

Family Partnership Services Workbook

Second Edition

Crisis

Education

Employment

Housing

**Head Start/Early Head Start
You're Covered**

Assign Staff Resources

Family Needs
Assessments

Family Well Being,
Health & Safety

Family Plans &
Community Resources

PFCE Framework

Economic Stability

Father Engagement

Family Partnerships



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Preface

Head Start Family Partnership Services can be life-changing, eye-opening, exciting, challenging and fun for families and staff. **Family Partnership Services: Head Start/Early Head Start...You're Covered** and the training for which it was compiled are designed to assist Head Start and Early Head Start staff in their efforts to effectively partner with families.

Though not recommended as a self-study guide, **Family Partnership Services: Head Start/Early Head Start...You're Covered** is an excellent tool for use at family service staff training and pre-service events led by experienced Family Service Managers and staff. The workbook is filled with open-ended exercises that emphasize the process of working with families. The Family Partnership Agreement process, as outlined in 1302.52(c)(3) of the Head Start Program Performance Standards, provides flexibility so that it is the open-ended, interactive, on-going, and evolving "journey" that staff take with families.

Each section of the workbook was designed so that it can be used separately or together with other sections. The workbook can be useful in training staff whether they are new or seasoned at working with Head Start and Early Head Start families. While the workbook was initially designed for family service staff and their superiors, it can be also used with parents, teachers, service area managers, and Policy Council/Policy Committee and Governing body members as a tool to understanding the comprehensive work done in Head Start and Early Head Start.



Introduction

Many people see Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) as an educational experience for children. Although HS/EHS is proud of its early childhood development services, HS/EHS's services are much more comprehensive.

HS/EHS program services include health, education, parent/family engagement, family partnership services and supports and community partnerships. Such all-inclusive services are designed to meet the needs of children in the context of the family. With these services, HS/EHS maximizes its ability to influence the development of each child and family.

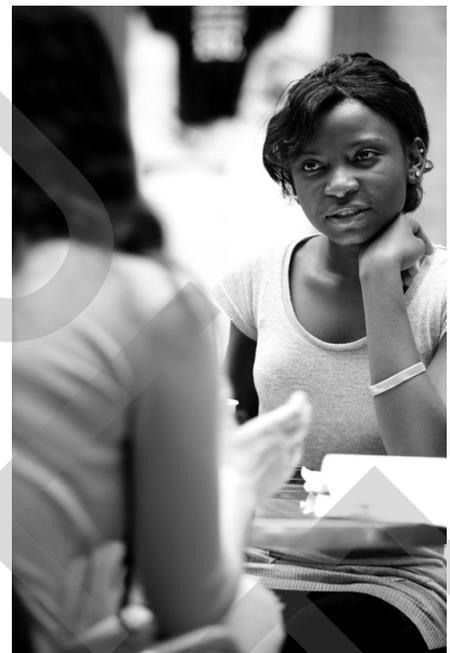
Traditional parent involvement programs see parents/families as outside the core of the program. In contrast, HS/EHS invites families to be integrally engaged, and in fact, expects them to be key players. Parents and family members are welcomed, not only as participants, but also as decision makers and leaders. Unlike programs that respond to parents as a group, HS/EHS provides individualized attention to meet the needs of each family. HS/EHS believes that decisions that guide its practice, have greater legitimacy when they are made in collaboration with those we serve; a parents' perspective is critical to understanding appropriate strategies for supporting children's development. A strong and healthy family is a child's most powerful resource.

One of the activities Head Start and Early Head Start staff must offer parents is the opportunity to participate in the family partnership agreements process. The family partnership agreement is a strengths-based, family-driven, relationship-centered process designed to provide support to families in direct response to their interests, goals, strengths and needs.

The family partnership agreement process recognizes that there are many ways and approaches to working with families. Head Start staff initiate this process and provide partnership opportunities for families by asking, "How can Head Start support you?"

The family partnership agreement process provides opportunities for families to identify and set goals, and to design an individualized approach for achieving their goals. Staff assist families in defining goals in measurable terms, discussing what needs to be done to achieve these goals, and how the accomplishment of each goal will be determined.

The emphasis here is on the process of relationship building and not on getting families to sign a form. Because the family partnership agreement process is family driven, plans will vary among families. These agreements are not necessarily formal documents, step-by step activities, or even interactions that must occur with all Head Start families.



