ATTACHMENT G

CHILD CARE CENTER DIRECTOR FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

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MATHEMATICA
Policy Research

Child Care Center Director Focus Group Guide

Study of Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships

CHILD CARE CENTER DIRECTOR FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

<u>Introduction</u>: *Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this discussion. Your participation is very important to the study. My name is _____ and I work for Mathematica Policy Research, an independent social policy research firm.*

We are conducting a study for the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation at the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to learn about the Early Head Start–child care partnership initiative and how agencies involved in the partnerships work together. Among others, we want to talk to child care center directors about their involvement in the partnerships and their opinions of the progress that has been made in implementing services for families. Participation in this discussion is voluntary, and you can choose to not answer a question if you wish. Being part of this discussion will also not affect the services you receive through the partnership, and your responses will be kept private. We will not share your comments today with other individuals involved in the partnership, and we ask that you not share any of the discussion you've heard here today with others outside of this group. Our report will describe the experiences and viewpoints expressed, but comments will not be attributed to specific individuals or programs. No individuals will be quoted by name. Today's discussion will last about 90 minutes. As a token of appreciation for participating, we will offer you a $20 gift card.

Also, you should know that the questions I will be asking today have been approved by the federal Office of Management and Budget or OMB. We're not allowed to ask you these questions and you don't have to answer them unless there is a valid OMB control number. For the questions asked as part of today's discussion, the OMB control number is xxxx-xxxx and it expires xx/xx/xxxx. If you have any comments about any aspect of our discussion, you may contact [Contact Name]; [Contact Address]; Attn: OMB-PRA (0970-[XXXX]).

1. Introductions: Please tell us which child care center you work for, how many years you have been providing care to children, and how long you have worked in your current job.

2. How did you learn about the opportunity to get involved with [PARTNERSHIP]? Did [PARTNERSHIP GRANTEE] invite you to participate, or did you hear about the initiative another way?

3. Why did you decide to participate? What did you hope to get out of [PARTNERSHIP]?

    Probes:
    -   Additional training and support for teachers?
    -   Resources for quality improvement?
    -   Additional services for the families you serve?
    -   Opportunity to serve more infants and toddlers in need of child care?

4. Describe the process of developing the partnership agreement. What role did you play? Were you able to communicate concerns to [PARTNERSHIP GRANTEE] and have them addressed successfully? If yes, please provide examples.

5. How did you and [PARTNERSHIP GRANTEE] determine the funding arrangements? Are funds allocated for child care, comprehensive services, quality improvement, and administrative requirements?

6. What else is covered in your partnership agreement? For example, does your agreement include rules for handling vacancies in partnership slots and compensation for vacant or unfilled partnership slots? Obtaining child care subsidies for eligible families?

7. Overall, how satisfied are you with the process of developing the partnership agreement?

    Probes:
    -   What challenges did you face in developing the agreement?
    -   How did you resolve any disagreements?
    -   How could the process be improved?

8. What steps have you and [PARTNERSHIP GRANTEE] taken to assess how your partnership is going and maintain positive relationships among partners? Have you faced any challenges and, if so, how have you addressed them?

9. One important aspect of [PARTNERSHIP] is ensuring that services meet the requirements of the Head Start Program Performance Standards. Can you describe what [PARTNERSHIP] is doing to meet the standards?

    Probes:
    -   Have you assessed strengths and needs of your center? If so, what was your role and [PARTNERSHIP GRANTEE]'s role in this process?
    -   Do you feel included in any assessments of quality or developing quality improvement plans?
    -   How is monitoring of compliance with the standards handled and who is involved?
    -   How are you using information from monitoring to inform your quality improvement plan?
    -   What aspects of the standards are most challenging to implement? Have you identified strategies to address these challenges?
    -   How much did you know about the standards before starting work on the partnership? What, if any, changes did you make to comply with the standards? What steps did you take to make these changes?

10. As center director, what training opportunities have you engaged in through the partnership? Are the training opportunities in line with your needs and interests as a center director? What additional supports do you need?

11. What training opportunities have staff at your center engaged in as part of the partnership? Are the training opportunities in line with the needs and interests of staff? What additional supports do staff need?

12. To what extent have you been involved in participating in, planning, and hosting networking events across partner organizations? Are these events useful? Why or why not?

13. What has been your experience in providing comprehensive services to children and families? Are expectations clear? Do you receive supports needed to provide these services? What are the biggest challenges? What additional supports would be useful?

14. How has [PARTNERSHIP] changed the way you provide services? Has it changed your ratios and groups sizes, the curriculum you use, your approach to curriculum use (for example, whether it is used to individualize content for children or data driven), your hours of operation, or the services you provide?

15. What are the most challenging or difficult aspects of the partnership? Were there any unexpected challenges of this partnership? What strategies have you used to address those unexpected challenges?

    - Challenges related to braiding partnership grant and child care subsidy funds, or other funding challenges?

    - Challenges related to meeting the child care subsidy requirement?

    - Challenges related to misalignment between the Head Start Program Performance Standards and child care licensing or other state requirements?

    - Would any changes in local or state policy have helped you to successfully participate in the partnership?

16. How would you describe the quality of this partnership? What are the best or most valuable aspects? Were there any unexpected benefits of the partnership? If, so describe them.

17. From your perspective, what do you think [PARTNERSHIP GRANTEE] staff have learned from working with child care partners like you?

18. Is there any advice you would give to a center director considering joining a partnership like this?

19. If you had to do it over, would you join this partnership? Why or why not?