

School Readiness Goals and Head Start Program Functioning
Site Visit Protocol
Interview Guide for Parents

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INTRODUCTION

I'd like to begin by thanking you for taking time out of your day to be here. We really appreciate it.

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 (Early) 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 programs from across the country. Our goal is to learn about program's 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.

We will use this information to write a research report that will help policymakers and the public learn more about how Head Start programs operate in different parts of the country.

You have been invited here because you are a parent of a child in (Early) Head Start. Over the next 45 minutes or so we want to talk with you about your experiences with this program.

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. Child and family characteristics/needs]

1. To start, would you please tell us how many children you have and how old they are, if they are or were in Head Start or Early Head Start, and how long they've been in the program?
2. What are some of the reasons why you enrolled in the (Early) Head Start program? What attracted you to the program?

[CONSTRUCT: Parent understanding of school readiness]

3. Next, I'd like to talk about what "school readiness" means to you. What you think your child needs to learn in (Early) Head Start and at home in order to be ready for kindergarten? (What are the different skills and behaviors he or she needs to have?)

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

4. (Early) Head Start programs are now required to set school readiness goals and measure children's progress towards their goals. Have you heard about your program having school readiness goals?

If EHS, probe: Have you heard of any goals for infants and toddlers in terms of their healthy development?

- a) (If yes) How did you first hear about it?

(Probe for whether parent knows about overall program goals, individual goals for his/her own child, the mandate itself, the assessments being used, etc.)

- i. Did the program staff give you any materials that showed the program's goals?
- ii. Did you ever participate in any meetings when they talked about setting goals for all children in the program?
- iii. Do you wish the program had shared the goals with you in a different way? Why?

b) (If no) Do you wish the program had shared the goals with you? Why?

[CONSTRUCT: *Involvement in goal setting process*]

5. Were you involved in developing your program's school readiness goals or do you know any parent who was involved?
 - a) Do you know if your program asked parents for input?
 - b) (If no or unsure) Do you think the program should have asked parents for input?
How?

[IF PARENTS HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF GOAL SETTING PROCESS]

- a) From what you know, what was the process of setting goals like?
- b) Did you or other parents get a chance to talk about what you thought was important?
- c) Do you know if parents involved with the process are pleased with how it went?

[CONSTRUCT: *Communication regarding progress*]

6. Do program staff ever share information with you regarding how your child is doing on different skills, such as the results of observations, assessments, or your child's work?
 - a) What kind of information do you receive?
 - b) Who shares it with you?
 - c) In what format is the information? Do they set up a one-on-one meeting to talk to you? Do they give you any materials to keep or show you any records they have collected?
 - d) How often does this happen?
7. Do staff talk to you about whether your child is reaching certain goals that have been set? What kinds of things do they share?
8. Have the staff ever told you how all children in the program are doing and if the whole group is reaching their school readiness goals?
 - a) What kinds of things do they tell you?
 - b) How often do they share this information?

9. Do you wish staff would communicate with you more or in a different way? How so?

[CONSTRUCT: Parent involvement in planning process]

10. Have you ever met with program staff to create a plan for your child focused on reaching certain goals? How did you and the staff person go about setting plans for your child?
- a) Did you find out which skills your child still needs to develop to be on track?
 - i. What kinds of skills?
 - b) Did the (teacher/home visitor) talk to you about ways to help your child develop specific skills?
 - i. What kinds of things did you talk about?

[CONSTRUCT: Usefulness of school readiness goals mandate]

11. Do you think the program's school readiness goals are helpful to your child? How so?
12. How, if at all, are the program's school readiness goals helpful to you as a parent?

[CONSTRUCT: Prioritization of goals]

13. School readiness goals can cover a range of different areas of child development, such as health and physical development, social skills, language and literacy, and more. From your perspective, has the program emphasized certain goals or skills more than others? Why do think that's the case?
14. Those are all the questions I have for you. Is there anything else you would like to tell us —anything important about the program and your experiences that we should know about?

Parent Interview Receipt of Payment

Initialing below indicates that you were offered \$25 as a token of appreciation for your time participating in an interview for the School Readiness Goals and Head Start Program Functioning project conducted by the Urban Institute.

I **accepted** the \$25 token of appreciation.

I **refused** the \$25 token of appreciation.

Respondent's Initials

Date