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## Orienting New Staff

### 1-A Case: The Region Self-Assessment

#### **1-A Job Performance Situation 1: CASE**

Leaders who work through these training activities will increase their competency in *planning and implementing new staff orientations* and *individual development*. Job Performance Situation 1 presents a hypothetical scene from a particular federal perspective. However, the skills addressed can be generalized to *any* situation in which colleagues need to establish systems and procedures for bringing new staff on board.

Consider the following:

#### **The Region**

Hector is an ACF program and budget specialist who has worked in Head Start for many years. Recently, three ACF specialists transferred into the Head Start program from other areas within the agency. The transferees are experienced in grants management and other aspects of their new job, but lack a grounding in Head Start philosophy, history, and values. Hector has been designated as their mentor.

“I’m really glad to have this chance to be involved with Head Start,” says Doug, one of the new specialists. “The whole field of early childhood really interests me, you know.” Hector does know. Doug and his second wife have a child who is just turning three, and Doug loses no opportunity to share snapshots of Elana or relate stories about her growth and development.

“It’s great for us that you’re interested, too,” Hector replies. “Though besides the focus on child development, it’s the Head Start emphasis on a comprehensive approach that includes the family that sets the program apart.”

“Sure, I get that,” Doug answers. Hector isn’t sure that Doug gets it. “These are such crucial years for children,” Doug continues. “Their minds soak up everything! Elana is in this preschool program, and the children there are starting to work with letters and sounds. Most of our Head Start children are just as smart, I bet you. Goals 2000 wants all children ready to go to school to learn. I think we’ve got the foundation in Head Start for building a pretty nice language arts program. Wouldn’t that be a contribution—if we could grow a model in our region that has all Head Start children entering school able to read? So by the time Elana is ready for college, we might see Head Start children all across the country really ready to learn!”

## SELF-ASSESSMENT

Job Performance Situation 1 requires skill competencies in *New Staff Orientations*, *Leading a Guided Discussion*, *Giving Feedback*, and *Developing Learning Plans*. The following Self-Assessment will help you determine your interest in completing the skill-building activities in Job Performance Situation 1.

### **SKILL: NEW STAFF ORIENTATIONS**

Have you experienced a similar situation in which you needed to *plan and implement a new staff orientation*? \_\_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_\_no

If yes, were you satisfied with your response? \_\_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_\_no

If you have not handled this type of situation much, would you feel comfortable addressing it? \_\_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_\_no

Rate (1, 2 = new skill; 3, 4 = some skill; 5 = highly skilled) your current skills in addressing situations in which you need to:

1. *Determine the best format for orienting new staff:*
2. *Anticipate and develop a plan for addressing new staff needs*
3. *Design and implement an initial orientation session:*
4. *Engage all staff in the orientation process:*
5. *Link new staff orientation to ongoing staff development:*
6. Questions 1 to 5 are linked to skill competencies addressed in 1–C, Staff Development and Training: New Staff Orientations. Count the number of answers you rated a 1 or a 2 and record that number below. Do the same for answers you rated 3 or 4 and for those you rated 5.

If you rated most of your skills a 1 or 2, you will definitely find it helpful to complete this activity. If you answered mostly 3 and 4, you may find the activity helpful. If most of your answers were a 5, you may find that the material in the activity addresses areas in which you already have a lot of skill.

Definitely (1-2) \_\_\_\_\_ Maybe (3-4) \_\_\_\_\_ Probably not (5) \_\_\_\_\_

**SKILL: LEADING A GUIDED DISCUSSION**

Have you experienced this or a similar situation in which you needed to *lead a guided discussion*?  
\_\_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_\_no

If yes, were you satisfied with your response? \_\_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_\_no

If you have not handled this type of situation much, would you feel comfortable addressing it? \_\_\_\_\_yes  
\_\_\_\_\_no

Rate (1, 2 = new skill; 3, 4 = some skill; 5 = highly skilled) your current skills in addressing situations in which you need to:

7. *Prepare for leading a guided training discussion:*

8. *Establish rapport in a one-on-one, in-house group, or workshop discussion:*

9. *Effectively manage a training discussion:*

10. *Help participants transfer learning to their ongoing work:*

11. Questions 7 to 10 are linked to skill competencies addressed in 1–D, Staff Development and Training: Leading a Guided Discussion. Count the number of answers you rated a 1 or a 2 and record that number below. Do the same for answers you rated 3 or 4 and for those you rated 5.

If you rated most of your skills a 1 or 2, you will definitely find it helpful to complete Activity 7–D. If you answered mostly 3 and 4, you may find the activity helpful. If most of your answers were a 5, you may find that the material in the activity addresses areas in which you already have a lot of skill.

Definitely (1-2) \_\_\_\_\_ Maybe (3-4) \_\_\_\_\_ Probably not (5) \_\_\_\_\_

**SKILL: GIVING FEEDBACK**

Have you experienced this or a similar situation in which you needed to *give feedback*? \_\_\_\_\_yes  
\_\_\_\_\_no

If yes, were you satisfied with your response? \_\_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_\_no

If you have not handled this type of situation much, would you feel comfortable addressing it? \_\_\_\_\_yes  
\_\_\_\_\_no

Rate (1, 2 = new skill; 3, 4 = some skill; 5 = highly skilled) your current skills in addressing situations in which you need to:

12. *Provide guidance to help new Head Start staff identify the knowledge and skills that are critical to their job performance:*

13. *Develop an open pattern of communication that allows others to express their needs comfortably:*

14. *Use feedback as a coaching tool during orientation of new staff:*

Questions 12 to 14 are linked to skill competencies addressed in 1–E, Individual Development: Giving Feedback. Count the number of answers you rated a 1 or a 2 and record that number below. Do the same for answers you rated 3 or 4 and for those you rated 5.

If you rated most of your skills a 1 or 2, you will definitely find it helpful to complete this activity. If you answered mostly 3 and 4, you may find the activity helpful. If most of your answers were a 5, you may find that the material in the activity addresses areas in which you already have a lot of skill.

Definitely (1-2) \_\_\_\_\_ Maybe (3-4) \_\_\_\_\_ Probably not (5) \_\_\_\_\_

**SKILL: DEVELOPING LEARNING PLANS**

Have you experienced this or a similar situation in which you needed to *develop a learning plan*?  
\_\_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_\_no

If yes, were you satisfied with your response? \_\_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_\_no

If you have not handled this type of situation much, would you feel comfortable addressing it? \_\_\_\_\_yes  
\_\_\_\_\_no

Rate (1, 2 = new skill; 3, 4 = some skill; 5 = highly skilled) your current skills in addressing situations in which you need to:

15. *Determine the skills and knowledge needed for a position:*

16. *Assist staff in assessing their training needs:*

17. *Use adult learning principles to select appropriate training resources:*

18. *Assist new employees in developing a learning plan:*

19. Questions 16 to 19 are linked to skill competencies addressed in 1–F, *Individual Development: Developing Learning Plans*. Count the number of answers you rated a 1 or a 2 and record that number below. Do the same for answers you rated 3 or 4 and for those you rated 5.

If you rated most of your skills a 1 or 2, you will definitely find it helpful to complete this activity. If you answered mostly 3 and 4, you may find the activity helpful. If most of your answers were a 5, you may find that the material in the activity addresses areas in which you already have a lot of skill.

Definitely (1-2) \_\_\_\_\_ Maybe (3-4) \_\_\_\_\_ Probably not (5) \_\_\_\_\_

## TALLY SECTION

Review the final question in each of the previous sections. Indicate your skill-development decisions below. At the completion of the Self- Assessment, you will transfer this information to your Learning Plan.

1–C, Staff Development and Training: New Staff Orientations:

Definitely                      Maybe                      Probably not

1–D, Staff Development and Training: Leading a Guided Discussion

Definitely                      Maybe                      Probably not

1–E, Individual Development: Giving Feedback

Definitely                      Maybe                      Probably not

1–F, Individual Development: Developing Learning Plans

Definitely                      Maybe                      Probably not

## THE LEARNING PLAN

The Learning Plan on the next page will help you keep track of your progress on using the *Moving Ahead* materials to enhance your own professional growth. The plan is divided into four columns. Use the first column to check the skills you need to enhance or develop, based upon your self-assessment. Use the second column to record your progress in completing activities you've selected. Please note: in addition to completing individual skill-building activities, you will also track your completion of the Case Activity (B) that puts the skill-building activities in context and the related Application Activity (X) that provides you with an opportunity to practice the skills.

After you've completed the Application Activity for this Performance Situation package, return to the Learning Plan and record how you will continue your skill development in your local workplace and the types of support you will need in order to be successful.

## LEARNING PLAN FOR JOB PERFORMANCE SITUATION 1

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Skills I Need	Put a check mark beside the skills you need to work on developing or enhancing.	2. Building These Skills	3. Next Steps for Continuing My Development	4. Support I Need from Supervisors, Managers, Co-Workers, and Team Members
		Record your progress in completing the training activities.	Examples: Read more about the topic. Repeat activity with colleagues. Practice in a work situation.	Examples: Provide opportunities to practice. Provide constructive feedback. Serve as my mentor or coach.
		1-B, Performance Situation Activity _____		
1-C, Staff Development and Training: New Staff Orientations		1-C, New Staff Orientations Date completed _____		
1-D, Staff Development and Training: Leading a Guided Discussion		1 - D Leading a Guided Discussion Date completed _____		
1-E, Individual Development: Giving Feedback		1-E, Giving Feedback Date completed _____		
1-F, Individual Development: Developing Learning Plans		1-F, Developing Learning Plans Date completed _____		
		1-X, Application Activity Date completed _____		



# 1-B Case Activity

## OVERVIEW

### The Region

**Outcomes.** Participants who complete this activity will be able to

- put themselves in the shoes of other Head Start staff
- consider the challenges presented by a commonly occurring job performance situation, as it is played out in one hypothetical program
- assess the role played by the presence or absence of skills in *new staff orientations, giving feedback, leading a guided discussion, and developing learning plans.*

**Materials.** Newsprint and markers

### Components

This activity can be done by one person, an informal group, or a formal workshop. We have provided suggested times, but participants and facilitators may wish to adjust these to their own timetables.

Step 1. Handout: The Region	10 min.
Step 2. Worksheet: Case Questions and Discussion	20 min.
Suggested total time	30 min.

# STEP 1. HANDOUT: THE REGION

Suggested time: 10 min.

Read and reflect on the following case to deepen your understanding of the situation—not to address the problems or find solutions. Following this activity, participants will work on specific skill-building activities; after that they will have the opportunity to come back to the scenario and, in an application activity, apply their increased skill competencies to addressing the issues it presents.

## The Region

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“Sure, I get that,” Doug answers. Hector isn’t sure that Doug gets it. “These are such crucial years for children,” Doug continues. “Their minds soak up everything! Elana is in this preschool program, and the children there are starting to work with letters and sounds. Most of our Head Start children are just as smart, I bet you. Goals 2000 wants all children ready to go to school to learn. I think we’ve got the foundation in Head Start for building a pretty nice language arts program. Wouldn’t that be a contribution—if we could grow a model in our region that has all Head Start children entering school able to read? So by the time Elana is ready for college, we might see Head Start children all across the country really ready to learn!”

STEP 2. WORKSHEET: CASE QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

Suggested time: 20 min.

**Part I** (10 min.) Use the following questions to reflect on the case. Question 1 applies only to grantee staff, question 2 only to federal staff, and questions 3 through 6 to both. Each participant should take about 10 minutes to answer the questions by herself or himself.

1. Grantee staff: what about this case seems familiar? What potential problems do you see coming up in the program? How will these problems affect areas of the program? How will they affect the program overall? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Federal staff: What about this case seems familiar? What potential problems do you see coming up in the program? What role can a federal staff person play in helping the program director identify and address these problems?

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3. Both: From your experience, can you describe how the presence—or absence—of skills in *planning and implementing new staff orientations* has affected day-to-day program operations?

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4. Both: From your experience, can you describe how the presence—or absence—of skills in *giving feedback* has affected programs, in both the short term and long term?

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5. Both: From your experience, can you explain the presence—or absence— of skills in *leading a guided discussion* has affected day-to-day program operations?

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6. Both: From your experience, can you relate how the presence—or absence—of skills in *developing learning plans* has affected program operations on a day-to-day basis?

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**Part II** (10 min.) If you are working in pairs or a group, take another 10 minutes or so to discuss your answers, why you gave them, and any points of difference.

# 1-C Staff Development and Training: New Staff Orientations

## OVERVIEW

### New Staff Orientations

**Outcomes.** Participants who complete this activity will be able to

- understand the role and benefits of new staff orientation
- design an initial orientation session
- assess the effectiveness of new staff orientation efforts

**Materials.** Newsprint and markers

### Components

This activity can be done by one person, an informal group, or a formal workshop. We have provided suggested times, but participants and facilitators may wish to adjust these to their own timetables.

Step 1. Worksheet: Reflection	30 min.
Step 2. Background Reading: The Essentials of New Staff Orientation	
Handout: Orientation Tools	20 min.
Step 3. Worksheet: Planning an Initial Orientation Session	15 min.
Step 4. Summary	45 min.
	10 min.
Suggested total time	2 hrs.

# STEP 1. WORKSHEET: REFLECTION

Suggested time: 30 min.

**Purpose:** To help participants reflect on the types of support and direction they received when they began working in the Head Start system.

## Part I (10 min.)

1. Think about your first day on the job as a Head Start employee. How did you feel? If you have been with Head Start for a long time, reflect back on a community situation where you were new. In either case, include your first impressions.

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2. What made your first days and weeks on the job a positive experience? Be specific. For example, think about how you were welcomed, how you were introduced to other employees, how you learned about the ins and outs of your job, etc.

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3. What more could your supervisor or co-workers have done during your first few weeks to ease the transition into your job? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Think about your first few months at Head Start. What were the most difficult aspects of your work? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What types of support and direction, either from your supervisor or co-workers, would have helped you meet the challenges you were facing?

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**Part II** (20 min.) If you are working in a group, discuss your responses with another member of the group.

## **STEP 2. BACKGROUND READING: THE ESSENTIALS OF NEW STAFF ORIENTATION**

Suggested time: 20 min.

Study the following reading. Feel free to highlight sections or write comments in the margin throughout these activities.

### **I. PURPOSE**

New Head Start employees at both the local and federal levels need support and direction to perform their jobs in sync with the spirit, vision, philosophies, and future directions of Head Start.

New staff orientation is an in-depth process. It needs to be carried out over time, not in one meeting on the employee's first day of work. Conducted in the right way, orientation can integrate new employees into the organization and prepare them to function effectively and successfully.

Competent planning for new staff orientation takes into account the unique needs of each new employee. The content, structure, and time frame will vary for different job functions. Some new jobs reflect transfers or promotions within Head Start. Or staff may come from agencies or organizations that are affiliated with or do the same type of work as their new employer.

A thoughtful, well-organized orientation will

- help reduce the anxiety that the new staff person is probably feeling
- foster a positive attitude toward and impression of the organization
- address the diverse needs of each new staff person
- answer critical questions
- establish and reinforce performance expectations

Now let's consider the essential elements of new staff orientation.



## There's Only One Chance to Make a First Impression

The first day on the job is often a stressful experience for new employees. They face many unknowns. Besides learning about the basics of their new job, they have to get acclimated to a new organizational environment, new managers, and new co-workers. It is the organization's responsibility to establish a good first impression in initiating new employees.

Here are five ways in which organizations can ease the transition of a new employee.

1. Always have someone available to welcome a new staff person at the door. A new employee should not get the impression that his arrival was unexpected or, worse, not planned for!
2. Do not overload new employees with paperwork before they have had an opportunity to be formally welcomed.
3. Make sure ahead of time that new staff have been assigned an office or work space that is adequately equipped, and that all equipment and furniture are in good working order. If new employees, such as teachers, are responsible for equipping their own work space, make sure that they receive guidance on ordering supplies and equipment.
4. If new employees will be required to attend any meetings or off-site appointments on their first day of work, let them know before they arrive.
5. Make sure that the high level of enthusiasm and constant communication that are used to recruit new staff are in place on the first day and maintained during the orientation and beyond.

## Introduce New Staff to the Head Start Culture

Regardless of their function in the organization, integration into the Head Start culture can instill a sense of belonging and commitment among all employees. An effective orientation would include discussion of the following.<sup>1</sup>

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| • Mission:            | Purpose of the organization                       |
| • Accepted behaviors: | Accepted language, and demeanor                   |
| • Norms or standards: | Acceptable daily behavior                         |
| • Values:             | Collective beliefs about what is important        |
| • Philosophies:       | Guiding principles behind policies and procedures |
| • Rules and customs:  | Professional conduct and accepted practices       |
| • Climate:            | How the organization is perceived                 |

## Help New Staff Begin Their Job

An effective orientation assists the employee in learning the ins and outs of the new job. It clarifies performance expectations; it defines initial tasks and assignments. It is best to review the job description in detail and to familiarize the new employee with co-workers, work-space facilities, benefits and accounting procedures, and meeting schedules.

**Reviewing the Job Description.** The job description takes on new significance on the first day of work. This is why a review of the job description is an important part of the orientation. It should cover

- an overview of primary job responsibilities

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community, *Leading Head Start into the Future*. 1997. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Social Services, p. 65.

- the interrelationship between the new employee's job functions and those of other staff within the organization
- identification of immediate and long-term training needs (for more information see 1F, Staff Development and Training: Developing Learning Plans).

Clarify performance expectations, including the quantitative and qualitative requirements for the job. Let the new employee know what to expect concerning conduct on the job, working relationships with other staff and clients, and measures for appraising future performance.

Reinforcing performance expectations during new staff orientation is important for another reason: it sets the tone for how the new employee and her immediate supervisor will communicate about critical performance issues, such as

- applying knowledge and skills to job tasks
- maintaining an acceptable level of work quality
- demonstrating accountability and follow-through on tasks

With performance expectations clear, the new employee is almost ready to begin work.

**Getting Started.** Supervisors have the most intimate knowledge about the new employee's job and are vital to the planning and implementation process. Page 8 1-C They need to prepare the employee to begin work by providing the following thorough introduction:

- Review the assigned office or work space (e.g., classroom) with the new employee. Make sure that the employee has the equipment she needs and knows how to operate it. Make sure that office and classroom supplies and other job-related resources are adequate.
- Give her a tour of the work-space facilities, particularly areas that she will regularly use or will be responsible for. Office tours are a great opportunity to engage other staff as guides and to help the new employee begin to establish relationships.
- Establish the new employee in the organization's benefits and accounting system. Show her how to complete time sheets, benefits claims forms, and requisitions for equipment and supplies. Provide an introduction to the organization's travel and expense reimbursement policies and procedures, if travel is part of the job.
- Introduce the new employee to key co-workers, members of the work team, and key personnel from other areas of the organization. Identify who can provide information or answers to questions. Co-worker introductions can also be part of specially planned events during the orientation: presentations, breakfast meetings, luncheons, or work sessions.
- Review the schedule and time frames for staff and management meetings, work meetings, and lunch hours. Get the new employee started with tasks or assignments that will help her transition into her job. Decide in advance what tasks she can do during the orientation period, with the benefit of support from her immediate supervisor and co-workers. Avoid burdening a new employee with a major work assignment before she has had the benefit of an appropriate orientation.

## II. METHODS

Orientations should be structured with the following in mind:

- the amount and type of information, guidance, and direction required to effectively and adequately prepare the new employee for work

- the nature, scope, and complexity of the new employee's job as well as the environment in which he will work
- the amount of time that the new employee will be given to begin performing at a functional level
- the organization's commitment of resources to the orientation process

Described from the standpoint of the employee's needs, the content, focus, and length of a new staff orientation need to take the following into account:

*What the new employee needs to know:* What type and complexity of information, knowledge, and skill are required for the job?

*When the new employee needs to know it:* What does she need to make it through the first day, the first 30 days, the first 6 months, and so on?

*How the new employee needs to receive it:* Does the position require formal training, coaching, or on-the-job training?

### **After the Initial Orientation**

The first week of the orientation helps new staff (1) understand their roles and responsibilities; (2) engage in specific work assignments; (3) form working relationships with other team members and co-workers; and (4) develop a deeper understanding of the principles and values inherent in the Head Start culture. But the orientation should not stop there.

**30 to 90 days later** Many organizations consider the 30- to 90-day period a probationary or trial period. This is usually the time before employee benefit programs take effect. It is the time when the organization and the new employee explore the mutual fit. Task performance and the potential need for further guidance and training are generally addressed during this period. This is an appropriate time to do the following:

- Review the orientation plan and solicit feedback from all involved as to its effectiveness
- Answer outstanding questions and clarify concerns regarding processes and procedures
- Elicit feedback from co-workers and team members as to the new employee's progress
- Increase the number and complexity of job assignments if the new employee is ready to move ahead
- Identify additional training and development needs

**Six months later** The six-month point is also a good time to assess and adjust staff orientation activities and ongoing staff development. It is also an appropriate time for a mid-year performance appraisal. The appraisal will determine whether the employee has absorbed the information and training received in the past six months and is ready to take on more complex tasks.

### **III. POINTS TO REMEMBER**

Consider the following points as you plan and implement the orientation:

- Begin planning for the orientation by identifying (1) the general information that all new staff need and (2) the information needed for the new position. You may find it useful to work with a

checklist like the one provided in the Orientation Tools Handout.

- Spread orientation activities over a reasonable time frame to avoid overloading new employees. Prioritize the information (e.g., distinguish what the employee must know on the first day from what can wait until a week or a month later). Set up a priority matrix like the one shown in the Orientation Tools Handout.
- Customize the orientation plan so that it takes into account the employee's level of experience, the complexity of the job, and other factors.
- Orienting staff is not a job for supervisors alone; it requires the commitment of everyone within the organization. Staff can help new employees set up the office or work space; serve as job task coaches, mentors, or "buddies"; and assist in other ways.
- Successful orientations require feedback from all involved, including the new employee. Supervisors can meet with the new employee during the first few weeks to answer questions and solicit her impressions of the orientation experience. This information can then be used to make needed changes to the orientation program.

# HANDOUT: ORIENTATION TOOLS

Suggested time: 15 min.

This handout contains five orientation tools for your review:

- Orientation Checklist
- New Staff Information Priority Matrix
- New Staff Orientation Plan
- Sample New Staff Orientation Agenda Day 1
- Sample Orientation Guidebook Table of Contents

# ORIENTATION CHECKLIST

**1. Provide essential resources and materials**

- Mission, values, and philosophy
- Program guidelines and standards
- Program procedures
- Organizational chart
- Job description
- Employment policies
- Other

**2. Review job description and performance expectations**

**3. Review work schedule (including lunch breaks and procedures for signing in or out)**

**4. Review payroll policies and procedures**

**5. Review key administrative policies and practices**

- Requests for leave
- Holidays
- Vacation
- Dress code
- Office appearance
- Regular report submission
- Conduct and discipline standards
- Health and emergency procedures
- Time sheet procedures
- Office security
- Ordering of equipment and supplies

**6. Conduct introductions to immediate co-workers and other key staff**

**7. Review standard meetings to attend**

Meeting	Purpose	Date/Time

**8. Conduct tour of program and organization facilities**

- New employee's office
- Supervisor's office
- Other key staff offices
- Meeting rooms
- Classrooms
- Restrooms
- Parking facilities
- Emergency exits
- Library
- Supplies and storage areas
- Kitchen and eating areas

\_\_\_\_ **9. Review and demonstrate critical equipment and systems**

- |                           |                       |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| ____ Computer and printer | ____ Project software |
| ____ Telephone(s)         | ____ Voice mail       |
| ____ Fax(es)              | ____ E-mail           |
| ____ Photocopier          |                       |

\_\_\_\_ **10. Present initial job assignments**

\_\_\_\_ **11. Schedule or assign additional training**

\_\_\_\_ **12. Plan and schedule special events**

- \_\_\_\_ Lunch with program or organization director
- \_\_\_\_ Breakfast or lunch with co-workers
- \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ **13. Other**

- \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

### New Staff Information Priority Matrix

Time Frame	Priority Rating		
First day	A. Critical Needs (Know Immediately)	B. Important	C. Nice to Know
First week			
30 days			
90 days			



### NEW STAFF ORIENTATION PLAN

Employee name: \_\_\_\_\_

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Initial Activity	Manager or Staff Responsible	Date to Be Conducted	Total Time Allotted	Date Completed	Comments

### Sample New Staff Orientation Agenda Day 1

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time</b>
• Welcome new staff person	7:30 a.m. – 8:15 a.m.
• Complete benefits, accounting, and other paperwork	8:15 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.
• Meet with supervisor	9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
• Give tour of facilities and introduce key personnel	10:30 a.m.– 11:30a.m.
• Attend introductory luncheon with members of work team	11:30 a.m.– 1:00 p.m.
• Meet with program director	1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.
• Meet with administrative director	1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
• Set up office and computer	2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
• Meet with supervisor at end of day.	4:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

## Sample Orientation Guidebook

New employees cannot be expected to retain all the information they receive initially about the organization or program, their co-workers, and their job. An orientation guidebook can be used as a reference at any time. Consider a sample table of contents. You can use it or one like it to develop a guidebook for new employees. Update the guidebook regularly.

### Introduction

- Welcome Letter from Program Director
- Orientation Plan
- Orientation Agenda

### I. Organization and Program Information

- History, Values, Philosophy
- Organizational Chart

### II. Job Information

- Job Description
- Job Assignments
- Staff Development Plan

### III. Staff Information

- Staff Roster with Phone Numbers
- List of Staff by Position and Responsibility

### IV. Facilities Information

- Facilities Floor Plan with Staff Offices and Other Key Areas Marked
- Instructions for VoiceMail and E-mail Systems

### V. Other

## STEP 3. WORKSHEET: PLANNING AN INITIAL ORIENTATION SESSION

Suggested time: 45 min.

**Purpose:** This worksheet will give participants an opportunity to select (or create) a profile of a new Head Start employee, then plan an orientation to meet the individual's needs.

**Part I** (15 min.)

### **Profile 1**

**Carlos** is a 25-year federal employee. He has just received a lateral transfer from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) to Head Start. His most recent job at OFA was to monitor and provide guidance to a number of demonstration projects within the states aimed at supporting welfare reform efforts. His new job at Head Start will require him to perform similar monitoring tasks with the local Head Start grantees in his region. Carlos is totally unfamiliar with Head Start except for information he picked up during joint meetings with Head Start staff while he was at OFA.

### **Profile 2**

**Lori** was recently promoted to the position of child development services manager. She has worked in La Paloma for five years, as a teacher for three years and as a center manager for two years. In her most recent position, she demonstrated strong supervision skills and a sound knowledge of child development. In her new role, she will need to manage partnerships with several local education agencies in your service area. She has no experience in working with outside organizations and seemed to be nervous when she made a presentation before the entire Head Start staff.

### **Profile 3**

**Brenda** has worked in the Atlanta regional office of Head Start for two and a half years as an administrative assistant while working on her master's degree in public administration. She completed her degree and recently received a promotion to the position of program 1-C Page 19 specialist. Shortly after her promotion, Brenda relocated to another federal office because of a change in her husband's job. She is now working with a new Head Start unit, with a new supervisor and new co-workers. During her years as an AA she learned a great deal about Head Start. She even occasionally volunteered for special activities at the Head Start center in her community. Since her hiring, several program specialists have commented on Brenda's lack of knowledge of Head Start administrative functions.

#### **Profile 4**

**John** has recently been hired as a family services manager. He holds an MSW, and before joining La Paloma Head Start, he was a social worker with a local mental health organization. The references you interviewed as part of the hiring process said that he has excellent interpersonal skills and understands the issues facing children and families in your community. He is new to Head Start, however, and has never held a management position before. He is thrilled that the family workers seem to like him: they ask him to meet with the families that are a challenge to them.

From these four profiles, select an employee who would fit into your own organization. Or create a profile of an employee you recently hired. Then develop an orientation plan for this person by completing the Information Priority Matrix and the first four columns of the New Staff Orientation Plan in this handout. Use the Step 2 Background Reading, the Orientation Checklist, and the Sample New Staff Agenda as resources.

Answer the following questions after you fill in the Priority Matrix and the Orientation Plan:

1. What information does the new employee need?
2. In what time frame does she need this information?
3. What type of support will she require from co-workers and supervisors, and why?
4. How extensive will the orientation need to be for the new employee?
5. What supportive materials would you provide or develop for the new employee?
6. What supportive training would you provide?

**Part II** (25 min.) Share and discuss your plan with the other members of your group. Guide your discussion with the following questions:

1. What were the major differences in each of the plans, (e.g., time frame of orientation, content)?
2. What was the most difficult task in planning an orientation: For each profile? In general?
3. Were there factors in any of the profiles that impeded your doing an orientation as you would have preferred?
4. What are the two or three most important things you learned about planning an orientation for new staff?

# STEP 4. SUMMARY

Suggested time: 10 min.

## Key Points

- The purpose of new staff orientation
- Strategies for addressing new staff needs
- The role of the supervisor
- Staff involvement in orientation

## Personal Review

What did you learn from this activity?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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How will you use your new knowledge and skills in your work?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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What other things do you think you might need to learn in order to master the skill of planning and implementing new staff orientations?

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## 1-D Staff Development and Training: Leading a Guided Discussion

### OVERVIEW

#### Leading a Guided Discussion

**Outcomes.** Participants who complete this activity will be able to

- identify opportunities for a guided discussion as an appropriate staff development strategy
- develop discussion questions based on learning objectives
- select a discussion stimulus



- use questions, call patterns, body language, and visual aids to manage a discussion
- use a three-step process to respond to incorrect answers
- help participants develop action steps to incorporate what they learned into their work

**Materials.** Newsprint and markers; Head Start video *Curriculum in Head Start*; copy of the Head Start Program Performance Standards

### Components

This activity can be done by one person, an informal group, or a formal workshop. We have provided suggested times, but participants and facilitators may wish to adjust these to their own timetables.

Step 1. Background Reading: Preparing for a Guided Discussion	15 min.
Step 2. Worksheet: Preparing for a Guided Discussion	40 min.
Step 3. Background Reading: Conducting the Discussion	15 min.
Step 4. Handout: Dealing with Challenging Participants	10 min.
Step 5. Worksheet and Role Play: Responding to Challenging Participants	45 min.
Step 6. Summary	10 min.
Suggested total time	2 hrs. 15 min.

# STEP 1. BACKGROUND READING: PREPARING FOR A GUIDED TRAINING DISCUSSION

Suggested time: 15 min.

Study the following reading. Feel free to highlight sections or write comments in the margins.

“Training is an ongoing activity designed to increase the level of competence and expertise of staff and volunteers.”<sup>2</sup>

Staff of local and federal Head Start organizations are often called upon to provide training. Staff in local programs provide training to orient new employees, convey up-to-date information or build skills with existing staff, and introduce parents to the world of Head Start. Federal staff are frequently required to conduct workshops at conferences or other large gatherings. Although many Head Start staff are eager to conduct a lecture-based workshop or lead an experiential activity, others avoid the role of trainer at any cost.

Not all effective training is packaged as a formal lecture or simulation. One training technique is the guided discussion: a leader facilitates a structured discussion that has specific objectives and that uses particular stimuli and planned questions to advance learning in the group. It can be used by both experienced trainers and non-trainers alike.

## I. WHAT ARE GUIDED DISCUSSIONS?

Guided discussions are used as a training method in almost every field, especially when there is a problem to be solved. They convey information and build shared understanding. They offer an alternative to didactic presentation techniques when you want participants to learn new concepts and apply what they've learned.

Guided discussions have several features in common:

- One or more participants who are prepared to explore new ideas.
- A leader who has identified learning objectives for the experience and manages the discussion. Frequently, the leader will involve participants in developing the goal and learning objectives for the experience. Page 4 1-D
- A common stimulus such as a book, article, case study, video, or live observation. The stimulus can come from Head Start materials or experiences or from other sources—family photos, storybooks, real-life vignettes, or commercial films.
- A set of questions designed to help the learners reflect on new ideas and explore ways to apply them to their work.

Guided discussions are especially useful in engaging participants in analyzing a situation or event so that they can arrive at principles to apply to their work. Effective guided discussions not only convey information but increase the learners' analytical and critical thinking skills. They also surface and clarify misconceptions. Guided discussions involve a high level of participant involvement, so learning often occurs on a deeper level and is retained longer. Used in a group setting, guided discussion helps participants learn from each other and gives them an opportunity to develop their group problem-solving skills.

## II. WHEN CAN GUIDED DISCUSSIONS BE USED?

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<sup>2</sup>*Developing a Head Start Training Plan*. 1993. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, p. 1.

Guided discussion lends itself to a variety of situations:

- Supervisors or staff-development coaches can engage an individual employee in a one-on-one coaching session to build his knowledge about a particular topic.
- Group leaders can use guided discussion as an informal training experience for an intact group such as the education staff of a local Head Start program or a group of federal program specialists.
- Trainers can use the technique in a formal workshop at a conference or other large gathering.

Guided discussion can be an especially effective tool in orienting new staff. Supervisors or staff-development coaches whom they appoint can use it to orient a new employee to the organization's goals or principles. They can use it to walk staff through situations they may encounter in a classroom or in an onsite review experience, and they can use it to assess how prepared the employees are for a given situation. When other employees are involved, a guided discussion can become a team-building experience.

### **III. GETTING READY**

A successful guided discussion begins with thoughtful preparation. Experienced trainers know that there is a direct relationship between the amount of prework they do and their ease in facilitating the experience. In fact, well-prepared guided discussions often seem to lead themselves. A discussion leader can ensure the success of the training experience by following these steps:

- Develop a goal and learning objectives that will meet the learning needs of the audience
- Select a resource that will illustrate the learning objectives and stimulate discussion
- Develop questions that will lead to the key points in the discussion

## Develop a Goal and Learning Objectives

The *training goal* tells the participants what you hope to achieve through the discussion. Like most goals, it is stated in broad terms and identifies who the learners are and the overall behavior the learners are expected to acquire.<sup>3</sup>

Frequently, the goal of a guided discussion is to address a training need discovered through supervision, observation of practice, or staff responses to training surveys. For example, a child development services manager who knows that most of her staff struggle with individualizing for children might state the training goal in this way: “to strengthen teachers’ capacity to plan for individual children’s needs, strengths, and interests.”

Helping staff prepare to offer new services is another goal. For instance, a program that is planning to offer full-day and full-year services might offer a guided discussion on summer learning activities for children.

Because goals are stated in general terms, they are open to interpretation.<sup>4</sup> *Learning objectives* are more specific—they elucidate the goal by articulating the major points that you want the participants to take away from the discussion. Usually, objectives begin with an action verb. For example, a child development services manager who wants to strengthen teachers’ capacity to individualize might state the objectives in this way:

- Understand the importance of individualizing
- Build an understanding of individual children through observation, assessment, and conversations with parents and other staff
- Use your knowledge of child development to select areas of focus for each child
- Select approaches and strategies for addressing each child’s individual goals
- Develop a curriculum plan that reflects strategies for individual children in the context of overall classroom activities

Trainers who conduct workshops for outside groups or conferences are often given a predetermined goal in the form of an invitation to conduct the workshop on a particular topic. They do not have the luxury of knowing the audience and its particular training needs, but they need to collect whatever information they can (the job categories of people likely to attend, their level of experience, etc.) in order to develop meaningful learning objectives. When this information is unavailable, trainers can choose to develop a workshop that meets the needs of a particular group and advertise it as such (e.g., “This workshop was designed for new Head Start directors who want to know more about community collaboration”).

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<sup>3</sup> Supplemental Training Materials, Module IV, *Developing Goals and Objectives*. Washington, DC: Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, p. SUPP-6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## Select a Discussion Stimulus

Now you are ready to select a vehicle that will serve as the stimulus for your discussion. It can be a video, an article, a book, a case study, or even copies of new regulations: the revised Head Start Program Performance Standards serve as the stimulus for the *Revisit and Renew* training package. Sometimes an actual observation of someone performing a function can be a wonderful stimulus for discussion.

The resource you select should

- challenge the conventional wisdom or demonstrate innovative practices (these types of resources are more likely to provoke thoughtful discussion than information that confirms what the participants already know)
- clearly illustrate your learning objectives
- if it is a video, feature characters that your audience can relate to
- if a reading or case, be written at a level appropriate for your audience

Head Start has a vast array of resources that can serve as a stimulus for discussion, including training packages that contain videos and prepared discussion guides. To obtain information on available Head Start resources, leaders can consult

- Catalog of Head Start Materials. This annotated listing of training materials is available from the Head Start Bureau.
- The Training Activities Matrix developed for the Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community. This resource provides an overview of 40 Training Guides. It maps the topics of each guide against the revised Head Start Performance Standards.
- The region's Quality Improvement Center or Disabilities Services Quality Improvement Center. Training and technical assistance specialists in each center are familiar with resources that might serve your purposes.

## Study the Training Resource

Next, develop the key points you want to cover. Begin by thoroughly studying the resource yourself. You may need to read or watch it, or both, several times to learn its content and understand its nuances. Study it until you can answer these questions:

- What is the main message of the resource? Do you agree or disagree with the message?
- Are the ideas new? Do they differ from current thinking or practice? If so, in what ways?
- How will participants respond? Will seasoned staff respond differently from new members? How could staff responses differ from your own?
- How can you use this resource to reach your training goal? Remember that many resources can be used for multiple purposes. For example, the *User's Guide to Curriculum in Head Start*<sup>5</sup> contains four different workshop outlines that can be used along with the *Curriculum in Head Start* video.

## Develop Questions

When you've become comfortable with the content of the resource, you are ready to develop questions to guide the discussion. If the resource is part of a training package, the questions in the user's guide may meet your needs. Most videos produced by Head Start are accompanied by excellent discussion guides.

If you are using an article, a case study, a live observation, or a video that has no discussion guide, you will need to develop the questions. Skilled trainers usually develop a core group of five or six primary

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<sup>5</sup>*User's Guide to Curriculum in Head Start*. 1988. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

questions and a set of subquestions that they may use if central points are not raised during the discussion. The list usually begins with general questions about the discussion resource (e.g., “What did you think about the reading?”).

The interaction<sup>6</sup> of participants can be so lively that an observer could lose sight of an important and basic reality: you are directing the discussion, through the kinds of questions you ask and whom you select to answer them. Questions can be used to

- kick off the discussion
- obtain information
- clarify a point
- draw attention to related points
- foster debate
- resolve a debate
- change the direction
- suggest a hypothesis
- stimulate abstract thought
- begin a summation

As a general rule, open-ended questions work best to engage participants in a discussion. These questions are thought-provoking and generate a wide variety of possible answers. They usually begin with the question words *what*, *where*, *which*, *why*, and *how*?

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<sup>6</sup>Adapted from Lang, C. *Case Method Teaching in Community Colleges*. 1987. Newton, MA: Education Development Center, Inc., p. 18.

## **Help Others Prepare**

Discussion participants also need to prepare in order to fully participate. You can help them by

- providing the stimulus in enough time to allow for thoughtful reading (if the stimulus is a written resource, such as case study, article, or regulations)
- arranging or assisting the participants in arranging for the observation (if the stimulus is a live observation)
- sharing discussion questions to serve as a reading or observation guide

# STEP 2. WORKSHEET: PREPARING FOR A GUIDED DISCUSSION

Suggested time: 40 min.

**Purpose:** To prepare participants to conduct a guided discussion

**Part I** (5 min.) Select scenario 1 or 2, then follow the directions below in Part II.

1. You are the mentor for two program specialists who have recently joined the Head Start unit after completing 10 years in another unit within ACF. During a recent meeting with the group, they expressed a desire to learn more about child development services in Head Start. You decide to use the Head Start video *Curriculum in Head Start* as a way to begin a guided discussion with the program specialists.
2. You are a family service manager in a local Head Start program. Recently you've noticed that the family workers whom you supervise have difficulty describing the program's child development philosophy to parents. You decide to show the video *Curriculum in Head Start* at your next staff meeting as a way to begin a discussion with the family workers.

**Part II** (15 min.) As you watch the video, think about questions and responses that the group you are working with may have. Record your thoughts below.

I am working with (circle one)

- new program specialists
- family workers

Possible questions and responses of participants in my group:

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**Part III** (10 min.) By yourself or with a partner, develop learning objectives for your group (major points you want participants to take away from the discussion).

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**Part IV** (10 min.) Develop at least five questions that are based on your learning objectives.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_



# STEP 3. BACKGROUND READING: CONDUCTING THE DISCUSSION

Suggested time: 15 min.

Study the following reading. Feel free to highlight sections or make notes in the margins.

## I. THE ELEMENTS

To lead a successful discussion you need two competencies: you have to know the content, and you have to manage the process.<sup>7</sup> In managing the process, you need to believe that others, even new staff, have important ideas to contribute to the discussion. You also need to believe that active engagement of participants will promote deeper learning. Discussion leaders who believe that they know everything there is to know about a topic, or are unwilling to learn from participants, are not effective.

If you lead the discussion successfully you will find that you are

- asking participants to analyze the stimulus
- guiding the discussion by your questions
- maintaining “enough” direction
- summing up what the participants have taught

## II. ESTABLISHING RAPPORT

We know from adult learning principles that adult learners need to know two things: (1) that a training experience will be worth their investment of time and (2) that the training environment is a safe one. You can fulfill both these prerequisites by including a brief time to discuss everyone’s expectations at the beginning of the session.

The specifics of this discussion will vary from training to training, but keep the following tips in mind:

*For a one-on-one discussion*

- Hold the discussion in a private place where distractions will be minimized.
- Agree on a time limit for the discussion before you begin; it will help you keep the discussion on track and free both of you from worrying about the time.
- Indicate that you, too, are looking forward to learning more from the discussion.
- Assure your discussion partner that the conversation will be confidential.

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<sup>7</sup>Adapted from *Case Method Teaching in the Community College*. 1986. p. 6.

*For an in-house staff discussion*

- Indicate that this is an opportunity for staff to explore new ideas and learn from one another.
- Agree on a time limit.
- Establish ground rules for the discussion, (e.g., listen respectfully to what others are saying, do not interrupt).

*For a workshop setting*

- Tell participants a little about yourself and your philosophy of training.
- Let others know that a successful discussion depends more on what they have to say than on what you say.
- Establish ground rules for the discussion. If the discussion resource is a video, even if some participants have seen it, you will need to introduce it briefly. Include the original purpose of the video and say who produced it. You can also suggest questions for participants to consider as they watch the video.

### **III. LEAD THE DISCUSSION**

Explain what you hope participants will get out of the experience. They need to know if the purpose is to raise awareness or to make a change in their practice following the discussion. Depending on which expectation they have in mind, they will tune in differently and ask different questions. After all participants understand the expectations for the session, the discussion can begin.

Typically, trainers begin the discussion by summarizing or asking a volunteer to summarize the key points of the resource they've read or seen. If all participants agree on the summary, an invitation to share initial impressions can be extended with questions like the following:

- What did you think?
- How does this relate to what we do?
- What good ideas are presented here?
- What do you agree with? What can't you accept?

The discussion continues with your prepared questions and fully explores important points by asking follow-up questions.

## Hints for Discussion Leaders<sup>8, 9</sup>

A discussion in the hands of a skilled leader seems to run itself. In reality a leader uses a number of techniques like the following to create the illusion of an effortless discussion. (Many of the points below refer to group discussions, but most can be applied or modified by a leader who is involved in a one-on-one discussion).

- Keep the conversation focused on the subject.
- Listen carefully and monitor participants' body language to stay aware of how the group is doing. If you are not sure, check in with a simple "How are we doing?"
- Give each person a chance to speak. Look at a reluctant participant and smile. Let him know that he has your support when he is ready to speak.
- Don't allow anyone to dominate the conversation.
- Encourage people to speak to the whole group. They may be tempted to speak just to you.
- Challenge someone's ideas without challenging them personally.
- Don't panic if the discussion lags; the group may need time to think about what they are hearing.

## IV. MAINTAIN "ENOUGH" DIRECTION<sup>10</sup>

As the leader you not only direct the discussion but also maintain some degree of management over the group as a whole. The challenge is to refrain from lapsing into a lecture while at the same time keeping the discussion from turning into a bull session with no focus. The following techniques can help.

### *Choice of Questions or Remarks*

- Insist through the questions that it's important to stay on a topic or that it's time to move on to another.
- Rephrase the questions: perhaps participants aren't responding because they didn't understand the first time
- Direct the participants to a particular exhibit or part of the resource to focus attention back on the resource and away from a dispute that is going nowhere.
- Ask a series of questions that address and honor a good point made by a participant
- Use humor to diffuse tension or conflict.

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<sup>8</sup>Adapted from Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community, *Setting the Stage: Including Children with Disabilities in Head Start*. 1997. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, p. 45

<sup>9</sup>Adapted from *Group Facilitation Tool Box, Facilitation Skill Development Process*. 1994. Washington, DC: Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, DM-H1, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup>Adapted from *Case Method Teaching in the Community College*, 1987, p. 23.

### *Call Pattern*

- Call on a participant for a particular response or point of view.
- Make eye contact with a participant to encourage him to speak.
- Foster a debate by calling on two participants known to have different views or who are sitting some distance from each other.
- Respond to a participant's comment directly or refer a comment to another participant for his or her response.
- Do not call on a participant who just speaks out. Nod instead to a participant with her hand up.

### *Body Language*

- Walk toward a participant to encourage her to speak.
- Hold your hand up to forestall a participant who wants to speak.
- Turn your back on a participant.
- Interpose your body between two participants in a heated debate.
- Listen and wait: it gives people time to think.

### *Using the Newsprint or Overhead Transparencies*

- Put particular comments on the newsprint: this signals a point to remember.
- Point to an idea already on the newsprint.
- Draw circles or lines to connect ideas on the newsprint.

## **V. HANDLE CHALLENGING PARTICIPANTS**

The primary role of the group leader is to make sure that the group achieves the agreed-upon objectives of the discussion while respecting the needs of the individuals in the group. The greatest roadblock to reaching these goals is challenging participants. Dealing with these challenges may be uncomfortable, but you owe it to the group to keep the discussion on track.

One common roadblock to group learning is the participant who answers a question incorrectly or shares an opinion that is contrary to accepted Head Start practices. In general, use the following three guidelines in responding to questions.

1. Always reinforce correct answers positively.
2. Acknowledge the effort of the respondent regardless of the answer given.
3. Minimize potential embarrassment for wrong or incomplete answers.

For example, suppose a teacher suggests that it would be a good idea to hold Head Start graduation ceremonies with children wearing caps and gowns. The leader might respond respectfully by saying:

“Yes, Sarah, it is important to celebrate the end of a child's Head Start experience. Does anyone else have thoughts about caps and gowns at graduation?” When you use this technique, the group is not left with the false impression that you agree that caps and gowns are acceptable, and Sarah is not embarrassed in front of the group.

(See the Step 4 Handout for ways to handle 10 types of challenging participants.)

## **VI. CONCLUDE THE DISCUSSION**

Even a dynamic, fruitful discussion will remain only an interesting training exercise unless the discussion leader helps participants apply what they've learned to their ongoing practice. Leave time at the end to summarize key points, draw conclusions, and determine next steps.

## **Summarize Key Points**

At the end of the discussion, distill the thoughts and responses of participants into several key points. Ask the participant(s) to summarize what they learned from the discussion, using the questioning techniques described earlier to elicit the most important points. Be sure to capture not only the points that you thought were important, but those that represent the opinion of the entire group, even if you may not have thought of them yourself. If you are working with a group, record the most cogent points on newsprint as a visual reminder. You may also want to record key points on your copy of the article or case, or in a notebook.

## **Draw Conclusions**

A summary goes just so far; participants also need to reflect on the implications that these key points have for their practice. Leaders frequently ask participants to think about what they will do differently as a result of what they learned. For example, a family services manager who participates in a discussion on family-centered practices may conclude that she needs to make her program's data-collection forms less burdensome for families.

## **Determine Next Steps**

Encourage the participants to develop an action plan so that they can apply what they learned to their practice. The plan can include steps like these:

- Obtain more information about the discussion topic through follow-up reading, observations of other staff, and further discussion with a supervisor.
- Institute a new practice
- Share new information with other staff.

Each step needs to indicate an action and a completion date. For example, the family services manager might decide to engage a committee of family workers to make their intake forms more family friendly before February.

In a one-on-one discussion or in other discussions with your own staff, it is usually helpful for the leader and the participant to develop the action plan together. This lets the participant tap into your knowledge of follow-up resources and engage you in supporting the action steps. Frequently, these will include a step for a follow-up discussion or an observation of any new practices adopted. In a conference or workshop setting, you can invite the participants to share some of their actions steps with the whole group as a way of validating their plan. You can also suggest that participants share their plans with their at-home supervisor.

# STEP 4. HANDOUT: DEALING WITH CHALLENGING PARTICIPANTS<sup>11</sup>

10 Suggested time: 10 min.

CHALLENGING PEOPLE	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
Talker Tim	<p>Has something to say about everything.            Be careful with Tim. You want to slow him down, not shut him up. Direct questions to others in the group. "That's good, Tim. What do you think, Bob?"            If all else fails, talk to Tim privately on break. "I'm so glad you're in the group, but I need to hear from others. I'll call on you when they need help."            Avoid eye contact.            Structure question so that it's closed-ended ("yes" or "no").</p>
Flatterer Flo	<p>Gives false feedback from the group by continually agreeing. She asks and courts your opinion in any way she can.            Bypass her as much as you can.            Remember that her feedback may be false.            Check with others in the group.            Don't let her dominate all your time</p>
Yakking Yolanda	<p>Side conversationalist.            Determine if the talking is disruptive or if it is another form of learning.            Pause and wait until the talking stops.            Move closer to Yolanda.            Bring Yolanda back to task.            Refer to Yolanda's previous contribution.            Ask her opinion about the current topic.            When stronger action is needed, rearrange seating.            Take a break and let Yolanda know that her behavior is disruptive.            Ask for her input to the solution.            Explain consequences if talking continues.            (These are progressive steps. Go only as far as you need to go to correct the situation.)</p>
Arguing Ann	<p>Insincere; has a hidden agenda that even she may not be aware of.            Stop the argument. Don't get drawn in.            Try questions as a way to get at the hidden agenda. If that doesn't work, throw it to the group.            Try agreeing with at least part of it to diffuse argument.</p>
Wandering Wilbert	<p>Continually gets discussion off center.            Thank him for his contribution and throw questions to the group to get back on track.            Paraphrase what you think Wilbert is saying. Introduce your paraphrase with, "Let me be sure we understand."</p>
Wrong Answer Willie	<p>Rephrase the question and redirect it.            Acknowledge any part of the answer that is correct.</p>
Gripping Gus	<p>He sometimes has legitimate complaints but more often likes to hear himself whine. If the complaint is legitimate, throw it out</p>

<sup>11</sup>Adapted from *Group Facilitation Tool Box, Facilitation Skill Development Process*. 1994. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, Washington, DC.

	to the group.
Silent Sam	He may be an active participant even though he says nothing. Check nonverbal behavior to see if he's with you. You may need to ask him a question to check.
Bored Brenda	Try to determine why she's bored. She may use boredom as a front because she feels insecure. If she knows it all or thinks she knows it all, use her as a resource.
Know-It-All Ken	If productive, continue dialogue. If nonproductive, use the following action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Don't get into an argument.</li> <li>b. Turn it over to the group for discussion.</li> <li>c. Listen to and acknowledge the question but don't confront.</li> <li>d. Suggest alternative views.</li> <li>e. Don't become defensive; acknowledge mistakes when appropriate.</li> <li>f. Don't put the challenger down.</li> </ul>

## STEP 5. WORKSHEET AND ROLE PLAY: RESPONDING TO CHALLENGING PARTICIPANTS

Suggested time: 45 min.

**Purpose:** To give participants an opportunity to respond to the challenges posed by a discussion participant.

**Part I** (25 min.) If you are part of a group, take 5 minutes to form into groups of four or more so that each participant can be involved in the role play. Ask for one volunteer to assume the role of a discussion leader, a second to play the new family worker. The third member will role play an experienced staff member; the fourth member will play an observer. (If there are more than four participants, others can also play the role of experienced staff members.)

Pass out role instructions. *Each role player should read only the instruction sheets for his or her own role.* Participants should take 5 to 10 minutes to read their own instructions, ask questions, and get comfortable with their roles.

Begin the role play. (It will take about 10 minutes.)

**Alternative Directions.** If you are doing the exercise on your own, read the three role play scripts that follow. Place yourself in the role of the discussion leader. Decide how you would respond to the new family worker, and develop the points that you would make to promote his or her understanding of Head Start's child development philosophy.

**Part II** (20 min.) Conclude by discussing the role play. Be sure to include the perspective of the observer and the role players in the discussion.



## **DISCUSSION LEADER INSTRUCTIONS**

You are a family services supervisor. As part of your orientation of a new family worker, you have shown him or her the Head Start video *Curriculum in Head Start*. The worker knows the community well and has worked as a volunteer with parents at a local social service agency. Your goal is to ground her (or him) in Head Start beliefs and practices so that she will be able to represent the program to interested parents during your upcoming recruitment process.

You are concerned that this new worker may have unrealistically high expectations for what the program should do. You have overheard her in the lunchroom telling other staff that Head Start's goal should be to teach all of its four-year-olds to read before they enter kindergarten. You have invited an experienced family worker with you to help reinforce the points that you want to make in your guided discussion.

To open the discussion, you mention that the video emphasizes the need to engage parents in their child's experience in Head Start. You ask the new worker if she has any thoughts about ways in which, as a family worker, she can promote family involvement in children's education.

You listen for her reply and decide how you will respond to what she says.

Continue the conversation. Using techniques from the Background Reading, help the new worker gain an understanding of Head Start's educational philosophy while maintaining her enthusiasm. Invite the experienced family worker to play a supportive role in the discussion.

## **NEW FAMILY WORKER INSTRUCTIONS**

You are a new family worker for the local Head Start program. You have lived in the community a long time. Before coming to Head Start, you volunteered at a local literacy program. You have just watched the video *Curriculum in Head Start* with your new supervisor and one or more experienced family workers. You were delighted when you heard that Head Start believes strongly in the parents' role in their children's education. Many of the Head Start parents you met through the literacy program believe that the best way to prevent illiteracy is to teach children to read before kindergarten. When your supervisor mentions Head Start's belief that it is important to engage parents in decisions about their child's education, you say:

"I'm happy that Head Start involves parents in making decisions about their children's education. Many of the parents I know believe that their children should learn how to read in Head Start. I'll be sure to encourage them to talk to their children's teacher about including reading instruction in the classroom."

## **EXPERIENCED FAMILY WORKER INSTRUCTIONS**

You are an experienced family worker. The family services manager has asked you to participate in a discussion with a new colleague about curriculum in Head Start. Her goal is to ground the new worker in Head Start beliefs and practices so that she (or he) will be able to represent the program to interested parents during your upcoming recruitment process. As a group, you've just watched the video *Curriculum in Head Start*. The discussion leader may call on you to help her clarify some of the points made in the video.

## **OBSERVER**

Use the following questions to guide your observation of the interaction between the role players. Be prepared to share your observations at the conclusion of the role play.

How did the discussion leader react to the new family worker's statement about teaching children to read?

1. Did she reinforce those parts of the new employee's reply that were in agreement with Head Start beliefs? If yes, how so?
2. Did she acknowledge the efforts of the new employee? If so, how?
3. Did she minimize potential embarrassment? If so how?
4. How did she help to change the new employee's views?
5. Refer to the Step 3 Background Reading. What other techniques could the leader have used?

# STEP 6. SUMMARY

Suggested time: 10 min.

## Key Points

- Defining a guided discussion
- Knowing when to use the technique
- Selecting a resource
- Developing guiding questions
- Establishing rapport
- Conducting the discussion
- Handling challenging participants
- Concluding the discussion

## Personal Review

What did you learn from this activity?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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How will you use your new knowledge and skills in your work?

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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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What other things do you think you might need to learn in order to master the skill of leading a guided discussion?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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# 1-E Individual Development: Giving Feedback

## OVERVIEW

### Giving Feedback

**Outcomes.** Participants who complete this activity will be able to

- understand the principles and guidelines for giving feedback
- know when feedback is needed
- select appropriate feedback for new staff
- elicit helpful feedback from new staff about their orientation experience

**Materials.** Newsprint and markers

### Components

This activity can be done by one person, an informal group, or a formal workshop. We have provided suggested times, but participants and facilitators may wish to adjust these to their own timetables.

Step 1. Worksheet: Reflections on Feedback	15 min.
Step 2. Background Reading: Feedback as a Tool in New Staff Orientation	25 min.
Step 3. Worksheet: The Right Type of Feedback Handout: Vignettes	40 min. 5 min.
Step 4. Worksheet: Round Robin Handout: Round Robin Observation Form	45 min.
Step 5. Summary	10 min.
Suggested total time	2 hrs. 20 min.

# STEP 1. WORKSHEET: REFLECTIONS ON FEEDBACK

Suggested time: 15 min.

**Purpose:** To give participants a chance to apply what they have learned about giving feedback.

**Part I** (5 min.) Reflect on your most recent experience as a new staff person to answer the following questions. If you haven't been a new employee in a while, think of the orientation of a colleague who just joined Head Start.

1. Did you receive any feedback from your supervisor or anyone else regarding your progress during the orientation period?

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2. Was the feedback helpful? If not, why?

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3. If you did not receive any feedback during your orientation, what feedback would have been helpful to you at that time, and why?

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4. How did/could feedback change your orientation experience?

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**Part II** (10 min.) If you are working in pairs or a small group, discuss your answers and compare notes.

## STEP 2. BACKGROUND READING: FEEDBACK AS A TOOL IN NEW STAFF ORIENTATION

Suggested time: 25 min.

Study the following reading. Feel free to highlight sections or write comments in the margins.

### I. COACHING NEW STAFF WITH FEEDBACK

“Feedback is a way of helping another person *consider* changing his or her behavior. It is communication to an individual that gives information about how he or she affects others. Feedback helps an individual keep his or her behavior on target and thus achieve his or her goals.”<sup>12</sup>

This description of feedback explains why giving and receiving it is so important in the workplace, particularly for new staff. Feedback can provide encouragement to change behaviors that impede satisfactory job performance. It is meant to be a give-and-take process that focuses on the employer's concerns about performance improvement and the employee's concerns about staff development.

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<sup>12</sup> “Techniques for Giving Effective Feedback,” *A Guide for Education Coordinators in Head Start: Resource Papers*. 1986. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. pp. 6-7.



Feedback can be a gift; it need not be dreaded and avoided. The best spirit of feedback is constructive intervention. It holds up a mirror in which people can view their behavior, assess its impact, and decide whether, why, and how to change it. As a supervisor, you hope to “mirror” in an environment that supports learning and development.

Supervisors and co-workers need to be adept at both giving and receiving feedback for new staff. The use of feedback throughout the orientation period lets the employer

- provide critical information on performance standards and expectations, as the new employee learns to do things in a new way in a new environment
- produce positive changes that will carry over in the new employee’s ongoing work habits and practices
- offer guidance about staff development needs by helping new employees explore job performance strengths and areas for improvement
- encourage new employees to participate in open communication by inviting and encouraging feedback as well

The best time for feedback is *not* the first day on the job. Feedback should be given during mentoring or other forms of on-the-job training. It should support the give-and-take of the learning that occurs during orientation.

## II. TYPES OF FEEDBACK

Hidden feedback is given and received every day at work. It includes tone of voice, a raised eyebrow, or a facial expression that communicates approval, disapproval, or any number of subjective feelings, opinions, and judgments about another person. It is neither constructive nor productive.

Feedback for new employees should be seen as staff development that directly helps them grow in the new job and beyond. It must (1) acknowledge the skills, knowledge, and experience that the new employee brings to the job; (2) support the learning process; (3) avoid penalizing for mistakes or missteps; and (4) give information about specific behaviors.

Three types of feedback—evaluative, prescriptive, and descriptive—serve separate functions.

### Evaluative Feedback

A person who gives evaluative feedback makes a judgment about what she has observed. The feedback is based on the feelings, perceptions, and biases of the person who gives it. It is focused on how the giver feels about the receiver’s behavior, not on the behavior itself. It provides little or no information that the receiver that can use to change behavior. For example, a supervisor may tell a new employee that he did a “bad” job on a report. Without hearing a reason for the judgment, the employee has no basis for doing the report differently the next time.

Evaluative feedback can also be positive (“You did a good job on the report.”). However, it still does not give specific information to the employee.

### Prescriptive Feedback

A person who gives prescriptive feedback gives advice to the receiver about changing behavior and correcting a performance problem. Prescriptive feedback is directive (“If I were you I would do it like this...”). It allows the receiver no say in determining the best course of action. Prescriptive feedback is useful for explaining a standard or uniform set of procedures that requires little or no adaptation, like a standardized reporting form.

## Descriptive Feedback

Descriptive feedback identifies a specific behavior and informs the receiver about the impact that behavior has on others. Its purpose is to focus the receiver on exploring the impact of specific behavior and reaching some conclusions about the need to make changes. A person who gives prescriptive feedback must remain objective about the behavior she observes and avoid putting a subjective or judgmental slant on the observation.

