

Program Self-Assessment Booklet 1

Management Systems: Program Governance

Core Question to be answered by Self-Assessment team:

How effective is your system of shared governance in supporting the implementation of quality services to children and families?

Purpose:

The objective is to ensure that programs have a policy group and governing body that share responsibility for overseeing the delivery of high quality services to children and families. Parents and community representatives should be empowered to actively participate in the shared decision-making process. (Introduction to 1304.50, p. 158, *Head Start Program Performance Standards*, hereafter referred to as “*Performance Standards*”.)

This booklet will help the Self-Assessment team determine if the program meets Federal *Performance Standards* relating to Program Governance. Related *Performance Standards*: 1304.50, including Appendix A; 1304.52 (k).

As you conduct your Self-Assessment of program governance systems, pay close attention to the following:

- Do the governing body, the Policy Council and the staff have a formal structure of shared decision-making which supports the delivery of high quality services to children and families?
- Do the governing body, Policy Council, and program managers work in partnership to lead the Head Start program?
- Do program leaders (governing body, Policy Council, and program managers) embrace the spirit and intent of the Head Start regulations and help to ensure that parents have direct participation in program planning and operations?
- Do governing body members successfully carry out their fiduciary (legal and fiscal) responsibilities and ensure effective and appropriate expenditures of Head Start dollars?
- Is the Policy Council actively involved in informed decision making?

Helpful tools to support data collection in this area follow.

Observe:

The Self-Assessment team member(s) should sit in and observe a meeting of the Policy Council and the governing body. During your observations, look for evidence that members are engaged in informed decision-making and have the opportunity to review and discuss information prior to making a decision to approve or disapprove.

Review:

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

- Organizational chart
- Grant application
- Written policies or procedures that describe the Head Start program's system for program governance and shared decision-making
- Governing body and Policy Council by-laws
- Evidence of ongoing training for the governing body and Policy Council
- Agendas, minutes, handouts and materials from the governing body, Policy Council, Policy Committee and Parent Committee meetings
- Ongoing monitoring reports
- **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**

Use the checklist below to assist you in your document review:

Does the organizational chart accurately reflect all decision-making bodies?

Yes No Comment: _____

Is there any documentation of ongoing training of governing body and Policy Council members (e.g. memos, invitations, sign-up sheets, training materials)? Does the training plan include orientation to the *Performance Standards* and support in carrying out roles and responsibilities in relation to the Head Start program?

Yes No Comment: _____

Do governing body members receive training specific to their oversight responsibilities in financial and legal matters?

Yes No Comment: _____

Do minutes and records from governing body and Policy Council meetings provide an accurate account of decisions and establish accountability?

Yes No Comment: _____

Do the minutes reflect that the governing body and policy groups have the opportunity to review and discuss issues prior to approval?

Yes No Comment: _____

Do agendas, minutes and records show evidence that the governing body and Policy Council review ongoing monitoring reports, including child outcome data and assessment information, to help determine the direction of program improvement efforts?

Yes No Comment: _____

Is there documentation that shows that parent members of the Policy Council or Policy Committee are elected once a year?

Yes No Comment: _____

Are all parents encouraged and given an opportunity to participate and serve as Policy Council members?

Yes No Comment: _____

Are any parent members of the Policy Council or Policy Committee serving for more than three years? (Check old meeting minutes, membership lists, ask Policy Council members and staff.)

Yes No Comment: _____

Is there a handbook or letter that explains Head Start parents' rights and responsibilities?

Yes No Comment: _____

Are there written procedures approved by the governing body and Policy Council to help resolve community complaints about the program?

Yes No Comment: _____

Are there written procedures to resolve disputes between the governing body and Policy Council?

Yes No Comment: _____

Is there documentation that shows that community representatives of the Policy Council or Policy Committee are elected once a year?

Yes No Comment: _____

Are any community representatives of the Policy Council or Policy Committee serving for more than three years? (Check old meeting minutes, membership lists, ask Policy Council members and staff.)

Yes No Comment: _____

Is there evidence that the grant and budgets have been approved and signed by the Policy Council prior to submission to the regional office?

Yes No Comment: _____

Interview:

A Self-Assessment team member should speak with at least two members of the governing body and Policy Council.

Questions for the governing body:

How would you describe the role you play in leading and supporting the Head Start program?

Can you describe for us some of the goals and issues facing the Head Start program at this time?

Relevant to your stewardship responsibilities, what types of Head Start financial reports do you routinely review? What is your understanding of the program’s current financial situation? Is it on target, under budget, over budget?

Does the governing body engage in a self-evaluation process to determine their level of effectiveness and ways they can improve?

Is the governing body involved in the annual review and evaluation of the Head Start director? Can you describe that process?

Questions for the Policy Council:

How does the Policy Council participate in the hiring and termination process?

Describe the ways parents are involved at the parent committee level. How regularly do they meet? How are parents supported financially to carry out their activities (i.e., reimbursements)? Are all parents encouraged to participate?

If your program has both Head Start and Early Head Start, are both represented adequately and proportionately on the Policy Council?

Questions to ask members of the governing body and Policy Council:

Many programs have exceeded *Head Start Performance Standards* by improving communication between the governing body and the Policy Council by appointing a liaison or providing for cross-membership within the governance structure. How does your program achieve two-way communication between the two groups?

Describe the ways in which the Policy Council receives information on how the program is progressing so that the Policy Council can make decisions that will be of benefit to the program.

What specific kinds of documents and reports do you receive to help inform you about the Head Start/Early Head Start program? (Listen for information about financial reports and child outcome data.)

Questions to ask members of the governing body and Policy Council:

Describe the training and support you have received from Head Start to assist you in your role.

Describe the governing body's (or Policy Council's) involvement in the Head Start grant application process.

Describe the annual Self-Assessment process. Who is involved in evaluating the program? How are the results reported to the governing body and the Policy Council? How are the results used to make improvements in the program?

Can you provide examples of how child outcome data has been used to plan for changes in the program?

How does the program recruit volunteers in the community?

Ask Policy Council and governing body members if the Policy Council and/or Policy Committee develop, review, approve/disapprove program policies and procedures. How do they accomplish this?

Team Member Summary Worksheet

Summary of Results for Governance

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:
