

# Head Start & Early Learning Programs Infant/Toddler Teacher Apprentice Program

## Rationale

Research is clear that the first three years of life are critically important for long term developmental outcomes, and that consistent and emotionally responsive out of home care is a significant protective factor for vulnerable young children and families. In order to ensure the ongoing availability of qualified educators for infants and toddlers, Head Start & Early Learning Programs (HS & ELP) has designed a workforce development (“Apprenticeship”) program to provide opportunities for parents, substitutes, and community members to obtain their Child Development Associate (CDA), which, upon completion, will also result in the award of *Lead Teacher* certification from the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC).

We anticipate that the outcomes of this effort will be that:

- HS & ELP will have all Early Head Start teaching positions filled with qualified individuals.
- HS & ELP will have a robust substitute list of qualified individuals to cover for staff vacations, training and leaves.
- Our service area will have greater resources for serving children 0-3, and will be better positioned to meet our program goal to expand services to the youngest and most vulnerable children and their families in our communities.

## Description of Program

The CDA is a national credential recognized by the Office of Head Start as an indicator of child development knowledge and expertise. Individuals with CDAs can specialize in Preschool, Infant/Toddler, Family Child Care, or Home Visiting. While the primary focus of this program is the attainment of Infant/Toddler center-based certification, those seeking other CDA awards may be considered. Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care awards Lead Teacher certification to any applicants who have earned a CDA.

## Eligibility Requirements

Teacher Apprentices must:

- Satisfactorily complete the application process, including interview(s) and reference checks
- Be approved by the HS & ELP Policy Council
- Produce evidence of a physical exam within the past year, which includes a TB risk assessment and evidence of MMR immunizations
- Pass all components of the required Background Record Check (BRC)

## Selection

Current Head Start/Early Head Start parents will be prioritized. Multi-lingual, multi-cultural Teacher Apprentices will also be given priority, as well as those living in the service area. A committee will review interviews and references to determine eligibility and selection decisions.

## **Employment Status**

Teacher Apprentices will be categorized under the job description “Substitute” and must comply with all requirements of that position, including keeping up to date with physicals, BRCs, First Aid training, personnel file information, and adhering to all agency policies and procedures.

Teacher Apprentices will be paid at the hourly wage of substitute teachers. Teacher Apprentices may ask to work additional hours, beyond their program apprenticeship, if substitute work is needed in the program. NOTE: Any additional substitute work may be in any classroom or age group, while the apprenticeship will focus on one classroom.

## **Expectations**

Teacher Apprentices must be able to complete study assignments independently and be able to attend regular classes (approximately monthly for two hours) conducted by HS & ELP.

Classes are designed to support and organize Teacher Apprentices as they work independently to complete assignments. Course materials are available in English or Spanish.

## **Structure & Requirements**

The program requires a 2-year commitment. Upon hire, Teacher Apprentices must participate in the HS & ELP Substitute Teacher Orientation and complete First Aid training within 6 months of hire. Teacher Apprentices will be:

- Assigned an experienced HS & ELP staff to serve as their program coordinator and CDA mentor
- Assigned to one classroom within the program
- Required to complete a paid apprenticeship each of the two years, lasting 20 weeks at 12 hours/week. (240 hours/year, 480 total work hours over 2 years) Apprenticeships available:
  - Turners Falls (2)
  - Northampton (2)
  - Amherst (2)
  - Westfield (1)

In Year 1, HS & ELP will hold regular classes to support the Teacher Apprentices to complete tasks on schedule. Teacher Apprentices will focus on:

- Achieving 120 hours of training in eight categories
- Completing 240 hours of classroom experience/internship

During Year 2, Teacher Apprentices will focus on:

- Completing 240 hours of classroom experience/internship
- Creating a Professional Portfolio
- Collecting Family Surveys
- Completing an observation by a Professional Development Specialist
- Creating an online CDA account and application
- Completing the CDA exam
- Applying to the MA Department of Early Education and Care for Lead Teacher certification

## **Training Materials, Paid Time, and Funding**

Distance learning courses will be dispersed to Teacher Apprentices one course at a time. Upon successful completion of each course, the next will be distributed. HS & ELP will provide the CDA Competency Standards Book for each individual. During Year 2, Teacher Apprentices will create their online CDA account and apply for certification electronically. HS & ELP will provide a Purchase Order for payment of the credential. All payments will be made directly to the Council for Professional Recognition.

Teacher Apprentices are paid for their time when the activity is considered “work time.” For example, Substitute Orientation, First Aid training, and apprenticeships with children are considered work time. HS & ELP also pays the fee for First Aid training, provided Teacher Apprentices attend the class. Teacher Apprentices are expected to attend class (approximately two hours) monthly. Time spent in the monthly class and working on the CEUs is not paid time. Classes and CEUs are a benefit of the Apprenticeship, delivered at no cost to the Apprentice.

Teacher Apprentices will also be considered for additional high quality training opportunities (additional class instruction time) as funding and space allows. For example, HS & ELP offers the Touchpoints 3-day Individual-Level Training in-house for staff, and Teacher Apprentices may be eligible to participate. The Brazelton Touchpoints Approach is an evidence-based and relational professional development model that gives staff tools to improve their practice while building deep partnership with families.

## **Commitment**

Teacher Apprentices are expected to commit to the two-year program. After the CDA is awarded, the Teacher Apprentice will apply to MA Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) Teacher Qualifications (TQ) and will be awarded Lead Teacher certification. At that time, the Teacher Apprentices will be eligible to apply for vacant regular positions that require a CDA. Upon completion of the program, Teacher Apprentices will provide feedback so that HS & ELP can continue improving the quality and responsiveness of the CDA program.

## **Successful CDA Retention**

Teacher Apprentices who achieve the CDA must renew the CDA every three years for the credential to remain valid. Within the three years, the Teacher Apprentice must:

- Work an additional 80 hours with the specified age group
- Complete 45 hours/4.5 CEU/3 college credits of additional ECE training, specific to the age group
- Become a member of a professional organization
- Have a current CPR and First Aid certification

If the Teacher Apprentice has worked for HS & ELP consistently during the 3-year period, HS & ELP may support CDA coursework and renewal fees. Teacher Apprentices are responsible for completing the renewal training work independently and on time. Teacher Apprentices interested in renewing should contact the Director of Education no later than 6 months prior to renewal date.

Teacher Apprentices hired into regular status HS & ELP positions will have renewal fees and coursework paid for by the program.