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DATE: July 9, 2024

SUBJECT: Non-Substantive Change Request: 2024 National Survey of Early Care and Education (OMB#: 0970-0391) – Update to questionnaires and data collection procedures to allow for data collection after August 1

OPRE is requesting approval of non-substantive changes to the approved information collection for the 2024 National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) [OMB #: 0970-0391], approved June 7, 2023, modified September 30, 2023.

Background

The NSECE aims to understand the availability and use of early care and education (ECE) across the nation. Through a set of four inter-related surveys, the NSECE is collecting information on (1) home- and center-based ECE services available (supply) to families with children ages birth through 5 years, not yet in kindergarten; (2) characteristics of the center-based ECE workforce providing these services; and (3) households with children under age 13 years.

The NSECE includes four surveys, collected concurrently in sampled geographic areas:

- Household Survey
- Home-based Provider Survey
- Center-based Provider Survey
- Workforce (Classroom Staff) Survey

These surveys of center- and home-based providers, center-based workforce, and households generate nationally-representative information on the supply of ECE available to families across all income levels; the demand for ECE; the factors influencing parents' choices and utilization of ECE for their children; and the interaction of supply and demand – specifically the extent to which families' needs and preferences coordinate well with providers' offerings and constraints.

Due to slow data collection progress to date, we anticipate needing to continue data collection activities into fall 2024. Originally, we anticipated completing data collection prior to August 2024 and the currently approved materials reflect this timeline. As such, we are requesting changes to the questionnaires and selected data collection procedures.

Based on analyses of 2019 NSECE data and review of school district calendars, the new school year is expected to begin as soon as August 1 in some locations. We wish to modify the four questionnaires so that data collected once the 2024-2025 school year begins can be analyzed in conjunction with data

from the 2023-2024 school year. The requested modifications would enhance the quality and amount of the data collected to address the government’s questions about the ECE in the United States.

The purpose of the data collection will remain the same as originally described in the approved OMB materials, and the methods of data collection are the same. Additionally, note that the OMB expiration date for the NSECE 2024 is 6/30/26, so we are not requesting an extension.

This memorandum describes the NSECE data collection to date, then enumerates specific changes that we are requesting:

1. **Revised time schedule**
2. Minor **edits to the four questionnaires** to clarify data collected once the new school year has begun
3. An additional possible **mode of administration** for the household interview
4. **Increased honoraria** to respondents to the center-based provider and center-based workforce interviews
5. Minor **edits to respondent contact materials** to facilitate sharing of publications and endorsement letters with respondents to address concerns about legitimacy and interest in NSECE findings to date

Data collection to date

The 2024 NSECE received approval from OMB for data collection to take place beginning in October 2023. Exhibit 2 of Supporting Statement Part A described a schedule in which we conducted mailings for household screening and some screening of center-based providers during November and December of 2023, then conducted field data collection from January through July of 2024, completing all field work no later than July 31. Questionnaires included provisions for collecting data appropriate to our research questions during the summer months when some behaviors would differ from the school year.

Key data collection phases such as household mailings and provider mailings as well as the launch of field work in early January 2024 all took place as scheduled, but the yield from early data collection activities (such as mailings and telephone outreach to providers) was lower than experienced in 2012 and 2019. In addition, the contractor has experienced significant labor force attrition from the initial 800 field staff recruited and trained for data collection. Table 1 below documents our progress as of June 15, 2024. It is apparent that we will not achieve our targeted sample sizes by that time. Our targeted sample sizes reflect completion numbers needed to answer the highest priority research questions, including those involving smaller subpopulations, with maximum utility to the government (See Supporting Statement B for additional information).

