

The Family Partnership Agreement Process



Early Head Start Program Strategies

Prepared by

Early Head Start National Resource Center @ ZERO TO THREE



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Head Start Bureau

Early Head Start Program Strategies:

The Family Partnership
Agreement Process

This document was developed by the Early Head Start National Resource Center (EHS NRC) @ ZERO TO THREE in collaboration with the Head Start Bureau. The contents of this paper are not intended to be an interpretation of policy.

Early Head Start National Resource Center @ ZERO TO THREE

2000 M Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036-3307

Phone: **202-638-1144**

Fax: **202-638-0851**

www.ehsnrc.org

Funded by contract #105-98-2055

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services

Administration for Children and Families

Administration on Children, Youth, and Families

Head Start Bureau

Early Head Start Program Strategies:

The Family Partnership Agreement Process

Introduction

Each year the Early Head Start National Resource Center (EHS NRC) invites Early Head Start (EHS) grantees to share their experiences in meeting the challenges of planning and implementing high quality services for expectant parents and families with infants and toddlers. The excerpts from the seven programs in this publication are from their response to a questionnaire (see Appendix A) that was mailed to every EHS grantee in the spring of 2002.

This paper explores the family partnership agreement process. We examine the Head Start Program Performance Standards related to the family partnership agreement process, and describe the important role of community collaboration. We also discuss staff roles and responsibilities and professional development necessary for effective services.

The excerpts from the seven Early Head Start programs featured in this publication provide a snapshot of the family partnership agreement process. As such, the excerpts do not provide a complete picture of the process or of the program. We hope that they do give you a fresh perspective and new ideas, provoke questions, and challenge you to think deeper about your own approach to family partnerships.

This publication is the fourth edition of *Early Head Start Program Strategies*, a series of reports illustrating the diverse and unique approaches of EHS programs around the country. The EHS NRC provides this unique opportunity for EHS programs to learn from each other on an annual basis. Each publication in this series focuses on a different aspect of high quality programming for expectant parents and families with infants and toddlers. For more information and to download additional copies of this and other EHS NRC publications, please visit the EHS NRC Web site at www.ehsnrc.org. EHS NRC publications are also available through the Head Start Information and Publication Center at 703-683-2878.

The Early Head Start National Resource Center gratefully acknowledges all the Early Head Start grantees who responded to our questionnaire on the family partnership agreement process. The following programs are included in this document:

Black River Area Development Early Head Start

1403 Hospital Drive
Pocahontas, AR 72455

Sherry Pierce, *Family and Community Partnership Manager*

Coastal Community Action Early Head Start

475 Highway 70 West, PO Box 1007
Havelock, NC 28532

Susan L. Pugliese, *Head Start/Early Head Start Director*

Community Action Region VI Early Head Start

1311 12th Ave. NE, PO Box 507
Jamestown, ND 58402

LaDeen Knutson, *Director*

Children's Therapy Center Early Head Start

600 East 14th Street
Sedalia, Missouri 65301

Valerie Lane, *Early Head Start Director*

Sherlene Cripe, *Mental Health/Family Support Coordinator*

Early Head Start of Grant and Blackford Counties

Carey Services, Inc.
2724 S. Carey Street
Marion, IN 46953

Robyn Culley, *Early Child Development Specialist*

Hawkeye Area Community Action Program, Inc.

