

Office of Head Start FY2018 Monitoring Kickoff

Ann Linehan: So Adia, here we are this afternoon, and I know we're going to launch into our monitoring webinar today, and we're very excited about it. And you and I talked before about opening up today, before we're getting into our slides, we really want to acknowledge that, we know that we have a lot of grantees that are enduring, and our families, and our staff, our grantees that are enduring a lot of stress. We've got lots of hurricane aftermath to cope with. We know that some states and some grantees have been experiencing wildfires. And whatever we say today, about what we're rolling out and how excited we are, we want to acknowledge that, we need to make, and we acknowledge this, accommodations for any grantee in any part of the country, or sovereign nations, or territories that have experienced, you know, damage and have recovery to go -- that we'll figure that out. This is really our, just our roll out today, because we want the country to understand what this AMS 2.0 is.

Adia Brown: Yeah. I think that everyone is in our hearts and minds, and from a monitoring perspective we've really looked over the schedule. We've tried to find the programs that may be effected by any natural disaster and our monitoring event coordinators are reaching out to folks, and really trying to make sure we're making the accommodations that are the right ones for people.

Ann: And so, with that, can you tell us what we're going to be doing over the next hour?

Adia: Well. You know, we're going to be talking about the enhanced monitoring system, and we're really going to dive into making sure that people know what we're doing, think about aligned monitoring -- what we're calling aligned monitoring 2.0 looks like. And that, you know, we give them all the information that gets them ready for other reviews of the FY2018 monitoring season.

Ann: Okay! Let's go.

Adia: Alright! Good afternoon, and welcome to the FY2018 Monitoring webinar. We are so happy to be here again. And we know that you've been looking forward to hearing all about what FY2018 monitoring is going to look like. My name is Adia Brown, and I'm here with Ann Linehan.

Ann: Thanks, and I'm happy to be here with you Adia, and look forward to walking through this slide. I know people are really eagerly anticipating the rollout. So hopefully --

Adia: I've been hearing all types of questions [Inaudible]

Ann: Oh, I know. I know.

Adia: Yeah. So hopefully this is going to be a lot of fun. So you want to just jump into it, Ann?

Ann: Sure.

Adia: Okay. So, today, during this presentation, we're going to give you a lot of information that we hope is going to be extremely helpful to all the grantees. We're going to talk to you about the background and what was the road to what we now calling the Aligned Monitoring System 2.0. I'm going to introduce it to you. Ann's going to give me a lot of help. There's things that we know that you want to know, and we're going to tell you about them. We're going to also tell you about something called focus areas, and we hope that in this presentation, we can make things crystal clear. But you have the opportunity to ask us lots of questions, and after you see this presentation, we'll be back to give you live Q&A, so that we can talk about things that you want to know more about.

Ann: So before we switch to the second slide, Adia, I'm wondering if we could kind of save a, take away the mystery of that Focus Area 1, Focus Area 2, because it's -- We used to call them what?

Adia: We used to call them content areas for a long time. So we called them content areas. It was all about us coming out and doing things like fiscal, ERTSEA, which we're still be doing. But now we're actually combined them together, these focus areas, and we'll be telling people a lot more about it later on in the presentation.

Ann: And so, the focus here I wanted to actually will be transformed into the protocols that will be posted. Right?

Adia: Absolutely.

Ann: Okay.

Adia: So, these guys should be seeing the protocols today. And we hope that, you know, they'll be looking at them, and they'll have lots of questions.

Ann: Okay. So let's move on to the next slide. And really, I think just reiterating. We had to do, obviously the undertaking of the revisions to the monitoring process. Really because we had new Performance Standards, first time in 20 years. Complete overhaul. So we were really forced into thinking about how we would do monitoring. They both align with the new Performance Standards. But I think the other thing that is also important to keep in mind, we now have every grantee in the country that is on 5-year grant period. So I think it gave us, it's a dual alignment with both the Head Start Performance Standards and the five-year grant period.

Adia: A lot of change. I mean, I think that grantees have really -- they've done a really great with dealing with all the changes, and thinking about sort of, how they want to think about being in five-year grants. And also, really handling the Performance Standards.

Ann: So I think the other thing that we want to mention also with the new standards. And it's interesting because it's going to be pervasive, I think, throughout the new AMS 2.0, the standards gave grantees flexibility -- shifted a lot on local determinations, and also, an would increase towards performance, innovation, and outcomes. In many ways, one could say that's fantastic. Everybody loves that. And grantees by and large love the flexibility. However, there's probably going to be a lot of nervousness because when you can't call up the federal office and say what is exactly -- "What's the answer to this?" I think people get a little bit nervous because will they be making the right answer. And I think like our monitoring system now, there's no -- there may not be a right answer because the right answer is made different from grantee to grantee, depending on what their data tells them.

Adia: And I think that's going to make grantees really nervous. But I think just thinking about all of the flexibility that folks have gotten in the new standards, the monitoring system had to shift so that we could also understand that flexibility. And so it's going to be a really new way to look at programs.

