Pathways for Children Generally Complied With Health and Safety Requirements

What OIG Found
Pathways generally complied with Federal and State requirements for ensuring the health and safety of children in its Head Start program. While we observed instances of noncompliance with select Federal and State health and safety requirements, we did not observe a systemic problem throughout Pathways. Pathways could improve its systems of health and safety practices and management to ensure children are kept safe at all times. Specifically, we found that Pathways did not always ensure its (1) buildings and physical premises were in compliance with Federal Head Start safety practices and State licensing standards, (2) employees received background checks as frequently as required, and (3) children received lead screening at the appropriate age.

These deficiencies occurred because Pathways did not provide training on the identification of hazards within a building or around the facility premises; did not have a reliable system to track when employees were due for renewed background checks; and did not adequately communicate with physicians’ offices on children age appropriate lead screening. Without adequate safety procedures, Pathways potentially placed the children’s health and safety at risk.

What OIG Recommends and Pathways Comments
We recommend that Pathways (1) correct all instances of noncompliance that we observed, (2) strengthen its systems of health and safety practices and management, (3) utilize the output from a reliable system to ensure all employees complete background checks in the timing and frequency required by Federal regulations and State licensing standards, (4) conduct a review of the remaining child health records to verify that there is documentation from a healthcare professional showing that screening for lead poisoning was conducted annually as prescribed by State licensing standards, and (5) follow up during a child’s enrollment process with the physician’s office when evidence demonstrates the child had not received an age appropriate lead screening and, if necessary, help parents schedule age-appropriate lead screening for their child.

In written comments on our draft report, Pathways concurred with our findings and recommendations and provided information on actions that it had taken to address our recommendations.

The full report can be found at https://oig.hhs.gov/oas/reports/region1/11802502.asp.