

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 9045

To direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to identify, review, and implement effective interventions in Head Start programs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 29, 2026

Mr. DESAULNIER introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Workforce

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to identify, review, and implement effective interventions in Head Start programs, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Early Childhood Men-
5 tal Health Support Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. IDENTIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS IN**
7 **HEAD START PROGRAMS.**

8 (a) INTERVENTIONS THAT IMPROVE SOCIAL-EMO-
9 TIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Health and
2 Human Services, acting through the Assistant Sec-
3 retary for the Administration for Children and Fam-
4 ilies, (in this section referred to as the “Secretary”)
5 shall identify and review interventions, best prac-
6 tices, curricula, and staff trainings—

7 (A) that improve the behavioral health of
8 children; and

9 (B) that are evidence based.

10 (2) FOCUS.—In carrying out paragraph (1), the
11 Secretary shall focus on interventions, best practices,
12 curricula, and staff trainings that—

13 (A) can be delivered by a provider or other
14 staff member in or associated with a Head
15 Start program or Early Head Start center;

16 (B) are demonstrated to improve or sup-
17 port healthy social, emotional, or cognitive de-
18 velopment for children in Head Start or Early
19 Head Start programs, with an empirical or the-
20 oretical relationship to later mental health or
21 substance abuse outcomes;

22 (C) involve changes to center-wide policies
23 or practices, or other services and supports of-
24 fered in conjunction with Head Start programs
25 or Early Head Start centers, including services

1 provided to adults or families (with or without
2 a child present) for the benefit of the children;

3 (D) demonstrate effectiveness across ra-
4 cial, ethnic, and geographic populations or dem-
5 onstrate the capacity to be adapted to be effec-
6 tive across populations;

7 (E) offer a tiered approach to addressing
8 need, including—

9 (i) universal interventions for all chil-
10 dren;

11 (ii) selected prevention for children
12 demonstrating increased need; and

13 (iii) indicated prevention for children
14 demonstrating substantial need;

15 (F) incorporate trauma-informed care ap-
16 proaches; or

17 (G) have a proven record of improving
18 early childhood and social emotional develop-
19 ment.

20 (b) INTERVENTIONS THAT SUPPORT STAFF
21 WELLNESS.—In carrying out subsection (a), the Secretary
22 shall identify and review interventions, best practices, cur-
23 ricula, and staff trainings that support staff wellness and
24 self-care.

1 (c) CREDENTIALS.—In carrying out subsections (a)
2 and (b), the Secretary, in consultation with relevant ex-
3 perts, shall determine the appropriate credentials for indi-
4 viduals who deliver the interventions, best practices, cur-
5 ricula, and staff trainings identified by the Secretary.

6 (d) CONSULTATION; PUBLIC INPUT.—In carrying out
7 this section, the Secretary shall—

8 (1) consult with relevant agencies, experts, aca-
9 demics, think tanks, and nonprofit organizations
10 with expertise in early childhood, mental health, and
11 trauma-informed care, including the National Insti-
12 tute of Mental Health, the Administration for Chil-
13 dren and Families, the Substance Abuse and Mental
14 Health Services Administration, the Institute of
15 Education Sciences, and the Centers for Disease
16 Control and Prevention; and

17 (2) solicit public input on—

18 (A) the design of the reviews under sub-
19 sections (a) and (b); and

20 (B) the findings and conclusions resulting
21 from such reviews.

22 (e) TIMING.—The Secretary shall—

23 (1) complete the initial reviews required by sub-
24 sections (a) and (b) not later than 2 years after the
25 date of enactment of this Act; and

1 (2) update such reviews and the findings and
2 conclusions therefrom at least every 5 years.

3 (f) REPORTING.—Not later than 1 year after the date
4 of enactment of this Act, and every 5 years thereafter,
5 the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the
6 results of implementing this section.