Ann: And I think, you know, the other thing I thought about when looking at this slide, and you and I have lots of conversations about this, and we'll talk about this a little bit later, but we both read lots of monitoring reports. And because we have in the past been compliance driven, the only things you sort of read about are the things that the grantee is not doing well. So then, the monitoring reports, while

compliance is extremely important, and will continue to be important, it doesn't give you the full picture of what the grantee's profile is.

Adia: And grantees have talked about that for years. Really wanting the Office of Head Start to give them that full picture that the monitoring reports just couldn't do because we just, we always, always was about compliance. And that this new system gives a lot more opportunity to think about progress and outcomes, and really how the grantees do there work.

Ann: And the difference between grantees.

Adia: Yeah. Yeah. I think so. So people are really probably, their appetites are very wet, and they really want to know what is this new AMS 2.0. And so one of the things that grantees really need to know about AMS 2.0 is that it's a system that is much more streamlined than what we've done in many years. We're trying to make sure that we're efficient, and that we're really focused on how programs use their data, and what outcomes they're getting in the five-year period. And so, in this process, there's three reviews that grantees have to worry about. We have to think about. And so, the grantees are going to be all out there like, "what are the three reviews? What does that look like?" So of course, we're still doing CLASS. CLASS is a major part of the monitoring system. We're going to continue it. And all grantees will have the opportunity to experience a CLASS review. But then we have two additional reviews. And we're calling them Focus Area One and Focus Area 2. And those two reviews happen for the grantees at different times. One happens closer to the first year, and one happens closer to the third. And I'll tell grantees a lot more about that later on in the presentation. But there are really a combination of things that we used to do is a much more streamlined way. So people will ask, "Well, why these changes?" The Office of Head Start is always trying to be very innovative. Really trying to meet grantees needs. We listened to grantees, and one of the things we heard about our last integration of monitoring was that the burden of the multiple reviews was really a lot for grantees. And so, in trying to plan this new system, we tried to reduce this new burden, especially grantees who are agencies, that have multiple grants every year. So we really have streamlined the system. We've increased what we're doing in the alignment of monitoring -- the Performance Standards, and you know, we want to make sure grantees get some value from this new system.

Ann: Why don't we go on. So looking at, you know, the who, the when, and the where, we really want grantees to benefit from the experience. I think you're going to talk a little bit further in the presentation about the opportunity for grantees to really demonstrate how they're performing and what tools they are using to measure their progress, and track their progress. We also want this to be beneficial to regional offices. I mean, this is something that is not, we do not want this to be considered separate, unattached, to the entire oversight, because we know our, our program specialists, and our grant specialists every day are interacting with grantees.

Adia: Absolutely.

Ann: You know, so we want as part of this process to capitalize and leverage on what they know, but we also want this process, the outcomes of this process to benefit their continued work. And, you know, we are going to begin. CLASS reviews begin first in October, and Focus Areas 1 and 2 will begin in November. And so, that's really right around the corner. Isn't it?

Adia: It's close. Very close.

Ann: And again, today, I think it's sort of like putting your toes in the water and just kind of testing it out. But can you tell us more about what's going to be happening in terms of follow-up?

Adia: Yeah. You know, I think that grantees are really going to have lots of opportunities to learn more. And we're going to open up an expo again. Grantees really liked our virtual platform. They really understand it. They like getting in there, and we're going to put up lots of tools, and tips, and the protocols are there. So grantees really have a great opportunity to look into the system and understand what we're doing before we come out to do it. So let me tell grantees a little bit about sort of the difference. Because people, you know, are anxious to know what's different about this, about AMS 2.0, than our last version of the online monitoring system. Well, first of all, we really want to stress about this new system is that it's progressive. The -- almost every interaction of monitoring thus far has really been about the snapshot. So we go to a grantee, we see him for a week, and we take a picture, and we say, "Okay. We think we know enough and we can really understand this grantee."

However, we know a lot about grantees, and we know that really what we want to do is understand grantees across the entire five years. So the two focus areas give us an opportunity to look at them at the beginning -- sort of when they're starting and what all of their foundation is about -- and also look at them sort of when they're almost to the end to see how well they've done. And like you said, this is not disconnected monitoring review. So all in between, the regional offices are doing their regular oversight, they're understanding that grantee, and it's helping us understand the progress and what they're doing. Also this new system is not as broken up as the last one. So the last system, we came out, we did content area reviews to grantees, and we separated then, thinking that it would be a great idea. And for some grantees it was. But for a lot of grantees, it really didn't work.

So now, when we do the focus areas, we combine together content, and we talk to the grantee about things so that they're connected. The last version of this system was all on site. This system has some components that are off-site. So Focus Area 1 is really, you know, a conversation and a call with a grantee rather than an on-site review. And also, we used to try to go out to every classroom. We tried to get to, and some programs 830 classrooms. And that was a lot. That was a lot for the grantee. Just the burden of trying to get the team around, the travel, the logistics. We did learn a lot about programs, but we also learned that we don't need to see as many classrooms.

Ann: And when you said, you know, the first one is, it's not on site, it's a call, well it's a series of calls. We don't want them to think it's a quick phone call.

