Descriptive Study of Early Head Start (Early Head Start Family and Child Experiences Study; Baby FACES)

Supporting Statement for Request for OMB Approval of Program Recruitment and Feasibility Study: Section A

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children, Youth and Families 4th Fl. West, 370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW Washington, DC 20047

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#### A. JUSTIFICATION

## A.1 Circumstances Necessitating Data Collection

## **Overview of Request**

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the Department of Health and Human Services is requesting Office of Management and Budget clearance for the methodology and instruments to be used to recruit programs to participate in a descriptive study of Early Head Start—the Early Head Start Family and Child Experiences Study (Baby FACES).<sup>3,4</sup> ACF has contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. and its subcontractors, Twin Peaks Partners, Branch Associates, ZERO TO THREE, Brenda Jones Harden, Alphabet Soup Books, Shugoll Consultants, and Judith Jerald (a consultant), under contract number HHSP23320052905YC, to collect descriptive information on services provided to children and families, characteristics of families served, and child and family development.

There are two legislative bases for the Baby FACES data collection. First, through the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993 (Pub. L. 103-62), which required that the Office of Head Start move expeditiously toward development and testing of Head Start Performance Measures, and also through the 2007 reauthorization of Head Start (Pub. L. 110-134; Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, Section 649 (h)), which requires a study of the status of limited English proficient children and their families participating in Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs). GPRA mandated that all federal agencies:

## • Develop strategic plans;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The study has appeared in the Federal Register as the Descriptive Study of Early Head Start. We are now referring to the study at the Early Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey, or Baby FACES.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> A second package will request permission to use specific instruments and measures of program, child, and family characteristics and outcomes.

- Prepare annual performance plans that set out the agency's performance goals; and
- Report annually on actual performance compared to goals.

The Baby FACES study will allow the Office of Head Start to document the status of limited English proficient children and families in Early Head Start, as well as understand how the population of enrolled children and families fare over time. This information will satisfy the accountability and program improvement goals mandated by the Act.

## **Study Context and Rationale**

Early Head Start programs are comprehensive, two-generation programs that focus on enhancing children's development while strengthening families. Designed for low-income pregnant women and families who have infants and toddlers 3 years of age or younger, the programs provide a wide range of services through multiple service delivery options: (1) a home-based option—weekly home visits and at least two group socializations per month; (2) a center-based option—center-based child care plus other activities; (3) a combination option—both home visits and center experiences; and (4) a locally designed option. Services include child development services, child care, parenting education, case management, health care and referrals, and family support. All Early Head Start programs must comply with the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS), which are based on best practices identified by a wide range of practitioners and researchers (Administration for Children and Families 1996). Currently, more than 700 grantees provide Early Head Start services to approximately 70,000 children and pregnant women around the country.

From its beginning 12 years ago, Early Head Start has built program services for low-income pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers on a foundation of rigorous research combined with a strong, ongoing emphasis on continuous program improvement. Baby

FACES is the next step in a comprehensive, integrated, and long term research agenda (ACF 2002a; Kisker et al. 2003a, 2003b; Vogel et al. 2007) aimed at maintaining an up-to-date, extensive knowledge base to support Early Head Start policies and programs.

Ever since its inception, research has been an integral part of the Early Head Start program. At the same time the first programs began operating, the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF) initiated an evaluation of Early Head Start. The Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (EHSREP). included a rigorous impact evaluation using an experimental design, a comprehensive implementation study, local research studies, special policy studies on child care and health, and feedback to programs and training/technical providers for continuous program improvement. Seventeen programs and 3,001 children participated in the evaluation. The findings showed that the programs had a broad range of impacts on child development and parent outcomes (ACYF 2002a). The implementation study found great variation in service delivery patterns and in rates of implementation. Patterns of impacts also varied by rates of implementation and program approach to service delivery. Programs that fully implemented key elements of the HSPPS early in the evaluation period demonstrated the strongest pattern of impacts. Although all program approaches achieved favorable impacts, those that provided both home- and center-based services had the broadest pattern of impacts.

