



Head Start Management Systems Wheel: Guiding Questions During a Pandemic

A pandemic has changed the way people live and work. Programs can use the guiding questions in this version of the Head Start Management Systems Wheel to determine their **immediate** and **temporary** needs.

- **Immediate**—the most urgent issues a Head Start program needs to address, including but not limited to:
 - Assessing the situation
 - Obtaining and adhering to federal, state, and local guidance
 - Mobilizing program leadership
 - Communicating with program staff, families, and key stakeholders
 - Cleaning and disinfecting facilities

- **Temporary**—ongoing issues for a program to address as a pandemic unfolds (this can be an extended period of time), including but not limited to:
 - Maintaining governance and fiscal activities
 - Exploring and implementing modified program options and services
 - Reviewing and addressing staffing needs to provide services to Head Start-eligible children and families

Head Start programs can use this resource to find their initial bearings and move forward in the days ahead. Given the unique nature of the pandemic crisis, each of these systems are fluid and there are no rules on how and when to address the questions. Depending on the nature of each individual operation, these questions may generate additional considerations.

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Leadership & Governance

- What is the process for determining and communicating operational status during the shutdown? What is the process for implementing a continuing office operations plan (COOP) during a pandemic? Who makes the determination? How will it be communicated to the Office of Head Start (OHS) Regional Office?
- Describe efforts to communicate, using a variety of platforms, to engage leadership.
- What Head Start compliance issues may be enforced, changed, or modified?
- How is leadership modeling, inspiring, and enabling their teams to remain effective?
- How is leadership challenging their teams to be creative and innovative in how they are operating?
- How is leadership encouraging staff to take care of themselves and their families?
- How are the governing body/Tribal Council and Policy Council:
 - Engaged in planning how the program will provide services immediately and temporarily?
 - Meeting virtually as necessary and creating flexibility to accommodate schedule changes?
 - Made aware of OHS, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and other important guidance, such as Information Memoranda (IMs), Program Instructions (PIs), OHS pandemic-related communications, and other resources?



Program Planning & Service System Design

- How are leadership and stakeholders engaged and consulted in planning for immediate and temporary service delivery? For example:
 - Governing body/Tribal Council members
 - Policy Council members
 - Program staff
 - Community members
- What are the immediate and temporary program operations provided during a pandemic?
 - Virtual education and family support activities
 - Home-based
 - Center-based
 - Health and mental health services
 - Food distribution
 - Eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance (ERSEA) activities
 - Other
- How do planning efforts address both opportunities and limitations imposed by current conditions?
- How do planning efforts address different scenarios that are anticipated during this state of emergency?



Data & Evaluation

- How are data and reports made accessible for funders, governing bodies, and other stakeholders? What is our capacity to access real-time data to be used for decision-making on a daily basis?
- What data is needed to identify actionable strategies and outcomes during this crisis (e.g., In what capacity is the center open for on-site services? How many slots and children are impacted by physical closure?)
- How is data collection, input, storage, and reporting impacted throughout the pandemic? How are staff trained to maintain data management systems remotely? How will data be collected during remote or modified service delivery? How will data collection change in response to program closures or modifications?
- How is the security and confidentiality of the data collected during the crisis assessed?
- How is data used to effectively communicate the impact of the crisis on children, families, staff, and community?
- How is data strategically used to inform decisions for serving children and families and rebuilding when the pandemic is over?



Fiscal Management

- What is the plan for continuation of essential fiscal activities during necessary closure?
 - How are staff and governing body/Tribal Council and Policy Council members engaged in fiscal management activities, including receiving monthly fiscal reports, submitting federal financial reports, and approving grant applications?
 - How will internal controls over fiscal operations be maintained?
 - How will grant application requirements be met during this period, such as the community assessment, self-assessment, and other data driven requirements?
- What fiscal management activities need to occur throughout the pandemic period?
This should include, but not be limited to:
 - Reallocating budgets for modified or enhanced service delivery
 - Modifying contracts
 - Ensuring grant applications are submitted timely
 - Requesting one-time and other funds to address the issues caused by the pandemic
 - Making decisions about paying staff during disruption of services, including planning for and addressing the ramifications of possible staff lay-offs
 - Using Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Head Start funds to provide nutrition services to children and families
 - Using IMs and PIs to inform fiscal flexibilities



Community & Self-Assessment

- How will changes to the community be assessed by the governing body/Tribal Council and the Policy Council? What data will be collected to inform planning?
- How frequently are program modifications evaluated by the governing body/Tribal Council and Policy Council?
- How will the program continue to serve the community and develop innovative ways to support children and families?
- For grant applications, what changes to community and self-assessment requirements will be allowed by OHS during this time?
- How will community and self-assessment data reflect this period of change?



