

Instrument 5: Head Start Other Staff Interview

This collection of information is voluntary and will be used to learn how Head Start programs coordinate family well-being support services. 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. The OMB number for this information collection is [OMB #] and the expiration date is [DATE].

Semi-Structured Interview with Head Start Other Staff

This draft of the protocol is generic, so it can be used with different respondents with varying roles – for example, teachers, nurses, etc. The term “site” is used, as respondents may come from the grantee, delegate, center, and/or program levels; “site” will be replaced with “grantee,” “delegate,” “center,” and/or “program” depending on what is appropriate for the respondent.

The questions with asterisks () are of lower priority and can be skipped if the interviewer is running short on time.*

This protocol includes probes, which will be used if a respondent doesn't understand the question or gives a brief answer. This protocol also includes sub-bullets, which are example questions that will be asked, time-permitting, if the respondent doesn't touch on that topic in their first response. Interviewers may probe more deeply in response to an interviewee's comment, in-line with the Head Start Connects research questions.

Section 1. Introduction and Consent

Thank you for meeting with me today! I'm [NAME] and I work for [MDRC, MEF, OR NORC – SHORT DESCRIPTION]. Your Head Start program is participating in Head Start Connects, a research study funded by the Administration for Children and Families and conducted by MDRC, MEF Associates, and NORC at the University of Chicago. The aim of the study is to build knowledge about how Head Start programs (Head Start or Early Head Start grantees, delegate agencies, and staff) across the country coordinate family support services for parents and the processes or practices used to ensure that service coordination is aligned with individual family needs and fosters family well-being. When I say, “family support services,” I mean services for parents and guardians such as education, employment services, financial capability services, housing and food assistance, emergency or crisis intervention services, substance abuse treatment, physical health services (such as tobacco cessation services, nutritional services, or other services to maintain and promote physical health and well-being), and mental health services.

I would like to interview you because your program is participating in Head Start Connects as a site for the case study on how Head Start programs coordinate family support services. We are conducting three-day visits this spring to the six programs participating in the case study and interviewing staff, parents, and community providers. Here is an information sheet about the study for you to keep for your records – please feel free to read the full form and I'll also now give you an overview.

If you are OK with talking to me today, I will ask you some questions about how you work with families and other Head Start staff to coordinate family support services for parents. I am very interested in the details of this process, and how it may be different for different kinds of families you serve. Your

opinions and ideas will provide valuable information about how Head Start programs coordinate family support services, which will help us figure out how to improve the services offered to parents.

This is not an audit, and our study staff will not view the actual case file or records of any families. We will not use your name or the name of your site or otherwise identify you when we report our findings. Your name or other identifying information will be protected and will not be shared outside the research team. During our interview we ask that you not provide specific names or other identifying information about particular families, as we want to maintain their privacy.

This interview won't take more than one hour, and your participation is voluntary. If you need to leave at any time or don't want to answer certain questions, that's fine – just let me know. We will never use your name or the name of your site or otherwise identify you when we report our findings. Though, there is always a small risk that people may be able to figure out the name of your site. This study has a Certificate of Confidentiality from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which says that we cannot be required to share any identifiable information, even under a court order or subpoena.

Finally, 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. The OMB number for this information collection is XXXX-XXXX and the expiration date is XX/XX/XXXX.

Do you agree to participate in the interview?

We are also asking to audio record the interview. The audio recording is to help our team keep track of what you said; the audio recording will never be shared beyond our research team. **Do you give permission for me to audio record?**

Do you have any questions before we start? So you know, whenever I reference “parents” in this interview I'm talking about parents and legal guardians.

Section 2. Staff Background and Role

Let's start by discussing your background and role at this site.

1. Please tell me a little about your professional and educational background.

[PROBE: What were you doing before you came to this site?]

- What are your degrees or other credentials?
- Thinking specifically about your work supporting families, which degree(s) and credential(s) have you found to be the most helpful?

2. Please describe your role at this site. What is your formal title?

[PROBE: Do you work full- or part-time? How long have you been in this role? What about in another role? What is the scope of your position—what are you responsible for?]

- How much time do you spend doing various activities around your center? For example, teaching, enrollment and recruitment, health services, transition services, family support services, subbing for sick staff or vacant positions, bus aiding, etc.?

3. What role do you play in coordinating family services – that is, providing parents with services they may need, such as case management, parenting classes, employment services, housing services, mental health services, food assistance services, etc.?

- Do you provide these services directly or connect parents to these services? At your site or at an outside provider?
- How much time would you estimate that you spend providing family support services? About what percent of your job is dedicated to providing family support services?