## Choose the Appropriate Feedback

Consider the benefits and limitations of each type of feedback:

**Feedback Type:** Evaluative

**Benefits:** Seems easier to give. Reveals the giver's feelings, perceptions, and biases about the receiver's behavior.

**Limitations:** Provides no specific information to help change behavior.

**Feedback Type:** Prescriptive

**Benefits:** Provides guidance and advice on how to change behavior.

**Limitations:** Does not allow receiver to determine best course of action on his own.

**Feedback Type:** Descriptive

**Benefits:** Provides specific information on the impact of behavior. Allows receiver to determine course of action.

**Limitations:** Receiver may not always be able to determine what the course of action should be for the job function.

Because of its subjective nature, evaluative feedback is the least desirable form, but people use it when they don't know how to give prescriptive or descriptive feedback, or when they perceive that they don't have time to do so. Evaluative feedback, even when it is positive, can seem shallow. It can have a negative impact on motivation, confidence, and performance.

Prescriptive feedback is a useful tool for skills training, mentoring, or coaching in standardized procedures. Receiving guidance on specific tasks from an experienced supervisor or co-worker can improve performance and help new employees avoid making mistakes.

Descriptive feedback is the most appropriate form of feedback for helping new employees learn how to accept feedback and how to choose a course of action on their own. It helps new employees develop their skills in critical thinking and analysis.

## III. BASIC GUIDELINES FOR GIVING FEEDBACK<sup>13</sup>

The motivation for giving feedback in the workplace should always be to improve quality and enhance performance. Consider the following guidelines.

*Think about the need for feedback before you give it.* What is the desired outcome? How will the feedback benefit the receiver? Always give feedback to serve the best interests of the employee and direct it toward behavior that he can do something about. Do not use feedback to release anger or frustration or to focus on behaviors that the receiver is not capable of changing. Ask the following questions before giving any feedback:

- What is the intent or desired result of the feedback, both for you and the person receiving it?

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<sup>13</sup> Adapted from the *Guide for Education Coordinators in Head Start*. 1986. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, pp. 6-7.

- How will this feedback help the person improve his or her performance, either now or in the future?
- Is this person capable of making the changes you want to suggest? Does he have the required skill and knowledge? Can his personality accommodate the feedback?

*Whenever possible, focus on giving feedback that is solicited by the receiver.* Feedback is most effective when employees seek it out, either to get answers to specific questions or to ask for direct guidance. This indicates that they are open to receiving feedback. On the other hand, feedback sometimes needs to be given even when it is unsolicited. At such times it helps to ask if the person is ready to receive feedback and to explain that the purpose of feedback is to improve performance and guide development.

*Limit your feedback to what the receiver can absorb.* Focus the discussion on one area of concern. Do not try to address everything at once. Saving up all your concerns and observations for one conversation can be overwhelming and counterproductive. It can also prevent any lasting change from occurring. Employees need to be able to focus on one area at a time so that feedback can become a practical part of their work routine.

*Be aware of your communication style.* What you say and the body language you use can determine how your message is heard. Your tone of voice and facial expressions may convey the impression that you are angry or that you don't care what the receiver has to say. Be sure that your verbal and nonverbal behavior are not an impediment to your feedback. Don't smile when you are trying to get across a serious point. Make sure you are not staring off into space when the employee is talking, and that your tone of voice is not loud or aggressive.

*Confirm that the employee who is receiving the feedback heard what you intended to say.* Feedback is a two-way communication that relies heavily on clarity, accuracy, and understanding. Ask the receiver to rephrase what you said and to interpret the message in terms of meaning and intent. It is crucial that you have the same understanding of what was said if there is to be an agreed-upon outcome to the conversation. Any misunderstandings can decrease the chances for change ("I didn't understand what the problem was so I didn't see a need to change.").

*Consider the timing.* As a general rule, feedback is most useful when given at the earliest opportunity: through a progress report, performance appraisal, or parent complaint. The employee may be most open to addressing the behavior at the time it occurs. Waiting may convey the impression that the giver let the opportunity for feedback go by only to be able to zap the employee with it at a later date, as a form of punishment. Sometimes the earliest opportunity may be several hours or even days later. When providing feedback to colleagues about their presentation or interviewing skills, for example, wait until you can meet with them alone in a safe environment.

*Be descriptive, not interpretive.* Report the facts, not what you think they mean. Say, for example, "The children took a long time to clean up today," not "You don't have any control over the classroom."

*Be specific, not general.* Don't say, "You're always late to work." Instead: "The last two times I came to the center you were late to work."

*Plan for the response.* How you react to the recipient's response can move the communication forward or shut it down. Take the time before you give feedback to anticipate how it will be received. Your knowledge of the person and the circumstances can help you determine whether the response is likely to be accepting or defensive, angry or calm. Consider how you might react, in turn, to the response of the receiver, and plan a way to get your feedback across in the most constructive manner possible.

### **Choose Your Words**

Success in giving feedback depends to a large extent on how you choose your words. Consider the effect each of the following comments is likely to have:

“So, is that pretty clear now?”

“I’d like to talk more about this now, but I have an important meeting in a few minutes.”

“If you have any questions, I’ll be glad to meet with you again—leave me a message and we’ll schedule something.”

“I think it’s important to give you this feedback because we value you and your work and we think there is room for development and advancement in this job.”

“So those were some of the things that were on my mind. But I’d like to hear more about your impressions of the job and your match with the job requirements. Would you be able to share some of your thoughts with me now? We could begin the dialogue and set a couple of other times to meet so we can both reflect.”

“I would like to hear your thoughts on these aspects of the job. Do you see it the same way? Perhaps you have some different achievements that we should talk about. Or perhaps some different concerns.”

“I would like us to set some goals together. See where you want to be at the end of the year, and let’s think together about what steps might help you get there.”

Even with the most encouraging comments, the employee may not be as forthcoming as you would like. A second task in the response phase is listening for clues that will allow you to probe for more genuine responses. For example:

Staff person: “I certainly started out with the idea that I would complete the reports on a timely basis. But it’s not always easy to get time on the computer.”

Supervisor: “We’ve certainly been going through a shakedown with that computer! Can you tell me a little more? Is it really that there are too many people trying to use it? Or do we just need to work out some scheduling system?”

### **Listen for the Real Response**

The response phase of the feedback session can go one of two ways: you can move into a two-way dialogue or shut down the exchange completely. If you are successful, your employee will view the response phase as an opportunity to speak candidly. She will want to share information or concerns that will illuminate the performance situation, and she will ask for (or at least be open to) suggestions about next steps. Think of it as a relay race: you are now handing on the baton to the other runner. You want to do it in a way that lets her feel like an equal partner in the race.

Nonverbal cues matter here as well: your tone of voice, and leaning forward with your hands clasped out on the table; or leaning back with your arms crossed on your chest. If you appear ill at ease, it will be doubly hard for your employee to enter into a collaborative dialogue with you. Pace is very important. If you appear hurried, look at your watch, or fold up your files, it will signal that as far as you’re concerned, the meeting is about over.

### **Deal with Resistance<sup>14</sup>**

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<sup>14</sup> *Federal Leadership: Strengthening Head Start Through Review, Analysis, and Technical Assistance*. 1992. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Some resistance to feedback is to be expected. Resistance takes many forms. It can be subtle and elusive or open and hostile. You can guess that your employee is feeling resistant to the feedback if she acts confused, remains silent, expresses anger, gives excuses, rationalizes performance, floods with details, attacks, moralizes, misses appointments, or gives little time to the coach or supervisors.

People are resistant when they feel vulnerable. Fighting the resistance or blaming the employee will not resolve the problem. Naming the resistance in a non-threatening way can help the employee express her concern and feel more in charge. It will increase the chances of keeping the communication open, and it will protect the health of the staff development process.

#### **IV. BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES**

In a general sense, feedback offers both benefits and challenges during new staff orientation. If used properly, it can support a new employee's ability to become productive in the new job. If not, the new employee can be left with an eroded sense of self-confidence and more questions than answers.

##### **Benefits**

*Opens up communication.* Feedback can encourage a productive back and- forth between new employees and their supervisors and co-workers. Employees are less hesitant to accept or ask for help when it is freely and openly offered through constructive feedback.

*Establishes a norm for supervision and guidance.* Used well, feedback indicates that new employees will not be left to fend for themselves, but will receive guidance and direction that will carry over beyond the orientation period.

*Provides an atmosphere for learning and improvement.* Feedback can encourage new employees to ask questions and seek answers in a supportive environment.

*Takes the focus off personalities.* Handled properly, feedback encourages the giver and receiver to focus on the behavior and not get stuck in unproductive personality clashes.

##### **Challenges**

*Determining when change is mandatory rather than voluntary:* Part of giving feedback is knowing when to give it unsolicited and when to let the employee seek it on her own terms. An employee who is performing outside expected norms or having difficulty with a critical task needs immediate feedback and guidance. At other times it is more important to let employees decide whether they are ready to receive feedback and how they will use the feedback.

*Dealing with barriers before feedback is given.* The outcome of a feedback exchange has a lot to do with frame of mind. The person who gives the feedback needs to do so constructively, and the receiver has to be capable of receiving the feedback. Both parties need to understand and be sensitive to the barriers that can prevent a feedback exchange from going well.

*Focusing feedback on one concern at a time.* A feedback conversation that addresses too many concerns at once can make an employee feel dumped on. Focus the feedback on just one area to increase the likelihood of its acceptance.

*Giving difficult messages.* See 3E, Communication: Effective Spoken Communication. In the following Worksheet, you will evaluate the way that feedback is given in three hypothetical scenarios.

## STEP 3. WORKSHEET: THE RIGHT TYPE OF FEEDBACK

Suggested time: 35 min.

**Purpose:** To give participants an opportunity to examine how feedback is given in certain situations, and determine its appropriateness.

**Part I** (15 min.) Take 5 minutes to read the vignettes in the following handout. Then take 10 minutes to answer the questions on this Worksheet. Consider the three kinds of feedback: *evaluative* makes an assessment, *prescriptive* suggests a change, and *descriptive* factually observes.

1. List the type or types of feedback that are given in each vignette.
  - a. Vignette 1:
  - b. Vignette 2:
  - c. Vignette 3:
2. How do you imagine that the receiver of the feedback will respond?
  - a. Vignette 1:
  - b. Vignette 2:
  - c. Vignette 3:
3. How could you change the feedback to make it more descriptive?
  - a. Vignette 1:
  - b. Vignette 2:
  - c. Vignette 3:

**Part II** (20 min.) If you are working in pairs or a small group, discuss your answers and compare notes.

### HANDOUT: VIGNETTES

Suggested time: 5 min.

#### Vignette 1

**Karen** is a newly hired Head Start teacher. She and the children in her classroom are having lunch together, and while eating, the children comment on a TV show they watched the previous evening. Although the TV show seemed to raise important questions about reality and fantasy, Karen is preoccupied with getting the children to finish their meal. After lunch she is approached by the child development services manager, who stops her in the hallway and says, "I saw you having lunch with the children, and you really missed an opportunity for an important conversation. Pay better attention

in the future.” The child development services manager then walks away, leaving Karen standing there.

## **Vignette 2**

**Damon** is a classroom assistant who has been on the job just one week. At the end of the day he is helping the children put on their coats and hats, in preparation to go home. A parent enters the room and asks directions to another part of the building while Damon is assisting one of the children. Damon interrupts the parent in mid-sentence and tells her that he can't help her now because he is busy with the children. Then he turns around and continues helping the child as the parent storms out the door. Two days later the program director calls Damon into his office to tell him that the parent lodged a complaint against him for being rude. Damon explains what happened and why he did what he did. The program director then says, “I know you did not mean to be rude, but when you don't take the time to answer a parent's question or address a problem, it gives the appearance that we don't care, and that reflects badly on the center. The parents are an important part of what we do here. I suggest that next time you take a few minutes to respond when a parent asks a question, even if it's only to let them know that you will help them as soon as you have finished with the child. At least that way you won't appear to be rude.”

## **Vignette 3**

**Pete** is a new federal team leader. He has just completed his first assignment leading a program monitoring team. He is editing the monitoring team's report and asks one of his co-workers, who is also a federal team leader, for some feedback. The co-worker reviews what Pete has written and says to him, “I think you are making a good start, but you need to make sure that the findings and the area summary are clearly written and include information about what was seen, heard, and read by the review team. This evidence is important because the grantee staff need to understand what the findings mean and how to address them. Let me show you a few of my old reports to give you an example of the detail that is required. I'll be happy to discuss changes with you when you are ready.”

## STEP 4. WORKSHEET: ROUND ROBIN

Suggested time: 45 min.

**Purpose:** To give participants an opportunity to use the guidelines for giving and receiving feedback in an experiential exercise.

**Part I** (30 min.) If you are working alone, read the four rounds that follow and think of what you would say to the two feedback receivers. Then proceed to Part III.

**Part II** (15 min.) If you are working in pairs or a small group, follow these steps. Then proceed to Part III.

1. Take 5 minutes to divide into small groups of three. Within each group select one person as the feedback giver, one as the feedback receiver, and one to be the observer. Each small group should move to a separate location in the room.
2. Each person takes the appropriate handout for her role:
  - Round 1 giver
  - Round 1 receiver
  - Observer's form (handout)
3. Participants take 5 minutes to review their material. The feedback givers and receivers should contemplate how they will respond to the reading. The observers should study the handout form and prepare to serve as timekeeper during the rounds.
4. Within each small group, place two chairs face to face for the giver and receiver of feedback and a chair on the side for the observer.
5. Round 1—10 min.
  - The giver offers feedback to the receiver
  - The receiver responds to the giver
  - The observer records the interchange

Round 1 ends when the receivers have completed their responses.

6. The observers take 5 minutes to share their observations with the givers and receivers.
7. The givers and receivers switch roles and review the Round 2 handouts for 5 minutes. The observer reviews the Round 2 observer's form for 5 minutes.
8. Round 2—10 min.
  - The giver offers feedback to the receiver
  - The receiver responds to the giver
  - The observer records the interchange Round 2 ends when the receivers have completed



their responses.

9. Again, the observers take 5 minutes to share their observations with the givers and receivers.

**Part III (15 min.)** The small groups come together for a 15-minute large-group discussion, using the following questions to guide the exchange. If you are working alone, use the space provided to record your answers.

1. What is the hardest part of giving feedback?
2. What is the hardest part of receiving feedback?
3. What can be done to make feedback a constructive staff-development tool for both giver and receiver

### **Round 1**

#### **Giver of Feedback:**

You are a federal team leader for a program monitoring review. During your Monday night team meeting, you ask your team to discuss the information they learned from the management team, the content area specialists and direct line staff that helps them understand the "big picture" of systems for this grantee. You are concerned that one of the members of your team is ready to write a finding on Disabilities Services at this early stage in the review process. This member is not interested in pursuing the issue any further and feels he's learned enough information from the group interviews.

When you asked him to share the information that lead him to this conclusion, he mentioned that, during the Content Area Experts Interview, the Disabilities Services Coordinator stated that disabilities services were hampered because the local school system routinely schedules IEP meetings for later in the year. The team member had no plan to follow-up this concern to gain an understanding of how the delay affects services to children, or to learn what special services the program is providing to meet the needs of children with disabilities until the IEPs can be developed. It seems that he never thought about how this statement needed further evidence and validation from multiple sources (i.e., other staff, parents, written agreement with LEA).

