

Understanding the Alignment of the Head Start Performance Standards and the *Your Journey Together* (YJT) Resilience-Building Parenting Curriculum

Your Journey Together (YJT) is a strength-based parenting curriculum designed to promote the social and emotional well-being and resilience of vulnerable children and their families. The YJT curriculum focuses on empowering parents to promote safe, trusting and healing environments—all key elements of a trauma-sensitive program. YJT is designed for families with young children including infants, toddlers and preschoolers, and is facilitated by a coach, who is typically a home visitor, caseworker or other family-service professional.

The goal of YJT is to provide parents and guardians with the knowledge and skills that promote resilience, and help family members better cope with life's challenges and reach their full potential. YJT shows parents how to use ordinary, everyday routines, activities and interactions as resilience-building opportunities. Coaches take parents through a series of lessons, called *Stepping Stones*, that introduce the concept of resilience and specifically teach parents how to:

- 1) promote their children's social and emotional skills that foster resilience;
- 2) create home environments that foster resilience-building opportunities; and
- 3) take care of their own resilience so that they have the energy, patience, knowledge and skills that allow them to parent in ways that fosters the resilience of the entire family.

The core of all Devereux Center for Resilient Children (DCRC) resources are the Devereux Early Childhood Assessments, nationally standardized, strength-based, reliable and valid measures of social and emotional competencies in children from four weeks of age through five years old (up to sixth birthday). YJT includes a module that guides use of the DECA assessments, although the curriculum can also be implemented in programs who choose not to use the DECA assessments. The assessments are designed specifically to screen, assess and strengthen children's social and emotional competencies. Both parents and teachers can complete the DECA, and research-based strategies are used to guide the planning process for the home.

This alignment tool was updated in March, 2018. The document reflects the alignment between the *Your Journey Together* Resilience-Building Parenting Curriculum and the Head Start Performance Standards that went into effect in November, 2016. To learn more about the Devereux Center for Resilient Children (DCRC), please visit www.centerforresilientchildren.org.

Head Start Performance Standard	<i>Your Journey Together</i> (YJT)
<p>1302.33 Child screenings and assessments.</p> <p>(a) Screening.</p> <p>(1) In collaboration with each child’s parent and with parental consent, a program must complete or obtain a current developmental screening to identify concerns regarding a child’s developmental, behavioral, motor, language, social, cognitive, and emotional skills within 45 calendar days of when the child first attends the program or, for the home-based program option, receives a home visit. A program that operates for 90 days or less must complete or obtain a current developmental screening within 30 calendar days of when the child first attends the program.</p> <p>(2) A program must use one or more research-based developmental standardized screening tools to complete the screening. A program must use as part of the screening additional information from family members, teachers, and relevant staff familiar with the child’s typical behavior.</p>	<p>In Module 3 of YJT, it is an option for parents to complete a DECA on their child.</p> <p>The DECA for Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers are strength-based, standardized, valid and reliable instruments that Head Start Programs can use with confidence to screen and better understand a child’s strengths and needs related to social, emotional and behavioral issues.</p> <p>The DECA Preschool form (DECA-P2) is appropriate for children ages 3 through 5 years. This tool measures three protective factors including Attachment/Relationships, Initiative and Self-Regulation. The DECA-P2 also includes an 11 item behavioral concerns screener.</p>
<p>(b) Assessment for individualization.</p> <p>(1) A program must conduct standardized and structured assessments, which may be observation-based or direct, for each child that provide ongoing information to evaluate the child’s developmental level and progress in outcomes aligned to the goals described in the Head Start Early Learning Child Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five. Such assessments must result in usable information for teachers, home visitors, and parents and be conducted with sufficient frequency to allow for individualization within the program year. (2) A program must regularly use information from paragraph (b)(1) of this section along with informal teacher observations and additional information from family and staff, as relevant, to determine a child’s strengths and needs, inform and adjust strategies to better support individualized learning and improve teaching practices in center-based and family child care settings, and improve home visit strategies in home-based models.</p>	<p>The DECA Infant/Toddler is appropriate for children ages 4 weeks to 3 years. The infant version of the tool measures two key child protective factors of Attachment/Relationships and Initiative. The toddler version also measures Attachment/Relationships, Initiative and Self-Regulation.</p>
<p>(c) Characteristics of screenings and assessments.</p> <p>(1) Screenings and assessments must be valid and reliable for the population and purpose for which they will be used, including by being conducted by qualified and trained personnel, and being age, developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate, and appropriate for children with disabilities, as needed.</p>	<p>If a child whose parents are participating in the YJT curriculum is attending a classroom program, both the child’s teacher and parents can complete the assessment, providing a valuable communication tool for educators and families to collaborate around optimizing a child’s social and emotional development. The tools have been normed on a representative sample of children in the United States, including children in Head Start. The</p>

