

Appendix F: DRS Telephone Interview: Program Directors

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 75 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing the instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. This information collection is voluntary. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: Reports Clearance Officer (Attn: OMB/PRA 0970-XXXX), Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, 370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20447.

Evaluation of the Head Start Designation Renewal System

Telephone Interview Guide for Head Start Program Directors

(75 minutes)

INTRODUCTION

Hello, this is [*insert interviewer name*], calling from the Urban Institute. May I please speak with [*insert respondent name*]? I am calling to conduct the telephone interview about the Head Start Designation Renewal System that we scheduled (*insert yesterday, a few days ago, last week, a few weeks ago, etc.*). Is this still a good time?

If no. I understand. When would be a good time to reschedule? (*set new date/time*).

If yes, Great. Just to confirm, you can talk with me until about (*insert time*)?

INFORMED CONSENT

Terrific. As I explained when we spoke before, The Urban Institute and Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute have received funding from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to conduct a research study titled *Evaluation of the Head Start Designation Renewal System*, or DRS. The purpose of the evaluation is to understand if the DRS is working as intended, as a valid, reliable, and transparent method for identifying high-quality programs that can receive continuing five-year grants without competition and as a system that encourages overall quality improvement over time. The purpose of these phone interviews is to learn from Head Start (*if applicable* and Early Head Start) programs like yours about their experiences with—and responses to—the DRS. We want a range of perspectives so we are speaking to all types of grantees, including those that have had some direct involvement with the DRS and those that have not. Before I begin my questions, I want to explain our study procedures and your rights as a participant.

The information you share in this telephone interview will be kept private. That means your individual answers will not be shared with anyone outside the research staff working on the study, except as required by child abuse and neglect reporting law. When we report our findings, information from all people we interview will be put together and presented so that no individual's answers can be identified. Also, we will not use your name, the name of your program, your specific location or any other identifying information in any of our reports.

We especially want to make sure that you freely consent to participate in this phone interview and that, except for losing the opportunity to share your views, you understand there won't be any consequences to you or your program if you choose not to participate or not to answer some of the survey questions. Participating in the study will not have any bearing on your Head Start grant. Do you consent to participate in the telephone interview?

(If yes, note time. If no, address concerns and explore possibility of participation.)

Because we value your time and information you will share with us today, we want to make sure we accurately capture all the details. So, we would also like your permission to record the

conversation. The recording will serve as a back-up tool to ensure we capture all your comments in as close to your words as possible and will be kept secure in the same way as I described our security procedures before. It will also help us move through the discussion more quickly because we will not have to pause to be sure we have documented your answers thoroughly. Once the project is complete, all recordings will be destroyed. During the discussion, we can also stop the recording while you make a particular comment. Do you give permission for us to record the conversation?

(If yes, note time. If no, do not record.)

Now, this is a government-sponsored research project, so I have to read the following statement to comply with the Paperwork Reduction Act. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 75 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing the instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and compiling and reviewing the collection of information. This information collection is voluntary. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB control number for this study is OMB/PRA 0970-XXXX. You can send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to ACF. Would you like that address? [Reports Clearance Officer (Attn: OMB/PRA 0970-XXXX) Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, 370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W. Washington, DC 20447.]

Before we begin, do you have any questions about the study, our organization, or this interview?

Okay, I have one final point to make. Our goal today is to hear your perspectives as clearly and as comprehensively as possible. So I will be doing a lot of listening, and asking follow-up questions, but I won't really respond directly to your comments and sometimes, I may need to change the subject abruptly so we can cover all the topics in the time we have.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. To start, would you please tell me your official job title, how long you've worked in this position, and about any past positions you've held in Head Start or Early Head Start?

2. And could you give me an overview of your organization?
 - a) Is your program part of a single-purpose or a multi-purpose organization? What other services does the organization provide?
 - b) What is your approximate total annual budget? *(For organization as a whole and, if different, specifically for Head Start or early childhood education services)*
 - c) Do you operate any other types of early childhood programs besides Head Start *(if applicable and Early Head Start)*? *(If yes,)* Tell me about how those programs operate and funding sources.
(Clarification, if necessary: A single purpose organization only provides Head Start and Early Head Start services, a multi-purpose organization operates other programs in addition to Head Start and Early Head Start).
 - d) What roles are represented on your management team?

2. Do you have any delegate agencies or Head Start slots through child care partnerships?
Probe if necessary: Tell me a little bit about those agencies/partnerships.

(Interviewer note: Review PIR in advance to obtain preliminary information about delegates/child care partnerships.)

3. Now, I'd like to hear a little bit about the history of your organization as a Head Start grantee.
 - a) How many years have you been offering Head Start?
 - b) What is your Head Start service area?
 - c) What do you see as the primary needs of young children in the community (communities) you serve?

