



## **Head Start Criteria for Identifying Children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders**

On January 21, 1993, Head Start published regulations outlining the criteria for identifying children with emotional or behavioral disorders. EMAA Head Start's "Social-Emotional Screen" is based on these criteria. These state:

A child is classified as having an emotional/behavioral disorder who exhibits one or more of the following characteristics with such frequency, intensity, or duration as to require intervention:

- \* Seriously delayed social development, including an inability to build or maintain satisfactory (age appropriate) interpersonal relationships with peers or adults (e.g., avoids playing with peers);
- \* Inappropriate behavior (e.g., dangerously aggressive towards others, self-destructive, severely withdrawn, noncommunicative);
- \* A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression, or evidence of excessive anxiety or fears (e.g., frequent crying episodes, constant need for reassurance); or
- \* Has a professional diagnosis of serious emotional disturbance.

In addition, the rule requires that "the eligibility decision be based on multiple sources of data, including assessment of the child's behavior or emotional function in multiple settings," and that it "include a review of the child's regular Head Start physical examination to eliminate the possibility of misdiagnosis due to an underlying physical condition" (*Federal Register*, 58, 12, 21 January 1993: 5506).