Adia: It's a series of phone calls. It's not a quick phone call. And later on we talk about Focus Area 1, I'll talk about what the series looks like. It is a series of calls. The on-site visits are [Inaudible]. So we look at grantees, we look at the size, and try to take a reasonable sample to see how many classrooms we should go to visit. This review, as you said earlier, compliance is always important. We want to make sure that people always comply with the Head Start Performance Standards. But the Head Start Performance Standards have changed. And they talk a lot about program progress, a lot of outcomes based on new data. This system is going to help us to do that. And finally, we still will do target reviews. They're really important. They really help us, you know, when we need to see a grantee, and there's an immediate need, targeted reviews gives us the ability to go out, go in and look at things right away.

Ann: Great. You know, I have to chuckle, I said this publically several times. I think this system, because we're focused on dialogue, and exchange, and grantees demonstrating, it really, in some ways it was

easier, right, as a grantee to, kind of, you figured out exactly what documents people were looking at, and what they wanted to know, and you kind of get so many grantees, you go in, and they have a whole room set up for the reviewers -- coffee table, Dunkin Donuts, close the doors, and the reviewers [Inaudible] [Laughter] So really, and we know that paper only tells part of the story. And that is true for grantees that may be not good on paper. They may not be great on paper, but they can certainly demonstrate and show you in other ways that they understand their children and families, and are making progress. And other programs that have great paper, doesn't necessarily mean that those papers are in action --

Adia: Are reflective of what they actually are doing. We have had some great experiences with grantees when were figuring out sort of, you know, how to do this. And grantees really got on board. We did lots of pilots, we had a lot of conversations with them. And we found that at first, it was a little disconcerting to grantees. Sort of like, "Oh no, you don't want those binders? You don't want to go in the room?" But as time -- as people started to understand that, we really do get a chance to see how grantees really operate their programs. And grantees are always interested in a schedule. They always want to know when you're coming to see me? When is all of this going to happen? And so, we put this slide up just so that people can really get a clear picture of the five years that they have their grant, and everything that's going to happen. So for lots of grantees, the first time that we're going to talk to them is from Focus Area 1, and it should generally happen in your first year. The next time we want to come out and see grantees, you can see from this picture is later. So, at the very end of your second year or your third year, we'll come out and do Focus Area 2.

Ann: So, I know we get people in the audience going, "Well, I'm in my fourth year! I'm in my fifth year! Or I'm in my second year!" What are --

Adia: Absolutely. They're going to be so many people that ask that question, and so, you know, grantees are in various stages right now. They're everywhere. So there are some grantees, they've already sort of, they're already in their third and fourth year. So we have grantees who are in their third or fourth year, and they've completed the monitoring system. They did all the reviews, they did everything --

Ann: So they may not enter into this system until their first year of their five -- the next five-year grant.

Adia: That's right. So they won't enter until their first year comes up again. And so, there are other grantees who are in the system, and in their third year, and they are saying, "Well what's going to happen to me? I'm not in my first year. I'm not in my third year. I haven't finished all of my reviews. What's going to happen?" And so, those grantees are going to get a Focus Area 2 this year. And so, just so that grantees feel comfortable, one of things we're doing that's special to this year is that when we do a Focus Area 2, we're going to do a new Focus Area 1. As we talk in this presentation, people understand why that's important. Focus Area 1 is really about the background, and we want to make sure that we get that even for the grantees who are sort of entering quote, unquote, late. We also are going to continue to do CLASS. You can see it can happen between your second and third year. It's always been the way that it is. And then, grantees, you know, we've always took the fourth year to give some determination and your notification of whether or not --

Ann: So that fourth year, we're looking at the data that we've collected, and then, and then notification, clearly, would be the notification of the designation renewal, whether or not a grantee would have to re compete for funding, or whether or not they would be eligible for a five-year automatically --

Adia: Exactly, exactly. So hopefully, grantees -- And I know grantees will take this chart and memorize it, and we'll also send to for all grantees, we'll continue to send out the 60-day letters so you know when the review is going to happen. We also send out the customized letters so that they know that they are on the schedule this year. And grantees should be getting those eventually.

Ann: So, let's focus a little bit on Focus Area 1. And really, this is a big shift because this is a, and we want to share with you, what you should expect from the reviewers. And this is, we have talked to the reviewers. I mean, we are setting a very high bar for the level of interaction and knowledge that reviewers will bring to Focus Area 1 review. As Adia said, this will be a series of discussions that will be mutually, sort of, scheduled, and -- What do you call those planners in the --

Adia: Monitoring and event coordinators. The MECs.

Ann: The MECs. Okay. So this is not something that will be done by surprise. I mean, it's because when we have these conversations, we want to have the right people at the table. And that -- having the right people at the table is really going to be the determination of the grantee if we know that the reviewer is going to be talking about -- I don't know, children services.

Adia: Children services. Family engagement.

Ann: Then, you want to have all those people available in order to contribute to the conversation.

Adia: Absolutely.