Given the variations in program impacts by service delivery and implementation observed in the EHSREP and the growth of the Early Head Start program, it is important to understand how programs currently operate, the services that they deliver, how these vary by program and family characteristics, and how children and families enrolled in the program fare over time to inform technical assistance and program improvement activities. Accordingly, ACF launched a planned series of descriptive studies of Early Head Start, beginning with the Survey of Early Head Start programs (SEHSP; OMB Control No. 0970-0008), and continuing with the current study.

The SEHSP collected data from the universe of Early Head Start programs and provided program-level information on the management systems, services, and aggregate characteristics of children and families served by them. It was not designed to provide information at the family and child level. Baby FACES goes beyond the SEHSP by providing information at the level of the individual family in addition to that at the level of the program. Specifically, it will (1) identify services offered, their frequency, and their intensity; (2) identify the key characteristics of families currently served in Early Head Start (with a focus on limited English proficient and English language learners); (3) investigate how programs individualize services to meet family needs and the match between identified needs and services; (4) show how children and families are faring over time; and (5) explore associations between the type and quality of Early Head Start services and child and family well-being. The focus on program services is an area of particular value. Whereas in the SEHSP we learned in general what programs provided (that is, the number of home visits that home visit programs typically provided to home visit families per month), it was not possible to link service provision to individual families.

Baby FACES will guide ACF, the Office of Head Start, national and regional training and technical assistance (T/TA) providers, and local programs in supporting policy development and program improvement at all levels. It will also provide guidance to Early Head Start programs for their own performance measurement by providing examples of measures that programs could use and helping them to incorporate regular data collection into their routines.

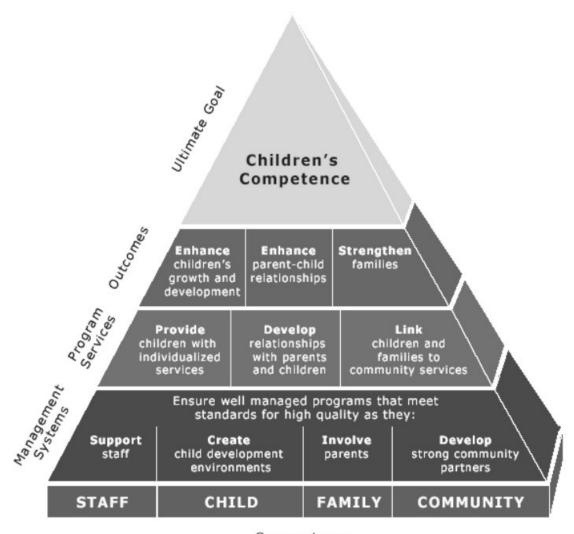
## **Conceptual Framework for Early Head Start Services**

Head Start has long had a strong focus on continuous program improvement, and Early Head Start is no exception. A key to continuous program improvement is the identification of a framework that identifies program goals and mechanisms for achieving these goals. The Head Start performance measurement framework has been modified for programs servicing pregnant

women, infants, and toddlers, incorporating the Statement of the Advisory Committee on Programs Serving Infants and Toddlers (ACF, 1994) as well as findings from the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project. The new framework identifies objectives related to program management systems, services, and outcomes that are crucial for achieving the ultimate goal of enhancing children's competence (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRAMS SERVING INFANTS AND TODDLERS



Cornerstones

The conceptual framework illustrates how program management practices and organization underlie provision of high quality services which in turn promote healthy and appropriate relationships among staff and families, and within families. Each level of the framework supports and contributes to the successful realization of the next higher level, and the ultimate goal of children's competence.

Based on the performance measures framework and building upon the results of the Survey of Early Head Start Programs that focused on the bottom two layers of the pyramid (management and services), Baby FACES will focus on all four levels of the pyramid. This study will provide not only program level information on program implementation, service offerings, management practices, and staff development, but in addition will provide specific and detailed information at the family level on services received, relationships with program staff, parent-child relationships, and child and family outcomes. Baby FACES will also explore the links between program characteristics and service quality with child and family outcomes such as children's social emotional, cognitive, and language development and parents' self sufficiency, well-being, and parenting skills. The present study will provide new or updated information in a number of key areas:

- Demographic characteristics of the families and children enrolled in Early Head Start, including limited English proficient families and children
- Characteristics of Early Head Start providers (Early Head Start teachers and home visitors)
- Self-reported goals, strengths, needs, attitudes of participant families, and their expectations for participation in the Early Head Start program, and how these change over families' experience in Early Head Start
- Activities and experiences of families while their child is enrolled in Early Head Start
- Early Head Start programs' approaches related to family involvement and support
- Responsibilities, training, and credentials of staff

- Barriers to provision of needed services and maximization of family involvement in Early Head Start as perceived by families and program staff
- Child and family outcomes and change over time based on the Head Start Performance Measures Framework
- Quality of observed classroom or home practice
- Use of curricula and assessments and provision of program support through training, mentoring, and supervision

## A.2 How, by Whom, and for What Purpose Information Is to Be Used

Baby FACES data will be used to provide rich descriptions of the characteristics, experiences, and outcomes for children and families served by Early Head Start and the relationships among family and program characteristics and outcomes. The rest of this section presents an overview of the study design and data collection. We are requesting permission however, only for recruiting a nationally representative sample of programs into the study. A separate request will cover the burden associated with the actual conduct of the study.

#### Overview of the Study Design and Data Collection

Baby FACES is a longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample of 90 programs and about 2,000 children across two cohorts (perinatal and age 1) that will collect information about programs, services, families, and children. Table 1 lists the data collection planned in the full study.

Data will be collected through interviews with parents, teachers, home visitors, and program directors/managers each year, and direct child assessments and videotaped parent child interactions when children are two and three years old. Data collection will also include observations of child care classrooms, home visits, and the environment of children's homes at ages one, two, and three. Data will be collected in four main waves; Spring 2009, Spring 2010,

 ${\tt TABLE~1}$  SUMMARY OF DATA COLLECTED BY DATA SOURCE, COHORT, AND WAVE

Cohort	Data Source	Spring 2009	Spring 2010	Spring 2011	Spring 2012
	Parent Interview	P	1	2	3
	Direct Child Assessment			2	3
Perinatal	Teacher/Home Visitor Interview	P	1	2	3
	Classroom/Home Visit Observation		1	2	3
	Parent-Child Interaction			2	3
	Teacher/Home Visitor Ratings		1	2	3
	Parent Interview	1	2	3	3.5*
	Direct Child Assessment		2	3	
Age 1	Teacher/Home Visitor Interview	1	2	3	
	Classroom/Home Visit Observation	1	2	3	
	Parent-Child Interaction		2	3	
	Teacher/Home Visitor Ratings	1	2	3	
Program	Program Director Interview	X	X	X	X
	Service Tracking Form	X	X	X	X

Note: Symbol indicates planned data collection activities. P refers to activities conducted with the Perinatal cohort; 1 refers to activities conducted when the children are 1 year old; 2 refers to activities conducted when the children are 2 years old; 3 refers to activities conducted when the children are 3 years old.

Spring 2011, and Spring 2012. A one-time follow-up when the age 1 cohort is 3 1/2 years old will provide information about transitions out of Early Head Start. Children and families will be followed until children are three years old and exit Early Head Start programs.

To recruit programs, ACF intends to send letters to program directors of the selected Early Head Start programs. The letter will describe the study goals, the importance of the study, and

<sup>\*</sup>Abbreviated interview at 42 months to learn about transitions out of Early Head Start, that occurs in fall 2011.

what participation entails for programs (such as assisting with recruiting families, scheduling visits, and coordinating collection of service tracking data). Directors will also receive a summary of the study that will include an overview of the design and data collection, a brochure describing the study, and examples of the consent materials that will be used to enroll families into the study. Programs will not be asked to enroll families during the initial selection and recruitment phase; we will simply ask for programs' commitment to cooperate with and participate in the study.

Selected programs will also receive a follow-up phone call to answer any questions from the Early Head Start program directors or staff. Program directors will be asked to provide information on the numbers of families enrolled with children who will be within two months of the target ages at the time of the baseline data collection. Directors will also be asked to identify a staff member to serve as an on-site coordination who will work with the study team to recruit families, help schedule interviews and site visits, and coordinate collection of service tracking information.