Section 3. Family Interactions and Communications

Next, let's talk about how you interact and communicate with families at this site.

4. What are some specific ways you interact with parents enrolled at this site?

- Do you have formal meetings with parents?
 - If so, for what reasons?
- What about informal meetings?
 - If so, for what reasons?
- Do you ever have other opportunities to meet with parents – for example, at site events?

5. *How often do you see and interact with parents?

- Do you see or interact with some parents more than others?
 - If so, for what reasons?

6. What are some specific things you discuss when you meet with parents?

- How does this differ by the different times you would meet with parents – formal meetings, informal meetings, seeing parents at other events, etc.?
- Does this differ by the parent – and if so, for what reason?

7. What strategies do you use to build and maintain relationships with parents?

[PROBE: For example, getting in touch with parents regularly, getting to know a little about the parents' personal lives.]

- Does this differ by parent – that is, do you use different strategies depending on the parent or family's situation?
 - If yes, how and why?

- o How would you describe your relationships with parents? For example, would you say that you're more like a mentor, a counselor, a colleague, a coach, a support system?

8. I imagine you work with families that come from many different backgrounds, cultures, and languages – what are some specific ways you take that into consideration when you work with these families?

[PROBE: Do you adjust any part of your process supporting families to accommodate different backgrounds, culture, and/or language?]

Section 4. Family Needs and Types of Family Support Services

Next, I'd like to understand the needs of the families enrolled at your site. I'm going to ask you a series of questions about various things different families may be interested in or need, and then I'll ask how they apply to families enrolled at your site and how you are involved in coordinating those services.

9. What are the education- and career/employment-related interests/needs of parents enrolled at your site?

- o What are some specific ways you are involved in coordinating or providing services to meet this need/interest for parents – if at all?

10. What kinds of skills do parents seek or need for themselves – for example, making financial decisions, asset development like children's savings accounts, parenting skills – like disciplining?

- o What are some specific ways you are involved in coordinating or providing services to meet this need/interest for parents – if at all?

11. What kinds of emergency and short-term assistance do families tend to seek or need – for example, cash assistance, food assistance, help with housing, or help with transportation?

- o What are some specific ways you are involved in coordinating or providing services to meet this need/interest for parents – if at all?

12. What kinds of supports do parents seek or need for their physical and mental health – for example, help with nutrition, tobacco cessation, counseling, substance abuse treatment, support groups around issues like domestic violence, or help accessing insurance and doctors?

- o What are some specific ways you are involved in coordinating or providing services to meet this need/interest for parents – if at all?

13. What kinds of supports do parents seek or need for their children – for example, wraparound childcare, taking care of children with disabilities, kindergarten selection and transition?

- o What are some specific ways you are involved in coordinating or providing services to meet this need/interest for parents – if at all?

14. *If you know off-hand, what kinds of services are used by the greatest number of families?

Section 5. Learning about Parent Needs and Linking to Supportive Services

Next, let's talk about how you learn about and help coordinate services for parents.

Please walk me through your process for learning about a parent's needs and then linking them to services.

15. First, how do you find out that a parent might need a family support service?

[PROBE: Does the parent reach out to you? Does someone else at the center tell you about a parent's needs and then you reach out to them?]

- o Does the child ever say something that prompts you to reach out to the parent?

[PROBE: For example, do children mention information about needs or situations involving their parents or families (e.g., lost a job, didn't have food in the house, had fights with partner/spouse)?]

- o Please share an example of a time you learned that a parent needed a support service and how you learned about it.

16. What do you do next, once you hear that a parent may benefit from support services – do you share what you learned with other staff?

- o If yes, which staff?
 - How do you share the information (e.g., orally, phone call, paper report, electronic system, team meeting, other)?
- o In what ways would this process look different, depending on if you heard from the parent or from the child?
- o Does your site provide guidance for sharing information about families, or do you figure things out on a case-by-case basis?

17. What is the next step? That is, do you begin to coordinate services for parents directly, do family support workers step in and coordinate these services, or is it a mix of both? Or something else?

[IF PROVIDES SERVICES DIRECTLY]:

- 18. Please share an example of a time you coordinated services for a parent directly.**
 - o What specific things did you do with this parent to provide family support services?
- 19. Walk me through your process for determining parents' needs and strengths and setting goals with them.**
- 20. What are some specific ways you track parents' progress towards their goals and follow-up with them?**

[IF FAMILY SUPPORT WORKERS ARE INVOLVED]:

- 21. Please describe a circumstance when you reached out to a family support worker on behalf of a parent.**
 - o What were the reasons?
 - o What did you ask of the family support worker?
 - o What follow-up, if any, happened after this referral?
- 22. Please tell me about a time you referred a parent to a family support worker and it was successful. (For example, the parent engaged with a family support worker in completing a needs assessment or participated in a service the family support worker referred them to)**
- 23. Now, please tell me about a time you referred a parent to a family support worker and it wasn't successful. (For example, the parent was reluctant to engage with a family support worker)**
- 24. What are some specific ways you collaborate with family support workers to coordinate support services for parents?**

[PROBE: How do you communicate with the family support worker? Do you have formal or informal meetings to discuss individual families?]