Ann: And I think what is different about this, and I think one criticism that, you know, we heard throughout every iteration of monitoring, is you know, reviewers come in and they don't know us. I think that we made efforts over the years, particularly in our travel communities. You know, because, you know, just because you've been to one tribe doesn't mean you're going to know anything about the next tribal community. I think that's also true with non-tribal grantees. We now have a lot of information in HSCS. We have prior monitoring reports, audit reports. We have PR data. We have the grant application, which is a wealth of information, because it really tells you all the aspirations and the goals, and how the grantee is planning to implement its services. So the reviewer's is going to have to do their homework. And they're going to have to -- I don't want to say plough through, but they're going to be responsible to familiarize themselves with that information so when they engage in a conversation, you're not having to say what stage you're in, and how many children you serve, and what did you're last monitoring say, or what is your PR information.

Adia: It's really a way to help reviewers engage in real conversation with the grantees. Once the reviewers know about the grantees, and they are really thinking about, you know, all the information that they, that they have read, and they've accessed, and they've analyzed, this actually helps them develop the questions they want to ask. And so, this is why it's so important that reviewers do their homework, and that they really do it for the grantees. We're spending lots of time. We spent all summer long with training reviewers to think about how to do that.

Ann: And I do think, and we'll mention it again, the, we usually talk about a script. And I think the script gave grantees some level of comfort. Because we would always say that the reviewer can't deviate from the script. And what we realized is that's limited. Because what programs would always say is, "But why

didn't they ask me this? Or why didn't I have the opportunity to share this?" And I think this system has a flexibility and the fluidity that you go where the grantee takes you.

Adia: Absolutely.

Ann: And I think that the other thing about Focus Area 1. It really is to me also establishing a solid link with our Training and Technical Assistance Network, as well as with our program and fiscal staff. As we talked throughout these several months, this is an area -- This is an opportunity where we're really understanding what is it that you said you're going to do? Why did you make those determinations? Clearly based on community assessment and a lot of other data. If this is the first year grant year application, grantees have probably put a lot of thought into this, a lot of information, a lot of analysis. So it's an opportunity for us to basically establish the foundation of how the grantee built his house. And I think it also allows us the opportunity, because we know that some grantees are not always at the same level of other grantees. We want to be proactive. And if there is a red flag, we want to be able to say, "Hey. You know, I'm not sure that this might -- Have you thought about this direction? Or does this data really suggest that you don't need transportation?" So it's an opportunity to give the grantee some feedback, not to come down in a punitive way, but to say, "Gee. I wonder if you thought about this?" And then, it's up to the grantee. Because we know that sometimes the best made plans sometimes need to have course corrections.

So we're hoping out of this -- and if the grantees can further reflect, or they can say, "You know what? We're so confident, we're forging ahead." Or there's information that we could be sharing with the that they might say, "You know, we could use some extra help in this area." Or "We've never provided this model before." Or, "We have a new accounting system, and we're a little uncertain about how it's going to work out." Or "We have brand new board members." I mean, there are so many things that can emanate from this, that we hope is going to help the grantee, also from the regional office. And the regional office can then get to determine if it's something we might want to assist the grantee with, or is it something that we might want to deploy some TA resources.

Adia: Absolutely.

Ann: Now that's not to say that if something egregious occurs, we would would certain issue a finding, but this is really trying to really engage the grantee at the beginning of a five-year process, and be value-added.

Adia: I couldn't have said it better, Ann. I feel like the Amy inquire here. [Laughter] So, let me tell grantees just a little bit about Focus Area 1. And, I mean, you just laid it out for them so well. When you look at the slide, we really want to think about what are the strength of the community of the, that the grantee serves. It's really a building block. It's why you decided to build your program. Why you have it in the areas that you do. It's, you know, the children that you decided to serve. These are all the things that you're figuring out here. We're also look at your staffing, and your patterns, and how that meets the design that you've set out to do in the beginning of your program. And again, just like you said, if we do it here, we have the opportunity to say, "Hey. looks great. Looks like you have a good combination of staff. Well. you know, Are you thinking about things with professional development? Are you thinking about getting a hub coordinator, if you don't have one. And it's not to be punitive. But it's really to think about how is the grantee designing their program, and what might they need to improve so that they can do really well along the way.

Ann: I think one of the things -- And I'm so glad that you got the little piggy there with the piggy bank. Because I think, and I think that programs have gotten so sophisticated in this, but I think from the program side, you sort of think about the design, you look at the data, you develop what options, you develop your staffing plans. And then you need to look at, do you really have the budget that's going to support the attainment of the goals that you set forth. So I really think making that connection with, does the capacity of the design and the build of the budget, is it going to support the success on the on the service side.

Adia: And grantees think about that. They write it in their grant application. This is our opportunity to talk to the grantee about it, and really for us, make those connections. And sometimes, if the connection wasn't made, it's a great opportunity for the grantee to think about it, and say hey, this is a place that I might want to shift some dollars and do something different. And we also want to know what governance looks like. Very early on in the program. How is your governing body really thinking about the program planning, with you starting off, making sure that you have the resources and the finances that you need to move forward. And you know, and how are they -- How do they begin to understand their roles in what they need to do as a governing body.