ACF intends to conduct a feasibility pilot study at two Early Head Start programs in November 2008. The two programs will be purposively selected in the Washington, DC area and the Princeton, NJ area. Both of the two participating programs will be asked to recruit approximately 20 families to participate in the pilot study. We will attempt to recruit approximately 6 families who are between 2 months before birth and 2 months postpartum, 7 families who have a child between 10 and 14 months old, and 7 families with a child between 22 and 26 months of age. In the pilot study, ACF will test the feasibility of administering the entire data collection battery, this includes the direct child assessment measures, the parent interview, the home visit observations, classroom observations, home visitor and classroom teacher interviews, and director interviews as well as ask the home visitors and classroom teachers

complete the family services tracking form for each child participating in the pilot. Clearance is being requested for recruiting and conducting the feasibility study with about 40 children and families in the 2 programs (approximately 20 in each program). As a part of this feasibility study, we expect to conduct approximately five home visit observations, four classroom observations, five home visitor interviews, four classroom teacher interviews and two director interviews. Home visitors and classroom teachers will also be asked complete the family services tracking for participating children for four weeks. Because the observations, teacher and home visitor interviews, director interviews, and family services tracking involve nine or fewer participants, they do not necessitate OMB clearance, and burden estimates are not included.

The goals of this feasibility study are to test our selected measures as a complete battery in a realistic environment. Specifically, we will be looking at the ranges of responses to our interviews, and whether parents, teachers, home visitors and directors find the interview questions clear, relevant, and easy to answer. On the child assessment measures, we will be looking for a range of responses and for floor and ceiling effects. After the home visit observations we will conduct a short debriefing with parents and home visitors about the experience of participating in the observation. Home visitors and classroom teachers will also be debriefed about the process of completing the family services tracking form.

## A.3 Use of Improved Information Technology to Reduce Burden

The universe of Early Head Start programs will be established through the Head Start Program Information Report (PIR), an annually updated database consisting of self-reported descriptive information from each of the Early Head Start grantees across the country. Using computerized PIR data, the basic characteristics of the national Early Head Start program will be established and programs will be selected from that universe for participation in the study. This

data source reduces the burden on Early Head Start staff members by providing program-related information to the research team without requiring additional data collection. In addition, the samples of families in each cohort will be drawn from computerized rosters of children wherever these are available.

## A.4 Efforts to Identify and Avoid Duplication

There is no evidence of any other studies or administrative data that offer comprehensive data that Baby FACES will collect. Baby FACES is informed by the history of Early Head Start, its research context, and the existing early intervention literature, as well as national trends in the circumstances facing Early Head Start's target population. Baby FACES is a complement and extension of the Survey of Early Head Start Programs (SEHSP). The SEHSP was a descriptive study that included a survey and in-depth site visits to 17 programs (Vogel et al. 2007). Key findings from the SEHSP included new information about the entry and exit patterns of families, families' risk factors, program approaches to service delivery and changes to those approaches over time, management and staffing, and the extent of and use of program partnerships. Baby FACES will extend the program level data collection studied in SEHSP to the family level.

No comparable data have been collected on the characteristics of Early Head Start families, their program participation, service use, or child and family outcomes on a nationally representative sample of Early Head Start programs and families. No existing data set provides the breadth of description that will result from Baby FACES, particularly involving a nationally representative sample of Early Head Start children across two cohorts. No available studies combine the five sources of primary data (staff interviews, home visit observations, parent interviews, classroom observations, and child assessments) as well as service use tracking that will be collected in Baby FACES. The information from these sources and the linking of

data across them make this a unique data set. The PIR provides basic information on program services and enrollment at an aggregate level, not at an individual family level.

#### A.5 Efforts to Minimize Burden on Small Businesses and Other Entities

No small businesses are impacted by the data collection in this project. The burden on Early Head Start programs and their staff have been minimized wherever possible by using the following procedures. We will obtain information through computerized databases where they are available and through use of computerized instruments when doing so is feasible. In addition, the research team will solicit the help of the local Early Head Start program in identifying an On-Site Coordinator (OSC), to be paid by the project, and who will be responsible for contacting parents, providing them with an initial orientation to the study procedures, and scheduling interviews for both parents and staff and coordinating service tracking data collection.

