



## CHAPTER 6

# Next Steps: Continuing to Grow as a Health Manager

## CHAPTER 6

# Next Steps: Continuing to Grow as a Health Manager

You should be starting to feel familiar with your job as health manager and its responsibilities. This includes seeing how your tasks relate to the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) and the systems, data, and people in your program. It also means knowing about other regulations and requirements that affect Head Start, including tribal, state, and/or local licensing laws, US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Nutrition Assistance Programs, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. This guide is a starting point for bringing together all the parts of your job. This should help you organize what you do every day. It can also help you develop long-term plans.

Here are a few more best practices that are useful:

- Find a health manager network to help you solve issues as they arise.
- Look for a mentor who knows Head Start health services and is willing to support you.
- Use administrative time when your program is not delivering services to children and families for reviewing and evaluating systems.

## Join Health Manager Networks

Formal and informal groups of health managers come together on a local level, or in states and regions, to support one another in their jobs. Meeting with a group of peers can decrease feelings of professional isolation, strengthen compliance with the HSPPS, increase awareness





of resources, and increase job satisfaction. Members can exchange successful sample policies and materials, greatly reducing time and energy spent creating them from scratch.

Some of these groups are organized by the state or regional Head Start Association, but others form when health managers find one another through training activities, technical assistance, and community organizations. The following people might be able to help you find a health manager network:

- The previous health manager in your program
- Your program director
- Health staff at your program
- Health consultants
- Health partners
- Your management team
- Other health managers in nearby programs
- Your state Head Start Association
- Your Head Start collaboration office
- Your Office of Head Start (OHS) regional office
- Your program's technical assistance providers

Your health manager network can guide you as you:

- search for resources to meet specific program needs or the needs of individual children and families
- develop connections between federal regulations/initiatives and tribal, state, or local regulations/initiatives
- solve issues in your work

Not all communities, states, or regions have a formal health network, and networks that do exist may vary in how they work. Do not be discouraged. When time, distance, and funding are barriers to meeting, consider using new technologies such as virtual meeting tools.

Ultimately, a health manager network will connect you to others who do the same kind of work you do. These relationships will help you remember that you are not alone. They will build your confidence, so that you can deliver better services to children and families.

If you have additional questions about health manager networks, including how to find or start a network in your area, contact the National Center on Health (NCH) Information Line at [nchinfo@aap.org](mailto:nchinfo@aap.org) or call 1-888-227-5125. You can also contact your program specialist at the OHS regional office and read the [NCH Health Services Newsletter on Head Start health manager networks](#).

## Consider a Mentor

When people begin a new job, they often find it helpful to have an experienced colleague who can answer their questions, anticipate their needs, and support them with their work. As you begin your job as health manager, think about whether any of the people you are meeting in your program or partner organizations might have the experience, knowledge, and time to help you with your job. Sometimes a mentor will find and adopt you. Some programs may even assign them. If this is not the case in your program, reach out to others



who you feel might serve as strong supports for you.

Many people can be a mentor: your program director or another manager in your program, a member of your Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC), a health manager in another program, a consultant or technical assistance provider, a staff member with an understanding of the program, or a family member of a child who has graduated from Head Start. Consider these questions to determine the right mentor for you:

- Does this person have the knowledge, skills, and experience to advise you on your work?
- Does this person have time to help you?
- Does the person see mentoring as a good investment?
- Do you have a comfortable relationship with this person?
- Can you contact him or her easily when issues arise?

Once you have found a mentor, discuss your expectations, how you will work together, and what kind of support you feel will be most important. Seek guidance on issues as they arise.

Also know that you can work with multiple mentors who together may be able to offer you diverse kinds of support.

For more information and resources about mentorship, read [Putting the PRO into Protégé: A Guide to Mentoring in Head Start and Early Head Start](#).

## Practice Time Management

Your program may have periods, such as summers or school holidays, when direct services are not delivered to children and families, but managers are still working. Periods without direct services—also known as “administrative time”—allow you to step back and reflect on how your work is organized. It gives you time to think about how well you do your job and to identify additional resources, such as a mentor or health manager network, to support you.

You may wonder how to use this administrative time. The following are some ideas:

- Review and update the community assessment to ensure your planning process is based on the most current needs in the community.

- Use the planning cycle to explore how each management system supports the successful implementation of your health policies and procedures.
- Build new partnerships with local agencies that can support your work.
- Plan recruitment and enrollment activities to make sure you are serving children and families with the highest needs.
- Take part in professional development activities that build your knowledge and skills.
- Review logs and records to see that policies and procedures are working or to find out what needs updating.

These activities will help you when direct services resume. It is important to sometimes look beyond the day-to-day work to ensure you are meeting the larger vision and mission of your program.

## Be Resourceful

The [Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center](#) (ECLKC) is the electronic clearinghouse and archive for all information from and materials for Head Start and Early Head Start.

*It is important to sometimes look beyond your day-to-day work to ensure you are meeting the larger vision and mission of your program.*

OHS posts new program instructions, information memoranda, and other announcements in English or Spanish. All of the national centers, including NCH, have landing pages there with the latest resources. By

selecting “subscribe” you can choose to receive OHS news and resources, Federal Register alerts, grants and funding opportunities as well as information about training and technical assistance tailored to your own needs and interests. You can also subscribe to topic-specific newsletters, including the health services newsletters.

The [NCH landing page](#) on ECLKC is a portal to the most up-to-date health and safety resources as well as upcoming webinars, conferences, and online learning opportunities. Users can access information for children, staff, and families about mental health; environmental safety; emergency preparedness; response and recovery; nutrition; health and wellness; and oral health (including subscribing to the [“Brush Up on Oral Health” monthly email newsletter](#). There are tip sheets on a range of topics, including a [tip sheet series developed especially for health managers](#).

## Conclusion

The work you do as a health manager on a daily basis and the systems you develop that guide these tasks will ensure that the Head Start children in your program are healthy, safe, and ready for school. As part of the Head Start team, you do work that plays an important part in Head Start’s effort to help children and families lead healthier lives, now and in the years to come.

