board.

Provision for communications among Head Start parents and program staff, staff and community partners which outline plans for operational procedures and emergencies, are reflected in the content area procedures manual for **Family and Community Partnerships (1304.22(a)(4), .41(a)(1), .51(b))**.

Through its different plans such as the Strategic Plan, the Program Plans, the Training & Technical Assistance Plan, the Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework, parents, staff and the community are kept engaged in the operation of the Program as a whole.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program has made great strides in implementing an integrated communication system via its computer network. The Program uses e-mail and an online messaging system to communicate among all departments and with centers. The Program has also installed a surveillance system. This system allows center staff and central office staff to observe classrooms in session for purposes of security and for monitoring staff activities. Recorded data serves to assist in training or other needed action.

Please refer to the attached Communication Plan for a summary of the communication activities, strategies and tools used by staff.

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SYSTEM: RECORD KEEPING AND REPORTING 45CFR 1304.51(g)(h)

The Program's Record-Keeping and Reporting System establishes and maintains efficient and effective records which provide accurate and timely information regarding children, families, and staff and with specific measures in place to ensure appropriate confidentiality of information. The Hidalgo County Head Start Program provides reasonable public access to information and to the records pertaining to the Head Start Program under the Freedom of Information Act.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program has invested time and resources in installing computer systems that facilitate communications and record-keeping for all locations. The system produces multiple reports which are utilized for compliance monitoring and recordkeeping, and are an integral part of the Program's **On-going Monitoring Plan**.

PROMIS (Program Resources and Outcomes Management Information System) is a computerized system whereby staff maintains a complete family history and produces reports for monitoring program activities to meet federal deadlines in health, mental health, family services, special services and nutrition. This web-based system is networked to all centers and to all of the departments within administration central office. Reports configured and generated at the center level and at the central office for different purposes ensure that data from the different departments remains timely and accurate. PROMIS has made it possible to hold staff accountable, maintain data integrity, and to be able to check for accuracy and timeliness continuously.

Individual children's folders are utilized to organize and document in all areas of service. The file is divided into sections/areas of service whereby data and progress are documented to meet program requirements and to meet the individual needs of each child. Each child's progress is documented in the file for each area. Children's progress and performance information is used to keep parents informed and engaged.

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The **MIP** (Micro Information Product) computer system generates periodic reports of financial status and program operations in order to control program quality, maintain program accountability, and advise governing bodies, policy groups, and staff of program progress. In addition MIP generates official reports for Federal, State, and local authorities, as required by applicable law. This system contains a procurement module which produces electronic requisitions, maximizes internal controls and safeguards expenditures. The Financial Accounting Manual contains detailed information on the utilization of this system.

A standardized instrument is used to document and track children's performance in different areas. The **LAP-D** (Learning Accomplishment Profile Diagnostic) is a computerized assessment tool utilized three (3) times a year (Pre, Mid and Post) in the classroom to assess and document the child's progress in mastering the domains of literacy, mathematics and language. It is a key tool in individualizing each child's instruction. The information is gathered in the classroom by utilizing lap tops which are then connected to a web-based system to generate reports on each child's performance. This data is shared with parents for engagement and support and is utilized by the Staff Development and Education Departments' staff to plan and develop staff training as listed in the T & TA Plan. The aggregation of the children's performance data is conducted at least three (3) times a year, after each assessment and more often at the center level or classroom level. Additional detailed information regarding this system is found in the Education Services Program Plan.

Staff is required to sign a Confidentiality Policy and must follow steps to meet the requirements of a Family Privacy Act. Access to information in the different sites is linked to a sign in code and there is a trail of records reviewed.

Department Heads work closely with the MIS (Management Information System) Department to conduct data integrity checks and to resolve issues/problems related to data management. The main objective is data accuracy. Any errors or missing data is traced to the source and corrected.

The Executive Director reviews fiscal data on a monthly basis with the Assistant Directors and the Chief Financial Officer. Data is also shared with the Policy Council every month.

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As explained in the Self-Assessment System, data from different reports are utilized to plan and monitor program operations. The communication system also includes follow ups on issues and action plans developed and implemented based on findings.

ABRA is a computerized program for managing and monitoring all personnel records. The program contains required data for each employee. It also serves to track and record existing vacancies.

Procedures Manuals

Each content area has developed a procedures' manual to meet the documentation and reporting requirements of Head Start Standards. Please refer to the procedures manuals of Early Childhood Development, and Health, Family and Community Partnership and the Program Management Plans as well as the Accounting, Procurement and Personnel Procedures Manual.

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SYSTEM: SELF ASSESSMENT 45 CFR 1304.51(i)

Performance Standard 1304.51(i)(1) requires the Hidalgo County Head Start Program to conduct a self-assessment once a year. The purpose of the Assessment is to measure the Program's effectiveness and progress in implementing Federal regulations and in meeting Program goals and objectives. It also serves to measure accomplishments, strengths and weaknesses and as a process to promote continuous improvement of Program Plans, the delivery of services and the School Readiness Plan (Promoting Kindergarten Readiness). The Self-Assessment offers parents, community members, Policy Council members, Grantee Board members the opportunity for engagement with the staff in the process to improve the quality of services.

Self-Assessment Teams are formed and they may include parents, Policy Council members, Head Start staff, Grantee Board members, and private consultants with expertise in the different areas served. The Self-Assessment Teams are provided with training and guidance. Additional meetings are scheduled as necessary. Each member of the Assessment Team receives a packet of instructions, assessment tools, and report forms to be used during the assessment. Each item in the packet is reviewed during the training. The following items are presented at the training meeting:

- The purpose of the Self-Assessment
- The responsibility of the Self-Assessment Team and of the individual team members
- The proper attitudes for team members toward staff and parents
- Assessment techniques: Interviewing, observing, examining records, what questions to ask, what methods to use, how to document assessment findings, when and where to return findings
- The development of Corrective Action Plans to address findings

The Executive Team Members take a leadership role in assisting each Center assigned to them in implementing the Corrective Action Plan when one is required. Each corrective action plan is then validated and confirmed by Executive Team Members reviewing Plans for centers not assigned to them.

