

Program Self-Assessment Booklet 14

Family and Community Partnerships: Parent Involvement

Core Question to guide the Self-Assessment team:

How does the grantee provide parent involvement opportunities in all aspects of the Head Start program?

Purpose:

The objective is to ensure that parents are provided opportunities for growth that reflect their needs, desires and input so they become strong partners in the education of their child.

This booklet will help the Self-Assessment team determine if the program meets Federal *Performance Standards* relating to parent involvement. Related *Performance Standards* include: 1304.20(e)(4); 1304.23(d); 1304.24(a)(1); 1304.40(b)-1304.40(h); 1304.50; 1308.19(j); 1308.21.

As you conduct your assessment of the program's services in the area of parent involvement, pay close attention to:

- How the program promotes parent involvement in each of the service areas: education, mental health, health, nutrition, disabilities, transition and family partnerships
- Information pertaining to opportunities in the program for parent leadership (e.g., Advisory Committee meetings, Policy Council, community partnership activity, etc.)
- The different opportunities that the program offers for families and whether or not they are responsive to the expressed needs of the families they serve
- How the program reaches out to both mothers and fathers whether or not they live together

Helpful tools to support data collection in this area follow.

Observe:

As you spend time in the Head Start program during the Self-Assessment process, take note how parents are involved in the program.

As you enter each center, is the atmosphere warm and inviting to families, including fathers?

Are current or former parents serving as volunteers and paid staff?

Are parents engaged in group meetings? What are the meetings about?

Review:

Ask the Head Start director and/or responsible manager to provide you with access to the following documents:

- Sample files to review for documentation of home visits and parent/teacher conferences (only staff serving on Self-Assessment teams are permitted to review files)
- Records of parent involvement activities
- Parent training records and training calendars
- Plan for parent involvement (this may be integrated into other program plans)
- Participation records or referrals for family literacy services
- Community resource directory
- Parent surveys, including identified areas of interest
- Ongoing monitoring reports
- **Important data sources relevant to this area such as the *PRISM* report, *PIR* data, Community Assessment, strategic plan or short and long term program goals**

Use the questions below to assist you in your review:

Is there evidence in child/family records of at least two staff-parent conferences conducted per program year?

Yes No Comment: _____

Do you see evidence that the information obtained from families during home visits and parent/teacher conferences influences the services that are provided to children and families?

Yes No Comment: _____

In files pertaining to children with disabilities, is there evidence that parents are involved in the process of developing an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?

Yes No Comment: _____

Early Head Start:

In files pertaining to children with disabilities, is there evidence that parents are involved in the process of developing an Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP)?

Yes No Comment: _____

Does the program provide the following opportunities for mothers and fathers:	Yes	No
Opportunities to enhance parenting skills?		
Opportunities for children and families to participate in family literacy services?		
Medical, dental, nutrition and mental health education programs?		
Opportunities to participate in community advocacy?		
Parent involvement and education and employment opportunities responsive to the needs expressed by families?		
Parent involvement in curriculum development?		
Opportunities for families of children with disabilities to recognize their role in advocating for their child?		
Opportunities for parents to learn about rights and responsibilities concerning the education of the child in the school they attend after Head Start?		
Opportunities to participate in Early Head Start to improve skills and knowledge in prenatal education on fetal development, labor and delivery and post-partum recovery?		

Interview:

The Self-Assessment team should attempt to speak with as many program managers as possible, asking each manager how he/she promotes parent involvement in the service areas they manage. Another strategy you may use is to check in with the other Self-Assessment teams charged with reviewing child development, health, nutrition, education, mental health, disabilities and transition services. You can ask for their assistance in assessing the extent to which parent involvement is an integral part of each of these service areas.

As part of your assessment, interview some families, teachers and members of the family services staff. Use the following questions to assist you with interviews:

Questions for each content area specialist (manager):

In what ways are mothers and fathers involved in services for children in the content area that you manage? (Answers should address home visits, health care, curriculum development, nutrition services, disabilities services and transition to/from Head Start.)

Describe current practices which ensure that parents have a strong voice in planning for the transition of their child into Head Start from Early Head Start or other child care/child development arrangements or from Head Start into elementary school.

How does the program ensure that parents have opportunities for community advocacy so they can influence services in this community? Can you give me a few examples of community advocacy efforts being supported by this program?

How does the program ensure that opportunities for involvement are responsive to the needs and interests of individual parents (e.g., parents with disabilities, parents whose primary language is not English, working parents, homebound parents, incarcerated parents, non-custodial parents, grandparents, etc.)? Can you share a few examples of the ways you have changed or enhanced the opportunities you offer to families to respond to their changing needs?

What procedure do you follow if parents refuse health care services offered through Head Start?

What procedure do you follow if parents choose not to follow up with recommended treatment or services proposed by the Head Start program (e.g., mental health, health, Individualized Education Plan (IEP))?

Questions for staff working directly with families:

How do parents find out about the different ways they can get involved?

What are some of the different opportunities (e.g., learning, community involvement, etc.) that this program offers families?

Describe your role in connecting families to these different opportunities.

Questions for mothers and fathers:

Tell me how you learned about some of the various opportunities that Head Start offers to families. Can you name some of them?

How have you chosen to be involved in Head Start and how has the program benefited your family?

Have you participated in an end of the year staff-parent meeting to understand the progress your child has made while in Head Start? Did it better prepare you to advocate for your child in public school? If so, how?

Do you know what to do if you have a complaint?

Other Parent Involvement Considerations

The following questions are adapted from *Building Block 2, First Thoughts on Getting Dads Involved in Head Start and Building Block 3, Building Your Foundation to Work with Fathers*, Department of Health and Human Services, ACF,ACYF, Head Start Bureau, 2004.

In what ways are fathers an asset to the program?

Do staff members have an understanding and appreciation for the important role that fathers play in child development? Describe any training and technical assistance they have received regarding father involvement.

Can you talk about the ways that this program has helped fathers to appreciate the important roles they play in their child's development?

What steps are being taken to fully involve fathers in the enrollment process? How is information gathered on fathers who do not live with their children?

Are fathers personally invited and encouraged to participate in the program and given practical ideas for how to participate?

What are the most common services provided to fathers during the family partnership process? How are these services working?

Describe some of the key community resources for fathers and the community partnerships that help you to improve services to fathers.

Question for fathers:

Describe the services that this program offers to you and other fathers.

Document review:

Can you find evidence that staff involve fathers in the family partnership process? Are there specific goals established with fathers?

Team Member Summary Worksheet

Summary of Results for Parent Involvement

Areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds *Performance Standards*:

Areas where the program needs improvement:

Additional areas of concern:
