

Creating A 21st Century Head Start

Final Report of the
Advisory Committee on Head Start
Quality and Expansion

December 1993

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, D.C.

The Report of the Advisory Committee on Head Start Quality and Expansion

Preface

Head Start was born, and has survived, with the kind of spirit and determination that lives in the hearts of all young children. Head Start is about the future. Perhaps more than any other social program of its time, it is a symbol of hope for a better life for low-income children and their families.

The Advisory Committee on Head Start Quality and Expansion is about making sure that the vision and potential of Head Start are renewed, that the program is strengthened, that it meets the changing needs of children and families, and that this powerful legacy of an earlier time continues to thrive into the next century.

In announcing the formation of the Advisory Committee on June 16, 1993, HHS Secretary Donna E. Shalala stated, "We want every Head Start program to offer the comprehensive family services and high quality early childhood experience that are the core of the Head Start vision." The purpose of the Committee was to review the program and make recommendations for improvements and expansion.

The Advisory Committee was created in the bipartisan spirit that has long characterized the Head Start Program. The 47 members appointed to the Advisory Committee reflect diverse backgrounds and perspectives and include representatives from the Head Start community; staff to members of Congress; Administration officials; representatives from the public and private sector; and experts in children's health and education.

The Advisory Committee activities took place over a six month period and included input from hundreds of people concerned with and affected by the Head Start program. A series of focus groups on various aspects of the program was held with experts and representatives of the Head Start community, internal program data and past reports were reviewed, outreach meetings were held with various national organizations and other interested parties, and a public hearing took place with parents and staff testifying before Committee members and some 1,500 people attending the National Head Start Parent Involvement Institute held in Washington, D.C.

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Three formal meetings of the full Advisory Committee and seven subcommittee meetings were held to review and discuss all relevant material and to develop a set of recommendations that could guide program planning.

During this intense period of activity we have come to appreciate the critical importance of this program. Head Start at its best is a central institution in a community which supports low-income children and their families. A well run Head Start establishes relationships that promote growth and development in young children, encourages the self sufficiency of families, and helps create other community services that better serve low-income families. Over the years, the Head Start philosophy has affected the entire field of early childhood education and family support services.

At the same time, our review pointed clearly toward the need to improve and refocus the program to respond to both national and local problems and concerns. The 1990s and beyond are very different than the 1960s. Today, the needs of families and children who live in poverty are more complicated and more urgent than ever. Head Start must respond to the changing needs of children and parents. Today the landscape of services in a community has changed, with new players and more demands. Head Start must not be isolated from other providers; it must take its place as a partner in a community and state. Today Head Start is a greatly expanded program, yet one that needs to make the delivery of high quality services a top priority as it continues to serve more children. Head Start must be a model of high quality comprehensive services for young children and families.

With these goals in mind, this report marks the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the Head Start Program. It is our hope that the work of the Committee will lead to a renewed sense of excitement and commitment on behalf of all those involved in the program: parents, staff, federal officials, members of Congress, and the many friends and outside groups that have helped make the program such a success.

A Head Start parent testifying before the Advisory Committee said: "I learned to live again, not just survive. Head Start gave me and my children a chance to succeed, to be winners." It is time that we stop allowing Head Start to just survive, it is time once again to rededicate ourselves to the nation's most vulnerable children by making sure that Head Start thrives so all of our families can win.

Mary Jo Bane
Assistant Secretary for Children and Families

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Executive Summary

The Advisory Committee on Head Start Quality and Expansion was created in June 1993 to review the Head Start program and make recommendations for improvement and expansion. After six months of deliberations, the 47 members of the Advisory Committee seek to open a new chapter in the history of the program.

Launched in 1965 as a comprehensive child development program, Head Start has provided a beacon of hope and support to more than 13 million low-income children and their families across the United States through the provision of education, health, social services, parent involvement, and disability services.

Yet the world of Head Start today is dramatically different than in 1965. Today the needs of families and children who live in poverty are more complicated and urgent than ever before—from children who have lived with violence and substance abuse to families with interrelated problems of homelessness, lack of education, and unemployment. Since Head Start began, the face of poverty has changed to include more single parents, and increasing numbers of working parents. In addition, the recognition and importance of promoting family literacy has increased.

Over the past 28 years, the landscape of community services has changed dramatically. There are new roles and enhanced capacities for serving young children and their families. Today we also have new knowledge about the attributes of services and supports that are effective in changing long-term outcomes for young children, new knowledge about the importance of the first three years of life, and new knowledge and appreciation for the continuum of developmental and comprehensive services needed before school and into the early years to help children succeed in school.