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	<p>instruments are available in English and Spanish and in paper and electronic platforms.</p> <p>The DECA for Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers can all be used as progress monitoring tools that allow for ongoing evaluation of a child’s social and emotional strengths and needs. Parents and educators can rate a child on the age-appropriate version of the tool at a particular point in time to determine if a child has particular areas of need as well as to identify whether a child has areas of strength that can be leveraged to assist in meeting identified goals. Once strategies and plans are in place and have been implemented for a sufficient length of time, a second rating can be conducted to determine whether progress is being made or if the plans and strategies should be revised.</p> <p>The DECA for Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers are all nationally standardized, reliable and valid measures. The tools meet or exceed all standards set forth by the American Psychological Association for high quality instruments. The national standardization process included procedures to ensure that the tools would be culturally and linguistically appropriate. Children in Head Start were represented in the national standardization process to ensure that the tools would be appropriate for children attending Head Start Programs across the country. An English and Spanish version of the tools is available.</p>
<p>1302.34 Parent and family engagement in education and child development services. (a) Purpose. Center-based and family child care programs must structure education and child development services to recognize parents’ roles as children’s lifelong educators, and to encourage parents to engage in their child’s education. (b) Engaging parents and family members. A program must</p>	<p>The lessons, or stepping stones, that comprise the YJT parenting curriculum are designed to be delivered in either one-to-one home visiting sessions or in group sessions. For Head Start Programs looking to engage families in education and child development services, the 29 scripted lessons, offer a perfect resource. These lessons can be used to engage parents in understanding how important their actions at home are connected to the teaching at the Head Start Program. Children learn social and emotional skills</p>

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<p>offer opportunities for parents and family members to be involved in the program's education services</p>	<p>through the modeling that takes place by all of the important adults in a child's life, including parents and teachers. For those Head Start Programs interested in a companion classroom-based resource, the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) Program is a companion tool to YJT. Use of YJT and DECA Program together offers Head Start programs a holistic approach to fostering children's resilience through individualized child plans and through the creation of home and classroom settings that provide children with opportunities to use these skills and to flourish in settings that are consistent in their resilience-building practices.</p>
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1302.45 Child mental health and social and emotional well-being.

(a) Wellness promotion.

To support a program-wide culture that promotes children's mental health, social and emotional well-being, and overall health, a program must: (1) Provide supports for effective classroom management and positive learning environments; supportive teacher practices; and, strategies for supporting children with challenging behaviors and other social, emotional, and mental health concerns;

(b) Mental health consultants. A program must ensure mental health consultants assist: (1) The program to implement strategies to identify and support children with mental health and social and emotional concerns; (2) Teachers, including family child care providers, to improve classroom management and teacher practices through strategies that include using classroom observations and consultations to address teacher and individual child needs and creating physical and cultural environments that promote positive mental health and social and emotional functioning ; (3) Other staff, including home visitors, to meet children's mental health and social and emotional needs through strategies that include observation and consultation; (4) Staff to address prevalent child mental health concerns, including internalizing problems such as appearing withdrawn and externalizing problems such as challenging behaviors

