



Head Start and Early Head Start Relationship-Based Competencies

Learning Extension: Coordinated and Integrated Services

Overview

The Relationship-Based Competencies (RBCs) highlight the knowledge, skills and actions for staff and supervisors who work with families in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. There are 9 competencies outlined in the RBCs, and in this resource we explore the ways that programs are increasing their knowledge, skills and/or actions related to RBC Competency #7: Coordinated, Integrated and Comprehensive Services.

When staff act on the knowledge and skills related to Competency #7, a positive and efficient organizational culture results. As staff and supervisors strengthen their ability to act as a well-coordinated team, they also support systemic, integrated and comprehensive family engagement. In other words, PFCE strategies are aligned across program systems and services. This approach helps to break down “service silos”. It creates a program environment and organizational culture that is more welcoming and supportive of families. Most importantly, it strengthens program wide family engagement, leading to better outcomes for children and families.

RBC #7:
**Coordinated,
Integrated and
Comprehensive Services**
Acts as a member of a
comprehensive services team
so that family service activities
are coordinated and
integrated throughout
the program.



*Parent, Family and Community
Engagement is Systemic, Integrated,
and Comprehensive*

Systemic means that parent, family, and community engagement is anchored in leadership priorities, program management, continuous improvement systems, and staff development. **Integrated** PFCE activities are carried out throughout the entire organization, and all staff have a role in engaging families and supporting school readiness. In a **comprehensive** approach, the full range of strengths, interests and needs of the adults and children in a family are considered and supported.

What do coordinated and integrated services look like in Head Start and Early Head Start programs?

To answer this question, we have collected examples of Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) programs in action. We have organized the examples according to the Elements of the PFCE Framework. Some examples may represent more than one Element.

“Coordinated, Integrated and Comprehensive Services means we don’t operate in isolation. We make sure everything we do related to PFCE incorporates everybody!”

HS and EHS organizations need strong foundations to make the kind of progress that leads to lasting change for families. Program Foundations are systemic building blocks for successful parent and family engagement. They are: program leadership, continuous improvement, and professional development.

Program Leadership

Using the Framework as a guide, one grantee’s Leadership has focused on communication and integration of all of the service areas working together to achieve goals. Rather than operating in isolation, this organization has made a shift to ensure their PFCE efforts incorporate all staff.

Professional Development

In one program, staff come together for cross-team family and child reviews and to engage in team coaching. For example, the family service worker may spend time coaching the teaching team on how to build relationships and have conversations with families around tricky issues; and the teaching staff may spend time helping the family services staff understand things they can share with the family to support the child’s learning. Together they create opportunities for engaging parents in children’s learning that is tied to the learning in the classroom and presented in a way that welcomes parents’ participation.

In another program, family service and education staff meet regularly to review options for creating more seamless experiences for families in the program. For example, they developed a professional development activity where family service staff work alongside education staff to review case studies and figure out how to partner with a family together. They looked for strengths in the family. Discussing the case study helped staff recognize their joint efforts can lead to better experiences and outcomes for families.

One program is achieving more coordinated and integrated services by reassigning a staff person to oversee PFCE across the grantee and by forming a PFCE committee. With this enhanced capacity and attention to PFCE, they are providing training on the PFCE Framework and assessment for leaders and across all delegate agencies.

Programs are making a point to provide family engagement training to home-based as well as center-based staff. They are seeking to include all staff members, including teachers, in these trainings so that all program staff understand their role in engaging families. One program noted that teachers sometimes have a different view of their role in family engagement than home visitors and that this makes it critical that all staff receive similar professional development on engaging families.

Continuous Improvement

Many programs are looking for trends and patterns with child outcomes data and family outcome data. For example, teams look at data together to learn more about what kinds of progress and achievement for families might correspond to positive changes for children.

Program Impact Area Examples

With a solid PFCE foundation in place, program leadership and staff are set to work in partnership with parents, families, and the community to promote family engagement and work toward family goals. To do this, programs align PFCE strategies across four impact areas: Program Environment, Teaching and Learning, Family Partnerships, and Community Partnerships. This helps to create a seamless system of coordinated, integrated and comprehensive services.

Family Partnerships

After collecting family and child information through the enrollment and family assessment process, a cross-service team of health services staff, family services staff, teachers, the education coordinator and the bus driver meet to go over the family partnership agreement and other family information that is collected during home visits. At this “staffing,” the team identifies resources for the family and determines who will follow up with the family.

Teaching and Learning

Both teachers and family support specialists use the children’s learning portfolio to advance child and family outcomes. As a result of this, family support specialists understand how to use the portfolio in their work with families to bolster engagement in their children’s learning. Therefore, staff are able to build on each other’s work in a holistic way.

Many programs shared that their family services staff and teachers are doing joint home visits and joint parent-teacher conferences.

Family Partnerships/Teaching and Learning

One program shared that teachers used to have the responsibility for all transition activities, but now their family advocates have become more involved. At the same time, while goal setting largely falls to family advocates, there are plans to involve teachers in more goal setting with families.

Program Environment

Some programs have designed their facilities so that family services staff are located near the classroom. This creates opportunities for consistent contact between teachers and family services staff. They have easier access to each other and can share information that helps each stay abreast of issues, strategies and progress.

Community Partnerships

One program talked about how staff share data on family well-being with community partners and policy stakeholders to help them understand what supports families need, such as health services and parent education. Staff host events with community partners so that families see a familiar face at community service locations. This helps families feel more comfortable accessing particular community-based services.

Family services staff and their supervisors play a critical role in supporting family well-being, positive parent-child relationships, and children’s school readiness. When families who come to HS/EHS have struggles that require knowledge and experience that are beyond staff capability, it is important that consultation with qualified professionals is readily available (especially in the realm of mental health). In these situations, staff and supervisors can work together to determine when additional supports are needed and which services are the right services for families.

Summary

Across the country, Head Start and Early Head Start programs are working to deliver Coordinated, Integrated and Comprehensive Services (Relationship Based Competency #7) across the Elements of the PFCE Framework. As a result, programs are finding that staff and family partnerships are more effective. Positive goal oriented relationships with families are a core part of all family engagement efforts.

Do you have examples of the ways you are coordinating and integrating comprehensive family services across your program and community? What are the benefits your program is experiencing? Share your ideas with us.

Contact the National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement at ncpfce@childrens.harvard.edu or 1-855-208-0909 (toll-free) from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (ET).

Additional Resources:

- [Head Start and Early Head Start Relationship-Based Competencies for Staff and Supervisors Who Work with Families](#)
- [Using the Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework in Your Program: Markers of Progress](#)