



OIG NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(202) 619-1343
April 30, 2007

Office of Inspector General
Department of Health and Human Services
330 Independence Avenue SW.
Washington, DC 20201

OIG RELEASES REPORT ON ENROLLMENT LEVELS IN HEAD START PROGRAM

Report Recommends ACF Address Grantee Challenges to Maintaining Full Enrollment

Washington, DC — Inspector General Daniel R. Levinson announced today that the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a report entitled “Enrollment Levels in Head Start.” This review was undertaken to determine the enrollment levels of Head Start grantees, to provide insight into the challenges of maintaining full enrollment, to assess the Administration for Children and Families’ (ACF) monitoring of enrollment, and to assess ACF’s enforcement of full enrollment.

Established in 1964, Head Start is an HHS ACF program that funds grantees to enroll children from low-income families to increase school readiness. In FY 2005, funding for all Head Start programs was \$6.8 billion. Regulations require grantees to maintain enrollment at 100 percent of the funded enrollment level. By accepting their annual Head Start grant award, programs agree to serve the number of children they have been assigned. ACF awards these Head Start funds directly to grantees.

To determine enrollment levels of Head Start grantees, OIG analyzed attendance data from 179 randomly sampled grantees. OIG also surveyed sampled grantees and ACF staff regarding challenges to maintaining full enrollment.

OIG found that in the 2006 program year, 40 percent of Head Start grantees were fully enrolled. Eighty-one percent of all grantees had enrollment levels of 95 percent or higher. Overall, enrollment levels ranged from 100 percent to 68 percent. Five percent of Head Start slots were funded but not filled.

“Head Start enrollment is vital to improving the future for so many of America’s most vulnerable children. Maintaining full enrollment will ensure that eligible children are afforded the opportunity to participate in this important program,” said Daniel R. Levinson, HHS Inspector General.

—MORE—

Grantees cited several challenges to maintaining full enrollment, including a requirement to fill 90 percent of the slots with very low-income children, lack of transportation, and competition with State and locally funded pre-kindergarten programs.

The report also noted that ACF may be relying on inaccurate data from grantees regarding enrollment levels. Only 11 percent of grantees reported enrollment data that matched OIG's findings. Moreover, OIG questioned the ability of 26 percent of grantees to maintain accurate attendance records. ACF has increased its enforcement of full enrollment by reducing or withholding funds to grantees; however, OIG found that this practice varies by region.

OIG recommended that ACF:

- Address grantee challenges to maintaining full enrollment.
- Ensure that enrollment data are accurate.
- Issue guidance concerning the use of funding reductions for grantees not at full enrollment.

ACF indicated general support for OIG's recommendations.

To read the full report, go to:

<http://www.oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-05-06-00250.pdf>