In order to develop a set of recommendations for the future of the Head Start program, the Advisory Committee reviewed existing data and reports on Head Start and consulted with a wide variety of individuals and groups across the country. The Committee found that, after a period of rapid expansion, Head Start can be proud of many successes yet still needs to address existing quality problems and to be refocused to meet the challenges of a new age. The Advisory Committee found that:

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- ☐ Head Start has been successful in improving the lives of many low-income children and their families and in serving as a national laboratory for early childhood and family support;
- ☐ Most Head Start programs provide quality services, however, the quality of programs is uneven across the country;
- ☐ Head Start needs to be better equipped to serve the diverse needs of families;
- ☐ There continues to be a large unmet need for Head Start services; and
- ☐ In many communities and states, Head Start, public schools, and other early childhood programs and providers responsible for addressing the needs of young children and families operate in isolation from one another, without adequate resources, planning, and coordination.

As the Advisory Committee looks forward to the next century, we envision an expanded and renewed Head Start which serves as a central community institution for low-income children and their families. The Head Start of the 21st century:

- ☐ Ensures quality and strives to attain excellence in every local program;
- ☐ Responds flexibly to the needs of today's children and families, including those currently unserved; and
- ☐ Forges new partnerships at the community, state, and federal levels, renewing and recrafting these partnerships to fit the changes in families, communities, and state and national policy.

In order to respond to these issues, and to create a 21st Century Head Start, the Advisory Committee sets forth a set of recommendations to the federal government, Head Start providers, and the nation at large. These recommendations implement three broad principles.

1. We must ensure that every Head Start program can deliver on Head Start's vision, by striving for excellence in serving both children and families.

The Advisory Committee believes that the quality of services must be a first priority. We should strive for excellence in all Head Start programs by focusing on staffing and career development, improving the management of local programs, reengineering federal oversight to assure accountability, providing better facilities, and strengthening the role of research.

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The Advisory Committee recommends that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) develop new initiatives to utilize qualified "mentor teachers" to provide supervision and support to classroom staff, establish competency-based training for staff who work directly with families, ensure sufficient staffing levels to serve children and families effectively, and continue to increase compensation.

In the area of management, the Advisory Committee recommends an expanded emphasis on management training; strengthening financial management policies and practices; supporting strategic planning through a multi-year "phased-in" expansion strategy; updating the Performance Standards in health, parent involvement, social services, and education; and developing performance measures.

In addition, the Advisory Committee recommends an assessment of the training and technical assistance system, a review and strengthening of Head Start monitoring, training of regional and central office staff, and the assurance of prompt action to deal with low performing grantees.

2. We must expand the number of children served and the scope of services provided in a way that is more responsive to the needs of children and families.

The Advisory Committee reaffirms the concept that all eligible children in need of Head Start should be served. At the same time the Committee remains committed to investments in quality as a top priority. Head Start should focus on the needs of children in the context of their families and communities by enhancing family services and increasing parent involvement, assessing needs and planning strategically, reaching out to children and families currently unserved, promoting full day and full year programs where needed, and improving services to families with younger children. The overwhelming majority of Advisory Committee members recommend a new initiative to expand Head Start services to families with younger children. Some Advisory Committee members believe that further study is needed to explore ways of serving additional families with children under age three prior to launching an initiative.

The Advisory Committee recommends that HHS review and expand current resources used for family services, parent education, and family literacy, and that increased efforts be made to involve parents in all aspects of the program. The Committee recommends that as Head Start programs move forward toward the goal of serving all eligible children, they should be encouraged to assess their total program in order to balance the needs for quality, scope of services, and number of children served. Particular

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attention and support are recommended to address the special needs of Indian and migrant programs.

3. We must encourage Head Start to forge partnerships with key community and state institutions and programs in early childhood, family support, health, education, and mental health, and we must ensure that these partnerships are constantly renewed and recrafted to fit changes in families, communities, and state and national policies.

Because no program, no matter how excellent, can go it alone, we must ensure that Head Start join forces with other providers in the community and state. As a partner, Head Start can not only maximize its own resources, but can use its leadership to influence other service providers to adopt the core concepts that have made Head Start such a success.

Head Start and public schools should renew commitments to ensure continuity of services by providing developmentally appropriate programs, parent involvement, and supportive services from Head Start through the primary grades.

Head Start should form new partnerships at the state and local level, and with the private sector, to provide more coordinated services to families. Head Start should also play a central role on behalf of low-income children and families in emerging initiatives, particularly in national service, health reform, education reform, family preservation and support and welfare reform.

In summary, the Advisory Committee supports the goal of ensuring that all eligible children and their families receive high quality Head Start services, that programs are tailored to meet the needs of today's families and communities, and that sufficient resources are made available to meet these goals.