1515 Hawkeye Drive
PO Box 490
Hiawatha, IA 52233

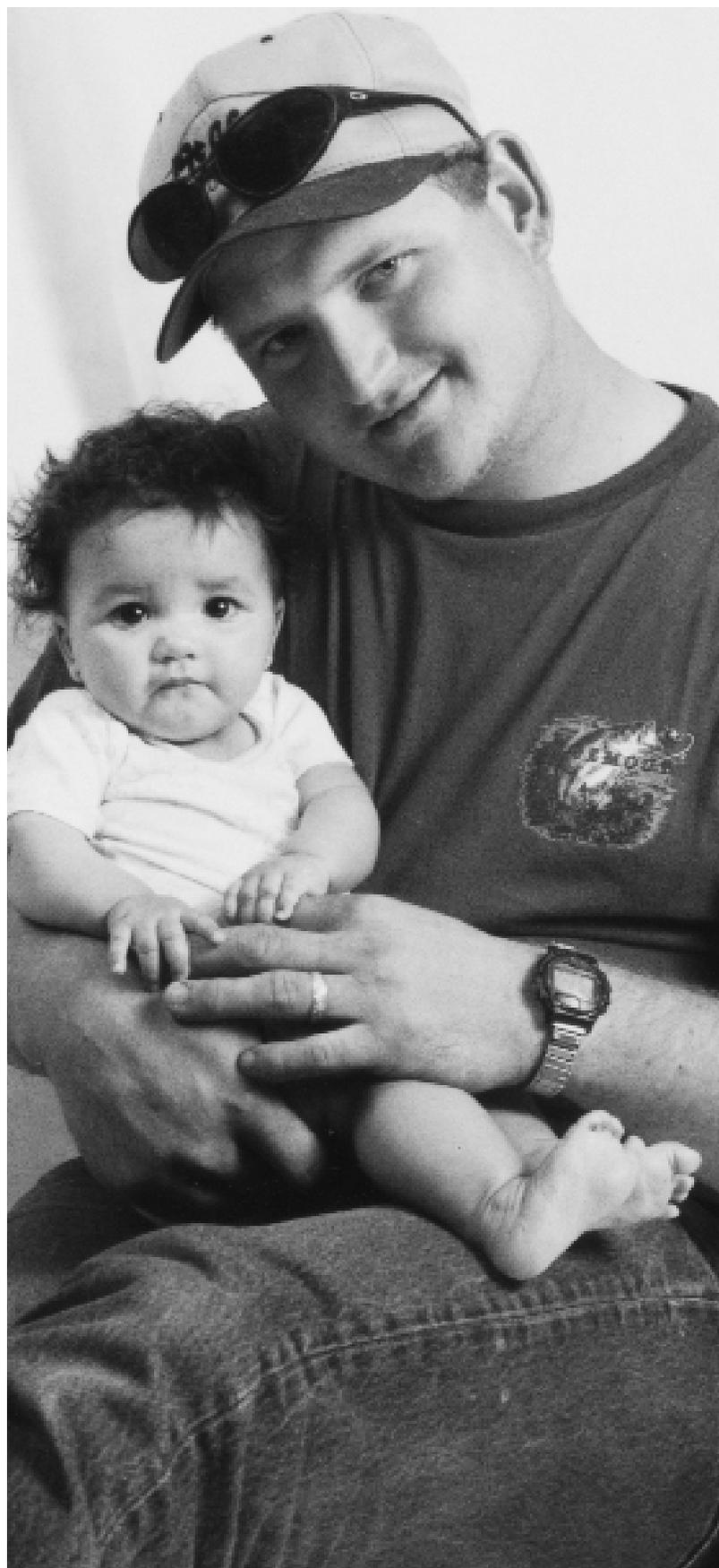
Jane Drapeaux, *Director of Field Operations &
Head Start/Early Head Start*

Monongalia County Early Head Start

1433 Dorsey Avenue
Morgantown, WV 26505

Suzanne Smart, *Community Liaison*

2



EARLY HEAD START PROGRAM STRATEGIES: THE FAMILY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT PROCESS

The family partnership agreement process [45 CFR 1304.40 (a)(1-5)] refers to the set of opportunities you offer families to develop and implement individualized goals. This process includes the responsibilities of families and staff, timetables, and strategies for achieving those goals. However, how you set goals, implement them, and document the process can be different for each program and each family.

A family partnership agreement is not a form that you fill out, or ask parents to fill out. It is the process through which you support families in Head Start. Thus, it is an interactive experience that happens over time and can include many different types of interactions. This process is not a one-time “event,” such as a formal meeting. There are many types of interactions that can be a part of the process, such as:

- Helping families identify and reach their goals; identify and use their strengths and resources; and advocate for their children.
- Offering opportunities for family members to enhance their skills or build new ones;
- Providing access to community resources, and emergency or crisis assistance when needed; and
- Supporting any pre-existing family plans. (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Family Partnerships: A Continuous Process, 1999).

The family partnership agreement process encompasses both how you approach family partnerships, and how families choose to be involved in your program. The family partnership agreement process is individualized and family driven. Thus, parents have the right to determine how much information they want to share and with whom; when they are ready to set goals; how long it will take to achieve those goals; and how to

measure their success. At the same time, staff members are expected to offer opportunities for goal-setting as a continual part of their collaboration with families.

It is important to remember that setting goals and working toward them can be challenging for families under stress. Living in poverty can raise barriers and dampen optimism about the future. It can be difficult for families to see beyond their current crises or life circumstances, especially if they are struggling with additional stressors that go along with poverty, such as limited education, homelessness, substance abuse, or poor health. Yet, the process of helping families identify their goals can offer them hope and a place to begin taking the steps they need to change the future.

It is also important to keep in mind that sharing goals is intimate work. Goals must be meaningful for families to feel motivated to move towards them, but it can be difficult for families to share these goals with staff when relationships are new. The supportive relationships that staff members create with families over time can open the door to allow families to share, sometimes for the first time, goals related to hard issues like substance abuse or depression. Allow families the time they need to get comfortable with you and the Early Head Start program. You need to first establish a trusting relationship before you can expect family members to openly discuss their needs and challenges.