7 **SEC. 3. IMPLEMENTING THE INTERVENTIONS IN HEAD**
8 **START PROGRAMS.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Assistant Secretary for the
10 Administration for Children and Families shall award
11 grants to participating Head Start agencies to implement
12 the interventions, best practices, curricula, and staff
13 trainings that are identified pursuant to section 2.

14 (b) REQUIREMENTS.—The Assistant Secretary shall
15 ensure that grants awarded under this section are award-
16 ed to grantees representing a diversity of geographic areas
17 across the United States, including urban, suburban, and
18 rural areas.

19 **SEC. 4. EVALUATING IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERVEN-**
20 **TIONS IN HEAD START PROGRAMS.**

21 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Health and
22 Human Services, acting through the Assistant Secretary
23 for Planning and Evaluation and in coordination with the
24 Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children
25 and Families, shall—

1 (1) determine whether the interventions, best
2 practices, curricula, and staff trainings implemented
3 pursuant to section 3—

4 (A) are effectively implemented pursuant
5 to section 3 and other relevant provisions of law
6 such that the anticipated effect sizes of the
7 interventions, best practices, curricula, and
8 staff trainings are achieved; and

9 (B) yield long-term savings;

10 (2) develop a method for making the determina-
11 tion required by paragraph (1);

12 (3) ensure that such method includes com-
13 petency and testing approaches, performance or out-
14 come measures, or any other methods deemed appro-
15 priate by the Assistant Secretary, taking into consid-
16 eration existing monitoring components of the Head
17 Start and Early Head Start programs; and

18 (4) solicit public input on the design, findings,
19 and conclusions of this process and shall consider
20 whether updates are necessary at least every 5
21 years.

22 (b) PROCESS.—In carrying out subsection (a), the
23 Secretary of Health and Human Services shall—

24 (1) conduct any research and evaluation studies
25 needed; and

1 (2) solicit public input on—

2 (A) the design of the method developed
3 pursuant to subsection (a)(2); and

4 (B) the resulting findings and conclusions.

5 (c) TIMING.—The Secretary of Health and Human
6 Services shall—

7 (1) develop the method required by subsection
8 (a)(2) and make the initial determination required
9 by subsection (a)(1) not later than 2 years after the
10 date of enactment of this Act; and

11 (2) update such method and determination at
12 least every 5 years.

13 **SEC. 5. IMPLEMENTING THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK**
14 **FOR HEAD START PROGRAMS.**

15 (a) EVALUATION METHOD.—The Assistant Secretary
16 for the Administration for Children and Families shall im-
17 plement the evaluation method developed pursuant to sec-
18 tion 4(a) in the Head Start program as a voluntary mech-
19 anism for interested Head Start programs or Early Head
20 Start centers to evaluate the extent to which such pro-
21 grams or centers have effectively implemented the inter-
22 ventions, best practices, curricula, and staff trainings
23 identified pursuant to section 2, with minimal burden or
24 disruption to programs and centers interested in partici-
25 pating.

1 (b) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Assistant Sec-
 2 retary for the Administration for Children and Families
 3 shall provide guidance, tools, resources, and technical as-
 4 sistance to grantees for implementing and evaluating
 5 interventions, best practices, curricula, and staff trainings
 6 identified pursuant to section 2 and optimizing the per-
 7 formance of such grantees on the annual evaluations.

8 **SEC. 6. BEST PRACTICE CENTERS.**

9 The Assistant Secretary for the Administration for
 10 Children and Families may fund up to 5 Best Practice
 11 Centers in Early Childhood Training in universities and
 12 colleges to prepare future Head Start agencies and staff
 13 able to deliver the interventions, best practices, curricula,
 14 and staff trainings identified pursuant to section 2.

15 **SEC. 7. FUNDING.**

16 (a) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
 17 authorized to be appropriated \$100,000,000 for the period
 18 of fiscal years 2027 through 2036 for carrying out sec-
 19 tions 3(b), 4, and 6.

20 (b) AVAILABILITY OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Amounts
 21 authorized to be appropriated by subsection (a) are au-
 22 thorized to remain available until expended.

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