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Because of the confidentiality of children and families' records required by Head Start Performance Standards, parents and volunteers are prohibited from reviewing records other than those of their own children. Children's health and educational records and social services records of families are open only to Head Start staff and Special Consultants on a "need to know" basis. Similarly, sensitive personnel information and other personal data must be respected as confidential and available strictly on a "need to know" basis.

The Self-Assessment process puts the following practices in place:

- The use of the latest version of the Office of Head Start Monitoring Protocol as the primary tool for conducting the Assessment and for reviewing Program Services.
- The use of all data which has been collected from different sources and for different purposes including Community Assessment data, PIR data, children's assessment data, health data, family services data, nutrition data, staff level of education, PROMIS, MIP, etc. to assess meeting Program Standards, regulations or other requirements.
- The use of the findings/non-compliances/needs/concerns identified during the Self-Assessment to make recommendations to adjust and enhance the ten Program Management Systems to improve delivery of services and to adjust the School Readiness Plan as needed.
- The Self-Assessment is cycled with the Program Planning cycle and the On-Going Monitoring cycle to strengthen each process and to maintain a cycle of continuous improvement which provides the vehicle to sustain the delivery of services of the highest quality. (See Office of Head Start Program Management and Fiscal Operations Program Planning Cycle in the Program Planning section.)

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SYSTEM: PROGRAM MONITORING 45CFR 1304.51(i)(2)

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program has established procedures for **Ongoing Monitoring** of Head Start operations which ensure the effective implementation of federal regulations. Along with effective and innovative monitoring procedures, the Program has invested time and resources in installing computer systems that facilitate communication and monitoring of all service areas. The system produces multiple reports that are utilized for compliance monitoring and recordkeeping and are an integral part of the Program's **Ongoing Monitoring Plan**.

The Executive Team, composed of central office department heads, directors, coordinators and specialists, monitor program operations at the forty-three (43) centers and the two (2) kitchens. The process has been completed in two (2) ways: (1) Each center is visited bi-weekly by at least one (1) member of the Executive Team and provides written feedback on the designated form. Center Managers are required to conduct weekly observations of classroom activities and provide written feedback to teachers on the designated forms. (2) The Executive Team members conduct desk audits of the centers using the data gathered through the Program Resources and Outcomes Management Information System (**PROMIS**), and the reports and records submitted to carry out the goals and objectives of each department in delivering services and by observation of activities at the centers assigned. Contact is made via telephone when desk audits are conducted.

Three (3) Education Area Directors provide leadership and training and technical assistance and ensure that the eight (8) domains are implemented and that there is accountability by the classroom staff to deliver appropriate instruction to reflect successful children's performance in all areas assessed. Classroom instruction is monitored by the Center Manager assigned to supervise those teachers and by the Education Area Director for the area. Monitoring activities include the review of lesson plans; classroom observations completed individually utilizing CLASS and other observation tools and by reviewing reports submitted including LAP-D reviewing children's progress, attendance reports, etc.

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One (1) Area Director is assigned to focus on curriculum and instruction and the individualization of instruction. This director also works with the School Readiness Plan implementation and the School Readiness Partnerships. The focus is on constant review of activities and teaching staff performance of strategies that facilitate school readiness with public schools. Focus is also on the use of assessment data (**LAP-D**) to plan and deliver instructions.

Twice a year the Executive Team will use the Program Compliance Monitoring Instrument to assess each center's compliance with standards, rules and regulations and the overall success of Program operations.

The Self-Assessment also assists in monitoring compliance with the Head Start Standards, Texas Minimum Standard Rules for Child Care Centers and other Program requirements.

Each Program Plan includes a Monitoring Component to insure that all planned activities are carried out as proposed. Department Directors will utilize specific instruments, the PROMIS data, and specific reports to monitor such activities.

Daily decisions regarding program operations are delegated to the Executive Program Director by the Grantee Board. The Program Executive Director delegates the supervisory and functional responsibilities to the following personnel:

- ◆Assistant Program Directors and Administrator for Human Resources
- ◆Department Directors

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program maintains an internal records system that provides accurate information on component activities, financial management, and program operations and personnel. Monitoring of financial systems is accomplished through the **MIP** (Micro Information Processing) system. Monthly financial report packets are prepared and reviewed by the Assistant Program Director, and the Executive Director these packets include General Ledger Trial Balance, Payroll Trial Balance, and Trial Balance for USDA, Detail Report and Encumbrance Budget Report by Department.

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The Program maintains a process with open communication between staff, parents, and the community, which provides information regarding services, and activities for children and families, financial status, resources within the program and community, application process, etc.

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SYSTEM: HUMAN RESOURCES

45 CFR Part 1304.52(a)-(k)

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program has an organizational structure that facilitates the implementation of Federal Standards as revised January 8, 1998. Program functions have been assigned to qualified personnel. In the area of program management an experienced Executive Director for Head Start along with qualified staff provide leadership through a Management System approach to deliver services in education (school readiness), family engagement, disabilities, health and community partnerships.

This organizational structure supports the accomplishment of program objectives as well as addresses the major functions and responsibilities assigned to each staff position and provide a mechanism for proper staff supervision and support. Please refer to the Organizational Chart.

Personnel Policies

The Hidalgo County Head Start ensures that staff and all consultants utilized by the Program have the knowledge, skills, and experience they need to perform their assigned functions responsibly. Additionally the Program makes sure that only candidates with the qualifications specified in this part and in 45 CFR 1306.21 are employed.

All current and former Head Start parents receive preference for employment vacancies for which they are qualified. Staff and Program consultants are familiar with the ethnic background and heritage of families in the Program and are able to serve and effectively communicate with children and families with limited or no English proficiency.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program operates under the auspices of the County of Hidalgo, as such all Personnel Policies and Procedures, adopted by the Hidalgo County Commissioners' Court/Grantee Board, are also adopted by the Hidalgo County Head Start Program. (Please refer to Personnel Policies.) Specific Personnel Policies are acknowledged and reviewed by staff every year. The Policy Council approves all Personnel Policies related to the Head Start staff.