In the following excerpts, four Early Head Start programs describe elements of their approach to the family partnership agreement process. Each program underscores the importance of the relationship-building process as the foundation for developing effective family partnerships.

COASTAL COMMUNITY ACTION EARLY HEAD START

The components of the family partnership agreement process are assessment, intervention and evaluation. The process is ongoing and fluid in nature. The assessment phase begins upon the initial encounter with a family. During this phase, a rapport - or relationship building - is begun. We seek to understand family structure...communication patterns, cultural and religious values and attitudes, as well as the families' relationships to other agencies or organizations. We begin to identify family needs and goals during this phase.

CHILDREN'S THERAPY CENTER EARLY HEAD START

Our family partnership agreement process is initiated during enrollment. The foundation of the partnership is a respectful, intentional relationship-based approach. We believe that relationships are at the heart of partnership, and begin all work with families from the value of developing an effective relationship with them.

EARLY HEAD START OF GRANT AND BLACKFORD COUNTIES

The family partnership agreement process has many components. First, a relationship must be established between the home visitor and the parent(s). The relationship building process takes patience, empathy, and follow-through on the part of the home visitor. To record family strengths, needs, and readiness to establish goals, the home visitor documents observations after each home visit. The parent is also invited to complete a weekly "evaluation of

the visit" and "observation of my child's skills" directly on the Home Visit Plan after each home visit. This parent documentation is a critical piece in determining the parent's satisfaction of services, readiness to set personal goals, and power of observation. It also helps the parent reflect on the home visit activities and helps the parent become a skilled observer of their child's behavior.

MONONGALIA COUNTY EARLY HEAD START

The partnership agreement process officially begins at the time a family enrolls in the program but in many cases is initiated during the registration and waitlist process. During this time, staff often become aware of pre-existing plans that may later shape a family partnership. Staff use a variety of positive communication skills and a strength-based intervention approach to establish a positive relationship with the family. As the rapport in the relationship develops, the identification of family strengths and needs begin to surface and later help to identify family partnership goals.

Human Services Department Early Head Start, Chattanooga, TN



SETTING GOALS

What does it mean to “set goals” in the context of Head Start? Does every family have to set goals as a part of their family partnership agreement? What if a family doesn’t want to set goals or to be involved in a family partnership agreement?

The Head Start Program Performance Standards state that programs “must engage in a process of collaborative partnership-building with parents to establish mutual trust and to identify family goals, strengths, and necessary services and other supports.” [(CFR 1304.40(a)(1)]. In addition, agencies must offer parents opportunities to formally develop family partnership agreements that “describe family goals, responsibilities, timetables, and strategies for achieving those goals as well as progress in achieving them.” [(CFR 1304.40(a)(2)]. Family goals might include both goals that families set for their children, such as “my child will learn to use his words to ask for what he needs; or my child will receive her speech therapy in the Early Head Start setting,” and goals families set for themselves, such as “I will finish my GED; we will find ways to spend one-on-one time with our child each night; or we will move into a new home by the end of the year.”

Simply put, goals are a vision of the future. A natural way to help families identify their goals is to begin right where they are: what brought them to your program? Every family walks through your door for a reason. Most parents come to Early Head Start because they want something for their children. Parents are often able to articulate their hopes and wishes for their children before they can focus on themselves or the family as a whole.



Save The Children Early Head Start, Atlanta, GA

There are many ways to set goals with families. A formal meeting where you document specific goals on a written form is only one way, and is not necessarily the preferred way to engage families in goal-setting. In fact, such a formal process can be intimidating. Families may feel overwhelmed or scrutinized. It is important to recognize that goal-setting can be accomplished in a variety of less traditional ways. Sometimes you can turn a talent or interest into a goal. For example, you might notice and comment on a unique skill that a parent demonstrates at home or at the center. Perhaps a parent with a knack for cooking can do a parent workshop on making affordable and nutritious meals; or a parent with a flair for decorating can give you some ideas on improving the family resource room at the center. When you encourage parents to apply their skills, you may help them discover goals or dreams they never had before. Be prepared to use a variety of informal and formal approaches in your partnerships with families.

Helping families identify a goal is the first step in the process, and then comes the challenge of figuring out how to make that goal a reality. Encourage families to think through the steps they need to take to reach their goals. Break down large goals into manageable, concrete steps. Be prepared to change direction as family needs and resources change. And always celebrate achievements, both large and small.

In the following excerpts, Early Head Start programs describe the fluid nature of setting goals and the continual need to revisit and revise goals as families and children grow and change. These programs support families in achieving their goals by making explicit the responsibilities of both staff and family members in working toward their goals.