 - o What are some specific ways you share information about parents with family support workers?
 - Is it ever shared electronically?
 - o To what extent do you stay involved in communicating with or providing parents services once the family support services staff start working with a parent?
- 25. *Do you ever address parents' needs directly without involving family support staff or with minimal involvement of the family support staff?**

- o If so, in what situations? That is, for what type of needs and why?
- o What are some specific ways you provide families with services in this situation? Do you provide direct services, refer families to outside providers, or both?
- o In two parent families, do you often work with both parents or just one?

Section 6. Working with External Community Providers

Now let's talk about how you may work with other agencies and external community providers.

26. Do you ever coordinate with case managers from other agencies and programs? For example, public assistance (from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program [TANF]); food stamps or an EBT card (from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP]); a program that provides training and supports to learn a skill for a job (workforce development program); child support; services and supports from an agency to make sure that children are safe and that families have supports needed to care for them successfully (child welfare); health programs or Medicaid?

- o If so, which agencies do you coordinate with the most? Why?
- o What are some specific ways you coordinate with these other case managers?
 - Do you have regular meetings where you review all cases you have in common? Or do you meet/communicate as needed, ad hoc?
 - What are some specific ways you share information or coordinate services or plans?

27. Do you ever refer parents to external community providers – that is, other organizations, agencies, or people in your community that provide services to help families?

- o If yes, about what percentage?
- o What agencies or community services do you refer parents to most often?

28. *What are some specific ways you find out information about the different agencies or community services available and how they may change over time?

[PROBE: What sources of information about local or community resources do you have? Who are they – for example, managers, supervisors? Does your area use 211 to identify local services or another type of comprehensive health and human service referral and information service?]

- o Do you maintain a directory or handbook of community resources?
 - Do you give parents a copy?
- o How do you or your staff learn about the availability of these services – that is, whether there are open slots or a wait list?

29. Do you have a role in initiating or maintaining partnerships with service providers? If so, can you describe your role – how do you initiate or maintain a partnership with a service provider?

- Have you developed new partnerships in the past year to address family needs? If so, with what service providers?
- Do you share resources and materials with community providers?
- Have you learned any strategies for providing family support services from them?

30. *Do you attend community meetings with service providers?

- Which ones?
- How often?
- How do you interact with service providers at these meetings?

31. Which organizations or services in your community do you wish your site had more access to? For instance, think about which services you may not have in your community as well as services that are in your community but there are not enough to meet the need.

- Do you feel as though you have enough services or organizations that match families' backgrounds or that can provide services in a culturally sensitive way?
- Are there any services that are available but aren't widely used by your parents? If so, why do you think that might be?

Section 7. Low Service Uptake

We've talked about parents who are receiving services. I'm also interested in learning about parents who either aren't receiving services or who don't seem to get a lot out of these services.

32. Are there any parents who do not seem to get a lot out of these services?

- What are some specific reasons they don't benefit from these services?

33. Do you have any examples of parents you tried to work with but were not successful?

- What are some specific reasons parents declined services?
- For example:
 - They believe they don't need help
 - They don't feel a match with the particular family support worker
 - They don't have enough time
 - They don't have transportation

- There are limited local resources
 - There aren't enough culturally- or linguistically appropriate resources
 - They perceive negative consequences for accessing safety-net programs
- Are there common features of parents that tend to decline services?

34. Are there certain services that tend to be declined? If so, which services, and why do you think they aren't used?

Section 8. Supervision, Support, and Professional Development

Next, I have a few questions about how you are supervised and supported, and about any professional development you might receive.

35. *Please describe your formal supervision and support. Who do you report to?

- How often do you meet?
- What are some specific things you discuss when you meet?
- To what extent does your supervisor provide the support and guidance needed for you to generate answers to your own questions?
 - Can you give me an example of a time your supervisor or other staff supported you in your role?
- Does anyone else work with you to improve practice around service coordination on an ongoing basis like a mentor or coach? What do you discuss?

36. Thinking specifically about the role you play in coordinating family services, please describe how were you trained to do this work.