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All employees of the Hidalgo County Head Start Program will be placed in one of the following two (2) classifications at the time of employment according to their present position or entry level for new employees: full time employees, part time employees.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program job descriptions are developed by the Human Resources Department using the following procedure:

- ◆ Initial job description for positions new to the Hidalgo County Head Start Program will be developed by the Administrator for Human Resources and the supervisor for the position and submitted for approval to the Executive Director. Each job description is subsequently approved by the Policy Council and Grantee Board.
- ◆ Job descriptions for all employees will be signed by the employee upon employment.
- ◆ Recommendations for upgrading the job descriptions will be the responsibility of the supervisor based on specific needs and functions of a position. Review and approval is required by the Executive Director, the Policy Council and the Grantee Board.
- ◆ A copy of the job description must be filed in the Employee's Personnel record.
- ◆ Job descriptions for all staff are updated as needed.

A Personnel file will be kept on each employee. This file is regarded as confidential material and shall be treated as such except as otherwise required by law. All correspondence, references, evaluations, agreements and disciplinary actions will be kept in the employee's file. The only persons with access to the file will be the employee, the Executive Director, Administrator for Human Resources, Human Resources Clerks or Secretaries and individuals required by law or regulations. Access on a "need to know basis only" will be determined by the Assistant Directors, the Administrator for Human Resources.

At a minimum, the following information will be included in all individual personnel records: applications for employment, job description, reference letters, T.B. Test, INS Forms I-9, new employee orientation checklist, date of employment, results of criminal history check, any and all personal action reports (PA's) any disciplinary action taken against employee, employee performance evaluations, termination notice, if applicable.

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Disclosures of any information in the personnel record to persons or agencies not associated with the Hidalgo County Head Start Program require the written consent of the employee.

Information that shall be considered public information will be employee's name, salary, job title and length of employment except as otherwise required by law. All personnel information is filed under lock and key. The Administrator for Human Resources is the guardian of records.

Staff Recruitment, Selection and Qualifications

Education and child development services are supported by staff, and consultants when necessary, with training and experience in areas that include: The theories and principles of child growth and development, early childhood education and family support. In addition, staff meets the qualifications for classroom teachers, as specified in section 648A of the Head Start Act and any subsequent amendments regarding the qualifications of teachers.

Health services are supported by staff and consultants with training and experience in public health, nursing, health education, maternal and child health, and health administration. In addition, the Program ensures that only a health professional is utilized, when a health procedure must be performed by licensed/certified health personnel. Mental health services are supported by staff with expertise in this area, and with consultants who are licensed or certified mental health professionals with experience and expertise in serving young children and their families.

All Nutrition service activities are directed by a staff member with a degree in nutrition.

Family and Community Partnerships services are directed by staff with training and experience in fields related to social, human, or family services, and with skills in assisting the parents in advocating and decision-making for their families.

Disabilities services are under the direction of staff with training and experience in securing and individualizing needed services for children with disabilities. The Program's fiscal administration is under the supervision of a qualified fiscal officer.

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When a position becomes vacant, a personnel requisition is completed by the authorized personnel, and submitted to the Executive Director or designee for approval and budget consideration. After approval, it is submitted to the Administrator for Human Resources who verifies the vacancy, and correctness of qualifications. The requisition is then submitted to the Hidalgo County Human Resources Department for posting. Postings are made internally and externally for one (1) week and published in the newspaper and the County's website and if no selection is made then the postings are made externally (newspaper). Job listings are sent to all centers. After a one (1) week period the Head Start Administrator for Human Resources will receive from the Hidalgo County Personnel Office a list of qualified applicants for interview.

Interviewees are scheduled by the County's Personnel Director and appropriate Hidalgo County Head Start Program personnel carry out the interview process. Applicant's qualifications are reviewed by assigned staff to ensure that they have the required credentials and that the adequate skills and experience needed to carry out their functions and responsibilities.

Current Head Start parents are given preference for employment vacancies for which they are qualified. After an applicant is selected by a committee including the supervisor, a recommendation is made to the Executive Director for initial approval. Then the Executive Director submits all recommendations to Policy Council Personnel Committee and to the Policy Council for final approval.

At the time the employee's application documents are processed, each employee will complete a form declaring any pending\prior criminal arrest\charges; any dispositions regarding child abuse or neglect any child sexual abuse and violent felonies.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program adheres to the Civil Right Act of 1964, as amended, The Texas Department of Regulatory Services, and the Head Start Act of 1998, regarding criminal history record checks and results are kept in the employee personnel file. The current personnel policies are consistent with the Department of Labor as they pertain to working hours, overtime, vacation, holidays and absences/leaves.

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The Hidalgo County Head Start Program evaluates new employees monthly during a one-hundred and twenty day (120) probationary period. The successful completion of one-hundred and twenty (120) day probationary status denotes that the employee is eligible for all fringe benefits of the Program, thereafter; all employees will receive a formal yearly evaluation at the end of the school year.

A wage and salary comparability study is conducted annually with comparable agencies in the County of Hidalgo as well as with other Head Start Programs. Employee benefits are evaluated annually to determine comparability to other social service agencies.

Staff Development for Head Start employees encompasses many areas of professional development. Pre-service and in-service training sessions are conducted as skill based knowledge sessions, with the primary goal of enhancing the abilities of employees at all levels of the organization. Seven to ten days are scheduled every year prior to the beginning of the school year for all center and central office staff.

Educational leave, of up to four (4) hours per week, with pay, is available to eligible Head Start employees. Employees pursuing a degree or additional skill development in their assigned job position are eligible for Educational leave as well. Tuition and fees are paid for those pursuing an associate's degree or higher in Early Childhood education.

The Program's Training and Technical Assistance Plan reflects the areas of need as determined by the self-assessment, the staff appraisal information and information gathered through personnel surveys. The plan includes development in the areas of planning, record keeping and reporting, ongoing monitoring, human resources, prevention and early intervention, health care tracking and follow-up, disabilities, curriculum and transportation, child outcomes, etc. (See Training and Technical Assistance Plan.)

Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

The Head Start Program will not undertake on their own, to treat cases of child abuse and neglect. The Hidalgo County Head Start Program will cooperate fully with child protective service agencies in in the community, and will make every effort to retain in the Head Start Program children allegedly abused or neglected, recognizing that the child's participation in Head Start is essential in assisting

Hidalgo County Head Start Administrative Program Plan

families with abuse or neglect problems. The Hidalgo County Head Start Program has designated the Health Director to coordinate the following:

- ◆ Establishing and maintaining cooperative relationships with the agencies providing child protective services in the community, and with any other agency to which child abuse and neglect must be reported under State Law, including regular formal and informal communication with staff at all levels of the agencies
- ◆ Informing parents and staff of state and local laws requirements in cases of child abuse and neglect
- ◆ Maintaining updated information regarding community medical and social services available for families with an abuse or neglect problem
- ◆ Reporting instances of child abuse and neglect among Head Start children as reportable under State law on behalf of the Head Start Program
- ◆ Discussing the report with the family if it appears desirable or necessary to do so
- ◆ Informing other staff regarding the process for identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect

Orientation and training is provided for staff on the identification, reporting and prevention of child abuse and neglect during pre-service training. The Health Services Procedures Manual contains detailed information and documentation on this process. Refer to the **Human Resources Management Plan**

Hidalgo County Head Start Administrative Program Plan

SYSTEM: FACILITIES

45CFR 1304.53

Physical Environment and Facilities

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program provides a physical environment and facilities conducive to learning and reflective of the different stages of development of each child with appropriate space to conduct all program activities and address specific access requirements for children with disabilities. Each center is organized into functional areas that can be recognized by children and which allow for individual and child's elected activities and social interactions.

All equipment, toys, materials and furniture necessary to meet the needs and to facilitate the participation of children and adults, are provided to all classrooms. The Program takes into account the inter-relatedness of cognitive and intellectual development, physical, mental health, and nutritional needs, and other factors that enable the child to function optimally. The equipment, toys, materials and furniture owned by the **HCHSP** are supportive of the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the children, they are age appropriate, safe and supportive of the abilities and developmental level of each child served, with the necessary adaptation for children with disabilities. Furthermore, these are accessible, attractive, and inviting to children. The environment is designed to provide a variety of learning experiences and to encourage each child to experiment and pursue their own interests.

All of the facilities owned or operated by the Hidalgo County Head Start Program meet the licensing requirements of 45 CFR 1306.30.

Hidalgo County Head Start employs personnel, who provide for the maintenance, repair, safety, and security of all Head Start facilities, materials and equipment. These personnel ensure a center-based environment free of toxins, such as cigarette smoke, lead, pesticides, herbicides, and other air pollutants as well as soil and water contaminants.

Outdoor play areas at each center are arranged so as to prevent any child from leaving the premises and getting into unsafe and unsupervised areas. No child in route to play areas is exposed to vehicular traffic without supervision.

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The Hidalgo County Head Start Program conducts safety inspections annually, to ensure that each facility's space, light, ventilation, heat, and other physical arrangements are consistent with the health, safety and developmental needs of children. A safety checklist is administered by the Risk Management Department at least twice a year to identify areas of need.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program currently operates one-hundred ninety-seven classrooms. Each classroom meets or surpasses the 35 square feet requirement of usable space per child. These centers accommodate 2 to 11 classrooms with each classroom encompassing an area of approximately 700 square feet, with 75 square feet of usable outdoor play space per child. Each classroom is supervised by a teacher with an associate's degree or higher and an assistant teacher with a minimum of a CDA or undergoing training. Some classrooms in the School Readiness Program also include a certified bachelor's degree teacher from the school district.

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SYSTEM: ELIGIBILITY, RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE

45CFR 1305

Service Area

The Commissioners' Court of the County Of Hidalgo is the Grantee Board for the Hidalgo County Head Start Program. The Hidalgo County Head Start Program is currently funded for three-thousand six-hundred and ninety (3,690) children who are served through the forty-three (43) centers located throughout the Hidalgo County area.

Enrollment

Area I		Area II		Area III	
Center	Enrollment	Center	Enrollment	Center	Enrollment
La Joya	94	Alton	100	Austin One (A-1)	135
Palmview I	100	Western Road	57	McAllen V	57
Palmview II	160	McAllen IV	51	Vine Terrace	56
Palmview III	120	McAllen VI	51	Pharr	95
Sullivan	94	Mission I	80	Las Milpas I	114
		Mission II	148	Las Milpas II	51
		Mission III	51	Hidalgo	54
		Mission IV	55		
Area IV		Area V		Area VI	
Center	Enrollment	Center	Enrollment	Center	Enrollment
Alamo	117	Elsa	57	Edcouch	182
Donna I	136	La Herencia	52	Edinburg I	57
Donna II	60	Mercedes I	117	Edinburg II	34
Donna IV	33	Mercedes II	34	Edinburg III	51
San Juan I	54	Monte Alto	37	Edinburg IV	194
San Juan II	179	Progreso	57	Edinburg V	154
San Carlos	80	Weslaco I	77	U.T.P.A.	34
		Weslaco II	74		
		Weslaco III	97		
Total Centers 43		Total Funded Enrollment 3,690			

Hidalgo County Head Start Administrative Program Plan

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program follows all guidelines as set forth by the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. The Policy Council approves the priority guidelines for eligibility of all children to the Hidalgo County Head Start Program. Families are ranked in order as defined by the guidelines.

The Program provides full day services to those children and families with special needs that justify full day services or to those children whose parents are employed or in job training with no care giver present in the home.

In addition to the full day program, ten percent (10%) of the total funded enrollment has been designated for children with special needs.

Low Income

As per the mandate of Section 511 of the Head Start Act, the Hidalgo County Head Start Program focuses primarily upon children from low income families. One hundred (100%) percent of the children in the program comply with income guidelines established for eligibility.

Income Verification Documentation

In order to implement this regulation regarding income, Hidalgo County Head Start uses the definitions of family and income found in the eligibility regulations (45 CFR Part 1305.2 Definitions.).

Family Definition

The poverty guidelines figures are directly dependent on the number of persons in a family. In order to determine eligibility Hidalgo County Head Start must know the size of each child's family. In determining the size of the family the following definition must be used. "All persons in the same household who are supported by the income of the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the child enrolling or participating in a Head Start Program, and is related to the parent(s) or guardian(s) by blood, marriage, or adoption".

Once the family size has been determined Hidalgo County Head Start then looks at the family income with the following definition.

Hidalgo County Head Start Administrative Program Plan

Income Definition

“The term income” means “gross cash income and includes earned income, military income (including pay and allowances), veteran’s benefits, social security benefits, unemployment compensation, and public assistance benefits. With respect to a child in foster care, family income is the amount paid to the foster family on behalf of the child by a public or private agency.”