Table 1. Data collection progress as of June 15, 2024

Questionnaire	Cumulative completes	Targets from Exhibit 2 of Statement A	% of target completed
Household	4,830	10,600	45.6%
Unlisted Home-based	870	1,158	75.1%
Listed Home-based	2,765	4,360	63.4%

Center-based	3,464	8,392	41.3%
Workforce	1,626	7,418	21.9%

No single factor fully explains the lags in production to date. One prominent factor relates to difficulties with hiring and retaining interviewers as the study has found that as the workforce in general has embraced remote work, field interviewers, too, often prefer alternatives to in-person field work. We have also experienced significant turnover due to personal reasons. While we are working to address staffing issues internally, there are multiple factors related to data collection processes that we are trying to address through these proposed changes.

In general, data collection requires more effort than anticipated, with many calls, emails and visits required to make contact with respondents. Gated communities, locked entries, doorbell cameras, telephone blocking services and spam filters are all technologies that respondents can employ to avoid or ignore project outreach.

Despite these difficulties, data collection is continuing steadily though more slowly than expected. Particularly reassuring, analyses of representativeness of the samples have indicated very few characteristics on which collected data show systematic over/under representation of key sub-groups. In addition, preparatory research in advance of the field period has yielded achieved eligibility rates that closely match the rates underlying our design.

The efforts to increase production have included activities such as additional staffing, extended email and mail outreach, traveling staff and sometimes multiple staff visiting sampled providers, and repeated contacts with entities from whom formal permission is required for data collection. The combination of these efforts has indeed resulted in steady production on household and provider samples, though not enough to complete data collection by the originally targeted date of July 31.

Specific Changes Requested

The objective of the information collection is the same as originally proposed. The requested changes to the questionnaire instruments would permit data collected in the Fall of 2024 to be comparable to data collected earlier in the year. Because many households and many ECE providers change schedules, care practices, and payment arrangements between the school year and the summer, we believe it would be appropriate to make some modifications to the NSECE instruments to ensure that data collected as the new school year begins can be properly analyzed in conjunction with data collected within the prior school year.

1. Revised Time Schedule.

Table 2 below indicates a revised time schedule incorporating the longer data collection period. This schedule updates the schedule previously provided in section A16 of Supporting Statement A, which indicated completion of data collection in July 2024 and release of publicly available data in Summer 2025.

Table 2. Revised Data Collection Time Schedule

Activity	Date
Pre-field Data Collection	Late October 2023 - December 2023
Field Data Collection	December 2023 - November 2024
Data Processing and Analysis	November 2023 - December 2025
Data files available for public use	July 2025 - December 2025

2. Edits to the Questionnaires.

Table 3 below summarizes the proposed questionnaire modifications to the four questionnaires, then tables 4-7 (below) each address one questionnaire and the specifics of the modifications proposed for that questionnaire. There are no impacts on burden in anything we are proposing.

Table 3. Summary of proposed modifications to NSECE instruments

NSECE questionnaire	Modification proposed
Household Questionnaire	Insert two questions to ask whether the household is reporting summer/school-year/year-round schedule, and comparison of spring and summer spending on early care and education, as well as instructions on the reference time period for the interview. (Instrument 1,1S)
Home-based Provider Questionnaire	Insert three questions to ask the date of the start of the school year, numbers of summer-only staff hired, and comparison of spring and fall prices in 2024, as well as instructions on the reference time period for the interview. Two questions about children leaving and entering the program will change reference from early 2023 to early 2024. (Instrument 2,2S)
Center-based Provider Questionnaire	Insert three questions to ask the date of the start of the school year, numbers of summer-only staff hired, and comparison of spring and fall prices in 2024, as well as instructions on the reference time period for the interview. Two questions about children leaving and entering the program will change reference from early 2023 to early 2024. (Instrument 3,3S)
Workforce (Classroom Staff) Questionnaire	Insert three questions to determine if the workforce member is a temporary summer worker, and the extent to which summer classroom activities differ from school-year classroom activities. (Instrument 4,4S)

Household Questionnaire. Two questions added to the household questionnaire will assist analysts using the household survey data to understand whether reported data may be summer-specific or may need to be adjusted to be comparable to spring data on costs and schedules.

