

# **JOB DESCRIPTION**

**PROGRAM:** Early Learning  
**JOB TITLE:** Head Start Early Intervention & Mental Health Specialist  
**CLASSIFICATION:** Program Specialist III-B  
**PAY GRADE:** 10

## **JOB SUMMARY**

Provides expert guidance and high-level direct support to staff, parents, providers, agencies, and contractors and their staff members regarding all aspects in the implementation of Head Start Disabilities and Mental Health service areas, in compliance with Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS). Collaborates closely with Head Start program administration and management staff to assure seamless, integrated service delivery across all Head Start services areas.

## **SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIPS**

**REPORTS TO:** Early Intervention/Mental Health Manager

**SUPERVISES:** Not Applicable

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

- Minimum of a bachelor's degree in Special Education, Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Psychology, Human Services, or related field; and,
- Two years' professional experience observing, assessing, planning, and implementing individual and group activities for young children, including those with disabilities, special needs, and mental health and behavior issues.

## **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

- Pennsylvania State Police Criminal History Clearance, Child Abuse Clearance, FBI Clearance, and Sex Offender Registry check prior to hire; and Motor Vehicle Record check;
- Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse training completed within 90 days of hire;
- Physical examination prior to hire;
- Tuberculosis test prior to hire;
- Computer training and/or documented proficiency with popular word processing, spreadsheet, and database software; experience with and/or training in Microsoft Office products particularly Word, Excel, and Access is preferred;
- Valid driver's license and vehicle with adequate insurance coverage available for daily use;
- Physical ability to perform essential job functions without any health restrictions, including the ability to sit for long periods of time; stand, lift, and carry up to thirty pounds; have unrestricted use of the upper body; corrected or uncorrected hearing and vision within normal range, and a clear speaking voice; and other abilities necessary to ensure child safety in the classroom, other group areas, and when in the community, such as, but not limited to, the following:
  - Ability to bend, squat, reach, kneel, and climb stairs;
  - Ability to move from a sitting to standing position quickly, safely, and without difficulty;
  - Ability to chase an eloping child; and,
- Work nontraditional hours as needed or assigned, including evenings, weekends, and overnight travel.

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**SPECIFIC DUTIES/KEY TASKS:**

- ❖ Assist with planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating disabilities and early intervention and mental health services delivery in compliance with Head Start early childhood education and other applicable HSPPS and regulations;
- ❖ Orient staff, contractors, parents, and collaborating agencies and their staff members to the Head Start Mental Health and Disabilities services areas;
- ❖ Assist with assessment of training needs and training plan development in coordination with supervisory planning team;
- ❖ Support, guide, and coach education team members with the implementation of the mental health, social and emotional development, and developmental portions of the comprehensive screening and assessment process for each child;
- ❖ Review Evaluation Reports (ER) and Individualized Education Programs (IEP); discuss with appropriate Head Start team members; plan accordingly and assist with implementation under the direction of the Early Intervention & Mental Health Manager;
- ❖ Seek and receive referrals from staff, parents, contracting individuals and agencies for children suspected of having a disability or children with atypical behaviors, and refer to appropriate professionals for further evaluation and documentation in coordination with the Early Intervention & Mental Health Manager;
- ❖ Visit, observe, and assess child environments; record and document; report to the Early Intervention & Mental Health Manager;
- ❖ Follow-up on child re-screens and referrals for further assessments or formal evaluations as appropriate, in coordination with the Early Intervention/Mental Health Manager;
- ❖ Process and report disability and mental health services information and performance indicators in the context of a comprehensive information management system including, but not limited to, child and group observations, support services, child screenings, referrals and assessments, interdisciplinary team meetings, diagnostician, disability status, therapies, and related expenditures;
- ❖ Provide training and technical assistance and serve as a resource for education team members and parents on disabilities, mental health, atypical development, behavioral and social/emotional issues;
- ❖ Provide training and technical assistance to education team members and parents on inclusion;
- ❖ Support, guide, and coach education team members with group management strategies and the implementation of behavior management plans for children, including data collection and analysis, monitoring, feedback, and parent collaboration;
- ❖ Facilitate comprehensive child/family team meetings for assigned groups; provide current special services and disabilities status information; ensure integrated cross-component discussion of each child and family; establish and maintain records; act upon or assign follow-up as needed;
- ❖ When support staff is placed in a Head Start setting, work with individual/agency (Head Start Behavior Specialist, behavioral health rehabilitation services providers, health care providers, Intermediate Unit support staff) to assure appropriate implementation, documentation, evaluation, and communication among team members in accord with team plan;
- ❖ Assist in overseeing the integration of Head Start and Intermediate Unit or other agency services, assuring compliance with applicable and other federal and state standards, and regulations and best practices;
- ❖ Assist with the recruitment and enrollment of children with disabilities and special needs;

