

Self-Assessment **CAT**scan

Comprehensive Approach & Tool

SIXTH EDITION

A publication of
Training & Technical Assistance Services
at Western Kentucky University
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Program Self-Assessment looks at the “big picture” or a program’s entire operations, unlike monitoring or quality control activities, which focus on smaller service delivery and systems segments. Results from the Self-Assessment should be used for continuous improvement and planning, for allocation of human and financial resources, and for program design and service delivery decisions.

Head Start Requirements Regarding Self-Assessments

SUBPART J - Program Management and Quality Improvement

§1302.102 Achieving program goals.

(b)(2) Ongoing assessment of program goals. A program must effectively oversee progress towards program goals on an ongoing basis and annually must:

- (i) Conduct a self-assessment that uses program data including aggregated child assessment data, and professional development and parent and family engagement data as appropriate, to evaluate the program’s progress towards meeting goals established under paragraph (a) of this section, compliance with program performance standards throughout the program year, and the effectiveness of the professional development and family engagement systems in promoting school readiness;
- (ii) Communicate and collaborate with the governing body and policy council, program staff, and parents of enrolled children when conducting the annual self-assessment; and,
- (iii) Submit findings of the self-assessment, including information listed in paragraph (b) (2)(i) of this section to the responsible HHS official.

(c)(2)(iv) Use information from ongoing monitoring and the annual self-assessment, and program data on teaching practice, staffing and professional development, child-level assessments, family needs assessments, and comprehensive services, to identify program needs, and develop and implement plans for program improvement; and,

(c)(2)(v) Use program improvement plans as needed to either strengthen or adjust content and strategies for professional development, change program scope and services, refine school readiness and other program goals, and adapt strategies to better address the needs of sub-groups.

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Organizing a Self-Assessment

Head Start programs need to design a Self-Assessment Plan that will lay out key elements of the process. They also need to collect and have available information that the various sub-teams may need in order to complete their work. The elements of the written Self-Assessment Plan should include the following:

1. When the Self-Assessment will take place?
2. Who will be on the team?
3. What instrument(s) will be used?
4. What will the procedure be for collecting data?
5. Who will compile the data?
6. Who will analyze the data and what analyses will be conducted?
7. What will the format be for the Self-Assessment report and who will develop it?
8. How the information will be presented to the Board and Policy Council/Policy Committee for their approval?
9. What strategies will be used by the management team, the Policy Council/Committee and the Board to ensure that the improvement plan serves as a touchstone for ongoing program assessment and continuous program improvement?

The information that team members may need to complete their tasks will vary by program. However, there are some documents that all programs will need to have available. These include:

1. The School Readiness Plan, including the program's School Readiness Goals
2. The Community Assessment and any subsequent updates
3. The Program Information Report (PIR) and Annual Report
4. The Five Year Plan Goals
5. The Service Area Plans and any Systems Plans

Setting Up Your Self-Assessment Team

The membership of the Self-Assessment team should include persons with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Members can be drawn from among the Policy Council/Policy Committee, Head Start/Early Head Start parents and other agency staff, Governing Board, and community professionals and representatives. It is important to maintain objectivity; team members should not be assessing their own work or records. Confidentiality of information about children, families, and staff is required; non-program staff should not be assigned to tasks that involve the confidential files of children, families, or staff. It is recommended that parent Self-Assessment team members access only their own child's and family's files. In addition, all team members sign a confidentiality statement, noting that they are aware that information gathered during the Self-Assessment process should not be shared with others.

Because some team members may not be familiar with the tight deadlines and requirements of the Self-Assessment process, all participants should be trained on the contents of the Self-Assessment tool and timelines.

- Since each Self-Assessment is a function of its program's design, structure, and staffing pattern, managers need to determine how many centers, records, classrooms, and sites will be reviewed/observed and determine when sections will be completed. Managers also should decide the composition of the sub-teams.
- Will there be a sub-team for each service area under 1302 (e.g., education, health, family and community partnerships, disabilities services, etc.) plus management systems?
- Will teams be assigned to centers or counties and examine all operations in those locales?
- Will all child services be lumped together (education, health, disabilities) and all services relating to families and communities combined into interdisciplinary teams?
- Will there be some combination of teams with service area and geographic responsibilities?
- Will a single team review all administrative operations (e.g., management systems, human resources, financial management) across 1301-1302 and 1303 or will there be a separate team for fiscal, but other management areas be reviewed by the same sub-team?

