



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

Office of Head Start | 8<sup>th</sup> Floor Portals Building, 1250 Maryland Ave, SW, Washington DC 20024 | [eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov)

November 17, 2014

Yasmina Vinci  
Executive Director  
National Head Start Association  
1651 Prince Street  
Alexandria VA 22314

Dear Ms. *Yasmina*  
Vinci:

Your letter arrived just as we were finalizing our letter to all Head Start grantees to address the concerns we have heard about the new Aligned Monitoring System. We agree that the implementation of any new initiative always generates questions and concerns from the Head Start community. The letter we disseminated to all grantees via ECLKC this past Wednesday answered the majority of the issues raised in your letter. So this response will address only those issues you raised that were not covered in our global letter.

Reviewers, assigned to conduct the Environmental Health and Safety Protocol, were all trained. Each is an expert in their field and has the requisite knowledge to collect information so that the Office of Head Start (OHS) is able to make determinations about the health and safety of children and facilities. The monitoring reviewers understand the differences in local codes and licensing. They are also well aware of the differences in settings, auspice, and the range of requirements and variances across states and localities.

The reviewers are qualified to answer all of the targeted questions in the protocol; however, they are instructed not to draw conclusions about compliance. Their expert knowledge is applied only in the gathering of all the data that is needed to inform OHS decisions about compliance and quality. Once the data is collected, it is synthesized by data analysts and categorized it into five sections:

1. Strengths
2. Concerns
3. Noncompliance
4. Deficiencies
5. Additional Information

This information is then used to develop the preliminary monitoring report. All preliminary reports are sent to OHS for final review and determinations. Monitoring reports will be issued soon after the review and will include findings, if applicable, as well as a matrix with additional

information captured during the review. This additional information, separate from compliance, could include information about life safety codes and other quality indicators.


The protocol contains specific headings that differentiate which health and safety elements are applied to each type of setting. We will develop a tutorial for grantees to help them understand how to view the different sections. Additionally, in past years, we have posted the protocol guides. The monitoring reviewers use the guides in preparing for the type of setting to be reviewed. Only elements relevant to the type of setting to be reviewed are displayed in the guides. We will post the FY 2015 guides so grantees have access to them. We believe that developing a tutorial and posting the guides will help the grantees understand how we look at different settings.

Lastly, I want to reiterate one issue addressed in the global letter. ***Only data that can be specifically linked to HSPPS or the Head Start Act is used to generate monitoring findings.*** Most of the questions that we received are related to the targeted questions. These questions are used to help us collect data and are not specifically tied to regulations.

I hope both the global letter and this one address all the issues you raised. Please let me know if you have additional questions or concerns.

Change is always challenging and we look forward to the continuing collaboration with the National Head Start Association.

Sincerely,



Ann Linehan  
Acting Director  
Office of Head Start

cc: Linda Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Ross Weaver, Division Director Quality Assurance  
Adia Brown, Monitoring Lead