Income as it is related to family size is the key component in determining eligibility for the Head Start Program. Verification of current financial status includes one of the following: W-2 form, Individual Income Tax Form 1040, Pay Stubs, written statements from employers, documents showing current status as recipients of public assistance.

Children whose families qualify for Public Assistance are eligible for Head Start Programs even if the assistance level exceeds the guidelines. “. . . Children from the lowest income families shall be given preference.” (45 CFR Part 1305.4, Family Income Eligibility).

Once the family is found to be eligible for Head Start Services a Hidalgo County Head Start employee will complete and sign the application for admission.

Recruitment

A team effort among the Head Start staff throughout the centers is put forth to recruit Head Start Children in Hidalgo County. Two recruitment days are scheduled in the calendar whereby every center staff member including teachers, assistant teachers, support service facilitator, support service assistant, bus aides and bus drivers participate in door to door recruitment throughout the County. Pre-registration is held in the latter part of April before the end of the school year.

During this time letters, posters, and announcements are made available to local churches, agencies, and families planning to return. Applications are taken on-site and are subject to a screening process. The family income data is reviewed to determine eligibility. Parents are required to bring the child’s birth certificate and immunizations records.

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The Hidalgo County Head Start Program will recruit children who are three (3) and four (4) year of age on or before September 1st. All Head Start Centers are located strategically throughout Hidalgo County to better serve eligible children as close to home as possible.

Recruitment efforts are made throughout the school year with a major effort in April. All staff members are a vital part of the recruitment effort. Recruiting of disabled children is done in the same manner including Region One Education Service Center Child Find Program, Easter Seals and through screening and parent referrals.

The Head Start Program maintains an outreach and recruitment process which insures participation of children of the most disadvantaged families on the target area. The Hidalgo County Head Start Policy Council, Grantee Board and Head Start Executive Director have approved a set of priorities which will serve as a guide in the recruitment effort. One hundred percent (100%) of the children come from the most disadvantaged families and at least ten percent (10%) of those are children with disabilities. All children and their families meet eligibility requirements. The requirements are:

Age - Children must be three years of age on or before September 1st of the applicable program year and is eligible until the child enters kindergarten. Children with disabilities are eligible for Head Start on the date that the child becomes three years of age.

Income - Families must comply with the Family Income Guidelines for Head Start Programs. [Ref: CFR, Vol. 74, No. 14]

Children with Disabilities - The Hidalgo County Head Start will NOT deny eligibility on the basis of disability or it's severity to any child. The definition of children with disabilities as defined in Head Start Performance Standards. [Ref: (1305.2(a))]

The Hidalgo County Head Start Executive Director or designee will act as a liaison between the Head Start Office, Centers, and the community for children with identified disabilities.

The Director of Family Services will:

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- ◆Coordinate with all department directors the recruitment process.
- ◆Work with other federal and local agencies to coordinate all services available to both Head Start personnel and parents.
- ◆Work with and coordinate the recruitment of children with disabilities and volunteers.
- ◆Design in-house instruments for recruiting for a specific task or avenue for reaching children with disabilities for example: Bulletins designed for boards in churches and private or social services agencies; classified advertisements, designed for paid advertising in newspaper for, weekly, bi-weekly, or daily circulation; Public Service Announcements - designed for unpaid public service announcement by radio and television; News Release- designed for free publication at a specified time. This is updated so they may keep a copy once every three months of publication.
- ◆All applications are given equal consideration.

The application process includes the following:

- ◆Names of family members and number of family members and their ages.
- ◆Information about the child, including age, sex, residence.
- ◆Income and immunizations verifications.
- ◆Provisions for immunizations.
- ◆Applications are thoroughly screened by a selected screening committee
(Refer to Family & Community Partnerships Plan.)

All materials are available in the primary language of the families the program serves. All staff members are bilingual, thus assuring that all Head Start children and families receive services in their primary language.

Recruitment Area

The entire County of Hidalgo serves as recruitment area. The County is divided into six (6) areas and centers are clustered together. While efforts are countywide the center is the unit of organization for recruitment activities. When centers are closed during the summer, the central office serves as the “recruiting base”.

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During the month of March prior to the enrollment year, recruitment procedures are implemented via door to door contact, parent information, poster, brochures, news advertisement, and local media. This process systematically seeks out the most disadvantaged homes and children regardless of race, creed, or color within the recruitment area.

Staff Assistance

Head Start employees assist families, as needed, in completing an enrollment application to ensure that all necessary information is complete.

Enrollment Opportunities

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program Enrollment Status Report is used to keep track of enrollment opportunities and meet funded enrollment slots. In the event that the center has met full enrollment, families will be placed on a waiting list. Children on the waiting list are ranked according to priority guidelines as approved by the Policy Council.

Selection Criteria

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program does not deny anyone the right to apply for services regardless of race, sex, creed, color, national origin or disabling condition.

The selection criteria is reviewed and approved by the Policy Council and the Grantee Board every year depending on the modifications or adopted changes.

Children Selection

The families of children applying for admittance to the Hidalgo County Head Start Program must meet income eligibility and age eligibility. Children will be selected upon verification of income and other pertinent information. All children that qualify for enrollment will be provided with either full day or part day services, provided that they meet the set criteria. Final approval will be granted by the Hidalgo County Head Start Policy Council.

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Waiting List

In the event that the program is fully enrolled, families will be made aware that their children will be placed on a waiting list. Children on the waiting list are ranked according to priority guidelines and on a first come first serve basis as approved by the Policy Council.

Head Start Participation

If a child has been found eligible and is participating in a Head Start Program, the child remains eligible through the enrollment year or until kindergarten or first grade is available in the school system. The Program may choose not to enroll a child when there are compelling reasons for the child not to remain in Head Start, such as when there is a change in the child's family income and there is a child with a greater need for Head Start services.

Funded Enrollment

At the time of enrollment, orientation and parent-teacher sessions are held. Parents are made aware of the importance of their child's regular attendance and the benefits that the child and parents will receive as a result of good attendance.

A vacancy is created by a child leaving the program or failure to participate and has gone through the appropriate transitional process. A child's slot shall be considered vacant when the child does not participate for a period of more than thirty (30) calendar days of un-excused absences despite the provision of family support services. (Refer to Enrollment and Attendance Policies in Head Start, Federal Register, November 2, 1979, Definitions).