#### A.6 Consequences of Less-Frequent Data Collection

The last comprehensive study of Early Head Start programs and the families attending Early Head Start was the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project Implementation and Impact Studies (EHSREP). This study began in 1996 with 3,001 families in 17 of the first Early Head Start programs funded. Unlike Baby FACES, the EHSREP was not nationally representative (neither in terms of the programs nor the families included). The data are not generalizable at the program level because of the original sample was not statistically representative of programs at the time and because program has expanded from 68 programs to more than 700 today. Further, Early Head Start enrollment has changed due to welfare reform and high rates of immigration that have produced rapid changes in the composition of the population of low income families with young children. Further, the newly reauthorized Head

Start legislation mandates studies of the English Language Learner population in both Head Start and Early Head Start.

# A.7 Special Circumstances Requiring Collection of Information in a Manner Inconsistent with Guidelines in Title 5, Section 1320.6 of the Code of Federal Regulations

This study will be conducted in a manner entirely consistent with the guidelines in Title 5, Section 1320.6 of the Code of Federal Regulations. There are no special circumstances that might require deviation from these guidelines.

## A.8 Efforts to Consult With Persons Outside the Agency

#### a. Federal Register Announcement

Appendix B contains documentation from all *Federal Register* announcements, comments received, and responses to those comments. The initial public announcement for BabyFACES was published in the *Federal Register*, Volume 72, on November 27, 2007 (Reference Number FR 07-5842). No public comments were received during the 60-day period following that announcement.

The second public announcement for Baby FACES was published in the *Federal Register*, Volume 73, Number 26, on February 7, 2008 (Reference Number FR 08-529).

#### b. Federal Consultation

Numerous individuals and organizations have been contacted for advice on the design of the study and data collection instruments. Their feedback was obtained through in-person meetings and telephone conversations. Members of the Baby FACES Technical Work Group are also listed below.

#### MEMBERSHIP OF BABY FACES TECHNICAL WORK GROUP

Margaret Burchinal University of California, Irvine

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**Helen Raikes** University of Nebraska

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Ellen Eliason Kisker Twin Peaks Partners, LLC

Michael Foster University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

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**Brenda Jones Harden** University of Maryland, College Park

**Lisa Berlin** Center for Child and Family Policy, Duke University

## A.9 Payment or Gifts to Respondents

This request for clearance covers only the recruitment and pilot phase of the Baby FACES study. During the recruitment and piloting phase, we recognize that families who participate in feasibility testing of the instruments and measures may incur some costs, such as transportation and child care costs. Therefore, participating parents will receive \$40 for completing the parent interview and children will receive a book worth approximately \$10.

## A.10 Assurance of Confidentiality Provided to Respondents

During the feasibility stage, MPR staff will (1) conduct parent interviews in private locations so that respondents' answers will not be overheard (such as in private rooms at Early Head Start programs or a room at the public library or community center), (2) not share the responses of the individuals (parents or staff) with anyone, and (3) use results of the feasibility

and pilot tests internally within MPR to improve data collection instruments and procedures and will not share specific information outside of MPR.

During the recruitment phase covered under this OMB request, programs will not be asked to enroll participants in the study. However, we will be providing programs with a copy of the carefully worded consent forms (Appendix C) that will be used in the enrollment phase. The consent forms explain in simple, direct language the steps the study team will take to protect the privacy of the information each sample member provides. These same consent forms will also be provided to participants in the feasibility study.

Prior to the feasibility study, and during the recruitment process, assurances of privacy related to the parent interviews, record reviews, home visit and classroom observations, and child assessments will be given to the Program Director at the initiation of contact and to each parent as he or she is recruited for the feasibility study. Parents will be assured that their responses will not be shared with the Early Head Start program staff and that their responses will be reported only as part of the group data across the pilot study. Researchers for the feasibility study will obtain signed, informed consent from all parents prior to the parents' participation and obtain their consent to assess their child. At the beginning of the parent interview, the interviewer will review the contents of the consent form with the parent. The consent form will provide information about the study goals, the time required and the duration of the study, the types of questions that parents will be asked, and the activities that children will be asked to do. If a parent does not understand the form, a member of the research team will explain it and note the explanation on the consent form. Interviews will be conducted in places that make it unlikely that Early Head Start staff would overhear the parents' responses. This will be accomplished by securing private rooms at programs or in rooms in public libraries or community centers.

