

Program Self-Assessment Booklet 3

Management Systems: Communication

Core Question to be answered by the Self-Assessment team:

How effective is the grantee's communication system in supporting the implementation of quality services to children and families?

Purpose:

Communication ensures the exchange of information that allows individuals to become fully involved in program activities and to make group decisions that promote a quality program (Rationale for 1304.51(b), p.181).

This booklet will help you to assess if the program is meeting Federal *Performance Standards* relating to communications involving governing bodies, parents, policy groups, staff, partners in the community, and the community in general. Related *Performance Standards* include: 1304.22(a)(4); 1304.20(c)(1); 1304.22(b)(3); 1304.41(a)(1); 1304.51(b)-1304.51(f); 1308.4(l).

As you conduct your assessment of this program's communication system, pay close attention to how information is shared:

- Among staff, governing bodies, and policy groups
- Between staff and parents
- With community partners and child care partners
- With delegate agency governing bodies, Policy Committees, and staff (where appropriate)
- With the public and news media

Helpful tools to support data collection in this area follow.

Review:

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

- Policies and procedures pertaining to communication systems
- Written communication among staff
- Meeting minutes
- Sample communications with families
- Policies and procedures pertaining to communication
- Communications with the governing body and policy groups
- Ongoing monitoring reports
- Sample communications with community partners
- **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**

Interview:

The Self-Assessment team member(s) may want to interview members of the Head Start management team, staff, members of the governing body or Policy Council, and Head Start families.

Questions to ask staff:

How do you find out what's happening in the program?

What opportunities do you have on a regular basis to communicate with other staff, including supervisors?

How do you foster effective two-way communication with families?

Are you able to communicate with families in their primary or preferred language?

How does the program obtain information from each family in order to plan services for their child?

Does the program communicate with both parents when they live in separate households?

Questions for policy group and governing body members:

How are you oriented to your roles and responsibilities as a policy group or governing body member?

Is required information such as reports, federal policies, guidelines, program plans, policies and procedures and grant applications, shared with you? Is information received in a timely manner?

Questions for Managers:

Is there a system in place for staff to communicate regularly about services to children and families so that services become integrated and coordinated? Describe the system.

In what ways does the program seek information from families to plan opportunities within the program that meet their needs and desires?

How is good communication ensured between the program and its community partners?

Describe the system for orienting new employees.

What is the process for parent orientation to your program and services?

Questions for Families:

How do you find out about what's happening in the program?

Did you participate in an orientation to the program? Describe that experience.

Team Member Summary Worksheet

Summary of Results for Communication

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:
