



Job Performance
Situation 5:
Promoting the Vision of
Head Start

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REFERENCE

This activity presents a type of situation that often confronts Head Start and that involves both federal and local grantee staff. It prepares participants to embark on training activities in two skill categories: *resolving unnecessary conflict* and *making presentations*. Learners will analyze a hypothetical Head Start case and will draw on their individual experiences in meeting similar situations.

Related skill activities include 3–E, Communication: Effective Spoken Communication; 5–C, Conflict Resolution: Understanding the Elements; and 5–D, Making Presentations: Developing Effective Presentations.

Symmington Head Start

Outcomes. Participants who complete this activity will be able to put themselves in the shoes of other Head Start staff in order to consider the challenges presented by a commonly occurring job performance situation. They will assess the role played by the presence or absence of skills in resolving unnecessary conflict and making presentations.

Materials. Newsprint and markers

Components

This activity can be done by one person, an informal group, or a formal workshop. We have provided suggested times, but participants and facilitators may wish to adjust these to their own timetables.

Step 1. Handout: Symmington Head Start	10 min.
Step 2. Worksheet: Case Questions and Discussion	20 min.
Suggested total time	30 min.

This activity contains 6 pages.

STEP 1. HANDOUT: SYMMINGTON HEAD START



Suggested time: 10 min.

Read and reflect on the following case to deepen your understanding of the situation—not to address the problems or find solutions. Following this activity, participants will work on specific skill-building activities. After that they will have the opportunity to come back to the scenario and, in an application activity, apply their increased skill competencies to addressing the issues it presents.

Symmington Head Start serves about 1,200 children in a large city in the Midwest. Demand for full-time care is growing as increasing numbers of parents are either working or in training. Over the past eight months, the Head Start director and directors of numerous child-care programs in the city have been meeting on a regular but informal basis to explore ways in which they could work in partnership to provide full-day services. Thus Head Start could meet the changing needs of eligible families, and child-care programs could maintain full enrollment. At the last meeting the group decided it was time to take the next step toward a more formal relationship: they agreed to hold a meeting of all interested program directors as well as key managers and staff.

The purpose of this meeting will be to present the Head Start philosophy and approach to this wider audience (they expect 50 to 75 people). The planners agree that they need to highlight screenings and home-visiting protocols. These are tasks that child-care teachers will need to undertake if their programs contract to provide full-day education services to Head Start-eligible children. The Symmington Head Start director has asked the health manager to plan a presentation on screenings. The child development services manager and family service manager have been given the task of working as a team to plan and give a presentation on home-visiting protocols.

Martine, the family service manager, and Zoe, the child development services manager, had set aside times to begin their planning. But twice Zoe has had to cancel; first there was a crisis with one of her teachers and then a conflict with her son's baseball game. They finally met. It soon became clear, however, that although they have been assigned to work as a team, Martine and Zoe do not share a common viewpoint on home visiting.

“Good luck to these programs trying to get *their* teachers to go out on two home visits a year,” says Zoe. “Especially now, with so many parents working or in training. Teachers aren’t going to want to work past three o’clock. They have lives outside, after all, and how many parents are home before then? Or worse yet, go out at night! Some of these child-care programs are in pretty bad areas.”

“Zoe,” Martine says patiently, “that is where the families live. If child-care programs agree to provide services for us, they will need to follow our guidelines.”

“Easy for you to say,” grumbles Zoe. “You don’t think it’s a little unfair that the Performance Standards require *two education* home visits¹ and have no minimum requirements for family service workers?”

“Maybe that’s because it’s understood that family service workers care about families,” Martine replies, losing her patience. “My advocates are in the neighborhoods, *all* the neighborhoods. And they are there often!”

¹ Head Start Performance Standards, 1304.40(i)(2).

STEP 2. WORKSHEET: CASE QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION



Suggested time: 20 min.

Part I (10 min.) Use the following questions to reflect on the case and record your answers in the space provided. Question 1 applies only to grantee staff, question 2 only to federal staff, and questions 3 and 4 to both. Each participant should take about 10 minutes to answer the questions by herself or himself.

1. Grantee staff: What about this situation seems familiar? What potential problems do you see coming up in the program? How will these problems affect areas of the program? How will they affect the program overall?

2. Federal staff: What about this situation seems familiar? What potential problems do you see coming up in the program? What role can a federal staff person play in helping the program director to identify and address these problems?

3. Both: From your experience, can you describe how the presence—or absence—of skills in *resolving unnecessary conflict* has affected day-to-day program operations?

4. Both: From your experience, can you describe how the presence—or absence—of skills in *making presentations* has affected programs, in both the short term and long term?

Part II (10 min.) If you are working in pairs or in a small group, take another 10 minutes or so to discuss your answers, the reasons you gave them, and any points of difference.