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Press Release: Statement Regarding HHS announcement

Phoenix, July 14, 2025- The Arizona Head Start Association (AZHSA) remains committed to ensuring that every child—regardless of background—has access to quality early education and the foundational support they need to thrive.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a [press release](#) last Thursday urging Head Start Programs to check their immigration status as part of the eligibility process. It was officially [posted](#) today on the Federal Register.

This change could influence the decisions of immigrant families, many of whom are legally present in the United States when considering whether to access early childhood education and support services.

This decision may result in fewer families accessing early education services due to fear or confusion, even when they or their children are eligible and legally entitled to do so. Many mixed-status families (where some members are U.S. citizens or lawful residents and others are not) may now avoid enrolling their children in Head Start due to concerns about immigration consequences.

Denying or discouraging access to Head Start could have long-term negative effects on children's development, school readiness, and overall family stability. "AZHSA believes every eligible child deserves the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their family's background. While we acknowledge the administration's position on immigration policy, we are disappointed by the interpretation of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). This change risks creating fear among families seeking essential early childhood services and adds unnecessary administrative burdens for programs working to support the most vulnerable in their communities" said Eve Del Real AZHSA Board President.

Head Start is not just an education program—it provides comprehensive services including health screenings, nutrition, parent education, and emotional support. Head Start serves families working hard to provide better futures for their children. These are often the most vulnerable members of our communities.

Research shows that access to early education programs like Head Start improves outcomes in school, employment, and overall well-being later in life. We believe it is



essential to protect access to early childhood education for all eligible children, regardless of their family's immigration status.

Who We Are

Arizona Head Start Association (AZSHA) AZSHA provides a forum of empowerment and unification for the coalition of public and private organizations that administer Head Start programs and works to improve the lives of Arizona's children.