School Readiness Goals and Head Start Program Functioning

Site Visit Protocol

Interview Guide for Staff

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us today. I'm [INTERVIEWER NAME] and this is my colleague [ASSISTANT NAME] and we're researchers from the Urban Institute, a non-profit policy research organization in Washington, DC. As you may have heard, your Head Start program has been invited to participate in a research study called "School Readiness Goals and Head Start Program Functioning," funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

As part of this study, we are visiting 12 Head Start and Early Head Start grantees from across the country. Our goal is to learn about grantees' experiences with setting school readiness goals and their opinions towards the school readiness goals requirement, but we are <u>not</u> evaluating whether programs are meeting the requirement or not. The purpose of the study is to inform the Office of Head Start about how Head Start programs are implementing this requirement and what their strengths and needs are.

During our visit to your program, we will be meeting with program leaders, staff, parents, and other key stakeholders to get different perspectives on your program and its goals.

Our meeting with you today will last about an hour. The structure will be rather open-ended, meaning we have a list of specific questions to cover but we welcome any responses you may have.

INFORMED CONSENT

Before I begin my questions, I'd like to give you a copy of a consent form that describes our study procedures and your rights as a participant. If you agree to the study procedures, I'll ask you to sign and date your copy.

[NOTE TO FACILITATORS: Give copy of consent form to participant to read. Participant must sign and return one copy and may keep the second copy.]

- I'll point out that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to not answer any question and may stop the interview at any time.
- Everyone who works on this study has signed a *Staff Confidentiality Pledge* prohibiting disclosure of anything you say during the interview that would allow someone outside the research team, including government staff and officials, to identify you. The only exception is a researcher may be required by law to report suspicion of immediate harm to yourself, to children, or to others.
- Your name and other identifying information, such as the program's name and specific location, will be removed from the data to protect your privacy.
- We value the information you will share with us today and want to make sure we accurately capture all the details. With your permission, we will audio record the session and take notes (written and/or on a laptop computer). Those notes will not include your name. The recording will serve as a back-up tool to ensure we capture all your comments in as close to your words as possible. Once the project is complete, all recordings will be destroyed. During the discussion, if you would like to stop the recording while you make a particular comment, please let us know and we will do so.

Do you have any questions about the study procedures?

[If anyone objects to recording the discussion, the researcher who is not leading the interview will need to take thorough notes.]

PROTOCOL

[CONSTRUCT: Program context. Staff training and experience.]

1. Let's start by having you each introduce yourself. Please tell us your job title, how long you've been in your current position, any other Head Start positions you've held previously, and your educational background.

[CONSTRUCT: Perspectives towards school readiness goals mandate.]

2. Under new Head Start standards, programs are now required to establish school readiness goals and measure children's progress towards goals. Are you familiar with this new requirement about establishing school readiness goals?

   a) (If yes) How did you first learn about this requirement?

   b) What do you think about the school readiness goals requirement?

   c) Was this something you were doing already, or was setting school readiness goals new to you? *(Probe whether they previously had school readiness goals for the program or individual children and whether they collected data to measure progress towards goals.)*

[CONSTRUCT: Familiarity with program's own school readiness goals]

3. I'd like to talk about the specific school readiness goals and objectives your program has established.
   a) Are you familiar with your program's school readiness goals?
      (Probe how they learned about the goals, if director shared a copy or presented at a meeting, if staff were involved in decision-making, etc.)

   b) <u>If separate EHS goals</u>: How familiar are you with the school readiness goals for infants and toddlers?

[CONSTRUCT: *Opinions of school readiness goals.*]

4. What do you think of the goals and objectives your program set? *(Probe whether these are the best goals for the program and why/why not.)*
    a) Do you feel that the goals reflect the needs of all the children? Or some children better than others? How so?

[CONSTRUCT: *Involvement in goal setting process.*]

5. Were you involved in developing your program's school readiness goals, or do you know of other staff in positions similar to yours who were involved?

    (If involved) What role did you have?

    (All)
    a) From what you know, who was responsible for leading the effort?
    b) Who else was involved?
    c) From your perspective, was everyone involved in the process who needed to be to make it successful? Or was someone missing or not as involved as you would have liked?

[CONSTRUCT: *Infusing goals into practice and daily operations*]

6. Thinking back to before you had school readiness goals and now, how, if at all, has your teaching/work changed?

[CONSTRUCT: *Measuring progress towards goals*]

7. Tell me about the kinds of measures or assessment tools you use to assess progress towards school readiness goals.

8. Are you involved in collecting these data? How often and when do you (or others) collect data with these measures? *(If a Work Sampling System is used, probe for how materials are gathered and other types of data that are collected, such as from screeners.)*

9. Did you receive any training in how to use these measures and collect the data? What was the training like?

10. Have you experienced any challenges using these measures or in collecting the information you need? How so?

[CONSTRUCT: *Data use*]

11. What happens to the data after you collect it?

    (Probe: Do you submit it to someone else, do you analyze it yourself, do you save it in a file for safekeeping and possible analysis later, or something else?)

    a) Do you ever get data reports back?
        i.   What types of data reports do you run/see?
        ii. At what level are the reports (e.g., broken out by your class or caseload, for the program as a whole, etc.)?

    a) What kinds of things do you look for as you review the information?
        i.   Do you look at progress for each child?
        ii. What about progress for all the children you work with?
        iii. Do you ever look at the information for different groups of children? What groups?
        iv. Do you look at information broken down in other ways? In what ways?

12. How do you determine whether children are making progress toward the goals you've set? How do you know if there has been "enough" growth?

    (Probes: look at school readiness growth in individual children over time, look at growth toward specific skills, compare scores to norms, look at aggregated scores over time within the program)

13. Have you ever had difficulty interpreting the data (or the information in the data reports you received)?
    a) What was challenging about it?
    b) What would have made it easier for you to understand?
    c) Is there any information you would like to get from the data but can't get? What information?

[CONSTRUCT: Communication regarding progress]

14. What, if any, information is shared between you and your direct supervisor regarding progress towards school readiness goals and objectives?
    (Probe for how, when, and the type of information shared.)

    a) Have you ever looked at information together and talked about actions you could take?

15. What kind of information about progress towards school readiness goals do you share with families?
    a) Do parents get specific information about their child and whether their child is reaching set goals? When and how?

    b) Do parents get information about the progress of all children you care for?

    c) How are parents involved in planning to make sure their children are making progress and getting the support that they need?

[CONSTRUCT: Data-driven decision-making]

16. Have the results you've seen from school readiness assessments ever led you to change your [teaching/work] in any way?
    a) Can you provide a few examples of changes you've made?

    b) Have these changes been helpful?

    c) Are there other changes you would like to make?

[CONSTRUCT: Prioritization of goals]

17. From your perspective, has the program emphasized certain goals more than others?
    a) Why do think that's the case?
    b) *IF HS/EHS:* Are priorities similar for infants and toddlers as for preschoolers?

[CONSTRUCT: Supports needed to use goals]

18. What kinds of resources or support would you need to better measure progress towards school readiness goals and use goals for planning?
(Probe: For example, some programs have mentioned the T/TA available to them, their program leadership, partnerships, and other resources.)

[CONSTRUCT: Usefulness of school readiness goals requirement]

19. Overall, do you think that the school readiness goals requirement has been useful for your program? Why or why not?

20. Those are all of our questions. Is there anything else you would like to tell us or that you think we should have asked?