



**OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
PALM BEACH COUNTY**

**REPORT OF INVESTIGATION
CASE NUMBER: 2011-0004**

Sheryl G. Steckler
Inspector General

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Based on information provided by former Head Start Technical and Training Assistant Tara Harper, the OIG initiated an investigation concerning an allegation that Head Start personnel throughout Palm Beach County were not properly credentialed to work with young children.

A review by the OIG of Palm Beach County Head Start personnel records identified 116 Head Start personnel whose positions required specific credentials. The investigation determined that all 116 Head Start personnel were in compliance with the required credentials.

RECOMMENDED CORRECTIVE ACTION

No further action is necessary.

BACKGROUND

PBC's Community Services Department (CSD) administers a variety of programs, one of which consists of the Head Start program. Head Start provides school readiness programs, such as literacy, language, and other social programs, to low-income children in an effort to prepare them for elementary school.

On February 25, 2011, former Head Start Technical and Training Assistant Tara Harper submitted a complaint¹ to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) alleging that numerous Head Start personnel currently working with children in Palm Beach County, whose positions required Child Development Associates (CDAs) certifications, college level coursework, and/or college degrees, do not maintain the proper credentials to work with young children.

Based on the information provided by Ms. Harper, the OIG subsequently initiated an investigation.

¹ Ms. Harper's initial complaint was submitted to the Commission on Ethics in December 2010, at which time the COE initiated an investigation (Case #C10-08) concerning alleged misconduct by CSD Director Channell Wilkins. That investigation resulted in no findings. COE's investigation was subsequently forwarded to the OIG on February 25, 2011, at which time the OIG Investigator met with Ms. Harper where she provided the additional allegation referenced in this report.

MATTERS INVESTIGATED

Allegation 1:

Head Start personnel were not properly credentialed for their respective positions in order to work with young children in Palm Beach County. If supported, the allegation would be a potential violation of § 817.567(1) and (2), F.S.

Findings:

The information obtained **does not support** the allegation.

According to the OIG Investigator's review of PBC Human Resource (HR) records, 116 Head Start personnel were identified as personnel working at PBC Head Start facilities throughout Palm Beach County whose positions required CDAs or college degrees and/or transcripts. Although certification documentation is maintained by the respective Head Start facility, the Florida Department of Children and Families' (DCF) Child Care Program Office maintains the same certification information, which is also available through their online database.

By comparing HR records, Head Start facility records, and DCF records, the following pertinent information concerning staff compliance status (related to those staff members required to possess CDA certifications, college level coursework, and/or college degrees) was disclosed:

Location	# of Staff required to maintain CDAs	All Compliant	# of Staff required to maintain College Diplomas and / or Transcripts	All Compliant
Boynton Beach	1	Yes	6	Yes
Riviera Beach	8	Yes	2	Yes
Westgate	2	Yes	3	Yes
Pahokee	6	Yes	5	Yes
Lake Worth	6	Yes	5	Yes
Jupiter	2	Yes	7	Yes
West Palm Beach	11	Yes	12	Yes
South Bay	11	Yes	8	Yes
Sand Castle	1	Yes	4	Yes
Palm Glades	4	Yes	4	Yes
Delray Beach	4	Yes	4	Yes
TOTAL	56		60	

ARTICLE XII, SECTION 2-247

Pursuant to Article XII, Section 2-427 of the Palm Beach County Code, Head Start Director John Quatrini was provided the opportunity to submit a written explanation or rebuttal to the findings as stated in this investigative report within ten (10) calendar days.

On July 6, 2011, Mr. Quatrini provided the following quoted response to the investigative report:

I have read the Inspector General's report and, on behalf of Head Start and Community Services, wish to thank you for exonerating Head Start from the challenge put forth By Ms. Harper. We here at Head Start take our responsibilities very seriously and are quite vigilant regarding the credentials of the staff. Credentialing is a Federal mandate, a State of Florida mandate and a local mandate and we do whatever is necessary to insure proper credentials; including taking the step of terminating staff who have been unable or unwilling to secure and maintain the requisite credentials. Once again, thank you and please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information or response.

This Investigation has been conducted in accordance with the ASSOCIATION OF INSPECTORS GENERAL Principles & Quality Standards for Investigations.