### **Round 1**

#### **Receiver of Feedback:**

This is your first program monitoring experience. You weren't familiar with the PRISM interview instruments or how the process builds from what is learned during the Management Team Interview or the Content Area Experts Interview. You did not understand that you needed to listen for information that you could pursue later in the review. Halfway through the discussion, it became quite clear that you were not as prepared for the team meeting as the other reviewers. After the meeting, the team leader approaches you to discuss the PRISM review process and how you will need to validate your concern through multiple modes of inquiry before you form an opinion.

## Round 2

### Giver of Feedback:

You are a Head Start child development services manager who has just observed one of your new preschool teachers raising her voice to quiet two children who are playfully laughing and talking to each other during rest time. You make note of your observation and return at the end of the day to give her some feedback.

## Round 2

### Receiver of Feedback:

You are a new Head Start preschool teacher who has been on the job for just three weeks. It is rest time in your classroom, and two of the children are playing around. You have asked them to settle down. The child development services manager comes by at the end of the day to talk to you about your tone of voice.

# HANDOUT: ROUND ROBIN OBSERVER'S FORM

## Round 1

As an observer of the feedback exchanges, look and listen for the following (please jot down your thoughts):

1. The situation that prompted the feedback
2. The behavior that needs to change
3. The type or types of feedback given
  - Evaluative            Yes            No
  - Prescriptive        Yes            No
  - Descriptive        Yes            No
  - Combination        Yes            No
4. The behavior of the person giving feedback, in terms of
  - Tone of voice
  - Body language
  - Use of negative or positive language
5. The behavior of the person receiving feedback, in terms of
  - Tone of voice
  - Body language
  - Use of negative or positive language

6. The attitude of the person receiving feedback (defensive, apologetic, accepting, etc.)

## Round 2

As an observer of the feedback exchanges, look and listen for the following (please jot down your thoughts):

1. The situation that prompted the feedback
2. The behavior that needs to change
3. The type or types of feedback given
  - Evaluative            Yes            No
  - Prescriptive        Yes            No
  - Descriptive         Yes            No
  - Combination        Yes            No
4. The behavior of the person giving feedback, in terms of
  - Tone of voice
  - Body language
  - Use of negative or positive language
5. The behavior of the person receiving feedback, in terms of
  - Tone of voice
  - Body language
  - Use of negative or positive language
6. The attitude of the person receiving feedback (defensive, apologetic, accepting, etc.)

# STEP 5. SUMMARY

Suggested time: 10 min.

## Key Points

- Using feedback for coaching new employees
- Using various types of feedback in new staff orientation: evaluative, prescriptive, and descriptive
- Using the appropriate type of feedback
- Basic guidelines for giving feedback
- The benefits and challenges of giving feedback in new staff orientation
- Considerations for giving and encouraging feedback during new staff orientation

## Personal Review

What did you learn from this activity?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How will you use your new knowledge and skills in your work?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

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What other things do you think you might need to learn in order to master the skill of giving feedback?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# 1-F Individual Development: Developing Learning Plans

## OVERVIEW

### Developing Learning Plans

**Outcomes.** Participants who complete this activity will be able to

- identify four types of skills and knowledge needed for a specific position
- assist staff in assessing their own training needs through a questionnaire and an interview
- offer information on Head Start staff-development resources
- conduct a staff-development interview
- develop an individualized learning plan with goals, learning strategies, and action steps
- identify ways to support a staff-development culture in their organization

**Materials.** Newsprint and markers; *Head Start Program Performance Standards*

### Components

This activity can be done by one person, an informal group, or a formal workshop. We have provided suggested times, but participants and facilitators may wish to adjust these to their own timetables.

Step 1. Background Reading: Coaching Employees in Developing a Learning Plan	15 min.
Handouts: Sample Skill and Knowledge Grid for Federal Head Start Program Specialists Individual Staff Development Needs Assessment	25 min.
Step 2. Worksheet: Assessing the Training Needs of New Staff	20 min.
Step 3. Background Reading: Conducting a Learning Plan Meeting	15 min.
Handout: Learning Styles Checklist	5 min.
Step 4. Worksheet: Developing a Learning Plan	40 min.
Step 5. Summary	10 min.
Suggested total time	2 hrs. 10 min.

# STEP 1. BACKGROUND READING: COACHING EMPLOYEES IN DEVELOPING A LEARNING PLAN

Suggested time: 15 min.

## I. WHY A LEARNING PLAN?

A well-designed and effectively delivered employee orientation program is a good way to ground new staff and begin to integrate them into an organization. Frequently, however, after employees are grounded in their new jobs, they or their supervisors realize that they need more targeted training to perform comfortably in their new positions. One common response to this situation is for supervisors to provide staff-development coaching for new staff. Although in many cases the supervisor is the ideal coach, the supervisor may appoint another experienced staff person to function as the coach.

The coach can play many roles with the new employee: she can answer questions, help guide the employee through specific job tasks, and act as a sounding board. Often the coach assists the new employee in acquiring new skills and knowledge by helping her develop a *learning plan*. During the process of developing such a plan, the employee and coach

- assess the employee's skills and knowledge as they relate to specific job requirements
- identify on-the-job and other training experiences that will help her acquire the additional skills and knowledge she needs to be successful
- agree upon action steps and a timetable

Involving employees in developing learning plans during orientation is consistent with good management practices. It goes a long way toward enhancing the new employee's sense of connection and commitment to the organization, and provides proof of the organization's interest in the employee's development and potential for career mobility. It also emphasizes employees' role in their own development and can reduce the likelihood of future performance problems.

Learning plans are also consistent with the spirit of the revised Head Start Program Performance Standards. These standards require that "grantee and delegate agencies, at a minimum, perform annual performance reviews of each Early Head Start and Head Start staff member and use the results of these reviews to identify staff training and professional development needs, modify staff performance agreements, as necessary, and assist each staff member in improving his or her skills and professional competencies."<sup>15</sup>

### What Does a Learning Plan Look Like?

In some organizations a learning plan is a formal document that is placed in the employee's personnel file along with performance appraisals and other official documents. Other organizations consider it part of the performance appraisal. In most organizations it is an informal agreement between the coach and the employee, designed jointly by them. It guides training and other staff development experiences that the employee will pursue during a designated period of time. At a minimum, an individual learning plan includes:

- training needs agreed to by the employee and coach
- goals and objectives developed to address these needs
- action steps that the employee will take to meet these goals and objectives
- resources available within the organization to support the employee

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<sup>15</sup> Head Start Program Performance Standards, 1304.52 (i)

Clearly, the coach has a role in initiating and guiding the process and in helping employees assess their needs. The coach also plays a critical role in helping the employee to develop action steps and in identifying available resources.

## II. PREPARING FOR A LEARNING PLAN MEETING

### Understanding New Employees as Adult Learners

As a coach, keep a number of points in mind when you engage new staff in developing learning plans. New employees are not blank slates: they arrive at their new positions with unique sets of skills and with knowledge that grew out of their own employment, educational, and personal histories. Learning theory tells us that adults learn best when they

- integrate new ideas with what they already know if they are ultimately to make use of the information<sup>16</sup>
- plan and evaluate their own learning<sup>17</sup>
- take responsibility for their own learning by identifying what they want to learn and how they learn best
- are challenged and trusted to solve problems and develop their own ideas
- are involved in varied activities that reflect their preferred learning style

Therefore, a successful learning plan recognizes and builds on the skills and knowledge that the employee brings to the job. The following paragraphs contain brief profiles of four hypothetical Head Start employees: two new staff from a local grantee agency and two new federal staff. We will use these employees to illustrate key points throughout this activity. As you prepare to coach your own new employees, it may be helpful for you to create your own profiles.

#### Local Grantee Staff

**John** has recently been hired as a family services manager. He holds an MSW, and before joining La Paloma Head Start, he was a social worker with a local mental health organization. The references you interviewed as part of the hiring process said that he has excellent interpersonal skills and understands the issues facing children and families in your community. He is new to Head Start, however, and has never held a management position before. He is thrilled that the family workers seem to like him: they ask him to meet with the families that are a challenge to them.

**Lori** was recently promoted to the position of child development services manager. She has worked in La Paloma for five years, as a teacher for three years and as a center manager for two years. In her previous position, she demonstrated strong supervision skills. Her master's degree in early childhood education provides her with a sound knowledge of child development. In her new role, she will need to manage partnerships with several local education agencies in your service area. She has no experience in working with outside organizations and seems to be nervous when she makes a presentation before the entire Head Start staff.

#### Federal Staff

**Carlos** is a 25-year federal employee. He has just received a lateral transfer from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) to Head Start. His most recent job at OFA was to monitor and provide guidance to a number of demonstration projects within the states aimed at supporting welfare reform efforts. His new

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<sup>16</sup> Adapted from *Linking Our Voices Facilitator's Manual*. 1996. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> Adapted from *Head Start Social Services Training Manual*. 1990. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, p. 9



job at Head Start will require that he perform similar monitoring tasks with the local Head Start grantees in his region. Carlos is totally unfamiliar with Head Start except for information he picked up during joint meetings with Head Start staff while he was at OFA. For years he has listened to tales about onsite program reviews but has never participated in one. Whenever you suggest that it is time for him to plan for his first review, Carlos changes the subject.

**Brenda** has worked in the Atlanta regional office of Head Start for two and a half years as an administrative assistant, while working on her master's degree in public administration. She completed her degree and recently received a promotion to the position of program specialist. Shortly after her promotion, Brenda relocated to another federal office because of a change in her husband's job. She is now working with a new Head Start unit, with a new supervisor and new co-workers. During her years as an AA she learned a great deal about Head Start. She even occasionally volunteered for special activities at the Head Start center in her community. Since her hiring, several program specialists have commented about Brenda's lack of knowledge about Head Start budgets.

### **Assessing Training Needs: The Supervisor's View**

Because they are new to the organization, employees like John, Lori, Brenda, and Carlos often need assistance in defining the requirements for functioning effectively in their new position. The supervisor can help them by cataloging the requisite skills and knowledge on a list or chart. These typically fall into four broad categories:<sup>18</sup>

**Core Team Skills.** A large part of the work of Head Start employees, whether they are federal staff or local program staff, involves working with others in a team context. Local programs have management teams, case coordination (case management) teams, classroom teams, and so on. In addition to participating in teams and work groups within their offices, most federal staff are responsible for pulling together and managing program monitoring teams. To work effectively in a team context, employees require skills in listening, giving and receiving feedback, resolving conflict, participating in meetings, problem solving, and decision-making to work effectively in a team context.

**Leadership Skills.** Often when we think of leadership skills, we think of those serving in leadership functions—team leaders, managers, coaches. They require 1-F Page 7 skills in guiding and supporting teams, supervising, and strategic (long-term) and operational (short-term) planning. In Head Start, however, other kinds of workers need leadership skills. For example, family workers and teachers frequently play a leadership role in working with parents.

**Technical Skills.** New staff often require skills that are technical in nature. Federal program specialists, for example, need to be able to review a grantee budget, while grantee teachers may need training in the organization's method of developing lesson plans.

**Administrative Skills.** If they weren't covered during the orientation process, new employees will need to develop pertinent skills in administrative tasks, such as scheduling work and vacation time and completing travel forms. In developing this composite of required skills, the supervisor should consider

- the responsibilities outlined in the employee's job description. If the job description doesn't provide enough information, consider the functions performed by the employee's predecessor or by others who hold the same type of position.
- the changing needs of the organization. Where is the program headed? Will the organization need new skills to meet its strategic goals?

The Handout that follows this reading provides a grid for listing the knowledge and skills needed by federal program specialists.

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<sup>18</sup> Adapted from *Teams at Work: A Guide for Creating, Implementing and Assessing Teams*. Developed for Department of Health and Human Services Organization and Employee Development Group by Human Technology, Inc., McLean, VA, July 1997.

Once the supervisor has completed a grid for the new employee, he can begin to identify the areas in which the employee will benefit from training and other staff-development experiences. These assessments do not determine the final learning plan, but provide a basis for a true dialogue with the employee. In making the initial determinations, the supervisor should consider:

- the skills and knowledge that the employee brings from past employment experiences. For example, the La Paloma staff development coach needs to consider John's lack of supervisory experience and Lori's strong supervisory track record.
- her own initial formal or informal observation of the employee's performance of these skills. For example, Carlos's avoidance of the onsite review and Lori's nervousness during her full-staff presentation may point to possible training needs.
- feedback received from colleagues about the employee's skill level. For example, the federal staff-development coach will want to explore the feedback received about Brenda's lack of budgeting skills.
- The employee's own assessment of her staff-development needs.

### **Assessing Skills: The Employee's Role**

The supervisor and the employee need to engage in a true give-and-take about the employee's training needs, and this means that the employee also needs to prepare for the discussion. Employees need to reflect upon their own training needs before the conversation. Supervisors can help employees do this by sharing with them the Individual Staff Development Needs Assessment Handout (the second handout after this reading). The supervisor might also share the skill and knowledge list that he prepared for the position (without the preliminary assessment data). Head Start employees such as nurses, teachers with a CDA, or social workers who require special periodic training to maintain their professional certification or license may wish to explore the availability and cost of the required trainings before meeting with their supervisor.

### **Identifying Training Resources**

As you prepare for the learning plan meeting, consider the kinds of staff-development strategies that are available for your new employee. When planning for training, most managers and employees automatically think about workshops and conferences. Many other effective self-development strategies can be built into an employee's learning plan, including<sup>19</sup>

- lectures
- self-study
- college course
- shadowing
- peer tutoring and consultation
- observation of other programs
- coaching and mentoring
- on-the-job training
- video presentations
- satellite distance learning
- discussions
- role playing
- practical exercises
- group workshops

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<sup>19</sup> *Developing a Head Start Training Plan*. 1995. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, p. 3.

Local Head Start programs and federal staff have a wealth of training resources that can be used for many of these strategies. What follows is a partial list of these resources.

**The Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community** provide direction on conducting workshops, discussions, role plays, and simulations in nearly all areas of program operation. The Training Matrix that accompanies this set of over 40 guides can be used to identify training activities for specific topics.

**Head Start video training packages** cover a variety of topics, including child development services, parent involvement, mental health, and the home-based option. The videos can be used by themselves in workshops, or as the basis for guided discussions. Copies of each video have been sent to every Head Start program. They can also be ordered for free or at a nominal charge.

**Other internal resources** often provide the most effective and cost-efficient strategies. Within your own organization staff have the opportunity to observe others; to practice skills on their own, assisted by an observer who provides feedback; or to participate in guided discussions or peer support groups. If an appropriate mentor is not available within the program, the coach may be able to locate a mentor in a neighboring Head Start program.

**Local resources** provided by organizations like the Red Cross and United Way offer free or low-cost training experience for your staff.

**Workshops and conferences** are sponsored by Head Start Associations and the Regional Training and Technical Assistance Network, and other Head Start groups in each region. Excellent staff development conferences are also offered by organizations whose missions are compatible with the mission of Head Start, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children, National Head Start Association, and the Council for Exceptional Children.

As we select training strategies, it is important to reflect upon what we know about how adults learn. Each individual has her own preferred learning style, but adult learning theory tells us that "...those methods which promote **active** participation are preferred by the majority of adults."<sup>20</sup> The following adaptation of Edgar Dale's Cone of Experience (1969)<sup>21</sup> illustrates this point.

### How People Learn

People Generally Remember	Activity	Ways People Learn
10% of what they read	Read	Verbal receiving
10% of what they hear	Hear words	
30% of what they see	Watch still picture	Visual receiving
50% of what they hear and see	Watch moving picture	
	Watch exhibit Watch demonstration	
70% of what they say or write	Do a site visit	Hearing, saying, seeing, and doing
90% of what they say as they do a thing	Do a dramatic presentation	
	Simulate a real experience	
	Do the real thing	

Dale's Cone shows us that adults generally remember the things that they say, write, or do better than

<sup>20</sup> *Linking Our Voices Facilitator's Manual*. 1996. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Administration for Children and Families, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

things they simply read, hear, or see. Clearly, coaches need to actively engage their new staff in learning!

- When possible, select or provide workshops that actively involve the participant through a discussion or a simulation rather than just a lecture.
- Encourage learners to take notes on lectures they attend and to share key points with you or other staff.
- Provide learners with an opportunity to debrief following a lecture, video, performance observation, or reading assignment (see the Guided Discussion Technique described in 1–D, Development and Training: Leading a Guided Discussion).
- Provide opportunities for learners to practice new skills under the guidance and observation of a coach who gives honest feedback.

# HANDOUT: SAMPLE SKILL AND KNOWLEDGE GRID FOR FEDERAL HEAD START PROGRAM SPECIALISTS

Suggested time: 10 min.

**Skills and Knowledge Needed<sup>22</sup>**  
 (Please note: skills and knowledge are listed only once but may apply to more than one category)

	Previous Training or Experience	Demonstrated Skills and Knowledge	Additional Training Needed
<b>Team Skills and Knowledge</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening</li> <li>• Giving and</li> <li>• Receiving feedback</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> </ul>			
<b>Leadership Skills and Knowledge</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delegation</li> <li>• Supervision (of review teams)</li> <li>• Group facilitation</li> <li>• Individual development</li> <li>• Career development knowledge</li> </ul>			
<b>Technical Skills and Knowledge</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of Head Start history, values, and regulations</li> </ul> <b>Funding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Data analysis skills</li> <li>— Planning skills</li> <li>— Cost-benefit analysis</li> <li>— Negotiation skills</li> </ul> <b>Ongoing Monitoring</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Knowledge of human resources</li> <li>— Knowledge of organizational behavior</li> <li>— Evaluation skills</li> </ul>			

<sup>22</sup> Adapted from a chart prepared by the Federal Staff and Staff Development Work Group.

<p><b>Program Reviewing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Pre-review planning</li> <li>— Interviewing and questioning</li> <li>— Performance observation</li> <li>— Team meeting facilitation</li> <li>— Understanding of multiple modes of inquiry</li> <li>— Understanding systems support services</li> <li>— Writing skills</li> <li>— Understanding of essential elements of a finding and knowledge of HSMTS</li> </ul> <p><b>Serving as a Spokesperson</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Presentation skills</li> </ul> <p><b>Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Knowledge of adult learning principles</li> <li>— Training and development techniques</li> <li>— Presentation skills</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Administrative skills</b></p> <p>Computer skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Word processing, E-mail, Head Start software</li> </ul> <p>Records management</p> <p>Knowledge of travel policy</p> <p>Other</p>			

# HANDOUT: INDIVIDUAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Suggested time: 15 min.

## INDIVIDUAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT<sup>23</sup>

This form can be completed by a staff member or used as a guide in conducting interviews with staff. What is revealed becomes an important element of the Head Start training planning process.

1. What skills do you believe are necessary to do your job?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you comfortable performing your current job? What do you feel you do well?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What, if anything, is frustrating or difficult about your job? Can you describe why?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What additional knowledge and skills would be helpful in your job?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What areas would you like to improve in your job performance? Do you have ideas about how to make these improvements?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What type of training do you prefer (e.g., lectures, self-study, group workshops, coaching, peer tutoring)?  
\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>23</sup> Adapted from *Developing a Head Start Training Plan: Worksheets*. 1995. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, p. 49.

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7. What are your short-term and long-term goals regarding your work with Head Start?  
What would you like to be doing in three years?

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8. Other comments:

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9. Supervisor comments:

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## STEP 2. WORKSHEET: ASSESSING THE TRAINING NEEDS OF NEW STAFF

Suggested time: 20 min.

**Purpose:** To provide participants with an opportunity to do an initial assessment of training needs for hypothetical staff members.

**Part II** (10 min.) Using the Sample Skill and Knowledge Grid for Federal Head Start Program Specialists as a model, complete the Skills and Knowledge column on the grid below for a grantee family services manager. You may wish to consult Subpart C, sections 1304.40 and 1304.41 of the Head Start Program Performance Standards concerning the functions that family service managers oversee. You can choose to complete the grid for a position in your own organization.

	Previous Training or Experience	Demonstrated Skills and Knowledge	Additional Training Needed
Team Skills and Knowledge			
Leadership Skills and Knowledge			
Technical Skills and Knowledge			
Administrative Skills			

**Part II** (10 min.) Compare grids within your group. Discuss the differences.

## STEP 3. BACKGROUND READING: CONDUCTING A LEARNING PLAN MEETING

Suggested time: 15 min.

**Directions:** Study the following reading. Feel free to highlight sections or make notes in the margins.

### I. CONDUCTING A LEARNING PLAN MEETING

Now that the coach has defined and analyzed the skills that the employee needs to perform the job satisfactorily, she is ready to begin a conversation with the employee about training needs. Like any other good interview, this conversation should have three phases: initial, exploration, and closing.<sup>24</sup> It will help to conduct the meeting in a congenial setting, away from noise, distractions, and concerns about privacy and confidentiality.

#### The Learning Plan Meeting

**Initial Phase.** The first few minutes of a learning plan meeting can set the tone for the entire meeting. The coach welcomes the employee and helps to prepare her for full participation in the process. The coach reiterates the purpose of the learning plan and answers questions. This is a good time to help reduce any anxiety that the employee may be experiencing. Employees may feel that admitting they need training will lower the coach's opinion of their competence or negatively affect future performance reviews.

It often helps to explain your organization's position on learning plans. ("This is a new idea that we are trying with all new employees." Or, "All new employees develop plans within three months." Or, "Every employee completes a plan as part of their annual performance review.") It also helps to share your own experience with this type of plan. ("Last year, when I took on a new assignment and needed training on computers, my supervisor and I worked out a plan for me to attend a special workshop to get the knowledge and skills I needed.")

**Exploration Phase.** The exploration phase is the heart of the interview. The coach and the employee have an open and honest discussion about the skills and knowledge that the employee needs. They identify training sources that will meet the employee's learning style, and they develop the learning plan.

**Developing the list of training needs.** First, the coach and the employee agree upon and prioritize the skills and knowledge that the employee needs to succeed. They compare their preliminary thoughts. Then they construct a list, making sure to prioritize the items.

**Selecting staff-development strategies.** With the training needs and a preliminary time frame identified, the employee and the coach can begin to explore strategies for meeting these needs. Together, they should consider the following.

- The employee's learning style. How does the employee learn best? She may not have not given much thought to her preferred learning style. A checklist like the one that follows this reading can help you begin the conversation. Remember, Dale's Cone shows us that most people learn best when they are actively involved in the learning. If an employee prefers to learn by reading, listening to audio-tapes, or watching videos, consider following up with a guided discussion to help him integrate what he learned into his practice.

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<sup>24</sup> Adapted from the *Head Start Social Services Training Manual*. 1990. p. 109.

- Available resources. Is money available to pay for attendance at a conference, workshop, or college course? Are skilled staff willing and available to act as mentors or coaches? Can the region's Quality Improvement Centers support you in finding a mentor in a local program or recommend a program that the new employee can observe?
- Training needs of others. Do others in the organization have the same needs? Can learners be organized into study groups? Could you hold an in-house workshop? Can the employee join already scheduled workshops or other training venues?

**Developing the learning plan.** If the plan is a formal part of your organization's staff-development system, you may be able to follow a specified format that includes goals, objectives, outcome statements, and strategies. The format may be tied to the overall agency training plan and may prompt a thought-provoking discussion between you and the employee.

If you are developing your own format, you can increase or limit its complexity according to your own needs and preferences. The purpose is to develop a tool that will work for you and your employee. A simple, easy-to-use plan will contain the following:

- Training goal. This is a broad, general statement of the skills or knowledge that the employee wants to acquire (e.g., to build "giving feedback" skills). Training goals can be related to current or future job responsibilities. For example, a local child development services manager may want to develop expertise in supervising infant-toddler staff because the program will be adding an Early Head Start option next year.
- Strategies for achieving each goal. Strategy statements should be based on the employee's learning style. They should be expressed according to the **SMART** criteria, i.e., **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, related to available **R**esources, and **T**ime-bound (e.g., "to attend one workshop on feedback skills at the next Head Start conference," or "to complete the *Moving Ahead* skill-building package on giving feedback before March 15").
- Check-in times to assess progress. Schedule meetings to reassess the plan. The coach and employee can get together as part of ongoing regular supervision meetings or on a more-informal basis.

**Closing Phase.** Close the meeting thoughtfully. As the coach, you need to do the following:

- Summarize the agreements made during the discussion by reviewing the plan.
- Clarify responsibility for the next step. Will you or the employee locate the videotape for the guided discussion? Will you arrange for the employee to shadow an experienced staff person on a review? Lack of clarity about who is responsible for what can doom a well-thought-out plan.
- If you are not the employee's supervisor, decide who will share the plan with her. The supervisor may need to make resources available and provide the employee with release time.
- Plan a follow-up meeting to review progress and reassess the strategies you've selected. Close the meeting on a positive note by thanking the employee for his/her hard work and pledging your support throughout the life of the plan.

Close the meeting on a positive note by thanking the employee for his/her hard work and pledging your support throughout the life of the plan

### III. OTHER THOUGHTS ON STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Learning plans are most effective when they are implemented within an organizational culture that supports staff development. As a coach you can help build such a culture in your organization in these ways:

- Encourage other managers to develop learning plans for their new employees and to integrate development planning in the performance review process.
- Support the use of individualized learning plans as the basis for your organization's overall training plan.
- Build a staff-development library that contains Head Start and other staff development resources. Most Head Start resources are free. If space is not available to store the resources, keep an annotated list of resources on hand for employees to consult.
- Model lifelong learning and encourage others to do the same. Attend workshops, subscribe to and read professional journals, and host lunchtime discussion groups to stay current.

# HANDOUT: LEARNING STYLES CHECKLIST<sup>25</sup>

Suggested time: 5 min.

## Check All That Apply

How do you think you can best learn what you want to learn?

- Reading and writing on my own, supplemented by occasional sessions with my supervisor.
- Meeting with peers in an ongoing support group for discussing successes and concerns and creating solutions.
- Meeting with peers in an ongoing study group for reading articles, watching videos, and discussing professional development.
- Observing experienced staff members and peers practice new skills and having them observe me as I do the same.
- Attending other training sessions or taking a course at a nearby college.
- Receiving written notes and materials from my supervisor on topics that interest me.
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>25</sup> Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community, *Setting the Stage: Including Children with Disabilities in Head Start*. 1997. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

## STEP 4. WORKSHEET: DEVELOPING A LEARNING PLAN

Suggested time: 40 min.

**Purpose:** To provide participants with the opportunity to begin to develop a learning plan for an employee.

**Part I** (20 min.) Review the following staff profiles with a partner. Choose one of the two profiles or prepare a brief profile for an employee in your own organization. Use the profile to analyze training needs and develop a learning plan.

### Local Grantee Staff

**John** has recently been hired as a family services He holds an MSW, and before joining La Paloma Head Start, he was a social worker with a mental health organization. The references you interviewed as part of the hiring process said that he has excellent interpersonal skills and understands the facing children and families in your community. He is new to Head Start, however, and has never management position before. He is thrilled that workers seem to like him: they ask him to the families that are a challenge to them.

### Federal Staff

**Carlos** is a 25-year federal employee. He has just received a lateral transfer from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) to Head Start. His most recent job at OFA was to monitor and provide guidance to a number of demonstration projects within the states aimed at supporting welfare reform efforts. His new job at Head Start will require that he perform similar monitoring tasks with the local Head Start grantees in his region. Carlos is totally unfamiliar with Head Start except for information he picked up during joint meetings with Head Start staff while he was at OFA. For years he has listened to tales about onsite program reviews but has never participated in one. Whenever you suggest that it is time for him to plan for his first review, Carlos changes the subject.

Discuss the employee's training needs with your partner, then fill in the table that follows. If you are developing a plan for John, consider reviewing the grid you completed for the Step 2 Worksheet; it lists the types of skills and knowledge needed for John's job. If you have chosen Carlos, take a look at the Handout Sample Skill and Knowledge Grid for federal Head Start Program Specialists.

	Previous Training or Experience	Demonstrated Skills and Knowledge	Additional Training Needed
Team Skills and Knowledge			
Leadership Skills and Knowledge			
Technical Skills and Knowledge			
Administrative Skills			

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**Part II (20 min.)** Using the grid you just filled in, develop one training goal that you and the employee might work on together. \_\_\_\_\_

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Develop at least one strategy to help the employee achieve his goal. Make sure that the strategy meets the **SMART** criteria: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, related to available **R**esources, and **T**ime-bound.

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# STEP 5. SUMMARY

Suggested time: 10 min.

## Key Points

- Reasons for learning plans
- Needs of adult learners
- Four types of skills employees need
- Head Start training resources
- Three parts of a learning plan meeting
- Learning styles and staff-development strategies
- Organizational culture and staff development

## Personal Review

What did you learn from this activity?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

How will you use your new knowledge and skills in your work?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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What other things do you think you might need to learn in order to master the skill of developing learning plans?

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# 1-X Application Activity: The Region

## OVERVIEW

### Application Activity: The Region

**Outcomes.** Participants who complete this activity will practice some of the following skills:

- understand the role and benefits of new staff orientation
- apply a three-step process to the orientation of new Head Start staff
- design an initial orientation session for a new employee
- assess the effectiveness of new staff orientation efforts
- identify opportunities to use guided discussion as an appropriate staff-development strategy
- develop discussion questions that are based on learning objectives
- select a discussion stimulus
- use questions, call patterns, body language, and visual aids to manage a discussion
- use a three-step process to respond to incorrect answers
- help participants develop action steps to integrate what they learned into their work
- identify four types of skills and knowledge needed for a specific job
- assist staff in assessing their own training needs through a questionnaire and an interview
- gather information on Head Start staff-development resources
- conduct a staff-development interview
- develop an individualized learning plan that contains goals, learning strategies, and action steps
- identify ways to build an organizational culture that supports staff development
- understand the basic principles and guidelines for giving feedback
- determine when feedback is needed
- match the type of feedback to the needs of new staff
- elicit feedback from new staff about their orientation experience

**Recommended Group Size.** Three to 15 participants, with at least one representative from each of these skill groups: 1–C, Staff Development and Training: New Staff Orientations; 1D, Staff Development and Training: Leading a Guided Discussion; 1E, Individual Development: Giving Feedback; and 1F, Individual Development: Developing Learning Plans.

**Materials.** *Head Start Program Performance Standards*

### Components

This activity can be done in an informal group, or in a formal workshop. We have provided suggested times, but participants and facilitators may wish to adjust these to their own timetables.

