**MISSISSIPPI COUNTY, ARKANSAS, E.O.C.**

**EARLY CHIDHOOD EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

**1302.21**

**CENTER-BASED OPTIONS**

**POLICY**:

The program provides center-based options in accordance with the requirements.

**PROCEDURE:**

1. **Center-Based Options**

1.1 Setting, the center-based option delivers the full range of services, consistent with §1302.20b.

1. Education and child development services are delivered primarily in classroom settings.

**2.0 Ratios and Group Size**

2.1 Staff:child ratios and group size maximums are determined by the age of the majority of children and the needs of children present.

1. The program determines the age of the majority of children in a class at the start of the year and may adjust this determination during the program year, if necessary.
	* 1. Where state or local licensing requirements are more stringent than the Teacher:Child ratios and group size specifications in the requirements, the program meets the stricter requirements.
2. The program maintains appropriate ratios during all hours of program operation, except:
	* 1. For brief absences of a teaching staff member for no more than five minutes; and,
		2. During nap time, one teaching staff member may be replaced by one staff member or trained volunteer who does not meet the teaching qualifications required for the age.

2.2 An Early Head Start class that serves children under 36 months old has two teachers with no more than eight children, or three teachers with no more than nine children.

1. Each teacher is assigned consistent, primary responsibility for no more than four children to promote continuity of care for individual children.
2. The program minimizes teacher changes throughout a child’s enrollment, whenever possible, and considers mixed age group classes to support continuity of care.

2.3 A class that serves a majority of children who are three years old has no more than 17 children with a teacher and teaching assistant or two teachers.

2.4 A class that serves a majority of children who are four and five years old has no more than 20 children with a teacher and a teaching assistant or two teachers.

**3.0 Service Duration**

3.1 By August 1, 2018, the Early Head Start program must provide 1,380 annual hours of planned class operations for all enrolled children.

1. To meet the needs of young parents enrolled in school settings, the program meets the same service duration requirement as it operates a center-based program schedule during the school year aligned with the local education agency requirements and provides regular center-based services during the month of June.
2. Early Head Start operate for a minimum of 7 hours per day for 200 days.
3. Head Start Classes will operate for 7 hours per day for 178 days to be in align with the public school.

**4.0 Secretarial Determination**

4.1 On or before February 1, 2018, the Secretary of HHS may lower the required percentage

 described in 1302.21(c)(2)(iii) based on an assessment of the availability of sufficient funding to

 mitigate a substantial reduction in funded enrollment; and,

4.2 On or before February 1, 2020, the Secretary of HHS may lower the required percentage

 described in 1302.21(c)(2)(iv) based on an assessment of the availability of sufficient funding to mitigate a substantial reduction in funded enrollment.

**6.0 Calendar Planning**

6.1 The program:

1. Plans its year using a reasonable estimate of the number of days during a year that classes may be closed due to problems such as inclement weather; and,
2. Makes every effort to schedule makeup days using existing resources if hours of planned class operations fall below the number required per year.
3. In many instances, virtual learning, AMI packets, and ReadyRoise are available for parents to work with their children on emergency days or inclement weather.

**7.0 Licensing and Square Footage Requirements**

7.1 The facilities used by the program meet state or local licensing requirements, even if exempted by the licensing entity.

1. When state or local requirements vary from Head Start requirements, the most stringent provision takes precedence.

7.2 Center-based program have at least 35 square feet of usable indoor space per child available for the care and use of children (exclusive of bathrooms, halls, kitchen, staff rooms, and storage places) and at least 75 square feet of usable outdoor play space per child.