

ACF Administration for Children and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES	
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PROGRAM INSTRUCTION

TO: All Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start Grant Recipients

SUBJECT: Final Rule to Delay Effective Date for Increasing the CLASS® Instructional Support Domain Competitive Threshold

INSTRUCTION:

On November 6, 2024, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) published a final rule in the [Federal Register](#) that delays the effective date for increasing the competitive threshold of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) Instructional Support domain. The CLASS competitive threshold is one condition used to determine whether a Head Start agency will be subject to an open competition under the Designation Renewal System (DRS).

The effective date in the Head Start Program Performance Standards (the Performance Standards) that raises the CLASS Instructional Support competitive threshold from 2.3 to 2.5 was August 1, 2025. **This final rule officially delays the effective date to August 1, 2027.**

Background

On August 27, 2020, ACF published a final rule on DRS changes to improve how the Office of Head Start (OHS) determines whether a Head Start agency will be subject to an open competition to receive another five-year grant. Among other policy changes, this rule established a new competitive threshold for the CLASS Instructional Support domain, one of the seven conditions requiring a Head Start program to enter open competition. The established competitive threshold for the Instructional Support domain was 2.3, and was set to increase to 2.5 on August 1, 2025.

The graduated approach established by the 2020 final rule was designed to allow sufficient time for grant recipients to make necessary quality improvements. However, the unexpected pause in CLASS observations due to the COVID-19 pandemic shortened the five-year implementation time frame to less than two years. The fiscal year 2024 OHS monitoring cycle (2023–2024) was the first time the 2.3 competitive threshold for Instructional Support was fully implemented.

OHS is publishing this final rule to allow programs ample time before the increased 2.5 competitive threshold goes into effect.

This decision to delay the Instructional Support competitive threshold increase is also based on OHS' anticipated timeline for adopting CLASS 2nd Edition. In 2022, the developer introduced an updated CLASS tool which requires training, technical assistance, and certification procedures for both OHS and Head Start grant recipients. OHS will ensure necessary systems and supports are in place before its monitoring system implements the updated version.

Additionally, the August 2024 publication of the [Supporting the Head Start Workforce and Consistent Quality Programming](#) final rule in the Federal Register changed many requirements in the Performance Standards. Delaying the CLASS Instructional Support competitive threshold increase will allow Head Start programs the time and attention they need to implement the revised Performance Standards.

Please contact your Regional Office with any questions about the extension of the CLASS Instructional Support competitive threshold increase.

Thank you for the work you do on behalf of children and families.

Sincerely,

/ Khari M. Garvin /

Khari M. Garvin
Director
Office of Head Start