Chapter One:



The Family Partnership Agreement Process

The Family Partnership Agreement blends the concerns and strengths of families and community resources into a workable process for family growth. Head Start and Early Head Start staff utilize many skills and resources to partner with families in a meaningful way.

The Head Start Program Performance Standards section **1302.52 Family Partnership Services** states that:

(a) Family partnership process. A program must implement a **family partnership process** that **includes a family partnership agreement** and the activities described in this section to support family well-being, including family safety, health, and economic stability, to support child learning and development, to provide, if applicable, services and supports for children with disabilities, and to foster parental confidence and skills that promote the early learning and development of their children. The process must be initiated as early in the program year as possible and continue for as long as the family participates in the program, based on parent interest and need.

(b) Identification of family strengths and needs. A program must implement intake and **family assessment** procedures to identify family strengths and needs related to the **family engagement outcomes as described in the Head Start Parent Family and Community Engagement Framework**, including family well-being, parent-child relationships, families as lifelong educators, families as learners, family engagement in transitions, family connections to peers and the local community, and families as advocates and leaders.

(c) Individualized family partnership services. A program must offer individualized family partnership services that:

(1) **Collaborate with families** to identify interests, needs, and aspirations related to the family engagement outcomes described in paragraph (b) of this section;

(2) **Help families** achieve identified individualized family engagement outcomes;

(3) **Establish and implement a family partnership agreement process** that is **jointly** developed and shared with parents in which staff and families to review individual progress, revise goals, evaluate and track whether identified needs and goals are met, and adjust strategies on an ongoing basis, as necessary, and;

(4) Assign staff and resources based on the urgency and intensity of identified family needs and goals.

(d) Existing plans and community resources. In implementing this section, a program must take into consideration any **existing plans for the family** made with other community agencies and availability of other community resources to address family needs, strengths, and goals, in order to avoid duplication of effort.

Best Practice and the Process

The Family Partnership Agreement process is developmental in nature and "... must be initiated as early in the program year as possible and continue for as long as the family participates in the program, based on parent interest and need. Emphasis is not placed on a paper product, but rather on the process itself. The Family Partnership Agreement process could be defined as:

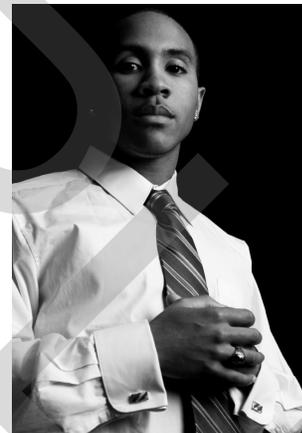
"Conversations that build relationships while identifying family interests, concerns, strengths, resources and that leads to family goal setting and skill building."

The Performance Standards state that this process is "...based on parent interest and need..." Obviously, parent interest and need will change from parent to parent. This will necessitate local procedures to ensure follow-up with families who choose not to participate at first but who may be interested later in the year.

Family Advocates

Family Advocates (Family Services Workers) must have a "systems perspective." This means that not only do they have a thorough understanding of how HS/EHS works but that they also understand how the broader systems of care in the community effect the families they serve. They should be familiar with how public assistance works in their service area(s) and should feel comfortable working with their peers from state and local agencies. Family Advocates play a variety of important roles. These include:

- Identifying Prospective Families for HS/EHS
- Assisting Families to Identify Interests, Concerns Strengths
- Assisting Families to Identify and Plan Services
- Linking Families to Service Providers
- Advocating for Families
- Monitoring/Evaluating Effectiveness of Services
- Developing New Resources
- Resolving Problems



Key Attributes of the Process

First of all, the process is based upon what the family wants. It must be driven by their needs and concerns, not necessarily the program's beliefs about what they should do. **Second, the process is holistic and comprehensive.** This means that taking the lead from the family, we will look at any aspect of the family's life that is relevant to helping them to reach their objectives. **Third, the process is interdisciplinary.** Consideration is given to areas such as health, legal, housing etc. providing the family's interests lead into these areas. **Fourth, it is participatory.** This is not something done to or for families. We participate as partners in this process. Families should be in charge as the senior partners.