All vacancies in the Hidalgo County Head Start Program must be filled within thirty (30) calendar days. All vacancies occurring in April or May will not be filled in order to prevent inappropriate and incomplete services being delivered to the child.

A daily attendance report will be forwarded to the Head Start Administrative Office by the Center Manager. The Center Manager will obtain an attendance report from each individual teacher. Each teacher shall be responsible for identifying and referring to the Center Manager any child who has three (3) or more consecutive absences.

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The following is a list of excused absences. In order to qualify as an excused absence, each specific situation must be documented. Excused absences are documented in the child folder as:

- ◆A child is hospitalized;
- ◆A child is incapacitated due to a serious illness or injury;
- ◆A child contracts a communicable disease;
- ◆A child has other health ailments which temporarily prevent attendance, such as asthma.
- ◆There is a death in a child's family;
- ◆A child cannot attend class because child has to receive medical treatment or therapy at the time when the class is being held.

When absences are the result of factors other than those listed in the Enrollment Policy, the Hidalgo County Head Start Program will institute family support services for all children with three (3) or more consecutive days of un-excused absences. The center manager or teacher will make a referral requesting that a home visit be made by the center staff member assigned to that family. The center staff member assigned will prepare a report of the home visit, which includes the reasons why the child has been absent and the date the child is expected to return class. "Family support services" means home visits and other family contacts and services to support the child's regular attendance and otherwise to insure that the child and family receive full benefits of Head Start participation.

Second Year Participation

If a child has been found income eligible and is participating in the Head Start Program, he or she remains income eligible throughout that enrollment year and the succeeding year.

Average Daily Attendance

The calculation of the ADA is processed in two (2) steps. In order to receive a daily status report for social services purposes, a telephone report is given on a daily basis from all sites. The daily telephone report given to the administration office is as follows: Total enrollment, actual enrollment, total number present, total number absent, total number excused absences, names of children counted excused absent and reason for absences.

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The documentation attendance report is maintained daily by individual classrooms. This report is then submitted to the Family Services Department on a weekly basis for total calculation purposes. The calculated figures are as follows: total enrollment, total present, total absent, total excused absent, average attendance (total present divided by total enrollment will equal the %).

Program and Activity Calendar

After revision and analysis of the Program Plans, staff formulates the designated activities to complement our program planning. The following calendar events illustrate the Program methodology of implementation of its activities to meet its objectives.

In order to comply with the Program Design of one-hundred and sixty (160) days per calendar year. The Hidalgo County Head Start Program has established a Program Calendar for one-hundred and seventy-two (172) days. In addition to this the following make up day procedure has been established. In case of Program interruptions, any service days necessary to comply with the 160 days minimum, will be made up during the summer break.

Head Start Staffing Requirements and Program Options

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program meets the requirements of 45 CFR 1304.52(g), Classroom staffing and home visitors, in addition to the requirements of this Section.

Staff is adequately supervised by the Center Managers in the classrooms and the Education Area Directors in the field. Each, of the three (3) Education Area Directors, is assigned fourteen (14) or fifteen (15) centers to supervise, depending on the number of classroom in each center. One (1) Education Area Director addresses individualization of instruction, and School Readiness Partnerships. They provide resources and direction in curriculum, personnel management and federal requirements.

Each classroom is staffed with a teacher and assistant teacher and whenever possible a volunteer. Some classrooms may also include a certified public school teacher in the School Readiness Partnership.

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Staff Qualification Requirements

All Classroom staff complies with section 648A of the Head Start Act and any subsequent amendments regarding the qualifications of classroom teachers. 100% of Teachers have earned an Associate's or a Bachelor's Degree in Early Education, 100% of Assistant Teachers maintain a CDA Certification or are currently enrolled in a class.

Volunteers

Recruitment of volunteers is a year round process. It is a joint effort by Family Services Staff and Center Managers. Parents and community members are encouraged to volunteer. They volunteer at the center or may choose to do volunteer work at home. Public Service announcements are made to assist in this effort.

A number of different volunteer pools exist. They are recruited from adult day care centers, church organizations, Winter Texans population, etc.

All volunteers will receive training from the various departments in the Content Areas. The Center Managers are also responsible for providing training to any perspective volunteers who do not attend the initial training.

A special sign-in roster is used to tract all volunteer hours. The Center Manager or other supervisory staff working with the volunteer must sign or initial it to confirm the hours documented.

Throughout the school year volunteers are recognized on a monthly basis at the center level. Each center chooses volunteers and recognizes them by awarding them with certificates at the Center Committee Meetings. They are also featured in the Parent Areas with a small write up about the individual person. The Hidalgo County Head Start Program recognizes the volunteers, its parents and community volunteers at an annual volunteer banquet.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program allows a total of two fund raising activities during fall and spring. Funds raised from these events are utilized for taking children on special field trips, purchasing additional materials for the Centers or any other activities that the parents decide to do carry out parents are given an opportunity to utilize their decision-making right as Head Start parents.

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The Hidalgo County Head Start Program uses Certificates of In-Kind Contributions to record non-cash contributions. Goods, space rentals, equipment rentals, non-personal services and volunteer hours are recorded on it. Credit is given and contributions are compiled on Summary Reports at the center level by center supervisors. The contributions are recorded and organized according to classroom enrollees. The entire Center's In-Kind is then totaled and put on an In-Kind Summary Report. Once completed it is submitted to the responsible personnel in the Finance Department.

The **Family and Community Procedures Manual** contains detailed information and forms used for the recruiting of volunteers.

Training

The Hidalgo County Head Start provides pre-service training and in-service training opportunities to program staff and volunteers to assist them in acquiring or increasing the knowledge and skills they need to fulfill their job responsibilities.

This training is directed toward improving the ability of staff and volunteers to deliver services required by Head Start regulations and policies. The training also includes information and training about the philosophy and goals of Head Start and the program options being implemented.

Choosing a Head Start Program Option

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program has implemented the center-based option in order to meet the needs of the children and families as indicated by the Community Needs Assessment. In addition prior to making final assignment of the child, consideration was given to such factors as the child's age, developmental level, disabilities, health or learning problems, previous preschool experiences, family situation and parents' concerns and wishes prior to making final assignments.