As you can see, there are many ways that sub-teams can be designed. Managers must also determine the membership of each sub-team, and team leader assignments. Within each sub-team, members will need to determine team task(s) assignments.

Preparing the Self-Assessment Report and the Continuous Improvement Plan

After the sub-teams have shared their information and the data have been aggregated and analyzed, the next step is to prepare a Self-Assessment Report. The purpose of this document is to share with a wide audience the strengths and the areas of needed improvement in all the systems and service areas of the program. Many programs find it useful to combine in a chart, by service area or system, where the strengths are listed, followed by the areas of needed improvement and suggestions from the sub-teams. The Head Start Director and management team should take the lead in preparing this document, and it should be completed shortly after the self-assessment visits have concluded.

The Report serves as the impetus for preparing the Continuous Improvement Plan. This document identifies specific actions or steps to be taken to ensure that needed improvements are made and includes timetables for the completion of each step. Specific responsibilities are assigned, and anticipated human and financial resources are identified. If appropriate, training or technical assistance needed to complete the steps also is listed. Many programs find that a chart is the most efficient and useful way to create the Plan. Since its purpose is to serve as a guide and calendar for the management team's ongoing monitoring of its improvement, a chart facilitates a monthly "check in" to evaluate progress.

Both the Self-Assessment Report and the Improvement Plan should be presented to the governing Board and the Policy Council/Committee for their input, consideration, and approval. Both groups may consider having the Head Start leadership report regularly on progress in implementing the Improvement Plan.

The Self-Assessment Report

The purpose of the Self-Assessment report is to provide all interested parties – the Board, Policy Council, HS/EHS leadership, parents, staff, and community supporters – with a useable and rich portrait of the program’s operations. The Improvement Plan is generated from the Self-Assessment findings and lays out strategies, assignments, and timelines for making the improvements that will address issues raised in the Self-Assessment Report.

Ultimately, the Self-Assessment should report:

1. Compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards
 - Education practices that produce positive learning outcomes
 - CLASS results that exceed minimum requirements
 - Program practices that meet family and community needs
 - Funds are managed pursuant to regulations
 - The human resources functions are safeguarding the rights and duties of the staff while ensuring services are functioning
2. Documented progress toward meeting Five Year Goals
3. Records that are accurate and up-to-date
4. Facilities that are safe and inviting
5. Staff who are competent and well trained

If the results do not report the five items above, then improvements are **necessary**. This in turn provides information for planning, budgets, and training. In addition the Self-Assessment should be able to inform staff, Governing Body members and the general public where the program is strongest, which groups of children benefit most from the program, where are requirements being met, and where the weaknesses and non-compliance areas are.

Using This Instrument for Your Self-Assessment

This tool is designed with a three-column approach. The first column lists the regulation; the second column asks questions to determine if you are in compliance with the regulation. A third column is provided for you to identify strengths, weaknesses, and non-compliances by flagging the item.



CATscan Component	Team Member(s) Assigned	Completed
Introduction		
Program Governance	<hr/> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Program Operations - Overall	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Does the five-year plan have concrete measurable objectives? Is progress towards meeting the objectives reported?	
ERSEA	<hr/> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Program Structure	<hr/> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SAMPLE

CATscan Component	Team Member(s) Assigned	Completed
Education & Child Development	_____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	_____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family & Community Engagement	_____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional Services for Children with Disabilities	_____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transition Services	_____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

SAMPLE

CATscan Component	Team Member(s) Assigned	Completed
Services to Pregnant Women	_____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Resource Management	_____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Program Management and Quality Improvement	_____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

SAMPLE

CATscan Component **Team Member(s) Assigned** **Completed**

Financial and Administrative Requirements

Financial Requirements	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Administrative Requirements	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Protections for the Privacy of Child Records	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delegation of Program Operations	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Facilities	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>

SAMPLE

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Name of Program:

Service / Component Area:

Date of Review:

Team Members:

STRENGTHS – In this section, where did the program exceed federal requirements?

WEAKNESSES – In this section, where did the program have difficulty meeting federal requirements?

NON-COMPLIANCE – Where did the program fail to meet requirements as indicated in the questions above?

SAMPLE

