

Handout 5: Family Support Practices and Skills⁴

Instructions

The questions listed below are to help you assess your professional practices in working with Head Start families. Think about the practices raised in the questions and put a plus sign (+) next to those you use all or most of the time. Put a check sign (✓) next to those practices you sometimes use. Put a minus sign (-) next to those practices you never or rarely use. If the question is not applicable to your job, put N/A. You will not have to show your responses to the questions to anyone. When you are finished, go over the questions again; this time, write down what you do, or could do, to build family partnerships.

Family Development

- ___ Do you involve the whole Head Start family, not just the child's parent(s), in the services you offer?
- ___ Do you contribute to on going assessment of Head Start family goals, strengths, interests, and concerns?
- ___ Do you extend invitations to Head Start families to work in partnership with you?
- ___ Do you use conversations with Head Start families, rather than formal interviews, to build family partnerships?
- ___ Are you able to identify strengths within all Head Start families?
- ___ Do you take the time to listen to Head Start families talk about their hopes or goals for the future?
- ___ Do you help Head Start families get together for mutual support?

Family Diversity

- ___ Do you use the Head Start family's first language, or take other steps to make sure that you and the family members understand each other?
- ___ Do you ask Head Start families whom they consider family?
- ___ Are you able to build partnerships with Head Start families very different from your own?
- ___ Do you encourage Head Start families to teach you about their family traditions, customs, values, beliefs, and practices?
- ___ Do you encourage children and families to learn about different kinds of families?

⁴Adapted with permission from Gigi L. Stafne with Donald Gjesfjeld, *The Family Based Services Support Program Self-Assessment Checklist* (Eau Claire, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Division of Community Services, 1989).

Handout 5: Family Support Practices and Skills (continued)

Support for Families

- Do you help Head Start families develop networks of informal support?
- Do you help Head Start families gain access to community resources?
- Are you able to help families achieve a sense of belonging to the Head Start community?
- Do you make yourself available to Head Start families as a source of support during difficult or stressful family times?
- Do you reach out to Head Start families by engaging them in casual conversations, arranging convenient times for talking with them, and making home visits?

Teamwork

- Do you apply a team approach to your work with Head Start families?
- Do you work with Head Start families as a group to develop or improve family resources?
- Do you keep other Head Start staff informed about family events or situations that might affect their work with families?
- Do you reach out to key individuals in the community to gain their support and involvement in developing resources for Head Start families?