6

Murray Early Head Start, Murray, KY



BLACK RIVER AREA DEVELOPMENT EARLY HEAD START

As goals are accomplished, new goals are set. An integrated referral system provides resources to meet the changing needs of the family. For example, if an established goal is for a parent to attend college, we structure the goal into steps with responsibilities and timelines. We make referrals to other agencies and service providers to accomplish steps related to the goal, such as Pell Grants, scholarship programs, job training programs, or child care.

CHILDREN'S THERAPY CENTER EARLY HEAD START

Parents and staff members jointly develop family action plans and child development plans to determine both family and child goals. The plans are revisited at subsequent home visits. During these visits staff help families determine steps toward the completion of goals. We document the planned action steps and track the progress toward goals on the form. We also have a separate form to track the use of community resources, which helps staff keep up with family circumstances and progress toward goals. Each week, families give detailed information regarding the services they have accessed. Parents are encouraged to journal, and record their thoughts in their EHS binder. This provides them with a concrete tool for reflection on their own progress.

COMMUNITY ACTION REGION VI EARLY HEAD START

Every goal is treated as unique and important. When a family has a goal in mind we start discussing strategies to achieve that goal. We explore the types of resources they need and the responsibilities of those involved. Parents are asked to set a target date for the goal. Families always sign their goal sheet and get a copy of it. Families are praised when they take steps toward reaching their goals, either verbally or in writing.

EARLY HEAD START OF GRANT AND BLACKFORD COUNTIES

The formal process of setting written goals begins once we have established a relationship with the family, and following the developmental assessments and nutrition screenings. If the family is not yet ready to establish written goals, they may benefit from learning how to evaluate personal strengths and challenges in order to identify personal goals. During this process, we help the parents learn how to set goals, and then we begin with goals that are relatively easy to achieve so that the parents are able to achieve success. The formal screenings and assessments, which we administer at regularly scheduled intervals, are used in conjunction with ongoing observation, within the context of the relationship with the family, and parent observations in order to develop future goals.

MONONGALIA COUNTY EARLY HEAD START

Staff employ a variety of positive communication skills and a strength-based intervention approach to establish a positive relationship with families. As the rapport in the relationship develops, the identification of family strengths and needs begin to surface and later help to identify family partnership goals. All families interested in receiving Early Head Start Services, and their designated family service worker, sign an agreement that documents both the parent's responsibilities and the family service worker's responsibilities by outlining program expectations and requirements. Parents also complete a Parent Interest Survey to help family service workers identify family interests and plan parent education opportunities.

Upper Des Moines Early Head Start, Spencer, IA



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

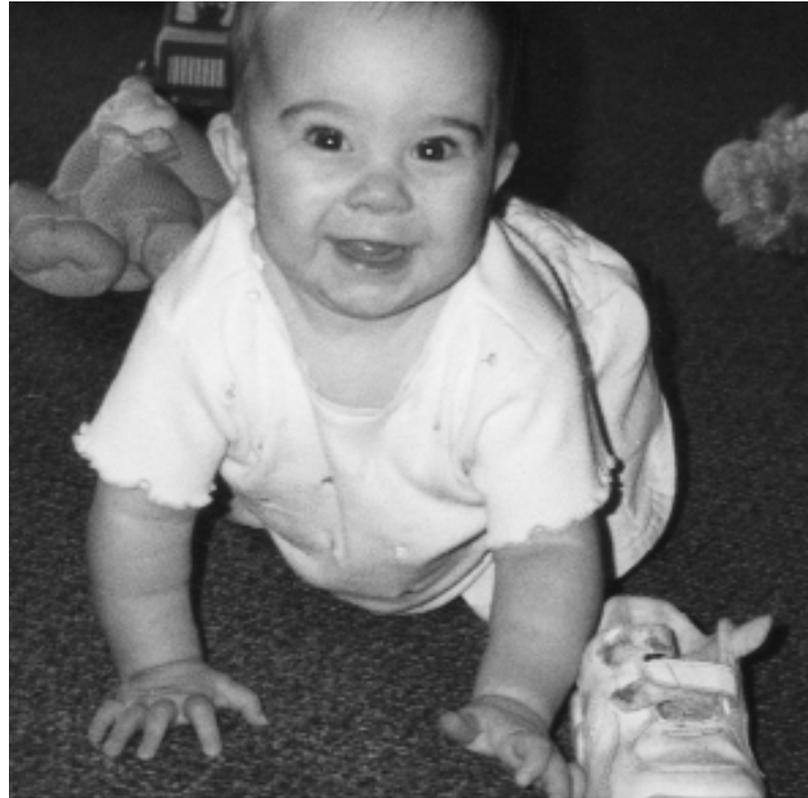
Strong community partnerships provide the resources families need to reach their goals. Depending on the needs of families, you might partner with a diverse range of agencies such as health providers, nutrition programs, social service agencies, child care providers, early intervention programs, or adult education and job skills training programs. Partnerships can be documented in formal, written agreements or can be built through informal relationships with individuals working in community programs. Written agreements explicitly describe roles and responsibilities for each community partner, and they continue to exist after the individuals who establish them leave their jobs. However, even informal relationships can have a tremendous influence in how effective your program is in finding and using the resources that are available in your community. Often, it is the relationships that you develop with individuals in those agencies that give you access to the services and resources you need for the families with whom you work.

