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Head Start Program

(Editor's Note: This article is the second of four dealing with new federal policies for Head Start programs. The series was prepared by the Learning Institute of North Carolina (LINC), Durham. LINC operates a Head Start program at its Children's Center in Greensboro, and also provides training and technical assistance to 55 Head Start programs in the Carolinas.)

DURHAM. — Head Start, launched in 1965 as an education, health, and nutrition program for poverty-level preschoolers, is continuing to expand its role as a family-oriented effort.

Barbara Whitaker, regional program director for the Office of Child Development (OCD) in Atlanta, said this family orientation is the major thrust of new regulations permitting local Head Start programs to use different approaches in providing the same services.

OCD is the arm of the Office of Human Development, a division of the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) which oversees Head Start. Atlanta is headquarters for HEW's Region IV, which embraces eight states including North and South Carolina.

Mrs. Whitaker, in an interview with the Learning Institute of North Carolina (LINC), said the new CCD regulations allow five approaches to Head Start, called "program options."

The first is the standard Head Start program. Essentially, it is a five-day-a-week preschool primarily for economically disadvantaged children aged 3 to 5. It is based at a regular center staffed by education, health, nutrition, parents involvement and social services professionals; and volunteers. Sharedly sharedly consultants; para - professionals and volunteers.

Under the new regulations, local sites may propose modifying their programs in any of the following ways:

— Varying attendance patterns. Still center-based, this option would place children in the classroom fewer days a week or fewer hours a day. The time saved could be used, for example, by teachers for parent-training sessions, thus recognizing and capitalizing on the fact that parents are their children's primary educators.

Employing double sessions. This option may be used to increase the number of children children served. But the regulations prohibit using these separate morning and afternoon programs in order to save money.

The comprehensive health and educational services required for all Head Start participants cannot be curtailed under this option.

Shifting to home-based programs. This option is the most dramatic departure from the traditional Head Start. It substitutes the home for the center as the setting for most activities. And it focuses staff attention on training parents to meet the nutrition, education, and health needs of their children.

Establishing locally designed programs. This option permits any local Head Start staff, working with parents and other service agencies, to develop a Head Start program suited to the peculiar needs of its community and its clientele. The result may be an all-new approach or a specific, single-purpose modification of the standard program.

Whatever option a local program selects, it must meet the new, strict performance standards and provide, in one way or another, the comprehensive services that form the backbone of the Head Start.

Each proposal, Mrs. Whitaker said, will get close scrutiny at both regional and national levels, and locally designed programs will be reviewed by special consultants as well.

OCD's new regulations suggest two forms for the varied-attendance option. First, the preschool may operate in the standard way for four days a week, with the fifth day devoted to special activities—staff, parent, and volunteer training, for example; or student field trips; or field visits to homes; or small group meetings with parents.

Second, Head Start may offer a "split-session schedule", enrolling two groups of students, with each group attending classes at the center two days a week. Special services—staff training, parent meetings, attention to particular needs of individual children—would fill the fifth day and the non-attendance days of each group of enrollees.

Mrs. Whitaker said demonstration programs are already under way for some of the options. Two such programs, operated in conjunction with regular Head Start programs, are in Lee / Start and Home Star.

Health Start, she said, services as an example of a locally designed modification. It might be incorporated into a Head Start program in order to identify a particular health problem, such as sickle cell anemia or lead poisoning.

Four of the Health Start demonstration projects are in Region IV. Mrs. Whitaker said. Two are in Florida; one in Charleston, S. C.; and the other in Sevier Pine, N. C., under the WAMY program, which draws its name from

the counties it serves—Watauga, Avery, Mitchell and Yancey.

Home Star projects using the home-based option are being operated by three Region IV Head Starts, she said. One is in Alabama, another in Tennessee, and the third in Franklin, N. C., under the Macon County progress program.

Regulations for the home-based option require Head Start staff to train parents to guide the development of all their children, not just those enrolled in the Head Start program.

Parent training must include not only specific individualized curriculums, but knowledge of nutrition and the food, health, psychological and social services available through Head Start and other agencies in the community.

Because Head Start programs have been ordered to maintain current enrollment levels and and home-based programs clearly would require additional staff, the regulations suggest starting on a modest scale, incorporating home-based activities into center-based programs.

Mrs. Whitaker sees the trend toward increased parent and whole-family involvement as the most hopeful development on the Head Start front. "For me," she said, "the child is the medium for intervention with the entire family."

If problems of funding, sponsorship, and bureaucratic reshuffling don't block the way, she thinks Head Start can be a powerful influence for improving the quality of family life among the poor.

Next: Serving the handicapped.

New Travel Book Off Presses

RALEIGH. — "Our State, It's Great, Discover It This Year" is the in-state theme being used by the North Carolina Travel and Promotion Division.

Based on this theme, the Travel and Promotion Division has just published a new, 20-page "See North Carolina" booklet. The publication is a series of close to home tours of the Tar Heel state.

"We think this is an excellent booklet for North Carolinians as well as out-of-state visitors," said Jim Hastings, travel and promotion director. "We have found more and more people are taking the short or mini-vacations, and we believe this publication will give a help in this type of trip."

The publication contains 11 close to home tours such as: Mountain Lore, Mountain Splendor, Piedmont and Mountain Attractions, Charlotte, The Urban Piedmont, Golf Capital of the World, the Heart of North Carolina, Capital City, Historic Southeastern North Carolina, Old Homes Tour and Black-Beginnings. There are 28 photographs in the booklet including six color pictures on the cover. In addition there are 12 mini-maps designed to help as reference points.

The "See North Carolina"

The Veterans Corner

(Editor's Note: Veterans and their families are asking thousands of questions concerning the benefits their government provides for them through the Veterans Administration. Below are some representative queries. Additional information may be obtained at any VA office.

Q.—I am receiving a 60 per cent service-connected disability compensation. I have a wife and two children. My 17-year-old child was married in January. When will my compensation payments be reduced?

A.—At the end of the calendar year in which the child was married.

Q.—I was discharged from the army in 1963. Do I still have rights under the G. I. bill for a guaranteed home loan?

A.—Yes. Congress has made no shut-off date for such loans. In fact, even World War II are still eligible in some instances. Full information may be obtained from your nearest VA office.

Q.—I am on active duty with booklet was written by staff members of the Travel and Promotion Division and was edited by publications editor Charles Heatherly.

Copies of the booklet may be obtained by writing Travel and Promotion Division, Department M, P. O. Box 27687, Raleigh, N. C. 27611.

the army and I plan to study law under the "Excess Leave Program." How do I apply so that I can receive VA benefits?

A.—Submit to the nearest VA office VA Form 21-E-1990, Veterans' Application for Program of Education or Training, and VA Form 21-E-1999a, Certificate of Availability, together with a copy of your excess leave orders (in lieu of DD 214) and a statement of service from your commanding officer.

ADOPTED CHILD

When an adopted child has problems in school or at home, it's not because he is adopted, according to a 20-year study of adopted children. As with all children, problems stem from parents' upbringing and their responses to the child's feelings.

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