## A.11 Justification of Questions of a Sensitive Nature

To achieve its primary goal of describing the characteristics of the children and families that Early Head Start serves, we will need to understand the social context within which Early Head Start children and their families live and the nature of the daily challenges they face. Thus, during the feasibility study, several questions of a sensitive nature will be included in the parent interview.

Queries of a sensitive nature include questions about feelings of depression, use of services for emotional or mental health problems, and use of services for personal problems such as family violence or substance abuse. In addition, questions about food insufficiency tap into availability of family resources in a very concrete manner. The questions obtain important information for understanding family needs and for describing Early Head Start's involvement in these aspects of individual and family functioning.

Other sensitive questions focus on the families' involvement with the criminal justice system and the child's exposure to neighborhood or domestic violence. Although highly sensitive, this information is crucial to understanding family needs, identifying risk factors for the child's development, and describing the contextual factors that impede or facilitate family and child well-being. This issue was given a high priority by the National Academy of Sciences (*Beyond the Blueprint: Directions for Head Start Research*) in formulating recommendations for Head Start research initiatives. Further, it was of central interest to many of the expert consultants identified in Section A.8. A full understanding of these issues is essential both for Early Head Start program planning and for a realistic assessment of what Early Head Start can achieve.

The voluntary nature of the questions and the privacy of the respondent's answers will be restated before sensitive questions are asked. In all cases, questions on these topics are part of a standardized measure or have been used extensively in prior studies with no evidence of harm.

## A.12 Estimates of Response Burden to Respondents

The estimated annual and total burden for feasibility study respondents—parents, children, and program directors—for Baby FACES is listed in Table 2

## A.13 Estimates of Annual Cost Burden to Respondents

There are no direct monetary costs to participants; they spend only their time to participate in the study. We calculated costs of the time for Early Head Start staff using Department of Labor mean salary for child care providers (\$9.05 per hour) and include those costs in the Table 2 below.

TABLE 2

ESTIMATED RESPONSE BURDEN FOR RESPONDENTS IN THE EARLY HEAD START FAMILY AND CHILD EXPERIENCES SURVEY (BABY FACES)

RECRUITMENT AND PILOT TEST

Instrument	Number of Respondents	Number of Responses per Respondent	Average Burden Hours per Response	Average Burden Hours per Response (@ \$9.05/hr.)	Total Burden Hours
		Recruitment			
Recruitment Materials to Program Sites	90	1	.25	\$2.26	22.5
Program Roster of Children in Target Age	90	1	.50	\$4.53	45
		Pilot Test			
Pilot Test Parent Interview	40	1	1.00		40
Pilot Test Child Assessment	40	1	1.00		40
Estimated Total Burden Hours					147.5
Estimated Total Burden Cost				\$254.70	

#### **A.14** Estimate of Annual Cost to Federal Government

The total cost to the federal Government for Baby FACES under the terms of the contract to Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. is \$12,614,934. The cost for the data collection elements is \$8,737,042, or \$1,456,507. per year. These costs include the sampling, data collection, participant tracking, data processing, and data coding. Respondent incentives and gifts are included in the costs.

## A.15 Plans for Tabulation and Statistical Analysis and Time Schedule

This OMB package and supporting statement apply only to the recruitment and feasibility phase of Baby FACES. The feasibility study will culminate in a report that describes any

identified problems and proposed solutions for implementing child assessments and parent interviews. It will include information on the response frequencies for specific questions of interest, and questionnaire and child assessment timings. The timeline for the recruitment and feasibility study are listed in Table 3.

TABLE 3
TIME SCHEDULE

Activity Description	Date		
Sample Selection of 90 Programs	January-March 2009		
Feasibility Testing	November 2008		
Feasibility report	February 2009		

# A.16 Display of Expiration Date for OMB Approval

The OMB number and expiration date will be displayed at the top of the cover page of each instrument used in the feasibility study. The OMB number and expiration date will also appear on each of the site recruitment materials and the consent forms.

#### REFERENCES

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