

**Recommended Home Language Survey Guidance  
December 2015**

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## Introduction

This new version of the Connecticut State Department of Education guidelines for the Home Language Survey (HLS) was developed based on recommendations made as the result of a project supported by the English Language Learners Alliance at the Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast and Islands (REL\_NEI) at EDC to improve the accuracy of data gathered through the Home Language Survey. The project, the HLS Data Working Group, involved members of the Connecticut Administrators of Programs for English Language Learners (CAPELL) and the CT SDE ESL/BL Consultant and built on previous work that identified key areas of improvement in the administration of the Home Language Survey. As part of the project, the ELLA Data Working Group reviewed the literature on the identification of English Learners, including the English Learner Toolkit developed jointly by OELA and the Department of Justice to come up with its recommendations.

The document provides districts with specific steps to follow in order to comply with federal law and assure that students in need of English language services are appropriately identified and offered those services. The Guidance Document and Appendices A (Sample Home Language Survey), B (Sample Script), and C (Flowcharts) are designed to be a single document that can be made available to districts and schools as they develop and review their procedures for identifying English Learners. Appendix D provides recommended content for an online HLS training module.

Key recommendations in the document include:

- Use of the same HLS by all districts in the state
- Development of an online training module for everyone administering the HLS and strong encouragement of its completion by those administering the HLS
- Translation of the HLS and script into the 10 most common languages in the state
- Development of a system for districts to share additional translations in low incidence languages

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## Recommended Guidelines

This guidance outlines the process for identifying students who are English learners and eligible to receive language assistance services. The steps of the identification process are as follows:

Step 1: Determine if the student is a potential EL student through the completion of the Home Language Survey

Step 2: Review the HLS results to determine if the results indicate that the student has a language other than English and may be an English learner.

Step 3: Administer the approved English Language Proficiency (ELP) Assessment.

Step 4: If the student's results on the ELP assessment indicate that the student is an English learner, student's parents are informed of the service options for their child and opt in to the service that the student will receive or waive services.

Section	State Guidelines Proposed Text
<b>Step 1</b>	<b>Home Language Survey</b>
1.1 HLS purposes and intended uses	<p>The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights and Connecticut state law require school districts to collect information about a student's language background at the time of enrollment/registration in order to determine whether the student is a potential English learner. (or, is someone who potentially may need English language assistance services). Connecticut has chosen to use the Home Language Survey to gather this information.</p> <p>The Home Language Survey does not collect information about immigration status, nor does it determine education services to be provided to the student. When a language other than English is identified, students will be screened for English proficiency in order to determine whether the student is an English learner and, if so, identify appropriate language services.</p>
1.2 What is in the HLS (see attached recommended survey)	<p>The HLS includes the following sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The purpose of the HLS - what it is and is not</li> <li>• Recommended questions to determine if a student is a potential English learner and might qualify for English language services</li> <li>• Optional questions that districts may choose to administer in addition to the recommended questions for determination of potential eligibility</li> </ul>
1.3 Recommendations for HLS administration	<p>The HLS should be distinguishable from the rest of the registration packet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administered separately from the registration; or</li> <li>• If embedded in the registration packet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If paper - different color</li> <li>○ If online - also different color or different screen</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The state does not have a recommendation about whether the HLS should be administered at the school or district level; this can be decided by the district.</li> </ul>
1.4 HLS Staffing	<p>Those who administer the HLS must have a thorough understanding of the purposes and processes for its administration. Any staff that will administer the HLS should be trained on the identification process and</p>

Section	State Guidelines Proposed Text
	<p>HLS administration. Each district should designate the appropriate people and/or staff positions to administer the HLS. Appropriate HLS administrators may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District registration staff</li> <li>• District support staff</li> <li>• School support staff</li> <li>• School-based parent or community coordinator</li> <li>• School-based EL teacher</li> </ul>
1.5 Recommended administrative procedures	<p>While each district can modify procedures to local context, procedures should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HLS administrators should complete the state-designed training module</li> <li>• HLS administrators should assess the needs of respondents in regard to need for written translations of the HLS or verbal interpretation support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If parent appears in person to register, the first point of contact should determine if the parent speaks and reads enough English to be able to complete on own</li> <li>• If parent needs language assistance, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide form translated into parents' preferred language, if available; or</li> <li>○ Provide for oral interpretation</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• HLS administrators should provide the HLS in the appropriate written or oral form</li> <li>• HLS administrators should read the script accompanying the HLS and answer any questions parents have; use translated script as needed</li> <li>• HLS administrators should know what to do with completed forms: who to send them to, who to notify</li> </ul>
1.6 Online registration systems minimum recommendations for HLS administration	<p>The system needs to include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructions: the oral script should be supplied in written form for online systems;</li> <li>• The HLS questions must be asked;</li> </ul> <p>The online system should provide access to written translations of the HLS questions in guardians' preferred language, to the extent possible; The online system should have a system in place for parents/guardians who either do not have access to the web or who need support with completing the HLS because of language/literacy needs (see flowchart below).</p>
1.7 Recommended HLS questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What is the primary language used in the home, regardless of the language spoken by the student?</li> <li>2) What is the language most often spoken by the student?</li> <li>3) What is the language that the student first acquired?</li> </ol>
1.8 Optional additional questions (districts may add their own)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What language do you prefer for written communication from the school?</li> <li>2) Will you require interpretation/translation at Parent-Teacher meetings?</li> </ol>

Section	State Guidelines Proposed Text
1.9 Translations	<p>The district is responsible for providing the HLS survey in the preferred languages of parents/guardians. Oral scripts should also be translated whenever possible.</p> <p>The state website provides the recommended HLS in English as well as other commonly used languages. Districts that translate the state HLS in other languages are encouraged to share those translations across districts.</p>
1.10 Documentation and record-keeping	<p>Document all HLS responses and store electronically in a district central data system tied to the individual student. Responses should be part of the student's permanent data record.</p> <p>Districts may use the HLS results to identify student's dominant language for use in calculation of numbers of language in the district.</p>
<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Review of HLS Results</b>
2.1 Review of results	<p>In the majority of cases, the appropriate next steps will be clear:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the parent/guardian lists English for all questions and demonstrates facility with English either through completion of other forms or conversation with HLS administrator, then no further action is necessary.</li> <li>• If any of the responses indicate a language other than English, the HLS should automatically go to the EL specialist, the person in the district responsible for making the determination of potential eligibility (e.g., district EL coordinator/director). The EL specialist will determine the next steps.</li> <li>• If there is a question about the accuracy and/or reliability of the responses on an HLS, that HLS should be reviewed by the EL specialist responsible for making the determination of potential eligibility. A next step may be an interview with the parent.</li> </ul>
2.2 Review of data anomalies	<p>Provide clear administrative procedures for further review if HLS data seem questionable such as when there are contradictory answers within a form, multiple forms completed with contradictory information; or if there is any other evidence indicating the possibility that the student is an English learner (e.g., false negative).</p>
2.3 Coordination with other district programs	<p>Coordinate with any screening for students with disabilities (SWD) or gifted &amp; talented identification; if possible, this should occur concurrently with or before ELP screening (to avoid false positives).</p>
2.4 Review of student records	<p>For students who are entering district from a district within the US, the ELL specialist should seek records of previous testing, and only administer the English proficiency assessment if no results are available.</p>
<b>Step 3</b>	<b>Screening: English Language Proficiency Assessment</b>
3.1 Screening	<p>See Figure C2 below, <i>English Learner Identification Flowchart – HLS, English Proficiency Assessment, Instructional Decisions</i></p>
<b>Step 4</b>	<b>Placement</b>
4.1 Parental choice	<p>Parents should be informed of the service options for their child and opt in to the service that the student will receive.</p> <p>Each district should have a written placement policy that can be shared with parents.</p>

## Appendix A. Recommended Home Language Survey

DISTRICT NAME

*Welcome to our school!*

*We have a few questions about languages spoken at home. We are required by the US Department of Education to ask for this information because it will help us know how we can best support your child. The language information also helps us know how we can best communicate with you. Please share with us about the language(s) spoken by your family and in your home.*

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### **Student Information**

Student first name:

Student last name:

Country of birth:

Date of birth:

Date first enrolled in any US school:

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1) What is the primary language used in the home, regardless of the language spoken by the student?