37. In the past program year, have you participated in any training or professional development (PD) to support your work in coordinating family support services?

[IF NO]: Why weren't you able to participate?

[IF YES]: What did the training or professional development address? Please describe.

[IF YOU HAVE TIME, ASK ABOUT EACH]:

- *Engaging or communicating with families? (*Actively reaching out to families in meaningful ways*)

- o *Building relationships with families? (*Getting to know families well and establishing trust*)
- o *Working in a culturally responsive manner? (*Working with families in a way that respects their culture, language, strengths, traditions*)
- o *Family partnership process? (*The family partnership process results in a written plan or agreement that Head Start staff and families create together that identifies needs, reflects ongoing communication between staff and parents, keeps a record of goals, and tracks progress over time*).
 - *Assessing or reassessing needs and strengths? (*Finding out what parents need or want and what their strengths and skills are*)
 - *Setting goals? (*Making a plan to reach a goal or what you want to accomplish*)
 - *Tracking progress? (*Keeping track of whether a parent has actually used the service(s) and is moving forward or making progress on a goal*)
- o *Family well-being? (e.g., parents' and children's safety, stability, and positive functioning in physical, behavioral, social, and cognitive areas) (*Families are safe and healthy, can meet their basic needs, and have opportunities for education and work*)
- o *Working with families in poverty?
- o *Family leadership and advocacy? (*Leadership: Families use and develop resources and services to strengthen their family; Advocacy: Families can speak up for themselves or others to address needs, clarify rights, and aid in problem-solving*)
- o *Providing or coordinating support services?
- o *Working with partners?
- o *Using a Management Information System (MIS)? (*Using a computer-based system to record and track your work with families*)
- o *Analyzing and using data for continuous quality improvement? (*Applying information and lessons learned to improve your work with families*)
- o *Reflective supervision with family support staff? (*Structured meetings between a supervisor and staff that are dedicated to reflection and discussion, with the goal of nurturing staff growth, reinforcing their strengths, and encouraging resilience when working with families*)
- o *Organizational leadership for family support services? (*Having supports and structures in place at all levels in your agency/workplace/center to support what is best for individual staff and the team as a whole*)
- o *Trauma-informed care?
- o *Other?

38. Tell me about this/these training/s. Who provided the training/s?

- Was it provided inside your organization, community based, state or regional, or national?
- Did you do this individually or as part of a team?
- Did you find the training or PD helpful? Why or why not?

39. Are there any areas where you would benefit from additional training, professional development, or technical assistance (TA) to coordinate family support services at your site?**40. Do you engage in reflective practice?**

[PROBE: That is, do you intentionally self-reflect about your work, thinking about your past practices in order to gather information on how to adjust your practices in the future?]

- If so, please describe what that looks like.

Section 9. Staff Wellness and Morale

Next, I have a few questions about staff wellness at work.

41. How would you generally describe staff morale at your site?

[PROBE: That is, are staff generally happy and satisfied at work?]

- Does this differ by the staff position? For instance, would you say there is more positive morale among administrators than there is among teachers?
- What is morale like with the staff who provide family support services, specifically?

42. Do you ever feel stressed, emotionally drained, or burned-out at work?

- What do you think causes these feelings? Are there specific aspects of your job or tasks that cause more stress than others?
- What do you do when you feel stressed or burned out – how do you address it?

43. Is there anything your site offers to staff who feel stressed, drained, or burned-out at work? For instance, does your site provide any mental health resources for staff?

- Are there any mental health resources available at your site for parents that you think staff would benefit from?
- What other specific things do you wish your site would provide for staff to help with staff wellness?

Section 10. Reflecting on Experiences Providing and Coordinating Family Support Services

Finally, I have a few questions about your experiences providing parents with support services.

- 44. What are some specific things that have been challenging about providing parents with support services?**
- Why do you think this is the case?
 - How have you addressed these challenges?
- 45. What are some specific things you would do to improve on your site's provision of family support services?**
- What do you wish you could do differently?
 - To what extent do you need additional support to improve family support services?
- 46. Thinking about your overall role providing parents with support services, what are some specific things that have been going well?**
- Do parents seem to benefit from the services your Head Start site provides to them?
 - How so – do you have an example?
- 47. Finally, what is the thing you're most proud of doing this year, in terms of providing family support services?**

Section 11. Conclusion

Those are the last of my questions. Before we end, I wanted to ask you – is there anything I missed about your site's coordination of family support services? Anything more you want to add in or any questions I should have asked?

Thank you so much for your time! Our next steps are to complete this site visit, interviewing staff, parents, and community providers, and then to visit additional case study sites.