Ann: And I also think in Focus 1, you're really touching on -- I was thinking about this, sort of the governance. I think it sends a message to the board early on that they really matter, their role is incredibly important, because we're engaging them at the outset. I think sometimes, you know, if we run into struggles with a grantee, it might be the third or fourth year of a grant, and we never gave to the board. And again, and that's not to say, and I want to keep reiterating, that that program specialist in the regions, and fiscal specialists who are doing that level of engagement all the time. And I think this should, this should just be a parallel process that supports it.

Adia: Mm-hmm. It should definitely support it. And we also begin here and start thinking about your education approach and your health approach, and your approaches to family and community engagement. All of those things are very important at the very beginning, to see how the program leaded out. What are some of your goals? What are some of the things that you are thinking about? You know, what curriculum have they decided to use? Lots of things here, where we can start to have great conversations with the grantee to really understand how they are starting.

Ann: And I think the whole thing with the curriculum discussion, you know, in many cases, programs may have curriculums that meet the criteria of the researched-based. But they may need some enhancement, because if some special, you know, need within their community, or population. So again, it's an opportunity, I think, to have an exchange, to add value at the beginning of the process instead of coming in midpoint.

Adia: I think so, too. So people are probably really wondering what does it look like. And earlier people heard me talk about this is an off-site review. And this is, it's a conversation. But it lasts. It can last up to a week. So there's a series of forty-five minute talks --

Ann: Not a straight week. Not 24 hours.

Adia: No. No, no, no, no. There's a series. That's a long time. [Laughter] I don't think anybody would have the stamina. But, there's a series of anywhere between 45 minutes and 120-minute calls that we plan with the grantee during that week. We give the grantee, sort of, carte blanche, to tell us what fits

for them. Who can we talk to, when? And we give them plenty of time to set up the interviews and the conversations. And we invite them to bring whomever they think is the right person to sort of talk to us about the topics. So, it -- we're hoping that it's going to be a good experience for the grantees, and that they really get an opportunity to share things -- both good and challenges -- that they're thinking about at the beginning of their program operations, and think about it in a way that we can help them in the future.

Ann: Well, and again, let's just talk a little bit about the benefits, and I think we've really gone over them, but I think the whole issue is an early look. Right? And I think it's so important to, again, get in as soon as possible, to have the dialogue, and to provide feedback. We see it a s-- and I know that you work with external stakeholders, and groups who were interested in -- as we were making the revisions and one of the the things, I think, that they were was this early exchange. So I think an early look is important. Again to not only validate the direction grantees are going in, but also give support or pushing and probing a little bit if you think that the direction may be problematic for them. Clearly any feedback, ongoing feedback to our regional offices is important, and again as you talk about the progressive. Let's not just go in there midpoint when it's really too late -- We care about, when you think about having -- whether it's babies or preschoolers, that's a long time in their lifespan. So we want to, we want things to be as right as they can be from the first year.

Adia: I think that's right. So, Ann, we talked so much about Focus Area 1 I know people are going to be excited to hear about Focus Area 2. And so, why don't we go, why don't we go and tell me about Focus Area 2, and sort, of what they can expect there?

Ann: Okay great. So, we talked a little bit about -- even folks who are one, it's not this script, this rigid script that folks are following. But we want to be clear. I think with the prior protocols, people always had a sense of comfort about the the transparency. And we want to ensure folks today is whether its Focus Area 1 or Focus Area 2, the protocols will actually, the protocols for those areas will actually describe the exact areas and standards that are going to be addressed throughout the conversation. So the transparency is there.

Adia: It's still there. And I think people will, you know, they'll find some comfort, because the topics are there. And under the topics, there are things that the renewal will talk about. This is not a random conversation. Every reviewer, we also have to think about consistency across grantees. So every reviewer has topics and they have places and standards that they are going to talk to the grantee about, and the grantee is going to be well aware of what each of those are.

Ann: And again, And I, and it's funny we have folks out there that know the CLASS, and domains. And I always think about that third domain, how difficult that is, but how important it is to children's learning. And the same thing with reviewers who are out there, if a grantee says something that's interesting, we want reviewers to ask a follow up question! And not let it drop. Because I think programs have made, may not have felt the freedom to be as expressive as we're asking them to be, about the way in which they're implementing services, supporting staff, conducting observations, whatever it is, we think that grantees have a lot to say that this system will really promote that level of expression of, the freedom. And again, you now I'm the oldie in the room here. So I go back to the savvy where you actually do check the compliance box. Right?

Adia: I wasn't -- I'm not -- I wasn't back then. [Laughter]

Ann: Well. But there was kind of a checking the box you know, how many plugs, you know -- How many plugs were covering the electrical things?

Adia: -- On the playground.

Ann: And I think that shift is certainly going to be welcomed. And again, you could say, you know, "Here's our safety checklist, and this is what we do every day, but wouldn't it be great to walk through the center and actually see that in motion?"