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- ❖ Assist with the transition of children with disabilities and special needs into and out of Head Start, assuring due process, parent involvement, advocacy, information distribution, and coordination with other agencies and/or schools;
- ❖ Compile data for Head Start children with IEP or significant social-emotional/behavioral concerns who are transitioning to kindergarten and forward to appropriate school officials prior to kindergarten registration; follow up as needed;
- ❖ Act as an advocate for children with disabilities or special needs; model appropriate advocacy techniques;
- ❖ Represent Head Start on interagency groups, act as liaison to other agencies, schools, and the community; advocate for improved or increased community response to early intervention, mental health, disabilities services issues;
- ❖ Maintain program resource library on disability and mental health topics in conjunction with education supervisors; order new resources as approved;
- ❖ Participate in program planning; including program self-evaluation, goal-setting, federal on-site review, and program improvement action planning;
- ❖ Assist with revisions of program work plans and disability and mental health services-related policy and procedure preparation and revision;
- ❖ Attend management and other services coordination meetings and trainings as required;
- ❖ Make home visits when appropriate;
- ❖ Establish and maintain written records of all contacts with families and agencies;
- ❖ Maintain confidentiality;
- ❖ Act as a member of the Head Start team; and
- ❖ Perform all other tasks as assigned.

**REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ABILITIES**

- ❖ Knowledge of the following:
  - Typical and atypical preschool child growth and development, especially social/emotional development and behavior;
  - Disabilities in young children, related resources, and sources for additional information;
  - State and federal due-process rules according to the current Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for preschool children;
  - Principles and practice of inclusion in an early childhood setting;
  - Understanding of HSPPS for Mental Health, Disabilities, Child Development, and other related HSPPS, the Head Start Act, and other applicable regulations;
  - Developmentally appropriate practices;
  - Child developmental screening tools, developmental assessments, curricular planning, and the implementation of individual and group programming for children including observation and recording;
  - Principles and methods of adult supervision and evaluation;
  - Microsoft Office Suite, including but not limited to Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, Power Point, and Publisher components;
  - Early childhood classroom management and behavior management techniques, following Positive Behavior Intervention Support Policy and Procedures.
- ❖ Skill in the following:
  - Writing, editing and communicating, including knowledge of English grammar, spelling, and punctuation as they relate to the production of reports, work plans, and other operational documents, as well as their use in communicating with a variety of individuals and groups;

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- Use of a keyboard and personal computer;
  - Command of multiple oral communication skills, such as speaking, listening, and interviewing; and,
  - Tracking and reporting systems including automated information management systems.
- ❖ Ability to do the following:
- Be creative, resourceful, and flexible; work cooperatively with staff and outside agencies to promote and improve services;
  - Organize, prioritize, and establish schedules to accomplish program goals and evaluate the delivery of service and program objectives;
  - Establish and maintain effective, collaborative partnerships with individuals and groups;
  - Establish effective, collaborative partnerships with people from varied social, economic, and educational backgrounds;
  - Demonstrate respect for individuals and groups with varied cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic identities or backgrounds;
  - Establish and maintain effective working relationships with staff, administrators, partnering agencies, elected officials, government agencies, businesses, customers, and the public;
  - Communicate effectively in writing and speaking; communicate effectively with individuals and large groups;
  - Soundly interpret and apply regulations and procedures; interpret written and oral information;
  - Collect, organize, analyze, and process information quickly and efficiently;
  - Prepare and maintain written records and reports;
  - Prioritize complex and sometimes conflicting issues;
  - Project a positive image;
  - Motivate and instruct adults and to convey information to adults;
  - Take initiative and exercise independent judgment;
  - Prioritize multitasked and multifaceted work;
  - Identify and meet goals, objectives, outcomes, and timelines within broad parameters and work independently of direct supervision; and,
  - Maintain confidentiality at all times.