4. Our conversation today will center on your perceptions and experiences with the Head Start Designation Renewal System or the DRS. Do you recall when you first heard about the DRS? *(Interviewer note: Pause to allow respondent to volunteer first thoughts about the DRS before probing.)*

- a) How did you first hear about it?
- b) What did you think of the DRS when you first heard about it?
- c) Have your impressions changed at all over time? How so?

5. If you had to explain what the DRS is to someone who is not familiar with it, what would you tell them?

(Building on response, probe for understanding of DRS implementation and related rules. For example, What would you tell them is the purpose of the DRS? How would you explain the conditions that trigger competition? What would you say is involved in competing for a grant? What happens to programs that are not designated for competition?)

(Optional clarification: One of the things we want to understand in this study are the parts of the DRS that are confusing and parts that are easy to understand, so we're interested in your sense of what the DRS involves.)

- a) Are there aspects of the DRS that you find confusing or would like to know more about?

6. Now thinking (more) specifically about the DRS conditions, what do you think of those 7 conditions?

(Clarify if necessary: The 7 conditions that OHS uses to identify grantees eligible for noncompetitive five-year grants and to identify grantees that will have to compete for ongoing funding).

(Clarify if needed: The conditions include deficiencies on monitoring reviews, CLASS scores, requirements around school readiness goals, certain audit findings, licensing status, and others.)

- a) Are there certain conditions you see as more problematic than others?
- b) *If yes*, Which conditions and why?
- c) *If no*, Is that because you view all the conditions as problematic (explain how) or because you don't view any of them as problematic?

(Interviewer note: We are interested in "problematic" in whatever way the respondent defines it, whether in terms of areas their program may have difficulty meeting or in terms of being invalid or unreliable measures of quality in general, or some other definition.)

7. One goal of the DRS is to identify high quality programs that are eligible for non-competitive five-year grant awards. Are there aspects of your program's quality that you feel are not well-captured by the DRS? Aspects of your program quality that you feel are well-captured by the DRS?
8. I want to change topics just a little bit now. Can you tell me about the ways the DRS has affected your program?

Interviewer note: The goal of this question is to get first, broad brush impressions of how DRS may be affecting programs, without pushing to specifics elements affected and how. If it is too abstract and difficult to answer, try the sub-questions but move on if not much fruitful discussion is generated. Alternatively, this question may lead to discussion of topics shown under question 11 below. If so, it is okay to finish out question 11 here and omit it later in the interview.

- a) Has the DRS made you think differently about your program or your approach to service delivery? What are you thinking about differently and why?
 - b) What kinds of positive effects, if any, has the DRS had on your program?
 - c) What kinds of negative effects, if any, has the DRS had on your program?
9. Grantees may have different perspectives on the DRS depending on how their program has performed in the past or how concerned they are about being designated for competition. Where do you think your program fits?

Optional probe: What do you see as your program's strengths and weaknesses?

If not covered in previous responses, probe for any concerns about meeting particular conditions, whether program is concerned about being designated for competition.

10. Some communities we've seen have a large number of early care and education providers that could potentially apply for available Head Start funding. In other communities, few eligible providers or organizations exist. What are your thoughts on your community? (*Probe: Are there other organizations in your area that you think might apply for Head Start funding if it becomes available? What do you think of these providers/organizations?*)
11. Thinking back to before the DRS was implemented to now, how, if at all, has your program changed? *Optional probe: Have you made any changes to your classroom operations or staffing, training, management, or governance activities as a result of the DRS? Tell me about those changes.*

- a) Can you provide a few specific examples of the changes made? (*Probe: professional development, attention to specific performance standards, other service delivery changes, management approach/activities, governance activities, community partnerships, working with consultants*)
 - b) Would you say the changes you described are related or unrelated to the DRS? Can you tell me more about that?
 - c) Are you planning any other changes for the near future that are in response to the DRS? What changes, and why?
 - d) (*If unclear*) How, if at all, do you think these changes are related to your program quality?
 - e) Is there anything special you do to prepare for monitoring visits because of the role those findings play in the DRS? (*Probe for details if necessary.*)
12. Tell us about the types of training or technical assistance your program has received during the past few years since the DRS was implemented. (*Probe type of T/TA provider, content and recipient of T/TA, occurrence and frequency, cost. If available, review and build probes on information collected during "quality" field work.*)
- a) Why did you decide to seek training or technical assistance on those topics?
13. *Optional/time permitting:* From your perspective, what other kinds of resources or support do you and your staff need to improve or maintain program quality?
14. Those are almost all of my questions. Before we wrap up, I want to ask you about two things. Overall, for the broad Head Start community, what do you think is the most problematic aspect of the DRS and what do you think is the most beneficial? (*Probe for both beneficial and problematic aspects*).

CONCLUSION

I don't have any additional questions for you. Is there anything I didn't ask that you want to tell me about the DRS?

This has been a really great discussion. Thank you very much for your time.