

Head Start Connects

OMB Information Collection Request New Collection

Supporting Statement

Part B

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Administration for Children and Families
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Part B

B1. Objectives

Study Objectives

The objective of this information collection (IC) is to conduct case studies in six Head Start programs as part of the *Head Start (HS) Connects: Individualizing and Connecting Families to Family Support Services* research project. This research project is sponsored by Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) through a contract with MDRC and its subcontractors, MEF Associates and NORC at the University of Chicago.

This IC seeks to collect data to refine a literature-based logic model hypothesizing links between coordinated family support services and family well-being. Case studies of six Head Start programs in diverse locations will be used to examine which family support services are coordinated and the factors that influence these processes. This information will be used to develop design options for a large-scale descriptive study of the coordination of family support services in Head Start programs.

Generalizability of Results

This study is intended to present an internally-valid description of the coordination of family support services in chosen Head Start sites, not to promote statistical generalization to other sites or service populations.

Appropriateness of Study Design and Methods for Planned Uses

The HS Connects case study will use a multiple-case design. This design will enable in-depth description and understanding of family support services in each of six sites (each site is a case) and examine similarities and differences across sites (that is, across cases).¹ The case study method “explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information.”² Benefits of a case study approach include the examination of complex inter-relationships that are grounded in the experience of participants. Although a limitation of the case study approach is that the findings are not generalizable to the wider population of Head Start centers and/or programs, through the collection of rich data from multiple perspectives and sources, case studies facilitate conceptual and theoretical development that can inform future, more representative data collections. In particular, the information gleaned from this research activity will be critical in shaping the design and execution of a larger-scale, nationally representative study of the coordination of family support services in Head Start.

¹ Yin, R.K. (2014). *Case Study Research Design and Methods* (5th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

² Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

B2. Methods and Design

Target Population

For each of the sites selected, we will collect data from Head Start staff, parents/guardians, and community providers. The sampling frame for each site will be the roster of staff that support family support services, parents/guardians who engage in the family partnership process and partake of family support services for parents/guardians, and community providers that receive referrals from the site and provide services to parents/guardians. The research team will use non-probability, purposive sampling to identify potential respondents who can provide information on the constructs of interest. Because the respondents will be purposively selected, they will not be representative of the population of Head Start staff or community providers. Parents/guardians selected to participate will not be representative of the population of families that the programs serve. Rather, the aim is to obtain variation in families' experiences to illuminate how the coordination of family support services within a given site varies.

Sampling and Site Selection

The research team obtained recommendations for potential case study sites from experts and stakeholders during key informant interviews conducted as approved in May 2019 under OPRE's Generic Clearance for Formative Data Collections (OMB #0970-0356). In consultation with the advisory panel and key stakeholders, the research team will identify 12 potential Head Start grantees and their programs (referred to as "sites" for the remainder of this document) that are appropriate for inclusion in HS Connects as case study sites. Should greater diversity be needed in the proposed pool of recommended sites (e.g., in terms of program size or type, population served, geography, urban/rural location, etc.), the research team will use PIRS administrative data to identify a subset of sites to draw upon. After OMB approval of the current IC request (ICR), sites will be selected for case studies to ensure variation in their approach to the coordination of family support services, as well as variation in size, structure, setting, and population served (to the extent possible). Six of the 12 sites will be primary candidates, and the remaining six will serve as backups.

During each case study site visit, five groups of participants will take part in semi-structured interviews, facilitated by members of the research team. This section describes each group, along with inclusion criteria and sampling methods.

- **Head Start Administrator/Family and Community Partnerships Manager:** Sampling of Head Start Administrators/Family and Community Partnerships Managers will be purposeful. Primary responsibility for oversight of family support services rests with the Family and Community Partnerships Manager. However, in smaller programs a Head Start Director may take on some of these responsibilities. During the pre-visit call, we will identify the most suitable person to interview. We will seek only one respondent for each case study site (1 per site * 6 sites = 6 total).