Table 4. Edits to Household Questionnaire [Instrument 1,1S]

Section	Questions modified	Type of change
Section C: Child Care:Types and Hours	FALL_START. Would you say that your (child’s/children’s) schedule last week... 1. Is similar to the schedule you expect in early October for all children 2. Is different from the schedule you expect in early October for at least one child	Adding item
Section D: Respondent and	Q10c. Think about total cost for summer care for your children under age 13 during the three summer months June, July and	Adding item

Section	Questions modified	Type of change
Spouse Employment Schedules	August. How did that total cost in the summer compare to the total cost for child care for those children during the three spring months March, April and May? Would you say: a. You had no costs in spring or summer b. Spring cost more than summer c. Spring cost about the same as summer d. Spring cost less than summer	
Sections C Child Care: Types and Hours, D Respondent and Spouse Employment Schedules, and J Non-parental Care Payments and Subsidy to Each Provider	Beginning August 12, all households will move from reporting on a typical week in May to their current ECE usage.	Edited reference period

Home-based Provider Questionnaire. We have drafted additional questions for the Home-based Provider survey to ensure that workforce estimates from 2024 NSECE data accurately count school-year workers. Another question informs the need for adjustment of data on child care providers' prices charged to parents when analyzing data collected in 2024-2025 with data from 2023-2024. If a provider has begun school-year activities (or does not have summer-only activities), the interview collects current information. If a provider is providing summer care at the time of the interview, the interview collects information about spring 2024.

Table 5. Edits to Home-based Provider Questionnaire [Instrument 2,2S]

Instrument & Section	Questions modified	Details of change
Section A: Location of Care and Screening	T1_SUMSTF. For 2024, how many staff did you hire as temporary summer workers to work directly with children? ___ Number of staff	Adding item
Section C: Enrollment	B_PRICE_CHG. How do your charges for Fall 2024 compare with what you were charging for Spring 2024? 1. No change in rates 2. Charges increased more than 5 percent from Spring 2024 to Fall 2024 3. Charges increased, but less than 5 percent from Spring 2024 to Fall 2024 4. Charges decreased from Spring 2024 to Fall 2024	Adding item
Section A: Location of Care and Screening	T2_SCH. On what date do your regular (non-summer) school year activities begin? ___ Month ___ Day	Adding item
Section A: Location of Care and Screening	If T2_SCH IS ON OR BEFORE INTERVIEW DATE, INTERVIEW COLLECTS CURRENT INFORMATION. IF T2_SCH IS AFTER INTERVIEW DATE, INTERVIEW COLLECTS INFORMATION ABOUT SPRING 2024.	Editing reference period

Instrument & Section	Questions modified	Details of change
Section F: Admissions and Marketing	<p>F1_2024. During January through March of 2024, how many children did you stop looking after? Include children whose parents withdrew their children from care as well as children you didn't want to look after anymore.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Range: 0-999</p> <p>F2_2024. During January through March of 2024, how many new children did you start looking after?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Range: 0-999</p>	Editing reference year from 2023 to 2024

Center-based Provider Questionnaire. We have drafted additional questions for both the Center-based and Home-based Provider questionnaires to ensure that workforce estimates from 2024 NSECE data accurately count school-year workers. Another question informs the need for adjustment of data on child care providers' prices charged to parents when analyzing data collected in 2024-2025 with data from 2023-2024. If a provider has begun school-year activities (or does not have summer-only activities), the interview collects current information. If a provider is providing summer care at the time of the interview, the interview collects information about spring 2024.