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Center-Based Program Option

Head Start classes are staffed by a teacher and an assistant or, whenever possible, a volunteer. Additionally some classrooms may also obtain the services of a certified public school teacher if they are participating in the School Readiness Program. Class is size based on the predominant age of the children who will participate in the class. For classes serving predominantly four or five year old children, the average class size of that group of classes is between seventeen (17) and twenty (20) children, with no more than twenty (20) children enrolled in any one class. For classes serving predominantly three year old children, the average class size of that group of classes is between fifteen (15) and seventeen (17) children, with no more than seventeen (17) children enrolled in any one class. A class is considered to serve predominantly three (3) year old children if more than half of the children in the class are three years old before September 1st.

All classes operate for five days per week for a minimum of six (6) hours per day and one-hundred seventy-two (172) days per year and all reasonable estimates were made of the number of days during the year that classes may be closed due to problems such as inclement weather or illness, based on our experience in previous years. Provisions were made in the budget and program plans to operate makeup classes and provide these classes, when needed, to prevent the number of days of service available to the children from falling below one-hundred sixty (160) days per year.

Staff is employed on an annual basis to allow them to participate in pre-service training, to plan and set up the program at the start of the year, to close the program at the end of the year, to conduct home visits, to conduct health examinations, screening and immunization activities, to maintain records, and to keep service component plans, activities current and relevant and to carry out recruiting activities.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program developed and implemented a system that actively encourages parents to participate in two home visits annually for each child enrolled. These visits are initiated and carried out by the child's teacher. The child may not be dropped from the program if the parents will not participate in the visits. The Early Childhood Development and Health Services Plan contain specific duties and responsibility regarding these duties.

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The Hidalgo County Head Start Program provides more than six hours of class operations per day using Head Start funds and complies with all the requirements regarding the center-based program option found in the Head Star Standards.

The Program tries to meet the needs of Head Start families for full day services agencies since alternative enrollment opportunities or funding from non-Head Start sources are not available for Head Start families needing full day child care services.

Home Bound Services

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program will not deny program admission to any child, nor exclude any enrolled child from program participation for a short or long term period, solely on the basis of his or her health care needs or medication requirements, unless keeping the child in care poses a significant risk to the health or safety of the child or anyone in contact with the child and the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level through reasonable modifications, and providing appropriate auxiliary aids which would enable the child to participate without fundamentally altering the nature of the program. Therefore those children who fall within this criterion will be provided with Home Bound Services. [Reference: 1304.22(b)(1)(2)]

Children who participate in the Hidalgo County Head Start Program – Home Bound Services will be provided with comprehensive, coordinated services in education/child development, medical and dental health, nutrition, mental health, social services and parent-family-community engagement services.

In addition to the services listed, children participating in short term or long term Home-Bound Services will be provided with one (1) home visit per week, lasting for a minimum of 1½ hours each.

Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework

Parent and family engagement in Head Start is about building relationships with families that support family well-being, strong relationships between parents and their children, and ongoing learning and development for both parents and children. The Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework (PFCE) is a road map for progress in achieving the kind of outcomes that lead to positive and enduring change for children and families. The PFCE Framework is a research-

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based approach to program change that shows how the Hidalgo County Head Start Program can work together as a whole—across systems and service areas—to promote parent and family engagement and children’s learning and development (National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, 2011).

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program implements the PFCE Framework by incorporating existing programs, strategies, and activities. Parent and family engagement activities are systemic and integrated across program foundations and program impact areas, family engagement outcomes are achieved, resulting in children who are healthy and ready for school. Parent and family engagement activities are grounded in positive, ongoing, and goal-oriented relationships with families.

Support Services Staff/Case Managers will work with the individual families in the development of the Family Partnership Agreements (FPA). The FPA’s will identify each family’s strengths, needs, and goals. Their goal development and follow-up will incorporate PFCE Framework outcomes and strategies. [Reference: Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework Program Plan]

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SYSTEM: FISCAL

45 CFR Part 92 Subpart H Part 92.20

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program has established written **Accounting Procedures Manual** documenting the financial management system that ensures budget management, maintains control over current operations, and provides timely, accurate, current and complete disclosure of financial matters. The Micro Information Products (MIP) software provides a computerized system of financial and personnel data collection capable of producing timely and accurate reports.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program operates its Fiscal Management Policies as mandated in **45 CFR Part 92 Uniform Administrative Requirements for state and Local Governments and Title 2 Part 225 Cost Principles for Non Profit Organizations, State and Local Governments.**

Accounting and Budgetary Practices are carried out as outlined in the **Financial Procedures Manual**, where individual cost elements, such as salaries, supplies, travel, etc. are identified with the fiscal records. The Finance Department responsible for preparing the budget are kept abreast with all applicable grant policies and costs allowable while maintaining interaction with the Federal Regional Staff.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program has established written Accounting policies and procedures to ensure the internal control of all assets and program financial resources. Refer to the Accounting Procedures Manual. The financial management system ensures budget control over current operation and provides timely accurate, current and complete disclosure of financial matters. This system reflects the following:

- ◆The validation of accounting records by source documents, such as invoices, vouchers, statements, canceled checks etc.
- ◆The posting of transactions in a continuous and timely manner.
- ◆A clear separation of duties and responsibilities between individuals so that no one person has access and control to financial operations procedures and records.
- ◆A description of a chart of accounts.
- ◆Budgeting control to preclude incurring obligation in excess of total funds, for grant object class and program account.

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The Hidalgo County Head Start's written accounting and budgeting procedures are designed to allow the determination, malleability and reasonableness of costs. These procedures facilitate the comparison of budgeted costs to actual costs and the timely distribution of cost data to program managers as a management aid in the administration of their program.

Administration costs to the Head Start Program are determined and identified. These costs are continually monitored and compared in order to comply with the **15%** administrative cost requirements. These costs are maintained substantially below 15%.

Non Federal Share requirements are met through the allocation of in kind costs charged to the grant. The valuation of these costs is based on fair and reasonable basis and is in agreement with the budget. The accounting records for the non-federal share contributions are supported by proper documentation.

Food Cost are budgeted through the **TDA** (Texas Department of Agriculture) **Grant** and are continuously monitored and compared with actual food costs recorded in the financial accounting records. The meals are accounted for using the TDA Guidelines to establish the number of meals for which reimbursement is claimed. All reimbursement requests are made within a reasonable time frame to allow for proper accounting and planning, please refer to the **Nutrition Procedures Manual**.