Programs that are working to promote effective classroom management and positive learning environments understand the critical connection between the home and classroom environments. YJT focuses on providing families with the knowledge and skills to strengthen children's use of prosocial skills and reduce children's need to use challenging behaviors. Efforts to promote positive learning environments in the classroom should include a strategy that involves families and ensures that consistent practices are in place in home and school. YJT Module 2 provides lessons around how parents create homes that encourage children to use prosocial behaviors and Module 3 provides parents with specific activities to promote their children's initiative, self-regulation and healthy relationships. All Devereux resources take a universal approach, emphasizing that ALL children need strong social and emotional competencies. In order to best support children using challenging behaviors, the YJT child strategies can be used with greater frequency and duration and may be modified to meet the targeted needs of a child who is already displaying behavioral concerns.

Mental health consultants who are working in partnership with educators and parents can help to identify and customize YJT child strategies for the home to align with classroom strategies so that a team approach guides the entire planning process. Educators and parents who are using YJT can be empowered by the mental health consultant to better understand a child's behaviors and to understand how their home and school environments, their daily activities and routines, and their interactions with a child can positively influence a child's use of appropriate behaviors.

1302.17

(b) Prohibition on expulsion.

(1) A program cannot expel or unenroll a child from Head Start because of a child's behavior. (2) When a child exhibits persistent and serious challenging behaviors, a program must explore all possible steps and document all steps taken to address such problems, and facilitate the child's safe participation in the program. Such steps must include, at a minimum, engaging a mental health consultant, considering the appropriateness of providing appropriate services and supports under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to ensure that the child who satisfies the definition of disability in 29 U.S.C. 705(9)(b) of the Rehabilitation Act is not excluded from the program on the basis of disability, and consulting with the parents and the child's teacher.

For children who are at-risk for expulsion due to behavioral concerns, it is critical that their parents are involved in the process to support their social and emotional skill development and reduce their use of challenging behaviors to get their needs met. Through use of YJT, parents of children who are engaging in challenging behaviors can learn strategies related to attachment/relationships, initiative and self-regulation that may help to support their children in using more positive behavior. All of the strategies and supports offered by Devereux to address children's challenging behaviors are research-informed and evidence-based.

1302.51 Parent activities to promote child learning and development.

(b) A program must, at a minimum, offer opportunities for parents to participate in a research-based parenting curriculum that builds on parents' knowledge and offers parents the opportunity to practice parenting skills to promote children's learning and development.

Your Journey Together, Devereux's resilience-building parenting curriculum, is designed to promote the resilience of young children and their adult caregivers/parents. This research-based curriculum offers flexible lessons for coaches to implement with parents in individual or group workshop experiences and includes significant opportunities for parents to practice new parenting skills to promote their own protective factors and resilience, and the protective factors and resilience of their young children.

The National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement has identified 3 categories of research-based curricula that meet the Head Start requirement for selection of a parenting curriculum.

YJT meets the criteria for being a "Research-Based" curriculum, defined as one that " is founded on solid research about parenting concepts, skills and practices, and promotes activities that have been previously shown to have positive effects on parenting/child outcomes, and has a preliminary or descriptive evaluation of the curriculum itself, but has not necessarily confirmed that any changes in desired parenting/child outcomes were related to or caused by the curriculum."

The National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement also outlined characteristics that parenting curriculum must meet. YJT includes all of the characteristics which are:

- Structured, sequenced learning activities for parents that focus on two or more of the following domains of learning:
 - Nurturing (warmth, responsiveness and sensitivity)
 - Discipline
 - Teaching

○ Language

○ Supervision

- A manual or guide that describes what learning domains to deliver, how to present them and in what order
- Available for public use
- Two or more sessions
- Delivered in a time-limited or ongoing manner
- Delivered to parents as the intended and primary audience
- Includes an opportunity for parents to practice skills
- Able to be implemented in early childhood settings or community-based organizations
- Research-based

[Head Start Program Performance Standard 1302.51 \(b\) Technical Assistance Resource](#) [from the *National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement*]