



PITC and Early Head Start: Aligned in Purpose and Practice

The Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) supports programs in implementing relationship-based, developmentally appropriate practice through responsive caregiving, continuity of care, small groups, and individualized curricula. These core principles reflect Early Head Start (EHS) expectations for safe, nurturing learning environments and intentional teaching for infants and toddlers.

The PITC approach is strongly aligned with the Program Performance Standards by centering what EHS requires most: high-quality, relationship-based care that promotes healthy development, strengthens families, and advances equity for infants and toddlers. Through PITC, we view infants and toddlers as curious, motivated learners who thrive through meaningful relationships rather than as passive recipients of care.

At the heart of PITC is a commitment to care that respects the diverse family experiences, preferences, abilities, and needs of the children and families we serve. PITC's philosophy emphasizes partnering with families, who are experts on their children; honoring culture and home language; and using observation to understand each child's strengths, needs, and developmental progress as described in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework. These practices support the implementation of standards related to family engagement; culturally and linguistically responsive services; and coordinated approaches that support children's learning, social-emotional development, and well-being.

The goal of PITC is to promote a coherent, standards-aligned approach that strengthens adult-child relationships, improves program quality, and enhances school readiness. PITC supports EHS programs with building consistent, reflective practice across classrooms, family child care partners, and home visitation services.



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Alignment of PITC Core Principles With Head Start Program Performance Standards Part 1302—Program Operations

Core principles of PITC align with the Head Start Program Performance Standards Part 1302—Program Operations.

PITC Core Principles

- Every child is unique, with individual temperaments, development rates, and interests
- Responsive caregiving supports children's natural drive to explore and learn
- Relationships matter most—they're the foundation for healthy development
- Families are essential partners in shaping their children's early learning and care

Head Start Program Performance Standards Part 1302—Program Operations

Subpart B—Program Structure

- **1302.21** Center-based option.
- **1302.23** Family child care option.

Subpart C—Education and Child Development Program Services

- **1302.30** Purpose.
- **1302.31** Teaching and the learning environment.
- **1302.32** Curricula.
- **1302.34** Parent and family engagement in education and child development services.
- **1302.36** Tribal language preservation and revitalization.

Subpart D—Health and Mental Health Program Services

- **1302.41** Collaboration and communication with parents.
- **1302.44** Child nutrition.
- **1302.45** Supports for mental health and well-being.
- **1302.46** Family support services for health, nutrition, and mental health.
- **1302.47** Safety practices.

Subpart E—Family and Community Engagement Program Services

- **1302.50** Family engagement.

Subpart F—Additional Services for Children with Disabilities

- **1302.60** Full participation in program services and activities.
- **1302.61** Additional services for children.
- **1302.62** Additional services for parents.

Subpart I—Human Resources Management

- **1302.90** Personnel policies.



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