2) What is the language most often spoken by the student?

3) What is the language the student first acquired?

*Optional questions that can be included*

- 1) What language do you prefer for written communication from the school?
- 2) Will you require interpretation/translation at Parent-Teacher meetings?

-----  
Parent/guardian name (please print)

-----  
Parent/guardian signature

-----  
Date

*Thank you for answering the questions. We look forward to working with your child.*

## Appendix B. Recommended script for HLS administrators to use when administering the HLS

### Script for Home Language Survey Administration

*Before administering the HLS, the HLS administrator must determine the parent's language of choice for completing it. If the parent does not complete the form in English, he/she must have access to the form, or an oral interpretation, in a language they can understand. Once the language has been determined, the following script should be used, in that parent's language.*

Welcome to our school!

We have a few questions about languages spoken at home. We are required by the US Department of Education to ask for this information because it will help us know how we can best support your child. The language information also helps us know how we can best communicate with you. Please share with us about the language(s) spoken by your family and in your home.

Please complete this form and return it to the school office as soon as possible. If you have questions or need help with the form, I will do my best to answer your questions. If you still have questions after we speak, please contact: [\[district contact here\]](#).

- Write your child's first name, then last name.
- Write the country where your child was born.
- Write your child's date of birth.
- Write your child's date first enrolled in any US school.

Now the form is going to ask you questions about the languages your child speaks and understands. The answers to the questions will help us know how we can best support your child.. Please answer each one.

- 1) What is the primary language used in the home, regardless of the language spoken by the student?
- 2) What is the language most often spoken by the student?
- 3) What is the language that the student first acquired?

Please print your name, then sign and date the form. Someone here in the office will review the form and will let you know about the next steps in your child's registration process. If needed, an English language specialist may meet with you and your child to describe the next steps in the process, which can include an interview and an assessment of your child's English proficiency. All of this will help us find the best support for your child, and we will describe all the options to you to make sure you understand.



## Appendix C. Home Language Survey Flowcharts – Step 1

Figure C1. Home Language Survey Administration Flowchart – Determining HLS Administration Format

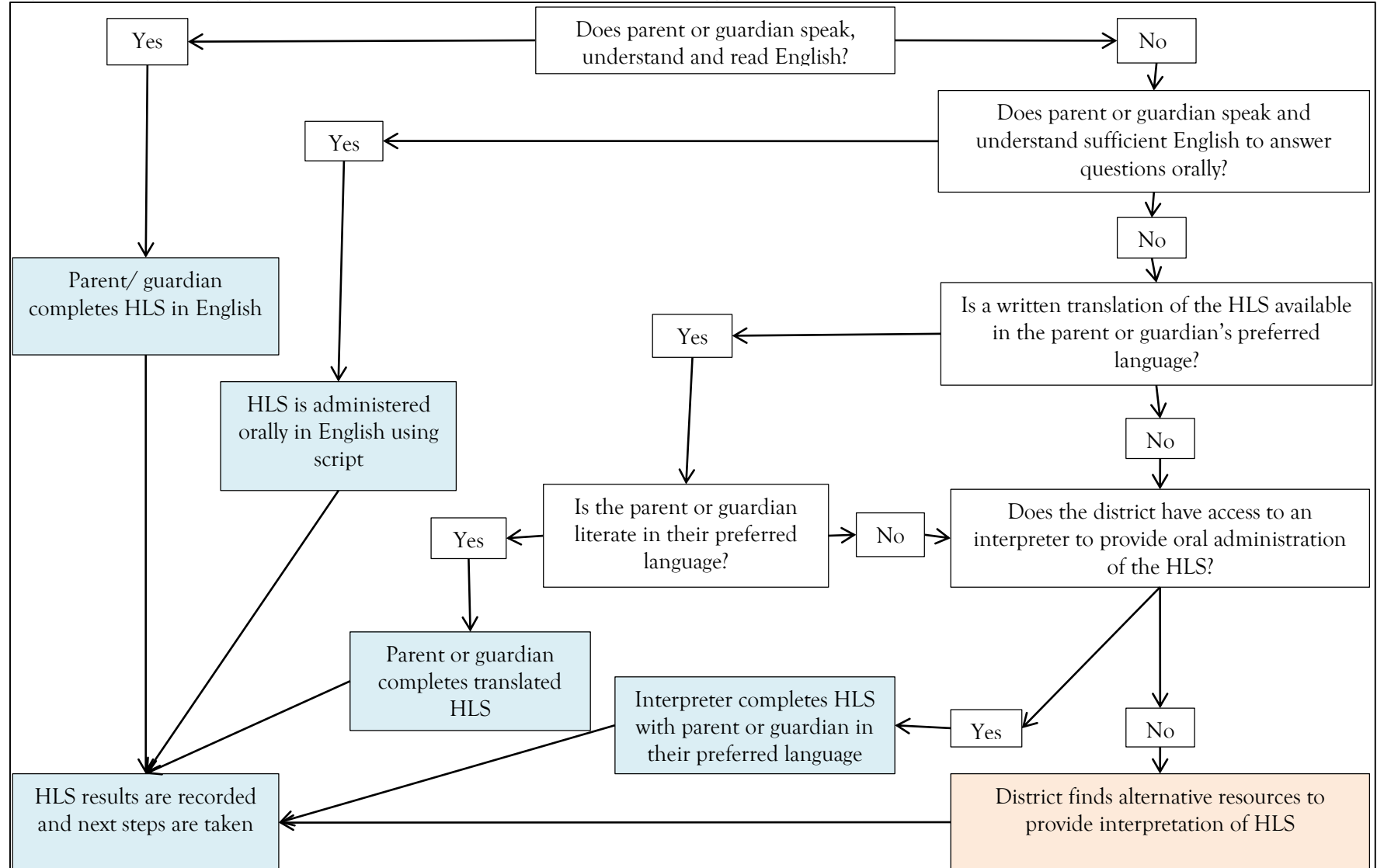
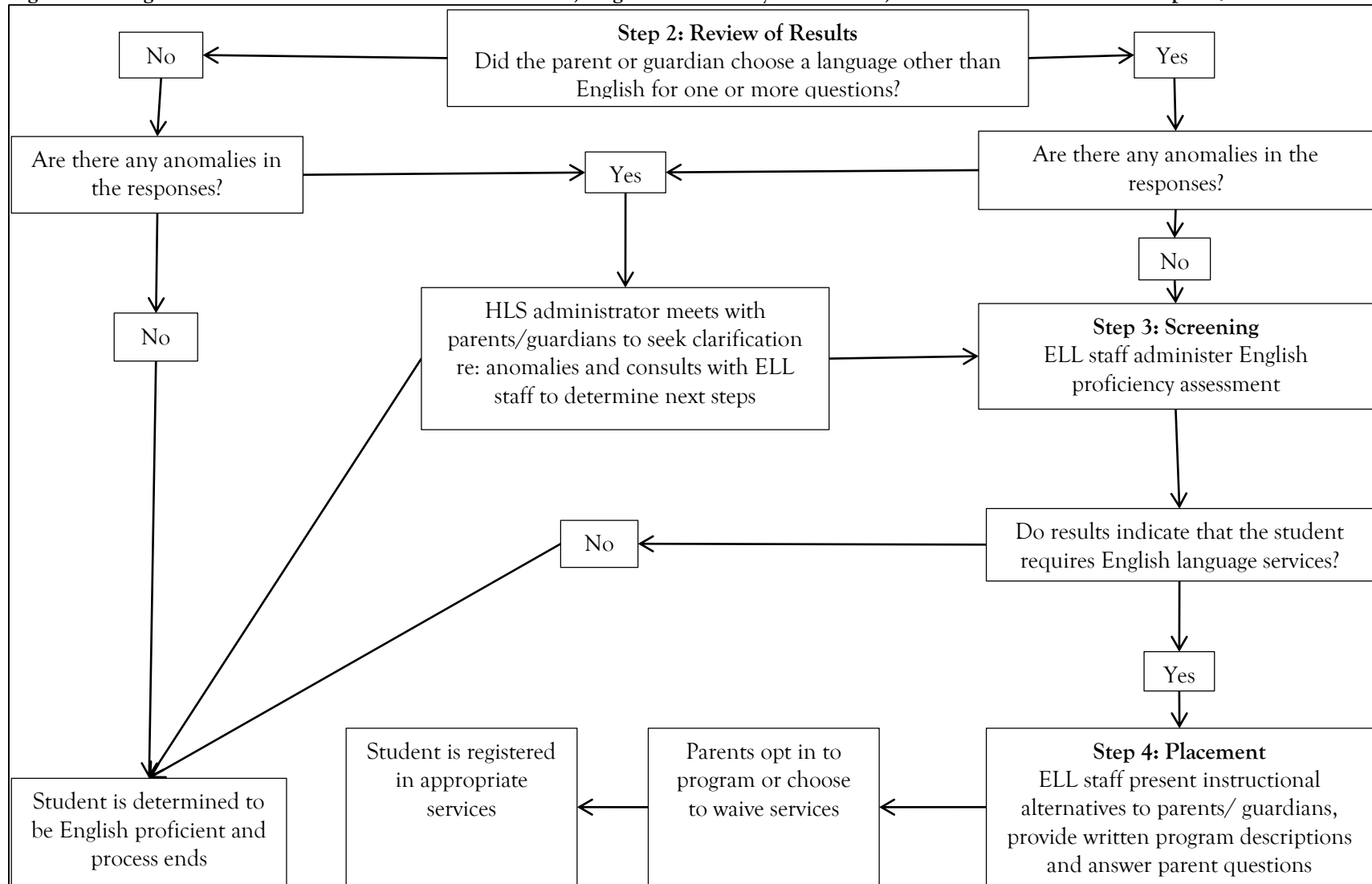