8

Pre-existing Family Plans

Some families participating in Early Head Start may already be involved with another community program such as early intervention or social services. In such cases, the family is likely to have a family plan that was developed through these agencies. It is important to identify a “lead” person or key contact for the family who can coordinate the services. In some cases, the Early Head Start program will become the lead agency working with the family, and in other cases the family will continue to work closely with the other organization. You do not duplicate what other agencies have done as you develop your family partnership agreements with these families. Rather, Early Head Start can support and complement these existing plans with careful collaboration between all those involved, especially the family.

The way that you support the preexisting plan becomes the family partnership agreement. For example, a child with an identified speech delay may be referred to your center-based program by the speech therapist from the



Community Teamwork, Inc, Lowell, MA

local early intervention program. The child will have an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) that was developed by the family and the early intervention agency. One way to support the existing plan is to integrate the child’s speech and language goals into your classroom experiences. The IFSP would help you individualize the curricula for this child and would form the basis for your family partnership agreement with this family.

The following Early Head Start programs describe the importance of communication and information-sharing for successful collaboration. Confidentiality guidelines determine how, why, and with whom you share personal information. These programs also highlight how community partnerships facilitate successful transitions. One strategy many programs use for collaboration is to carefully choose the community representatives that are invited to serve on Policy Council or other program committees. Likewise, if Early Head Start staff have the opportunity to participate in advisory groups or similar gatherings of other organizations in the community, their participation fosters a stronger collaboration.

CHILDREN'S THERAPY CENTER

EARLY HEAD START

During home visits, EHS staff use a checklist to determine the other services and agencies that families are associated with. This checklist is also used as a tool to determine needs, and as a method to connect families to other community resources. We explain to families why it is sometimes helpful to exchange information with other agencies in order or provide continuous high quality services. In these cases, we ask families to sign a release of information form in order to exchange information with other programs. When families enrolled in EHS have pre-existing plans with other agencies, we coordinate through communication and mutual investment in the common goal. With Part C, the coordination is facilitated by the presence of both programs in our department, and includes joint visits with families, joint planning, and cross-program implementation and support of goals. With other programs (such as our child welfare system), we begin coordination by having staff from those programs represented on Policy Council.

BLACK RIVER AREA DEVELOPMENT EARLY HEAD START

Early Head Start has developed working partnerships with other agencies and service providers in our service area. These include the Department of Human Services, County Health Departments, Disabilities Services Providers, Child and Family Counseling Services, Parents as Teachers, public schools, and others. We work within a mutual referral system with these agencies to provide services to children and families. In an effort to avoid duplication of services or conflict in service delivery, information (with family consent) is shared between partnering agencies. Confidentiality of information is emphasized in this exchange. Preexisting case plans are incorporated into Early Head Start Individual Family

Partnership Plans. Our program provides services to support other agency case plans, such as transporting families for appointments with other agencies, assisting families with paperwork involved in the application process for other agencies. The family partnership is an on-going process. When families transition from Early Head Start to Head Start, the family partnership process continues. Because our program operates both Early Head Start and Head Start programs, families usually stay with the same family service worker from enrollment in Early Head Start through the Head Start program. All records and documentation from the Early Head Start program are transferred with the family to the Head Start program. All goals and referrals that are in progress with the family continue. This insures a smooth transition between programs.

COASTAL COMMUNITY ACTION, INC. EARLY HEAD START

Our program has community partnership agreements (formal and informal) with the Department of Social Services, local public school systems and a host of other local agencies and programs. Moreover, local community agency representatives serve on our various committees such as the Health advisory Committee, the Family Services Advisory Committee and the Education Advisory Committee. Reciprocally, our program staff serves on the respective boards of our community partners. Finally, a formal referral process exists within our agency allowing families to be referred to local community agencies and programs.

EARLY HEAD START OF GRANT AND BLACKFORD COUNTIES

The family partnership agreement process continues throughout a family's transition to other community programs. It is through community partnerships that Early Head Start is able to be a part of every step of

transition, from beginning to end. The home visitor prepares the family for the transition to other programs by educating them on all aspects of the new program, and maintains a relationship with the family during the transition. The relationships between Early Head Start and our community partners help children and families to experience continuity between programs, services, and staff. All of these things work together to achieve a feeling of belonging to the community for the child, and family, as well as staff of Early Head Start.

HAWKEYE AREA COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM, INC.

The agency practices Family Team Meetings. These are voluntary gatherings of family members, friends, community resource representatives, and other interested people who join together to strengthen a family, brainstorm ideas to assist the family in reaching goals, and develop a protection and care plan for the children. Family Team Meetings evolve from the way that families form a natural helping system to meet needs and solve problems. The Family Team Meeting is often the forum in which the child and family team comes together to help the family craft, implement, or change the individualized course of action.

MONONGALIA COUNTY EARLY HEAD START

Program staff take an active role in this county's health and social services. A major strategy to accomplish this goal was to establish a community liaison staff position whose major responsibilities

include: (1) Facilitate the development of the partnerships and agreements that help families access the services needed to become self sufficient and meet their family goals; (2) Assist family service workers in identifying community resources to meet the specific needs of each enrolled family; and (3) Link staff and families to community groups, parent governing bodies, and community activities.

CESA #11 Early Head Start, Turtle Lake, WI





**Murry Early
Head Start,**
Murry, KY

STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Your responsibility as a staff member is to offer families partnership opportunities on a continual basis. As stated earlier, the family partnership agreement is not a one time event. You offer partnership opportunities as you interact with families in both formal and informal ways, such as family conferences, team meetings, phone conversations, progress letters, and home visits. In fact, each interaction you have with a family member is an opportunity to deepen your relationship and strengthen your partnership. Some times the casual conversations you have as parents drop off or pick up their children from the center, or during group socializations, provide the best opportunities to get to know family members. These informal interactions can create a more relaxed atmosphere that open communication, build trust, and give you another perspective on family interests, needs, or goals.

Documenting the Family Partnership Agreement Process

Head Start staff members are required to document the family partnership agreement process to ensure that the process is working. Documenting the process allows you to: know the specific ways that staff are supporting families;

identify families' needs and resources; track changes over time; and evaluate how effective the process is and make necessary adjustments.

It is tempting to meet this requirement by developing a written form that you can quickly fill out or check off and place in the family's file. The danger with this approach is that the process will not be individualized for each family. Written forms can be useful; but they should not replace the process of the family partnership agreement. The form itself is not the family partnership agreement. Rather, the family partnership agreement is how you support the family in their growth and development during their involvement with Early Head Start. Some of the ways you can document your interactions with family members is through case notes, telephone logs, video observations, or family journals. Documentation is just a tool you use to help you do your job. Try not to see it as a burden, but as a way that you can better achieve what it is you are striving for in your work with children and families.

Professional Development and Supportive Supervision

Training and staff development activities encompass knowledge development, skill-building, and supportive supervision. Potential training topics might include observation skills, communication skills, family-centered practice, crisis intervention, parent education techniques, or mental health intervention. Create an individualized approach to training by assessing staff members' skills relative to the needs of the program.

A successful family partnership agreement process rests on your ability to develop and sustain trusting, respectful relationships with families. Likewise, supportive relationships between staff members and supervisors provide the foundation for successful family partnerships. One of the



Mid Iowa Community Action, Early Head Start, Marshalltown, IA

most effective vehicles for supporting staff is reflective supervision. Reflective supervision is a collaborative relationship between staff member and supervisor that provides regular opportunities to reflect on the work with families. Supervision is a time for staff to openly discuss their challenges, share their accomplishments, and develop self-awareness. Working with children and families, while tremendously rewarding, is also physically, mentally, and emotionally challenging. Change is constant and often there are no clear answers. Individuals who do this work every day need to pay close attention to their own actions and reactions to the work. Supervision can help you manage the complex feelings that often accompany work of this nature.

Management Systems

It is evident throughout this document that management systems – such as planning, communicating, and record-keeping – play an integral role in the family partnership process. In addition, program self-assessment and

monitoring provide ongoing feedback about how well the partnership process is meeting family needs. Each system supports the others and together creates a cohesive approach to family partnership.

Program managers should consider how staffing patterns support the family partnership agreement process. The number of families a family worker is responsible for reflects the intensity and complexity of family situations. For example, staff members may require additional time to support families under stress or those with complex needs and thus work with fewer families. Similarly, staff members need adequate time for planning and follow-up so that they remain available and responsive to the ongoing issues of all families.

The following Early Head Start programs describe the professional development strategies that have enhanced their work. Reflective supervision, team staff meetings, and mental health consultation are key ingredients. A team approach is especially helpful to juggle the multiple demands of the work. In some cases, changes in management systems, such as reduced paperwork or staffing patterns, were necessary to maintain a commitment to quality services.

Mid Iowa Community Action, Early Head Start, Marshalltown, IA



BLACK RIVER AREA DEVELOPMENT EARLY HEAD START

Family service workers begin to develop relationships with family members during recruitment and enrollment. Because they are the first program staff to meet with families and provide much of a family's first information about the program, family service workers receive communications skills training. Our program believes in the importance of first contacts and first impressions that families form about the program. Once families are enrolled in the program, all staff who interact with the family provide support in the partnership process. Often families choose their key contact person by forming a natural bond with a center director, teacher, or teacher aide with whom they feel comfortable.

