

School Readiness Goals and Head Start Program Functioning
Site Visit Protocol
Interview Guide for Governing Body or Policy Council Representatives

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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 not 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 45 minutes. 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.

[NOTES 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: Background of governing body/policy council representatives.]

1. Let's start by having each of you introduce yourself. Please tell us the group or organization that you represent, and what role you serve on the governing body/ policy council. (Policy council: And if you are a parent of a child in Head Start or Early Head Start, please tell us how old your child is and how long she or he has been in the program.)
2. Would you please sum up for me what you see as your key responsibilities in this role?
 - a) How often do you meet as a group?
 - b) What communication do you have with the program director and staff?

[CONSTRUCT: Perspectives towards school readiness goals mandate.]

3. As you may know, Head Start programs are now required to establish school readiness goals and measure children's progress towards goals. Are you familiar with this new requirement about 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 the program was doing already, or was setting school readiness goals new to you?

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

4. I'd like to talk about the specific school readiness goals your program has established.
 - a) Are you familiar with the program's school readiness goals?
(Probe how they learned about the goals, if director shared a copy or presented at a meeting, if members were involved in decision-making, etc.)
 - b) If separate EHS goals: Do you know of different school readiness goals for preschoolers and for infants & toddlers?

[CONSTRUCT: Involvement in goal setting process.]

5. Were any of you or other members of the [GOVERNING BODY/ POLICY COUNCIL] involved with developing or approving the program's school readiness goals?
 - a) (If yes) What role did you have?
 - b) 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?
 - c) What do you think of how the process was organized? Were you pleased with how things turned out? Why or why not?

[CONSTRUCT: Communication regarding progress]

4. What information have you received regarding the program's progress towards school readiness goals?
 - a) How is information shared with you? In what format? How frequently?
 - b) Is the information you have been receiving useful? Is there other information that you wish you had that you have not received? Why or why not?

(Probe if group has actually received updates on progress towards school readiness goals and how. For parent members, try to probe whether they get information about the whole program separate from information about their own children.)

[CONSTRUCT: Data-driven decision-making]

5. Have you made any decisions as a group based on the information you have received? What kinds of decisions have you made (particularly related to the program's progress towards its school readiness goals)?

(If no decisions have been made yet, probe about future planning and how school readiness data will be useful.)

[CONSTRUCT: Usefulness of school readiness goals requirement]

6. Overall, do you think that the school readiness goal requirement has been useful for your program? Why or why not?
7. Those are all of our questions. Is there anything else you would like to tell us or that you think we should have asked?