Facilities & Learning Environments

- Outline the process for securing facilities if there are no on-site services. What additional steps may be necessary?
- How do facility closures impact the program budget?
- Who determines who can safely use facilities and outdoor spaces, when, and for what purposes?
- How will facility needs be addressed during a potentially extended closure?
 - How are unique facility needs addressed due to the pandemic (e.g., industrial cleaning or fumigation)?
 - How is the Health Services Advisory Committee involved?
 - Outline minor repair and maintenance to be performed during the closure period.
- What adjustments will be made to purchase, construction, or major renovation activities (e.g., timeline extensions, filing of federal interest extensions, reporting) already in progress?



Transportation

- How does program leadership make determinations on the appropriate use of vehicles during the pandemic period?
- How do changes to transportation impact the budget?



Technology & Information Systems

- How is technology used so the governing body/Tribal Council and Policy Council can continue to function in their capacities?
- Outline the technological capacity and needs of the program. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Training staff how to effectively use mobile devices and computers
 - Using multimedia platforms to stay connected internally and externally
 - Assessing the availability of multimedia platforms for use with parents, staff, and stakeholders, including their capacity to effectively use them
 - Training parents and staff to increase technological capacity
- How are staff accessing and utilizing the technology they need for telework? How is the program addressing modifications to support activities from home?



Training & Professional Development

- How can technology support the training and professional development needs of program leadership and staff?
- How does the pandemic affect training and professional development? What are key areas to address in the temporary period?
- What training and partnerships support professional development related to the effects of the pandemic?



Communication

- Outline the current strategy for reaching staff, governing body/Tribal Council, Policy Council, parents, and community partners in the immediate and temporary periods.
- What modifications are needed to provide ongoing communication among program leadership, staff, and families? What is the contingency plan if the preferred method is no longer available?
- If one does not exist, will the development of a crisis communication plan (CCP) that reflects immediate and temporary program needs be initiated?
- How can social media and other multimedia platforms be used for classroom and family engagement activities, home visits, and on-site office work?
- How can families be supported with their communication needs during this time of isolation?
- How is staff made aware of emergency communication protocols?
- How is community messaging framed as positively as possible?



Recordkeeping & Reporting

- Outline how the reporting system provides program leadership (e.g., governing body/Tribal Council, Policy Council, Regional Office) with the key information needed to make decisions on emergency measures and spending.
- How are physical and virtual files accessed during this time?
- How does recordkeeping and reporting use technology to manage information that is useful through the pandemic period? Is this information accessible and portable for key staff?
- What changes to recordkeeping are needed to monitor and report on modified or virtual service delivery while ensuring protection of personally identifiable information?



Ongoing Monitoring & Continuous Improvement

- How are the results of ongoing monitoring shared with program leadership and management staff during the emergency?
- How do ongoing monitoring systems measure the efficacy of new or modified service delivery?
- How will remote service delivery be monitored? How will that data be used for continuous improvement?
- How are staff trained and engaged in ongoing monitoring efforts during and after the pandemic period (e.g., cleaning, alternative service delivery, maintenance)?



Human Resources (HR)

- How does program leadership use pandemic legislation to impact HR decision-making?
- What additional resources will be used for workplace needs related to the pandemic?
- How is recruitment and retention of qualified staff performed as program options change or vacancies occur?
- How are staff needs identified and supported in their virtual work environment?
- How will the temporary program redesign impact the organizational structure and service delivery operations?
- How will unions be consulted in HR decision-making during the pandemic period?
- Outline a process for exploring how mental health consultants or Employee Assistance Program services can support staff to develop coping strategies so they can manage their own needs as well as support children and families.
- How will staff be advised about additional health and mental health resources available through the grantee's insurance carrier?

