Governance Leadership Handbook for VIPs *

* Very Important Persons

A Guide for Policy Group Officers and Members, Parent Committee Officers and Members, and Staff That Support Those Groups

A Publication of Training & Technical Assistance Services at Western Kentucky University
Governance Leadership Handbook for VIPs

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Introduction

The Governance Leadership Handbook for VIPs was designed to accompany the Governance Leadership Training developed by Training and Technical Assistance Services (T/TAS) at Western Kentucky University. The training was designed especially for some Very Important Persons (VIPs) - Policy Group Officers, Chairpersons, Parent and/or Center Committee Officers and Members, Advisory Groups, and other program governance leaders. The inspiration for the development of this training comes from several observations made by T/TAS trainers during the Positive Program Governance training, and from feedback from participants who expressed a need for more in-depth knowledge and information to support them in their role as leaders.

Effective leadership is developed and nurtured through knowledge, supportive relationships and experience. This handbook provides information and strategies to help people build the skills necessary to become successful leaders. One of the foremost secrets of successful leadership is the art of working effectively with people. This handbook provides information and activities to help you understand the process of creating dynamic teams and to support the growth and development of people, which is the greatest goal of leadership.

Remember the famous quote from Alexander Dumas’ novel The Three Musketeers? “All for one and one for all,” is easier said than done. It takes practice and time, training, and trust within an organization.

To support current, and potential leaders, this handbook is divided into four sections:

- Understanding Head Start/Early Head Start Systems and Services
- Leadership: Coming Together
- Leadership: Working Together
- Taking It Back Home

While this handbook was designed to stimulate discussion among the parent and community members of a Governance Leadership team, it can also be used to reinforce understanding of governance leadership among Head Start Directors, managers, coordinators, Governing Body members, and other appropriate service area staff members.
Section One: Understanding Management Systems & Services

Management Systems form a continuous cycle that involves all stakeholders of the Head Start/Early Head Start community. In order for Governance Leadership to be effective, an understanding of these systems is required.

The following diagram of the Head Start Management Systems is an updated version of the diagram that can be found in the Head Start Program Performance Standards, Section 1304.51 - Management Systems and Procedures.
Looking at Systems and Services

Head Start Management Systems and services are connected and interrelated. Each system impacts the others, all systems influence program services, and all systems are influenced by program services.

The framework chart represented below is a practical visual depiction of program-wide services and systems. Starting with the Program Governance systems on the left side of the framework, think about what occurs at every intersection between the Program Governance system and the Implementation of Services. Discuss the following questions:

- What important role does Program Governance play in the delivery of program services?
- How does Program Governance ensure quality service delivery?
- Is the role meaningful or just busy work?
- What information is needed to strengthen these areas?
- What about other intersections between systems and services?
- Look at the other systems and services and think about how they all are interrelated with one another.

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**Planning**

The regulations below clearly show that the policy-making group has a fundamental role in planning. As you review these regulations, refer to the systems and services included in the framework, and consider the intersecting points.

**1304.51(a) - Program Planning**

(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must develop and implement a systematic, ongoing process of program planning that includes consultation with the program’s governing body, **policy group**, and other program staff, and with other community organizations that serve Early Head Start and Head Start or other low income families with young children. Program Planning must include:

(i) An assessment of community strengths, needs, and resources through completion of the Community Assessment.

(ii) The formulation of both multi-year (long range) program goals and short-term program and financial objectives that address the findings of the Community Assessment, are consistent with the philosophy of Early Head Start and Head Start, and reflect the findings of the program’s annual self-assessment; and

(iii) The development of written plan(s) for implementing services in each of the program areas covered by this part (Early Childhood Development and Health Services, Family and Community Partnerships, and Program Design and Management).

**1304.51(a)(2)** All written plans for implementing services, and the progress in meeting them, must be reviewed by the grantee or delegate agency staff and **reviewed and approved by the policy making group at least annually**, and must be revised and updated as needed.

**Communications**

You will see from the regulations below, that the policy-making group must be involved in the communication system. Go back to the systems and services framework and consider how this happens. You will find standards on communication in Program Governance and in Management.

**1304.51(b) - Communications, General.** Grantee and delegate agencies must establish and implement systems to ensure that timely and accurate information is provided to **parents, policy groups**, staff and the general community.
1304.50(d)(2)(i) In addition, policy making groups must perform the following functions directly:

(i) Serve as a link to the Parent Committee, grantee and delegate agency governing bodies, public and private organizations, and the communities they serve.
(ii) Assist Parent Committees in communicating with parents enrolled in all program options to ensure that they understand their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in Early Head Start and Head Start and to encourage participation in the program;
(iii) Assist Parent Committees in planning, coordinating, and organizing program activities for parents with the assistance of staff, and ensuring that funds set aside from program budgets are used to support parent activities.

Program-sponsored parent activities are supported through the program’s Parent Activity Fund. Are you familiar with the parent activity fund? Does it exist in your program? Best practice suggests that there be a written policy and procedure for how it is administered and approved by the policy-making group.

1304.51(c) - Communication with families

(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that effective two-way comprehensive communications between staff and parents are carried out on a regular basis throughout the program year.
(2) Communication with parents must be carried out in the parents’ primary or preferred language or through an interpreter, to the extent feasible.

Governance Leadership can work with staff to improve communication with families by creating systems that support effective two-way communication.

1304.51(d) - Communication with governing bodies and policy groups. Grantee and Delegate agencies must ensure that the following information is provided regularly to their grantee and delegate governing bodies and to members of their policy groups:

1. Procedures and timetables for program planning;
2. Policies, and other communication from the Department of Health and Human Services;
3. Program and financial reports; and
4. Program plans, policies, procedures, and Early Head Start and Head Start grant applications.