The Advisory Committee believes that the recommendations and principles set forth in this report must inform Head Start program decisions at all levels. The recommendations must guide priorities and the use of existing as well as new resources to ensure quality services that children need to enter school ready to learn and that families need to achieve self-sufficiency.

The Advisory Committee recommends that HHS act promptly to develop an implementation plan based on the ideas set forth in this report. First priority should be given to ensuring quality and striving for excellence.

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The process of setting priorities should also draw on the best available information and input from Head Start and the larger community.

In concluding, the Advisory Committee on Head Start Quality and Expansion urges the Department to see this report as a step in an overall effort to improve early childhood and family support services for all children in the United States, and particularly for those most vulnerable. HHS should continue to show leadership in looking across programs to ensure that policies consistently promote quality services for young children and their families.

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
VIDEOTAPED REMARKS FOR NATIONAL HEAD START ASSOCIATION
23RD ANNUAL TRAINING CONFERENCE
FEBRUARY 27, 1996

Thank-you very much for giving me this opportunity to speak to you. I only wish that I could be in the beautiful city of New Orleans with all of you, surrounded by good food, beautiful music and people truly dedicated to giving all of our nation's disadvantaged children hope and skills for the future.

I want to thank you, the National Head Start Association, the parents, staff and friends of Head Start programs across our country, for the energy, resources, and commitment you are bringing to nurturing our country's greatest -- and most vulnerable -- resource, our children.

For thirty years now, Head Start has made a positive difference in the lives of millions of low-income children. Through Head Start, children are not only prepared mentally and emotionally to meet the challenges of school, but they are also taught to make learning a habit. At its best, Head Start establishes relationships that promote growth and development in young children, encourages the self-sufficiency of families, and helps create other community services. Head Start classrooms have also yielded knowledge that has influenced the entire field of early childhood education and family support services.

As we enter the 21st century, a time when education will become even more crucial to a person's economic security, we must recognize the fundamental importance of early childhood education programs such as Head Start.

The President knows that this is no time to retreat on such a fundamental commitment to our children. He has vowed to expand Head Start, to make this valuable opportunity available to all eligible children and families. Head Start serves just 40 percent of eligible children. If the President has his way, that figure will soon be 100 percent. He is dedicated to increasing the quality of Head Start services and will fight any mean-spirited and short-sighted attempts to cut this lifeline to our poorest children.

Children are our future. Each one of them carries all of our hopes, dreams and aspirations. There is no such thing as someone else's child. My child and your child -- children everywhere -- are also all our children. They must live and make their ways in the world. Our children are, in the beginning and in the end, the best reason for our being, the greatest of all our gifts and works.

It has been said that our children are not only our present and our future. They are a test of our humanity and our faith.

Thank-you for all you are doing and will do on behalf of our children.

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**National
Head Start
Association**

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NHSA Hotline 703-739-0879

February 7, 1996

Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mrs. Clinton:

The National Head Start Association requests the honor of your presence at our 23rd Annual Training Conference, to be held in New Orleans, Louisiana, March 27 - 30, 1996. We invite you to speak at one of our general sessions in Exhibit Hall B, located in the Ernest Morial Convention Center. The general session schedule is as follows:

• Opening Night	Wednesday, March 27, 1996	7:00 PM - 9:00 PM
• General Session	Thursday, March 28, 1996	8:30 am - 10:00 am
• General Session	Friday, March 29, 1996	8:30 am - 10:00 am
• Closing Session	Saturday, March 30, 1996	10:00 am - 12:00PM

The theme of this year's conference is:

Head Start the Nation's Pride... Building a Future for the 21st Century

We anticipate 8,000 - 10,000 Head Start parents, directors, staff and friends, from across the United States, will be in attendance.

The Head Start membership is very supportive of the outstanding work of the Clinton administration. We owe a debt of deep gratitude for their work to ensure the opportunity for social and economic equality for the millions of Head Start children and families. I especially admire Mr. Clinton's personal commitment to our cause and the encouragement he lends. Annually, our training conference serves as a vehicle for rededicating and focusing the Head Start community to the America that the Clinton Administration is rebuilding.

Attached please find some background on the National Head Start Association. Please feel free to contact me at (703) 684-3831 regarding your attendance at our 23rd Annual Training Conference. Thank you in advance for considering our invitation.

Head Start, currently serving over 750,000 poor children and their families is truly a great and worthy investment in America's future.

Sincerely,

Sarah M. Greene
Chief Executive Officer, NHSA



1651 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 (703)739-0875 Fax (703)739-0878

National Head Start Association

The National Head Start Association (NHSA) is a private not-for profit membership organization representing the 750,000 children, 139,000 staff and 2,051 Head Start programs in America. It is governed by a 49-member Board of Directors composed of a director, staff, parent and friend representative from each of the twelve federal regions and the immediate past president. NHSA provides a national forum for the continued enhancement of Head Start services for poor children ages 3-5, and their families. It is the *only* national organization dedicated exclusively to the concerns of the Head Start community.