Adia: It's interesting that you say that, Ann, because that's exactly what we're going to do. I think that grantees have really as you said earlier, used to us asking them for the checklist, and we would go over the checklist, and we would say, "Okay, you have the checklist." But this new system is really about the grantees sort of walking us through and showing us how do you use this checklist? What are the trends from that checklist? What are the things that you're actually doing to make things improve for kids based on what you do every day.

Ann: I think the same thing is very true, and the other example that I use that I think is so important is the whole family partnership and family engagement. I think that there was such a heavy emphasis, that programs gravitated to -- even though it was in the word written was in there at some point -- the written partnership agreement. But there's so much more. I mean sort of that agreement is just the beginning of that relationship with the family, the parent. And I even think the opportunity for parents to be able to articulate as well as staff how they feel engaged in the program, or how programs engage parents is much more freeing. And I think it will give many more opportunity for programs.

Adia: And the standards really do cover a lot of about how parents get involved, how parents are engage across all of the services. And we try to mirror that the new protocol, just making sure that we included parents, and health and education, in all the places that we think that parents should feel welcomed, and that they should have an opportunity to participate in the program. So we tried to create protocol that was very systematic. that it really wasn't about whether or not there was a plug plugged in, or whether or not there was one tripping hazard. But really about how is the program managing itself? How are they thinking about the information that they know about children and families? And how are they using that to really improve and make things great for kids.

Ann: And I think so the last little bullet here you know they could be asking questions across several areas you know, within a 15-minute or 20-minute conversation. But it is all linked together. I mean, if you are talking about serving a special population of children, you know, you might be curious if the demo -- demographics have shifted in the community, how would you go about recruitment. What are the -- Are there specific health areas? Are there differences in the families? Maybe it's a population that the primary language is not English, so what is your planned coordinated approach to supporting those families across all of those areas.

Adia: Well it was interesting, when we actually tried this grantees, grantees are really used to sort of going down the protocol, and going by question, by question, by question. And we would have these questions, and people would get so excited about their work. They would start showing us what they did. And then we would say, "Oh, that's great! You know, we think we have it all." And they would say, "You didn't ask all the questions." And we would sort of repeat back to the grantees, and say, " No. Here's where you answered all the questions." And they were surprised at how well people listened.

And how important the conversation was to really understand exactly what they're doing. So Focus Area 2 is really about the opportunity for the grantee to demonstrate their ability to do several things. One is we're very interested in how grantees track and access their program's performance. So what does the program know about how well they're doing? How well are you actually, you know, providing services to families? Are they feeling welcomed in your program? How well you're using your curriculum? Are you implementing it the way that you had anticipated it? Are people getting the professional development that they need? We also, this protocol is also very focused on how they are using data? So, grantees will be very interested to know that we're going to come out, we're going to actually look at your data, and look at how you use it, when you use it, who uses it, who gets it, and how does it actually help you make informed decisions about your program.

Ann: I think one of our colleagues, I think it might have been in Region I, did a search in the new Performance Standards how many times the word data was used. I want to say it was high sixties or low seventies. But clearly -- and that's been a huge shift in the Performance Standards, and I think it's reflected here.

Adia: And I think that it's going to be really interesting for grantees because when we were only focused on compliance, we were looking at very widgety things in the standards -- just one standard after the other. But the new standards are so woven together and data is such an important part of how grantees really operate their program. I just had to comment on that as a high-priority item in the new monitoring system.

Ann: And again, when we think about program performance, and I don't want to underscore the progress and the performance of children is so incredibly important. And it's really -- while we want children to progress leaps and bounds, what's important is the program really has the data to understand and explain how the children are progressing. It's not that they went from here to here in three months, but it's how do you know that they did progress, and if there's so gaps there, what are you doing to support those kids who are not progressing in a way that is more typically developing. I think another thing about program performance, we think about program performance, we think about early childhood, of children. I think about program performance in other ways. Like, if you have five facilities, how are you performing around the upkeep and the security of those facilities? So it really cuts across -- Program performance is huge.

Adia: It's very big. And it cuts across many different topics for the grantee, but it all connects together. It's funny. It seems huge, but it all matters. If you have facilities that aren't really being kept well, you know, it's very hard for teachers to teach there. It's very hard for children to be, you know, to be successful in those facilities. So everything goes together. And this protocol is very interconnected and woven together.

Ann: I think that the other thing I would like to make a point here, you know, we talk about the new so-called qualifications for some staffing and we know that some programs are still even struggling to meet the requirements in the Act, particularly sometimes in communities with infant-toddler teachers. And what we expect, and again we talk about program performance, if you find that you have some areas that yeah, you're striving and you're not quite there, what are you doing to support staff to meet certain credentialing? Do you have a professional development plan? Is there, is there a goal in terms of a timeline? Are you providing the observations and the supports that teacher needs to be successful? And so, it really is looking at the performance of the grantee. What are they doing in the attainment -- not

only of their own goals, but in either continuing maintaining the Performance Standards or striving to meet those Performance Standards. It's the effort and the intentionality, and the planning that I think is important for programs to be able to articulate.

