

**Request for Fast Track Clearance Process:**

**Description of the proposed process and instrument**

**Purpose of the study:** Pilot the use of a new document developed by the Office of Head Start by convening a series of focus groups designed to collect information that will provide insight into the preferences and experiences of stakeholders who will be using the document.

*Partnerships for Sustained Learning: A Guide to Creating Head Start-School Partnerships* (the Guide) was developed in order to help Head Start programs meet federal requirements included in the Head Start Act of 2007. The act states: “each Head Start agency shall take steps to coordinate ... with schools in which children participating in a Head Start program ... will enroll following such program to promote continuity of services and effective transitions.”

In order to assess the usability of the Guide and assure that it contains the appropriate content and guidance Head Start programs will need to adequately meet these expectations, a review/pilot process has been designed to collect information and input from practitioners and content experts. The purpose of the pilot process is to:

1. Collect feedback on the content and format of the Guide. This will help assure that the Guide is relevant to existing conditions and capacities at the local level, is easy to use and understand and contains all the resources and guidance practitioners need.
2. Identify key issues related to building continuity across Head Start programs and elementary schools. This will help assure that the Guide reflects the realities and complexities of working across systems and will inform the work of OHS to set expectations and provide support for local efforts to promote coordination.

**Description of the document:**

*Partnerships for Sustained Learning: A Guide to Creating Head Start-School Partnerships* is designed to be used at the local level by Head Start program administrators and staff. It provides a rationale and concrete examples of how Head Start programs and schools can work together to build continuity across their two systems of learning. The Guide is also a planning tool and includes a description of a three-step planning process as well as a “workbook” section that can be used to identify shared Head Start-School activities.

**Process:**

Feedback on the Guide will be collected through a series of facilitated focus groups held in a variety of settings and communities. Focus groups will be conducted with teams of Head Start/school practitioners and with groups of content experts. Participation is voluntary. Focus group members will provide feedback and insight based on their experience and knowledge of the issues.

Practitioners will contribute insight and provide feedback on the usability of the Guide and how well it addresses the realities and issues faced in the context of local programs and communities. Content experts will contribute insight and feedback on the adequacy and accuracy of the contents and how well they reflect current research and best practice. Findings

from the pilot process will be used to inform revisions and the development of additional materials needed to increase relevance and usability.

Pilot teams will convene for a one-day session. They will begin with an orientation to the pilot process and an overview of the Partnership Guide. Next, they will participate in a series of training exercise designed to familiarize them with the content of the Guide and provide them an opportunity to interact with the materials and to try out the planning process.

Following orientation and training, teams will participate in a facilitated focus group discussion to share initial reactions and respond to a set of key questions (see attached discussion template) designed to elicit their opinions and suggestions for how to improve the relevance and usability of the Guide. Discussions will address what needs to be changed or added to the Guide and what additional resources or support materials should be developed.

Once all focus groups have been conducted, information collected will be compiled and analyzed to determine what revisions or additions should be made to the Guide and what additional materials should be developed.