Step 1. Handout: The Region (Scene 1)	5 min.
Step 2. Worksheet: Case Analysis	20 min.
Step 3. Worksheet: Defining Training Priorities	30 min.
Step 4. Handout: The Region (Scene 2)	5 min.
Step 5. Worksheet: Giving Feedback Handout: Feedback Observation Form	40 min.
Step 6. Planning a Guided Discussion	30 min.
Step 7. Post-Assessment	15 min.
Suggested total time	2 hrs. 30 min.

# STEP 1. HANDOUT: THE REGION (SCENE 1)

Suggested time: 5 min.

Read Scene 1, then go on to the Step 2 Worksheet.

## Scene 1

Hector is an ACF program and budget specialist who has worked in Head Start for many years. Recently, three ACF specialists transferred into the Head Start program from other areas within the agency. The transferees are experienced in grants management and other aspects of their new job but lack a grounding in Head Start philosophy, history, and values. Hector has been designated as their mentor.

“I’m really glad to have this chance to be involved with Head Start,” says Doug, one of the new specialists. “The whole field of early childhood really interests me, you know.” Hector does know. Doug and his second wife have a child who is just turning three, and Doug loses no opportunity to share snapshots of Elana or relate stories about her growth and development.

“It’s great for us that you’re interested, too,” Hector replies. “Though besides focusing on child development, it’s the Head Start emphasis on a comprehensive approach that includes the family that sets the program apart.”

“Sure, I get that,” Doug answers. Hector isn’t sure that Doug gets it “These are such crucial years for children,” Doug continues. “Their minds soak up everything! Elana is in this preschool program, and the children there are starting to work with letters and sounds. Most of our Head Start children are just as smart, I bet you. Goals 2000 wants all children ready to go to school to learn. I think we’ve got the foundation in Head Start for building a pretty nice language arts program. Wouldn’t that be a contribution—if we could grow a model in our region that has all Head Start children entering school able to read? So by the time Elana is ready for college, we might see Head Start children all across the country really ready to learn!”

## STEP 2. WORKSHEET: CASE ANALYSIS

Suggested time: 20 min.

**Purpose:** To begin to address the issues raised in The Region case.

**Part I** (10 min.) Answer the following questions on your own. Feel free to refer to 1–C and 1–D, the two staff-development and training activities, or to any of the individual development activities. The skill-building activity associated with each question is indicated in parentheses.

1. What kind of feedback should Hector use in responding to Doug— evaluative, prescriptive, or descriptive? Explain your choices. (1–E, Individual Development: Giving Feedback)

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2. What knowledge and skills that Doug already has can Hector build upon? (1–F, Individual Development: Developing Learning Plans)

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3. In what ways can Hector support Doug in learning more about Head Start? (1–C, Staff Development and Training: New Staff Orientations, and 1F, Individual Development: Developing Learning Plans)

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4. What other staff people in *your* regional office would you connect Doug with? What kinds of tasks could they work on together? (1–C, Staff Development and Training: New Staff Orientations, and 1F, Individual Development: Developing Learning Plans)

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## STEP 3. WORKSHEET: DEFINING TRAINING PRIORITIES

Suggested time: 30 min.

**Purpose:** To give participants a chance to apply what they have learned about preparing an orientation plan for new staff.

**Part I** (20 min.) Before their first meeting, Hector completed a New Staff Orientation Plan for Doug, using the tools provided in 1–C, Staff Development and Training: New Staff Orientations. Given what you know about Doug and the skills and knowledge that program specialists need, complete the New Staff Orientation Plan (on the next page). The Orientation Checklist and the Skill and Knowledge Grid for Federal Head Start Program Specialists also follow for your review.

Note: If you prefer, you can develop an orientation plan for a new employee in your own organization.

**Part II** (10 min.) Pair up with another person, choosing someone who has done a plan for the same staff person if possible. Discuss the similarities and differences in your plans.

# NEW STAFF ORIENTATION PLAN

Employee name: \_\_\_\_\_

Start date: \_\_\_\_\_

Initial Activity	Manager/Staff Responsible	Date to Be Conducted	Total Time Allotted	Date Completed	Comments

# ORIENTATION CHECKLIST

\_\_\_ 1. Provide essential resources and materials

- \_\_\_ Mission, values, and philosophy
- \_\_\_ Program guidelines and standards
- \_\_\_ Program procedures
- \_\_\_ Organizational chart
- \_\_\_ Job description
- \_\_\_ Employment policies
- \_\_\_ Other

\_\_\_ 2. Review job description and performance expectations

\_\_\_ 3. Review work schedule (including lunch breaks and procedures for signing in or out)

\_\_\_ 4. Review payroll policies and procedures

\_\_\_ 5. Review key administrative policies and practices

- \_\_\_ Requests for leave
- \_\_\_ Holidays
- \_\_\_ Vacation
- \_\_\_ Dress code
- \_\_\_ Office appearance
- \_\_\_ Regular report submission
- \_\_\_ Conduct and discipline standards
- \_\_\_ Health and emergency procedures
- \_\_\_ Time sheet procedures
- \_\_\_ Office security
- \_\_\_ Ordering of equipment and supplies

\_\_\_ 6. Conduct introductions to immediate co-workers and other key staff

\_\_\_ 7. Review standard meetings to attend

Meeting	Purpose	Date/Time

\_\_\_ 8. Conduct tour of program and organization facilities

- \_\_\_ New employee's office
- \_\_\_ Supervisor's office
- \_\_\_ Other key staff offices
- \_\_\_ Meeting rooms
- \_\_\_ Classrooms
- \_\_\_ Restrooms
- \_\_\_ Parking facilities
- \_\_\_ Emergency exits
- \_\_\_ Library
- \_\_\_ Supplies and storage areas
- \_\_\_ Kitchen and eating areas

\_\_\_ 9. Review and demonstrate critical equipment and systems

- \_\_\_ Computer and printer
- \_\_\_ Telephone(s)
- \_\_\_ Fax(es)
- \_\_\_ Photocopier(s)
- \_\_\_ Project software
- \_\_\_ Voice mail
- \_\_\_ E-mail

\_\_\_\_ **10. Present initial job assignments**

\_\_\_\_ **11. Schedule or assign additional training**

\_\_\_\_ **12. Plan and schedule special events**

\_\_\_\_ Lunch with program or organization director

\_\_\_\_ Breakfast or lunch with co-workers

\_\_\_\_ **13. Other**

\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_



# HANDOUT: SKILL AND KNOWLEDGE GRID FOR FEDERAL HEAD START PROGRAM SPECIALISTS

Skills and Knowledge Needed<sup>26</sup>  
 (Please note: skills and knowledge are listed only once  
 but may apply to more than one category)

	Previous Training or Experience	Demonstrated Skills and Knowledge	Additional Training Needed
<b>Team Skills and Knowledge</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening</li> <li>• Giving and receiving feedback</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> </ul>			
<b>Leadership Skills and Knowledge</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delegation</li> <li>• Supervision (of review teams)</li> <li>• Group facilitation</li> <li>• Individual development</li> <li>• Career development knowledge</li> </ul>			
<b>Technical Skills and Knowledge</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of Head Start history, values, and regulations</li> </ul> <b>Funding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Data analysis skills</li> <li>— Planning skills</li> <li>— Cost-benefit analysis</li> <li>— Negotiation skills</li> </ul> <b>Ongoing Monitoring</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Knowledge of human resources</li> <li>— Knowledge of organizational behavior</li> <li>— Evaluation skills</li> </ul> <b>Program Reviewing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Pre-review planning</li> <li>— Interviewing and questioning</li> <li>— Performance observation</li> <li>— Team meeting facilitation</li> <li>— Understanding of multiple modes of inquiry</li> <li>— Understanding systems support services</li> <li>— Writing skills</li> <li>— Understanding of essential elements of a finding and</li> </ul>			

<sup>26</sup> Adapted from a chart prepared by the Federal Staff and Staff Development Work Group.

<p>knowledge of HSMTS</p> <p><b><i>Serving as a Spokesperson</i></b>  — Presentation skills</p> <p><b><i>Training</i></b>  — Knowledge of adult learning principles  — Training and development techniques  — Presentation skills</p>			
<p><b>Administrative skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Word processing, E-mail, Head Start software</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Records management</li> <li>• Knowledge of travel policy</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>			

## **STEP 4. HANDOUT: THE REGION (SCENE 2)**

Suggested time: 5 min.

Read Scene 2, then go on to the following Worksheet and Handout.

### **Scene 2**

Hector and Doug's discussion gets interrupted by another staff person, who welcomes Doug to the Head Start unit. Hector is grateful for the break; he wants time to think about how to bring Doug's thinking more in line with what Head Start knows about child development without crushing Doug's enthusiasm about his new job. He realizes that Doug is in a tough position; in a few months he will need to lead a monitoring team. Although no one expects that he will acquire 30 years' worth of Head Start knowledge in a few weeks, Hector wants to help Doug acquire enough information to be credible with his grantees and the monitoring team. He decides to meet with Doug later in the day and try to convey one main message.

## STEP 5. WORKSHEET: GIVING FEEDBACK

Suggested time: 30 min.

**Purpose:** To give participants a chance to apply what they have learned about giving feedback during new staff orientation.

**Part I** (10 min.) On your own, determine the main message you want Doug to hear and write it down.

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Think about the guidelines in 1–E, Individual Development: Giving Feedback.

- Consider the need for the feedback
- Whenever possible, give feedback that is solicited by the receiver
- Give no more feedback than the receiver can absorb
- Be aware of your communication style
- Consider the timing of your feedback
- Focus on specifics
- Confirm that the receiver has heard your message
- Listen to the receiver's response

Plan what you would say to Doug. Record the main points of your feedback here.

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**Part II** (10 min.) Compare your answers with those of other group members. How are they different? How are they the same?

**Part III** (20 min.) Conduct a feedback role play in your group using key points from your discussion. Select two volunteers, one to play Hector, the other to play Doug. Invite the other members of the group to watch the role play and record their observations on the handout that follows this worksheet.

As a group, discuss the feedback role play. Begin with the observers' comments, then discuss the following:

1. What is the hardest part of giving feedback?

2. What is the hardest part of receiving feedback?
  
3. What can be done to make giving and receiving feedback a constructive staff development tool?

# HANDOUT: FEEDBACK OBSERVATION FORM

Use this form in conjunction with the Step 5 Worksheet.

As an observer of the feedback scenarios you should look and listen for the following:

1. The situation that prompted the feedback
  
2. The behavior that needs to change
  
3. The type or types of feedback given
  - a. Evaluative
  - b. Prescriptive
  - c. Descriptive
  - d. Combination
  
4. The behavior of the person giving feedback, in terms of
  - a. Tone of voice
  - b. Body language
  - c. Use of negative or positive language
  
5. The behavior of the person receiving feedback, in terms of
  - a. Tone of voice
  - b. Body language
  - c. Use of negative or positive language
  
6. Reaction of person receiving feedback (defensive, apologetic, accepting, etc.)

# STEP 6. WORKSHEET: PLANNING A GUIDED DISCUSSION

Suggested time: 30 min.

**Purpose:** To give participants a chance to apply what they have learned about using a guided discussion in training.

**Part I** (15 min.) Hector decides that it might be useful to hold a guided training discussion on Head Start’s approach to education and early childhood development with the three new program specialists whom he mentors. He asks all three of them to review the Head Start Program Performance Standards on education and early childhood development, especially section 1304.21(a)(4)(iv), which refers to supporting literacy and numeracy development.

Read the following staff profiles and review the guidance that accompanies Head Start Performance Standard 1304.21(a)(4)(iv).

## Federal Staff

**Carlos** is a 25-year federal employee. He has just received a lateral transfer from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) to Head Start. His most recent job at OFA was to monitor and provide guidance to a number of demonstration projects within the states aimed at supporting welfare reform efforts. His new job at Head Start will require that he perform similar monitoring tasks with the local Head Start grantees in his region. Carlos is totally unfamiliar with Head Start except for information he picked up during joint meetings with Head Start staff while he was at OFA. For years he has listened to tales about onsite program reviews but has never participated in one. Whenever you suggest that it is time for him to plan for his first review, Carlos changes the subject.

**Brenda** has worked in the Atlanta regional office of Head Start for two and a half years as an administrative assistant while working on her master’s degree in public administration. She completed her degree and recently received a promotion to the position of program specialist. Shortly after her promotion, Brenda relocated to another federal office because of a change in her husband’s job. She is now working with a new Head Start unit, with a new supervisor and new co-workers. During her years as an AA she learned a great deal about Head Start. She even occasionally volunteered for special activities at the Head Start center in her community. Since her hiring, several program specialists have commented on Brenda’s lack of knowledge of Head Start budgets.

After reviewing the performance standard, develop a goal and learning objectives for the discussion, based on the needs of your audience.

## Goal

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## Learning Objectives

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Develop questions that you will use to guide the discussion. Make sure that they are open-ended and that you have included ones that

- kick off the discussion
- draw attention to important points in the reading
- foster debate
- stimulate thought
- begin a summation

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## STEP 7. POST-ASSESSMENT

Suggested time: 15 min.

Now that you have completed Job Performance Situation 1, this Post- Assessment will help you evaluate your competencies.

### Part I

I completed the following exercises in Job Performance Situation 1:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1-B, Case Activity: Orienting New Staff
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1-C, Staff Development and Training: New Staff Orientations
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1-D, Staff Development and Training: Leading a Guided Discussion
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1-E, Individual Development: Giving Feedback
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1-F, Individual Development: Developing Learning Plans

### Part II

Reassess your skills in the following areas:

#### **SKILL: PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING NEW STAFF ORIENTATIONS**

Rate (1, 2 = new skill; 3, 4 = some skill; 5 = highly skilled) your current skills in addressing situations in which you need to:

1. *Determine the best format for orienting new staff:*
2. *Anticipate and develop a plan for addressing new staff needs:*
3. *Design and implement an initial orientation session*
4. *Engage all staff in the orientation process:*
5. *Link new staff orientation to ongoing staff development:*

#### **SKILL: LEADING A GUIDED DISCUSSION**

Rate (1, 2 = new skill; 3, 4 = some skill; 5 = highly skilled) your current skills in addressing situations in which you need to:

1. *Prepare for leading a guided discussion:*
2. *Establish rapport in a one-on-one, in-house group, or workshop discussion:*
3. *Effectively manage a training discussion:*
4. *Help participants transfer what they have learned to their ongoing work:*

#### **SKILL: GIVING FEEDBACK**

Rate (1, 2 = new skill; 3, 4 = some skill; 5 = highly skilled) your current skills in addressing situations in

which you need to:

1. *Provide guidance to help new Head Start staff identify the knowledge and skills that are critical to their job performance:*
2. *Develop an open pattern of communication that allows others to express their needs comfortably:*
3. *Use feedback as a coaching tool during orientation of new staff:*

**SKILL: DEVELOPING LEARNING PLANS**

Rate (1, 2 = new skill; 3, 4 = some skill; 5 = highly skilled) your current skills in addressing situations in which you need to:

1. *Determine the skills and knowledge needed for a position:*
2. *Assist staff in assessing their training needs:*
3. *Use adult learning principles to select appropriate training resources:*
4. *Assist new employees in developing an individualized learning plan:*

**Part III** Use your answers to the following questions to finish filling in your Learning Plan for Job Performance Situation 1 (at the end of 1–A).

- A. In which competencies would you like to continue your skill building?
- B. What steps will you take to continue your skill building in these areas?
- C. How can managers, your supervisor, team members, and other colleagues support you in your continued skill development?