




Hidalgo County Head Start Program Memorandum

Date: April 24, 2024

To: Hidalgo County Head Start Policy Council
Hidalgo County Commissioners Court (Grantee Board)

From: Irma Peña, Head Start Executive Director 

CC: Elma Carrera, Assistant Program Director for Fiscal Operations
Dr. Nereyda Cantu, Assistant Program Director for Operations
Nora Muñoz, Assistant Program Director for Programmatic Services

Subject: Change in Scope Budget Modification for Grant No. 06CH012134

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program (HCHSP) proposes to submit to the Office of Head Start, Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, a Change in Scope modification to the current grant No. 06CH012134.

According to communications issued by the Administration of Children and Families, ACF-IM-HS-22-09. *"The Office of Head Start (OHS) recognizes that community needs shift over time for various reasons. These reasons may include changes during and after disasters and public health crises, changes in the availability of community resources relied upon to provide program services and shifts in geographical location of eligible children and families. Section 640(g)(3) of the Head Start Act (the Act) allows programs to propose a **reduction to their funded enrollment** to maintain quality program services and to recruit and retain trained personnel. A request to reduce funded enrollment or convert Head Start slots to Early Head Start slots is considered a **change in scope** request and requires OHS prior approval."*

The Change in Scope will allow HCHSP to address two crucial issues impacting the Head Start program. Meeting full funded enrollment and securing health insurance coverage for eligible staff that is necessary to recruit and retain a qualified workforce.

HCHSP submitted to OHS an Under Enrollment Plan for the Full Enrollment Initiative (FEI) to meet full funded enrollment by 12/10/2024. All Head Start Programs are required to have at a minimum 97% funded enrollment and retain enrollment for each reporting cycle. HCHSP met the allowable benchmark during the 1st quarter of the reporting cycle and has retained the required and sustained enrollment. HCHSP's staff health insurance cost increased by 23% in January 2024, and the budget impact of this increase is \$1,314,403. Currently the staff health insurance premiums are paid entirely by HCHSP for staff, and requesting employees to have shared cost would create

a financial burden for them and will impact the program's ability to recruit and retain qualified staff.

The Change in Scope model proposes reducing 140 enrollment slots with a net change in staff of 22 budgeted positions. This will allow HCHSP to meet 100% funded enrollment and secure the funding to offset the increase in health insurance premiums for staff. The 140 enrollment slots are currently vacant so no child will be impacted, and there are currently 29 vacant staff positions so no staff will be impacted. This request will not reduce the funds awarded under the Head Start grant.

Our current PreK-Head Start Collaboration "*Teaching Together*" model has leveraged the funds needed to provide pay parity to Head Start staff with other professionals in our community, attract qualified personnel, retain well-trained staff, and support the continuation of high-quality Head Start services. HCHSP has an approved Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Donna ISD, Edcouch-Elsa ISD, Edinburg CISD, La Joya ISD, McAllen ISD, Mercedes ISD, Mission CISD, Monte Alto ISD, and Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD. Together we combine resources and implement the PreK-Head Start Collaboration model, "*Teaching Together*" an early education model to provide services to eligible children in Hidalgo County.

HCHSP recommends approval of the Change in Scope.