Table 6. Edits to Center-based Provider Questionnaire [Instrument 3,3S]

Section	Questions modified	Type of change
Section: Introduction	T1_SUMSTF. For 2024, how many staff did you hire as temporary summer workers to work directly with children? ____ Number of staff	Adding item
Section: Introduction	T2_SCH. On what date do your regular (non-summer) school year activities begin? ____ Month ____ Day	Adding item
Section: Introduction	IF T2_SCH IS ON OR BEFORE INTERVIEW DATE, INTERVIEW COLLECTS CURRENT INFORMATION. IF T2_SCH IS AFTER INTERVIEW DATE, INTERVIEW COLLECTS INFORMATION ABOUT SPRING 2024.	Editing reference period
Section B: Schedule and Rates	B_PRICE_CHG. How do your charges for Fall 2024 compare with what you were charging for Spring 2024? 5. No change in rates 6. Charges increased more than 5 percent from Spring 2024 to Fall 2024 7. Charges increased, but less than 5 percent from Spring 2024 to Fall 2024 8. Charges decreased from Spring 2024 to Fall 2024	Adding item
Section D: Admissions/Marketing	D1. From January to March of 2023, how many children age 5 and under, not yet in kindergarten, did your program <u>stop</u> caring for? Please include children whose parents withdrew them from care as well as children you didn't want to care for anymore. Your best estimate is fine.	Editing reference year from 2023 to 2024

Section	Questions modified	Type of change
	<p>_____ Number of children RANGE: 0-999</p> <p>D2. From January to March of 2023, about how many new children did your program <u>start</u> taking care of? Please include children age 5 and under, not yet in kindergarten. Your best estimate is fine.</p> <p>_____ Number of children RANGE: 0-999</p>	

Workforce (Classroom Staff) Questionnaire. The proposed edits to the workforce questionnaire would help identify the extent to which reported data may have differed at a different time of year. [Instrument 4 and 4S]

Table 7. Edits to Workforce (Classroom Staff) Questionnaire [Instrument 4,4S]

Section	Questions modified	Type of change
Section A: Qualifications and Experience	FOR STAFF REPORTING WORKING AT THEIR PROGRAM FOR 6 MONTHS OR FEWER: Were you hired at this program as temporary summer staff for summer 2024? 1 Yes 2 No	Adding item
Section B: Employment Schedule and Compensation	B1B. Are your weekly hours worked different in the summer from the regular school year? 1 Yes 2 No	Adding item
Section B: Employment Schedule and Compensation	B1C. Do you work with different children in the summer from the regular school year? 1 Yes 2 No	Adding item

3. Additional Possible Mode for Administration of Household Survey.

The contractor has received many requests from respondents for a self-administered alternative to the interviewer-administered household interview. These requests are consistent with reluctance among some respondents to interact with strangers (such as field interviewers). Given these concerns and challenges contacting some households outside of postal mail, we believe a web self-administration option for the household interview is worth offering respondents if technically feasible. All other 2024 NSECE interviews are available to respondents for web self-administration, but we had not planned to permit web self-administration of the household interview due to the complexity of the detailed calendar that was part of the household interview in the winter and spring. Because of concerns about collecting summer schedules from households, the version of the instrument that is administered after May 31 does not include the detailed calendar administered in the winter and spring. Without the detailed calendar, we believe that good quality data can be collected through self-administration of the

version of the instrument to be used for the remainder of the field period. The contractor is investigating whether the project’s computing systems can be adapted for web self-administration of the household interview. We have updated the Supporting Statement A to reflect this potential.

4. Increased Honoraria for Respondents to the Center-based Provider and Workforce (Classroom Staff) Interviews.

We propose to increase the honoraria paid to respondents to the center-based provider and workforce interviews.

Table 8. Proposed increases to honoraria for two samples

Survey	Approved honorarium	Proposed honorarium
Center-based provider	\$25	\$50
Workforce (classroom staff)	\$10	\$20