CHILDREN'S THERAPY CENTER

Our three primary processes for supporting staff to be effective in working with families to develop meaningful family partnership agreements are staff training, interagency coordination, and reflective supervision. Staff development and training is truly the foundation of our expectation that staff will develop meaningful relationships with families to forward their work. Through monthly staff development days, staff are trained in our expectations, and provided with strategies and support to do the work. Reflective supervision is the support structure that is the ongoing and direct follow-up to staff training. In weekly supervision, staff have the opportunity to reflect with their supervisor on how the work is going, process particular challenges, and determine if an additional level of support is needed (such as a team staffing). If the family is involved in Part C services, staff also participate in monthly staffings with the Part C team to assure that goals are mutually supportive. Finally, as mentioned above, if coordination is needed with another agency, that is determined during weekly supervision, and a joint meeting is arranged.

EARLY HEAD START OF GRANT AND BLACKFORD COUNTIES

Reflective supervision is critical for staff to enable them to use all of their personal resources, and to discuss program resources, in working with families. Along with this process, we find that case staffings help the process. Our program firmly believes in training as a support for family development. The mental health consultant is utilized for both family and staff. As staff is cared for, they are in turn, more able to care for the children and families on their caseloads. In addition, our program has all Family Plans reviewed by the Specialist team which supports the role of the Home Visitor in knowing that all developmental areas have been addressed. Even more, the entire staff is supportive of one another. When a staff member is on vacation or ill, all staff are aware and are willing to help meet the needs of the children and families during the time the primary staff is away. By utilizing a true team approach, staff support is an everyday part of our team approach to working with children, families, and community.

MONONGALIA COUNTY EARLY HEAD START

We continually strive to support staff efforts in establishing multiple family partnerships with many families who face serious life issues. We have made a series of program changes during the last six years to maintain our commitment to offering quality services. Three years ago we reduced our family service workers case loads from twelve to ten and added one and one-half family service workers so staff would have more office time; we have redesigned our socialization framework; and we are currently working on a new data entry system that should allow for a reduction in paperwork. We have added a mental health specialist and a child development specialist to our staff. We have condensed data into fewer forms. We discuss program changes with all staff to assure that any change works for them as well. We attempt to respond positively to staff concerns. We see each center as a team in a community environment and value the strengths they each offer our program and the families with which they interact.

IN SUMMARY

The family partnership agreement process helps families think in concrete ways about what they want and need for themselves and their children, and what it will take to reach their goals. Your relationships with families are at the center of the partnership process. The family partnership agreement will naturally evolve out of the many ways that you support families in Early Head Start.

As you consider your approach to the family partnership agreement process, recognize the subtle but enormously

important ways that families welcome you into their lives. You are in partnership with parents when you are trusted to care for their children at the Early Head Start center every day, or when you are welcomed into their homes each week. You are in partnership when you help family members advocate for their children, use their skills or build new ones, or dream about the future. While each partnership will be as different as each family in your program, staff members and parents are ultimately working for the same goal: children who are growing to their fullest potential.



Appendix A

EARLY HEAD START PROGRAM STRATEGIES: THE FAMILY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT PROCESS

14

Dear Early Head Start Director:

The Early Head Start National Resource Center (EHS NRC) collects and disseminates information on issues of critical importance to the EHS community. Each year the EHS NRC invites EHS and Migrant and Seasonal grantees to participate in this unique opportunity to share their strengths with one another. As new EHS programs are being developed around the nation, the knowledge and experience of existing grantees is an invaluable resource from which others can learn.

The EHS NRC will choose, according to the depth and breadth of the responses to the questions below, a select number of programs to profile in the fourth edition of *Early Head Start Program Strategies*, a series of reports illustrating the diverse and unique approaches of Early Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal programs around the country. The previous editions in this series focused on staff development, socializations for infants and toddlers in the home-based program option, and responding to the mental health needs of infants and toddlers. To order these and other EHS NRC publications, contact the Head Start Publications Management Center at 703-683-2878 or visit the EHS NRC Web site at www.ehsnrc.org.

Survey Instructions

1. Please complete the following questions in as much detail as needed to adequately convey your approach to the family partnership agreement process in your program. In order to give us a detailed description of your program, we expect that the average length of your total response to be approximately 6 pages. Grantees are encouraged to share this survey with delegate agencies. We request that each grantee submit only one survey.
2. Submit your response separately from this paper, and indicate the number of each question to which you are responding.
3. Please send your responses electronically by e-mail attachment or on disk. Send to the attention of: **Stefanie Powers, ZERO TO THREE, 2000 M Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20036.**
E-mail responses to: s.powers@zerotothree.org.
Phone 202-638-1144 if you have any questions.
4. Please include a cover page with your name, title, phone number, fax number, name of the grantee, and mailing address.
5. If possible, include photos of your EHS program. Include a photo release form for each picture. These photos will be used to illustrate the *EHS Program Strategies* publication and will be kept on file for future EHS NRC publications. Please put the name of your program on the back of each photo.