Adia: And I think over time, in this system, people are going to get better at that. Right? And so, right now, people are going to be thinking a lot about implementing the standards and how they do that. When we go out and we see programs in Focus Area 2, they've already sort of been doing this for a couple of years now. And so, we will see those programs. And we'll see sort of how well they've been able to, for example, use their professional development systems to encourage teachers to implement the curriculum, to help them with strategies that they need to think about in the classroom to their children. To think about family workers are working now, building relationships with families and getting the services they need. So Focus Area 2 is really sort of the proof in the pudding focus area. In Focus Area 1, we learn all these wonderful things about their foundation, but when we get to Focus Area 2, it's really about understanding is the grantee doing those things that are expecting in the standards, and also whether or not if they're not, what type of progress they're making.

Ann: I think the other thing that this area will allow us to do, and I think we have, I don't want to say fallen short, but have not had the kind of information consistently. I think this information gathering -- because we're going to be gathering within categories, within buckets from every grantee. Right? It doesn't have to be exactly the same way, but we're going to know about the curriculum. We're going to know about the systems that are used to measure progress. We're going to know about assessments. It's going to give us a better national profile, because over time, as we're collecting this information, we're going to be able to roll it up in the aggregate, and be able to articulate better -- be it to Congress, be it to our, our Administration -- a better picture of the overall performance of Head Start programs.

Adia: And Ann, I think sometimes people -- People always know that in monitoring, we never monitor all the standards. And earlier this year you sent out a great letter to grantees, really letting them know that there's some standards that we're not going to monitor this time. And we know that there are things that people are still working on around curriculum. We know that, you know, duration -- there's still a topic that grantees are working on. And so, those are things that are not in this monitoring protocol. We're not looking to see whether or not grantees have actually completed those items yet. Grantees should continue to work on all of those things, but it's not something that we're monitoring at this time. So the standards that we chose to look at in the, in Focus Area 2, are ones that grantees really have been working on for a very long time, and their every familiar to the grantees, even from the standards, the last set of standards that we had.

Ann: And I think just to make, you know, a clear distinction, the Head Start Performance Standards, which we know everyone would have several copies. Right? One at their bed stand. There is a compliance table at the back of that Performance Standards. And the compliance table denotes those standards that Adia was talking about that were not effective 60 days after the issuance of, of the Performance Standards. And I think that effective date was November 7, 2016. And that whole, the whole front body -- those are the ones we're sort of looking at, and making a determination. It's the ones in the compliance table that have dates after than that November 7, 2016 that were.

Adia: And I think that was as really fair decision by the Office of Head Start. It really, you know, I think it shows that the Office of Head Start is really giving grantees that opportunity to implement these standards in the high- quality effective way. So by not monitoring the ones that are in the Appendix,

we're continuing to let grantees sort of grow in those standards, and make, you know, really good progress. So. Focus Area 2. People will want to know a lot about the methodology that we're going to use. And what we've talked a lot about, sort of, the conversations that we want to have with grantees. These are going to be really important conversations. We're using them as a tool help us understand and gather information. We want to look at grantees' data. One way we're going to do that is through something -- it's going to be a little new in this system. It's called a data tour. So rather than grantees.

And we're going to talk with you about the data you use every day to what the team is going to do is actually walk through data tours with and saying, "See you on Friday," the grantee setting up a bunch of binders, giving us those Dunkin Donuts, with coffee, actually provide services to children. And so, it's not really about us trying to interpret the data for you. It's about you showing us your data, and showing us your interpretation of it is, how you use it regularly, and how you use it with your staff, your governing body, and with parents to make differences in your program.

Ann: So if I were the ERSEA manager, or the health manager, might I find a reviewer sitting down next to me at my computer, and say, "Hey, take me through this system where you know the children are up to date, and their EPSTD schedules, or you've identified a child that is screening with a special needs, and that child's been referred out. Is that -- So it could be something as simple as that?"

Adia: It's very -- it's very simple. And it looks just like that. We did some, we did some pilots. I'll tell you an interesting story. We went out, and we did exactly that with grantees. And when we first went, we thought that we knew what tool the grantee would be using. It was attendance. And so, we had a, we had a spreadsheet, and a Excel. And we said, "Fill this out, and give us the information." and the grantee was very willing to do that. But when we sat down and talked to them, they said, well you know, that's not really how we do it at all. And we said, okay. Well, you know, "Let's rip this up and throw it away, and show us how you really do it." And the grantee took us into their office and they had a phenomenal amount of data on attendance, and when children are there, and when they weren't, and which parents they called, and who was absence for a few days, and what follow-up they did, and what family service worker was working with that family. It was amazing to actually see that. But to sort of taking away the barrier of, "We want this specific document, or this specific thing," and sitting there with people at their desk, gave them the freedom and the opportunity to really show us their stuff. And so it worked really well. Another thing that we're going to do is center and classroom observations. We've done those for a long time. And we're going to continue to do them --

Ann: Different from the CLASS observation.