Although the cumulative time spent completing the interview aligns with the estimated burden, it is evident that center-based provider respondents are working to complete the effort while juggling other work responsibilities likely due to the demands on their time and attention in the early care and education programs. As such, they are having to complete the interview in multiple sessions, which can be a deterrent for completion, particularly if not acknowledged in a suitable manner. Administrative data about the surveys completed so far indicate that 50% of completed center-based provider interviews are requiring at least two sessions, with 25% requiring at least four sessions. To date, more than half of respondents who have begun the interview have failed to complete it. To more accurately acknowledge the efforts required by respondents to complete the center-based provider interview, we propose to increase the honorarium for completion of the center-based provider interview to \$50. The increased honorarium will contribute to efforts to complete the necessary number of center-based provider interviews to support the range of analyses planned for the 2024 NSECE, and ensure that data are collected not just from centers where directors are able to make the time to complete the interview, but also from directors who may find it more challenging to make the time and provide the requested information. The proposed honorarium for respondents to the center-based provider interview is similar in real value to the \$35 respondents received in 2012 for completing that interview by web. [The inflation-adjusted equivalent of \$35 in January 2012 is \$48.50 in May 2024.]

Members of the center-based workforce are a particular population of interest for the 2024 NSECE. Given high rates of turnover among this population, prompt completion of the interview facilitates our ability to obtain representative data for the ECE workforce. Turnover is especially high during the summer, as workers may transition from one ECE setting to another (or out of ECE). Interest in understanding varying state-level workforce interventions also means that adequate state-level sample sizes will allow for the 2024 NSECE to advance understanding of workforce-focused policy innovation. We propose to pay a \$20 honorarium to individuals completing the workforce interview. More than 90 percent of workforce respondents are requiring at least two sessions to complete the interview. The amount proposed is based on the workforce interview being less than half the length of the center-based provider interview.

The increased honoraria would supplement other efforts to increase response rates that we are implementing, which include experimenting with express mail rather than postal mail, variation in formatting and timing of emails, sending postcards or making phone calls in advance of in-person visits to improve effectiveness of the visits, among other activities. We would like to begin offering these updated amounts upon OMB approval of this request (ideally July 2024).

5. Edits to Respondent Contact Materials

Sampled individuals have many questions about the legitimacy of the NSECE and interest in written documentation of what has been learned to date from the NSECE. We propose some edits to the respondent contact materials to share publicly available OPRE-published materials with respondents to address these issues. The new text will be customized for each of the samples and a specific topic. We also propose some additional contact materials to support the operational changes for which we have requested permission above as well as the change in timeline. Table 5 below summarizes these proposed revisions.

Table 5. Summary of proposed edits to respondent contact materials

Appendix	Proposed edits
2024 NSECE Household Survey Contact Materials (Appendix A and A-S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter/email text to share publicly available OPRE published materials (page 18, A; page 18, A-S) Letter/email inviting households to complete questionnaire by web (page 16, A, page 16, A-S) Letter/email reminding households to complete questionnaire by web (page 17, A; page 17 A-S) New language referencing the transition to new school year to use in late summer and early fall (page 17, A; page 17 A-S)
2024 NSECE Unlisted Home-based Provider Survey Contact Materials (Appendix C and C-S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter/email text to share publicly available OPRE published materials (page 9, C; page 7, C-S) New language referencing the transition to new school year to use in late summer and early fall (page 8, C; page 6, C-S)
2024 NSECE Listed Home-based Provider Survey Contact Materials (Appendix D and D-S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter/email text to share publicly available OPRE published materials (page 7, D; page 14, D-S with changes tracked) New language referencing the transition to new school year to use in late summer and early fall (page 13, D; page 7, D-S)
2024 NSECE Center-based Provider Survey Contact Materials (Appendix F and F-S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter/email text to share publicly available OPRE published materials (page 13, F; page 12, F-S) Letter/email text notifying center-based providers of increased honorarium (page 12, F; page 11, F-S) New language referencing the transition to new school year to use in late summer and early fall (page 9, F; page 8, F-S)
2024 NSECE Workforce (Classroom Staff) Survey Contact Materials (Appendix H and H-S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter/email text to share publicly available OPRE published materials (page 10, H; page 9, H-S) Letter/email text notifying workforce (classroom staff) of increased honorarium (page 9, H; page 8, H-S) New language referencing the transition to new school year to use in late summer and early fall (page 7, H; page 6, H-S)