The mission of the National Head Start Association is to nurture and to advocate for children and families; to provide the Head Start community the opportunity for expressing concerns; to define strategies on pertinent issues affecting Head Start; to serve as an advocate for Head Start programs; to provide training and professional development opportunities for the Head Start community; and to develop a networking system with other organizations whose efforts are consistent with the National Head Start Association.

Since the inception of NHSA in 1973, the Head Start program has received increasingly high marks as the *one comprehensive* early childhood development program that truly helps poor children obtain the basic skills so necessary to succeed in school and future employment. NHSA is action oriented.

The Association:

- Generates information to share with federal, state and local legislators;
- Assists regulatory agencies in the development of actions that impact upon the operation of the Head Start program;

(over)



National Head Start Association

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- Develops processes enabling the entire Head Start community the opportunity of expressing its concerns, its recommendations and its actions;
- Cultivates liaisons with organizations whose efforts are consistent with the purpose of the Association;
- Formulates position statements and implementation strategies on issues affecting Head Start;
- Produces vital research on special studies, salary surveys and new trends in Head Start;
- Serves as an advocate for the maintenance and improvement of Head Start programs;
- Publishes a range of informative brochures, reports, a quarterly journal and a line of products for children, parents and professional staff;
- Sponsors annual national training opportunities for Head Start state and regional presidents, directors, staff and parents, as well as, a Policy Council Leadership Institute;
- Provides promotional program information to the Head Start community.

For further information please contact: Sarah Greene, CEO

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SCHEDULE PROPOSAL

FEBRUARY 13, 1996

☐ ACCEPT

☐ REGRET

☐ PENDING

TO: Patti Solis

FROM: ✓ Alexis Herman
Assistant to the President and Director
Office of Public Liaison

REQUEST: Address the participants attending the Annual Training
Conference of the National Head Start Association.

PURPOSE: This is an opportunity to establish rapport and build support
among key figures in an important constituency group.

BACKGROUND: The National Head Start Association (NHSA) was founded in
1973 as an advocate and nurturer of children and families. The
organization has consistently received high praise for its
encouragement of early childhood development, which truly helps
poor children obtain the basic skills necessary to succeed in
school and future employment. Representing 750,000 children,
139,000 staff and 2,051 Head Start programs, the NHSA is the
only national organization dedicated exclusively to the concerns of
the Head Start community.

The NHSA is a solid supporter of the Clinton Administration.
They lead the Head Start community and are strong advocates
of child development programs. In the spring, the organization will
hold their Annual Training Conference and would like the First
Lady to speak at one of the four general information sessions.
This year's theme is *Head Start the Nation's Pride. . . Building a
Future for the 21st Century*. This would be a great opportunity for
the First Lady to enhance the Administration's position on the
education budget debate among key child development
specialists.

PREVIOUS PARTICIPATION: The President spoke to the group as a candidate in 1992.

DATE AND TIME: Any of the following dates and times:

Opening night	March 27, 1996	7:00pm
General Session	March 28, 1996	8:30am
General Session	March 29, 1996	8:30am
Closing Session	March 30, 1996	10:00am

BRIEFING TIME: 10 minutes

DURATION: 1 hour

LOCATION: Ernest Morial Convention Center, New Orleans, LA.

PARTICIPANTS: 8,000 to 10,000 Head Start parents, directors, and staff

OUTLINE OF EVENTS: Speech and work ropeline.

REMARKS REQUIRED: Speechwriting with input from OPL

MEDIA COVERAGE: Open Press

RECOMMENDED BY: Alexis Herman

CONTACT: Ben Johnson 6-5189

ORIGIN OF PROPOSAL: Letter

MEMORANDUM

To: June Shih
Fr: Sabrina
Re: Head Start suggested t.p.
Da: February 26, 1996

- ☒ Welcome everyone to the conference, acknowledge "parents, staff, and friends of Head Start" for hard work. Apologize for not being able to attend.
- ☒ Why HS is a vital investment -- see report from HHS. HRC also talks about HS in the book (education chapter).
- ☒ POTUS commitment to fighting Republican cuts (according to Gene Sperling, Republicans want to cut HS by \$135 million -- that's on a path to reduce the number of HS students by 180,000 by the year 2002).
- ☒ POTUS wants to expand HS -- to 100% of all eligible children (right now they're only serving 40%). Not only that, but he is dedicated to increasing the quality of services to children and families (ck).
- ☒ The most important thing is to thank these people -- they're the ones in the trenches with HS -- and to get them fired up about the job they do.

Bill Clinton