Adia: Different than the CLASS observation. These are ones where we'll have -- People have asked me this. How many reviewers? And who's going to come out? And in this system, we general have three reviewers depending on the size of your program. You know, the average programs get three reviewers. If you're larger, there will be more, because you have to cover more classrooms and cover my staff. But in general, we'll have a fiscal reviewer and two head start reviewers. And those reviewers will be versed in early childhood education, family engagement, and health. They'll work together with you in the program to really get a clear understanding. They go out to do the visits. And grantees really need to know that when we go out to do the classroom observations, we want you to come with us. You're our guide. We talk to you ahead of time to really talk to you about what will we see in the classroom. What's the data you have about this classroom? What is the teacher like in this classroom? So we ask those questions up front.

Ann: The teacher's very nervous because she just started last week.

Adia: The teacher's very nervous. People can tell us that. The teacher just started last week, you know. And so, we want to hear those things. We also want to hear, if you started last week, what are some of the supports you're giving for this teacher? And so, we ask tons of questions before we go out to visit the classroom. Then, when we're there, we ask the guide to tell us what we see. What are we looking at in this classroom. What's happening here? How is the teacher using the curriculum? And so we watch it and we talk, and then we take notes and do that observation. But what grantees also have to know is that we then talk to the teacher. So we spend about 10 or 15 minutes talking to the teacher, asking

her: How are you using the curriculum? How are you working with the children? How are you individualizing? What type of professional development you've gotten? So the observation is really not this -- It used to be we kind of went in with our computers, and we didn't say anything. We just took notes. It's very engaging now, and it really is a partnership with the grantee to understand what's happening. And then, we do a fiscal analysis. And it's a lot of fun to do. The grantee has the opportunity -- the fiscal staff has the opportunity, just like program staff, to talk to us about how they operate fiscal. What does their fiscal system look like? What is, you know, is it automated? Should be? What's the capacity of the staff? And really, how do they use the budget to help the program meet its goals. And so, it's really not about -- As we used to come in and do tons of transaction testing.

Ann: But we still will.

Adia: We still do transaction testing. we just don't do it -- We don't do, sort of, the the blank transaction testing that we used to do. Now we conversations with the grantee, and we do testing based on what their telling us about their goals, their objectives, what they're planning to do, and the information that we saw. So through audits. Look at facilities. The fiscal person is now looking at facilities. So the fiscal observation and analysis is really, it's broad and it includes program, as well. So this review is five days. Typically it's five days. And I told folks the size of the team. So. Typically three reviewers.

Ann: You know another thought is someone, you know -- We've always heard the expression, we've used it my many times -- you should be review ready every day. And what we mean is that if you're running a program, and know what you're doing, it shouldn't matter. And it -- And I think this approach doesn't really allow you to prepare, because the answers are not there. The answers are in the grantee.

Adia: Yes. The grantee has all the answers. It's really about how well the grantee is providing those services. And so, I think there's a lot of great outcomes for Focus Area 2. One is that this focus area is really about validating the program's progress. We know that programs will change from the time that we've seen them in Focus Area 1. So Focus Area 1, you've set the foundation. It's planned. You're going in that direction. But many things happen with programs. Like right now, for example, we're thinking in our hearts and minds about all the programs in Texas and Louisiana who absolutely they're --

Ann: And Florida.

Adia: And Florida. And St. Croix. And St. Thomas. All their program plans are going to change based on the hurricane situation that we have right now. And we've changed. We've said that we're going to push some those reviews off. We're going to find out the situation is, and really think about how best to serve those programs But things like that happen. Maybe not to that magnitude, in al programs. And we think about sort of how do programs change and shift. And when we come in Focus Area 2, it's not about

validating your plan. It's about validating your outcomes, and the progress that you've made along the way in meeting your Performance Standard, and meeting your overall goals and objectives.

Ann: And I can clearly see folks had a plan, they had an implementation strategy. And it is -- Is it working or are there course corrections. And I think you're, you're there are many course corrections that occur all the time because indicating, in the world of Head Start and Early Head Start partnerships, of circumstance we anticipate, and other things that happen that are unexpected. And again, it's -- There will be reports issued. there will be if there are noncompliance's or deficiencies. Certainly, they will be included in the reports, and people get that feedback. But they'll also hear about the things that they are -- the outcomes that they are achieving. Their progress on performance. So, it will be a much fuller picture of a grantee profile.

Adia: Absolutely. So, we've kind of come to the end of our row, and it's time for me to tell people about the resources that we'll have available for them. And --

Ann: We're also going to hang around and answer some questions.

Adia: Yeah, we can come to the end of the road of this PowerPoint presentation. So. One of the things we want people to know is that lots of things are going to be available both on ECLKC and the Monitoring expo. We have that every year. People get excited. It's going to launch today at 3:30. And so we hope that folks really go in there and look at all the tools, and the presentations, and everything that we have to offer for them there. And, we're looking forward to being out on the road and seeing grantees throughout this entire monitoring season.

Ann: Thank you. And now onto questions.

Adia: Yeah. On to questions.

[End video]