Budget Development

The budget development process begins in April. Several sources of information are used to create a comprehensive process that responds to the needs of children and their families. These resources include the following:

- ◆The Community Assessment
- ◆Self-Assessment
- ◆Reviews by Executive Team Members of their areas of responsibility
- ◆The Training and Technical Assistance Plan
- ◆Staff Development information needs collected from staff, appraisals, and children's outcomes
- ◆Facilities inspections and reviews conducted by maintenance personnel and others
- ◆The quest for increasing automation of information management and

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business systems

- ◆ Policy Council and Grantee Board concerns or direction to improve the quality of services
- ◆ Reviews of expenditure reports for the previous year
- ◆ Feedback documented from the center staff through the center managers and support services facilitators

The Executive Team reviews the budget. Then each member meets with the Executive Director, Assistant Program Directors and Finance Director for accuracy and applicability. A consolidated budget is then developed by the Executive Director, Assistant Program Directors and Finance Director for submission to the Budget Committee for their input and direction.

After input from the Budget Committee of the Policy Council, the Budget is then submitted to the Policy Council for the first review. If no revisions are necessary, the budget is presented to the Grantee Board in September for their review and approval. If the Budget is revised by the Grantee Board then it is re-submitted to the Budget Committee for revision. Upon approval of the Grantee Board the budget is then presented to the Policy Council and the Grantee Board in September for their final review and approval, after which the Budget is officially submitted to the Department of Health and Human Services.

Budget Review and Changes

Budget reviews are conducted throughout the year with each Department Director and the Executive Director to “rebudget within the approved direct cost budget to meet unanticipated requirements’ as per 45CFR Part 92.30 “Changes”.

The budget may also be changed in order to meet unanticipated expenditure of any remaining fund balance at year end. These changes will be submitted to the Policy Council and the Grantee Board (Commissioner’s Court) for their review and approval. If the Grantee Board determines that it will not need all of the funds for which it has budgeted, i.e., because of unexpected vacancies, the Grantee may also use these funds for other purposes related to its Head Start grant. The Grantee must receive prior approval from its Regional Office only if it is proposing to use these funds to purchase any equipment valued at more than \$25,000 or if it is proposing to use these funds in a manner that would substantially change the nature of its Head Start program (i.e., a change in program option). Any unspent grant funds as of the end of the grantee’s budget period are no longer available to

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the grantee without written permission from the grantee's Regional Office. (Head Start Policy Clarification No. OHS-PC-A-045)

45 CFR Part 92 Subpart C 92.36 Procurement Policies

The Procurement Procedures Manual has been approved by the Policy Council and Grantee Board. This manual provides a set of written requirements which when followed ensure compliance with **45 CFR Part 92; Subpart O & P part 92. (31, 32, 33, & 36)**. Specifically the Procurement Polices requires the Executive Program Director or his\her designated representative to review proposed procurement to determine the need and or possible alternatives (i.e. Lease vs. Purchase). The Procurement Office is designated by the Executive Director to administer and review proposed purchases. The Procurement Office, by virtue of the authority and responsibility conferred on him/her by the Executive Program Director shall ensure that the Head Start Program will implement the procurement of materials in a manner most advantageous for the Head Start Program. It is the policy of the Head Start Program Procurement Office to prepare bids that contain clear specifications which do not unduly restrict open competition and encourage the participation of small and minority owned businesses in the procurement process. Bids shall be awarded to the lowest and most advantageous bidder providing the best value which complies with all applicable bid requirements as specified.

The Procurement Office shall be responsible for the preparation of purchase orders and receiving of merchandise. The Procurement Office will compare the purchase order with the shipping and packing documents to ensure compliance with specifications and quantities. Should a discrepancy be found the Procurement Office will note the discrepancy on the shipping document and notify the vendor immediately. Damage to any package shall also be noted in writing on the delivery ticket\packing documents and notice given to the vendor and shipping company. The purchase order will not be closed out and processed for payment until all material and in the quantities and specifications ordered are received. Once the Purchase order has been completed the documentation shall be cross checked with the packing\shipping documents, closed out and forwarded to Finance Department for payment.

A copy of purchases and additional back up documentation will be maintained in the Procurement Office. This information will be maintained with bid quotes and warranty information received from vendors as part of the permanent record.

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Inventory

The Field Operations Director will maintain an inventory list of materials purchased and shipped which are valued over \$5,000.00 indicating accurate description of the items, the serial number, the source of the equipment, who holds the title, the location, use and condition of the items, and the purchase price of the items. The Field Operations Office will also conduct annual inventories of all Hidalgo County Head Start facilities. This will include the inventory of consumable materials kept as stock items (classroom education materials, colors, paints, etc.). This inventory process will be used to assist the Program in the planning and budgeting process to eliminate the duplication of purchases for materials currently in the Program inventory.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program and its employees, officers, or agents shall not solicit nor accept gratuities or anything of monetary value from contractors or potential contractors.

45 CFR Part 92 section 36 Contract Provisions

All contracts entered into by the Hidalgo County Head Start will comply with Federal, State and local laws and regulations and will be reviewed by the County of Hidalgo's legal counsel or legal counsel under contract to the Hidalgo County Head Start Program. All contracts will incorporate the appropriate provisions as stipulated in **45 CFR Part 92 Section 36**, which include but are not limited to the following:

- ◆Administrative, contractual and legal remedies when required
- ◆Termination for cause
- ◆Compliance with Executive Order 11246 of September 1965 entitled "Equal Employment Opportunity" as amended by Executive Order 11375 of October 13, 1967 and as supplemented by the Department of Labor regulations(41 CFR Chapter 60) on all construction contracts over \$10,0000.
- ◆Compliance with the Copeland "Anti-Kickback" Act.
- ◆Compliance with Davis-Bacon Act
- ◆Compliance with sections 103 and 107 of the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards
- ◆Notice of awarding agency requirements and regulations pertaining to reporting

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- ◆ Access by the Grantee, Sub-Grantee, the Federal Grantor Agency, the Comptroller General of the United States, or any other authorized agencies to any and all records.
- ◆ Retention of records
- ◆ Compliance with Disbarment requirements.

10.11.13