Figure C2. English Learner Identification Flowchart – HLS, English Proficiency Assessment, Instructional Decisions – Steps 2-4



## Appendix D. Components to be included in online HLS Training Module

State should develop an HLS training module that:

- is online (webinar, video)
- is short
- provides guidance on who should take the training

Every person that administers the HLS should receive training for proper administration. Training should include:

- The purpose(s) of the home language survey is to gather information about a student's language background in order to provide appropriate language assistance services.
- The HLS is NOT to be used for determining immigration status or determining the education services to be provided to students. This should be made clear to the parents.
- The HLS is one step in a larger, multi-step process for identifying English learners, which might include examination of previous school records, English proficiency screening, and interviews with parents/guardians.
- It is imperative that the HLS be completed accurately, because (a) it is the first step in determining whether the student is a potential English Learner who will need appropriate linguistic services, and; (b) the information forms part of the larger pool of English learner data.
- Each district determines its specific administrative procedures, which may include:
  - HLS administrators should assess the needs of the respondents in regard to written translations of the HLS or verbal interpretation support
  - HLS administrators should provide the HLS in the appropriate written or oral form.
  - HLS administrators should read the script accompanying the HLS and answer any questions parents have.
  - HLS administrators should know the appropriate follow-up procedures depending on HLS responses.
- Successful administration of the HLS includes an understanding of the need for cultural competency, [definition pending].
- The HLS results are confidential information available only to appropriate school staff [specific staff positions should be named].
- The HLS administrator is responsible for accurate data entry, accurate data management, and appropriate reporting as determined in the district guidelines.
- The HLS administrator should be trained in how to resolve errors in the HLS, such as discrepant or omitted data.

## References

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