This survey is voluntary and you are not required to participate.

Reader Survey

BACKGROUND

One of the most powerful tools the Head Start program has to assist families in setting and achieving their goals is the family partnership agreement process [45 CFR 1304.40(a)(2)]. We are interested in learning more about the relationship-building process that happens as you help families to identify family goals, strengths, and necessary services to ensure that families have the best chance for success in your program.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

A. The Family Partnership Agreement Process

1. Describe how you initiate the family partnership agreement process.
2. Describe the family partnership agreement process for working with expectant families, and how the birth of the baby has an impact on the process. Specifically address how fathers are engaged in the process.
3. What are the components of the family partnership agreement process?
4. How do you document the family partnership agreement process?
5. How do you document and track changes as family circumstances change or goals are met?
6. How do you make the family partnership agreement process one of relationship-building rather than having the emphasis on agency record-keeping?

B. Community Collaboration

1. How does your agency avoid the duplication of effort, or conflict with, preexisting family plans developed between families and other service agencies?
2. Describe how you coordinate with other agencies to support the goals in preexisting plans?
3. Describe how you collaborate with other agencies to assist families in meeting their goals and/or accessing necessary services?
4. How does the family partnership agreement process continue during and after transition to other programs (e.g. Head Start, early intervention, child care)?

C. Staff Training and Supervision

1. Describe staff roles and responsibilities in developing and maintaining relationships with families through the family partnership agreement process.
2. How are family partnership agreement goals communicated across the organization and influence all aspects of services?
3. Describe how you support staff to help them work effectively with families to develop family partnership agreement's that are meaningful to staff and families?

D. Management Systems

1. Describe the management systems (e.g. planning, communications, governing bodies, record keeping, reporting, and self-assessment) that are in place to facilitate the family partnership agreement process?
2. Please describe how these systems operate to ensure that the process is meeting families' needs.

RESOURCES FOR FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

Family Resource Coalition.

(1996). *Culture and family-centered practice*.
Chicago, IL: Author.

Florida State University Center for Prevention and Early

Intervention Policy. (1998). *Partners for a healthy baby: Home visiting curriculum for expectant families*.
Tallahassee, FL: Author.

Hanlon, G. (1999). *Successfully parenting your baby with special needs (video)*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Hussey-Gardner, B. (1999). *Best beginnings: Helping parents make a difference*. Palo Alto, CA: Vort Corporation.

Jeppson, E., & Thomas, J. (1997). *Essential allies: Families as advisors*. Bethesda, MD: Institute for Family-Centered Care.

Lerner, C., & Dombro, A.L. (2000). *Learning & growing together: Understanding and supporting your child's development*. Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE/ National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families.

Manolson, A., Ward, B., & Dodington, N.

(1995). *You make the difference in helping your child learn*. Toronto, ON, Canada: The Hanen Centre.

Powers, S., & Lerner, C. (2000). *Learning & growing together tip sheets: Ideas for professionals in programs that serve young children and their families*. Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE/ National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families.

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2000).

Communicating with parents, Training guide for the Head Start learning community. Washington, DC: Head Start Bureau.

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2000)

Partners in Decision Making. Training guide for the Head Start learning community. Washington, DC: Head Start Bureau.

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (2000)

Partnerships with Parents (multimedia kit). Washington, DC: Head Start Bureau.

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (2000)

Supporting Families in crisis Training guide for the Head Start learning community. Washington, DC: Head Start Bureau.

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1999)

Family Partnerships: A continuous process Training guide for the Head Start learning community. Washington, DC: Head Start Bureau.

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1998).

Building on success, Training guide for the Head Start learning community. Washington, DC: Head Start Bureau.

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1998).

Designing Parenting Education Training guide for the Head Start learning community. Washington, DC: Head Start Bureau.

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (1998)

Supporting Family Learning Training guide for the Head Start learning community. Washington, DC: Head Start Bureau.

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1995).

Engaging Parents Training guide for the Head Start learning community. Washington, DC: Head Start Bureau.

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1999).

Family Involvement, Head Start Bulletin #68. Washington, DC: Head Start Bureau.

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (2000).

Linking our voices: A training program for Head Start Policy Councils. Washington, DC: Head Start Bureau.

Wasik, B. H. & Bryant, D. (2000). *Home visiting: Procedures for helping families*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.



EARLY HEAD START NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