- **Head Start Family Support Staff:** Sampling of Head Start Family Support Staff will be purposeful. As site structures and staff roles and responsibilities can vary,³ potential respondents may include a Family and Community Services Supervisor and designated Family Support Services staff (e.g., Family Advocate, Family Services Worker, Family Services Support Specialist) who work directly with families to provide services. Potential respondents will be identified on the pre-visit phone call with the Head Start Administrator/Family and Community Partnerships Manager. We will seek three Family Support Staff respondents for each case study site (3 per site * 6 sites = 18 total). For sites with more than three family support staff, the research team will ask the Head Start Administrator/Family and Community Partnerships Manager to nominate family support staff for the interviews in two categories: (a) at least one year of experience and (b) more than five years' experience.
- **Head Start Other Staff:** Sampling of Head Start Other Staff will be purposeful. Potential respondents may include teachers and other Head Start staff such as nurses, health specialists, or site supervisors who interact with or provide support services to parents/guardians. Potential respondents will be identified on the pre-visit phone call with the Head Start Administrator/Family and Community Partnerships Manager. We will seek three Head Start Other Staff respondents for each case study site (3 per site * 6 sites = 18 total). For sites with more than three Head Start Other Staff, the research team will ask the Head Start Administrator/Family and Community Partnerships Manager to nominate Head Start Other Staff who have at least one year experience at the site and who interact with or provide support services to parents/guardians. At least one of these staff should be a teacher.
- **Parents/Guardians:** Sampling of parents/guardians will be purposeful. Through the pre-visit calls, we will ask the Head Start Administrator/Family and Community Partnerships Manager to identify parents/guardians who partake in the family support services by the site or community providers, and who may be interested in participating in an interview. The research team will ask each site to identify up to 4 parents/guardians and 4 backups. We will inquire about the best method to contact parents/guardians. We will seek four parent/guardian respondents for each case study site (4 per site * 6 sites = 24 total).
- **Community Providers:** Sampling of community providers will be purposeful. Through the pre-visit calls, we will ask the Head Start Administrator/Family and Community Partnerships Manager to identify community providers that provide the most commonly accessed services for parents/guardians at that site, and particularly staff at the provider who have the most direct communication with the site's family support services workers. We will ask the Head Start Administrator/Family and Community Partnerships Manager to identify staff at least 2 community providers and 4 backups. We will seek two community provider respondents for each case study site (2 per site * 6 sites = 12 total).

³ Aikens, M., Cavadel, E., Hartog, J., Hurwitz, F., Knas, E., Schochet, O., ... Tarull, L. (2017). *Building Family Partnerships: Family Engagement Findings from the Head Start FACES Study*. OPRE Report 2017-102. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S.S Department of Health and Human Services.

An alternative to the purposeful sampling strategies proposed would be to seek representative samples. However, this would be cost-prohibitive and is not essential—or appropriate, in the case of selecting respondents for such a small number of interviews in each site—for achieving the study’s goals.

B3. Design of Data Collection Instruments

Development of Data Collection Instruments

The items in the qualitative, semi-structured interview protocols were developed by reviewing the study’s research questions, along with the draft conceptual map for the study (see Appendix A: Conceptual Map), to determine what constructs the protocols should capture to best answer the research questions. The team also developed items by reviewing protocols from previous qualitative studies that had similar research questions and/or respondents (e.g., Understanding Poverty, OMB # 0970-0523; MIHOPE, OMB # 0970-0402). The research team then tailored interview protocols with phrasing appropriate for different respondent types (e.g., Head Start staff vs. parent/guardian) and organized the items in a logical way so the interview could flow in a conversational manner. Protocols were streamlined by removing similar items across multiple protocols so that information about a particular aspect was asked of a single type of respondent, unless comparing different responses across respondent types was part of the study design. Protocols also were reviewed by the HS Connects’ advisory panel and their feedback was incorporated. Finally, the protocols underwent preliminary cognitive testing: the team met with Head Start staff similar to those who would participate in HS Connects (administrators and family support staff) and reviewed the protocols with them to gather feedback on confusing items, repetitiveness, and terminology, in addition to the interview length. The same question was not asked of more than 9 people.

We pretested select interview protocols (Instrument 3: Head Start Administrator/Family and Community Partnerships Manager Interview, Instrument 4: Family Support Staff Interview, and Instrument 6: Parent/Guardian Interview) with Head Start staff and parents/guardians. The pretests were conducted over a 3-week period using a specially trained group of senior team members who will also conduct the interviews in the case study site visits. We conducted 1-2 interviews with each protocol. The research team closely monitored each pretest interview to determine whether any substantial changes were needed and conducted an interviewer debriefing after the pretest interviews to discuss the flow of the protocol, any questions that came up, etc.

B4. Collection of Data and Quality Control

The research team will conduct data collection activities at six purposively selected Head Start sites before and during a three-day site visit at each site. The research team will conduct (1) pre-visit calls with Head Start staff to identify the appropriate study participants, verify information about family support services and the site structure, and prepare staff for the site visit and (2) pre-arranged interviews with Head Start Staff, parents/guardians, and community providers according to a site visit schedule (See Appendix G: Sample Site Visit Schedule). Each site visit will be conducted by a senior member of the research team. Informed consent will be obtained from all respondents verbally.

Interviews will be audiotaped with respondents' permission. If a respondent does not give permission for audiotaping, notes will be taken during the interview electronically by a trained research assistant instead.

Members of the research team will contact potential respondents for the case studies and facilitate the semi-structured, one-on-one interviews during the site visits. Detailed procedures regarding recruitment follow.

Recruitment

- **Case study sites:** Once OMB clearance for the current ICR has been received and the 6 Head Start sites have been selected, senior members of the research team will email each Head Start director, and invite him or her to participate in the case study. This communication describes the purpose of the Head Start Connects case studies and outlines the nature of their participation (See Appendix G: Invitation Email to Head Start Grantee Directors). We will include a copy of the project description (See Appendix F: Head Start Connects Project Description).
 - Should the grantee agree to participate, we will send a thank you email and confirm next steps (See Appendix G: Thank You and Next Steps Email to Head Start Directors (accepted)).
 - If the grantee declines to participate, we will send an email thanking the grantee for their time and consideration (See Appendix G: Thank You Email to Head Start Directors (declined)).

If any of the six primary site candidates decline participation or are unresponsive after three attempts of correspondence (see Section B5 for more details), we will approach the requisite number of backup grantees, and repeat the recruitment process, as needed, using the recruitment materials noted above.

- **Head Start Staff:** Identification of Head Start staff who are involved in providing family support services will occur during the pre-visit calls with the Head Start Administrator/Family and Community Partnerships Manager from each site. During these pre-visit calls,⁴ the research team will work with the Head Start Administrator/Family and Community Partnerships Manager or designated site staff to discuss research activities and identify participants for the interviews (i.e., Head Start family support staff, Head Start other staff, parents/guardians, and community providers). After the research team has recruited Head start staff participants for the interviews, the research team will send an email summarizing the agreed-upon activities to the administrator/manager or designated staff (See Appendix G: Email Summarizing Head Start Staff Pre-Visit Call). The email summary will include information about the visit dates, activities and participants, and next steps. We will also send the proposed site visit agenda (See Appendix G: Sample Site Visit Schedule).

⁴ Protocols for the Pre-Visit Calls are described under Study Design in A2. Purpose.

- **Parents/Guardians:** Members of the research team, including at least one senior member of the team, will contact the four potential parents/guardians who have been identified by the Head Start site, contacting back-ups as needed if parents/guardians decline participation. The research team will communicate by email or phone, explaining the purpose of the project, describing the nature of the discussion, and inviting their participation (See Appendix H: Parent/Guardian Email or Phone Script). We will also provide the parent/guardian with a tailored version of the Head Start Connects project description (See Appendix H: Head Start Connects Project Description for Parents/Guardians). If the Head Start site prefers to contact the parents/guardians directly, then the research team will provide them with the recruitment materials listed here. If a parent/guardian agrees to take part in the interview, a member of the research team will schedule a meeting during the site visit at a time and place that are convenient to the parent/guardian.
- **Community Partners:** Similarly, members of the research team will contact the two primary community providers that have been identified by the Head Start site, contacting back-ups as needed if community providers decline participation. The research team will communicate by email or phone to invite them to participate in an interview (See Appendix I: Community Provider Email or Phone Call Script). We will also provide the community provider with a copy of the project description (See Appendix F: Head Start Connects Project Description). If a targeted individual is unable to participate, the research team will ask whether another member of the individual's organization might be appropriate and available for an interview, contacting and inviting the suggested respondents, as needed. If no alternative is given, the research team will contact a backup respondent on the list of community providers.

The proposed mode of data collection is semi-structured, in-depth interviews (see Instruments 1 through 7). The interviewer team will participate in a roles-based training where the objectives and research questions for the study will be reviewed, and they will be formally trained on all of the study's protocols, including spending time (a) reviewing the items in each protocol, the purpose of the items, and how the items connect to the study research questions, and (b) practicing how to conduct the interviews and to use probes when appropriate.

During data collection, the interviewer team will meet after each site visit to discuss what was learned, to address any challenges, and to prepare for the next visit. These meetings will serve as opportunities to ensure continuity in how interviews are conducted and consistency in the quality and depth of the interview information being gathered across site visits.

B5. Response Rates and Potential Nonresponse Bias

Response Rates

The study is not designed to produce representative or generalizable findings, and site participation is wholly at the program's discretion. Response rates will not be calculated or reported.

NonResponse

Based upon prior experience with similar studies in human service settings, we expect to meet the study's interview goals for HS staff, parents, and community providers for the HS Connects project. We find that respondents are eager to contribute their expertise and knowledge to inform program development, as well as share their perspectives as program operators and providers.

Within selected sites, the study team will aim to arrange interviews that accommodate respondents' scheduling needs. If there is an instance when a targeted respondent is unable to meet while the team is on site, a member of the study team will schedule a follow-up call at a more convenient time or request to meet with an alternate respondent in a similar position. Particularly in the case of program participants, the study team will be prepared to identify and recruit alternate respondents while we are on site if that is a possibility.

Maximizing Response Rates

We will take several steps to help ensure a high rate of participation among Head Start staff, parents/guardians, and community providers:

- **Knowledge of likelihood of participation:** As candidate Head Start sites will be identified by key informants and members of the project's stakeholder and advisory panels during the earlier information collection activities (under the Generic Clearance for Formative Data Collections, OMB #0970 - 0356, issued in May 2019), we expect that these recommendations will be based in part on their knowledge of a site's likelihood of participating.
- **Engaging recruitment materials:** Our recruitment plan will be reviewed by the project's stakeholders and advisory panel to ensure that the approaches and materials are engaging and culturally responsive.
- **Emphasis on benefits of the HS Connects study:** Our initial communication will emphasize the importance of participation and explain how the project will benefit Head Start programs and the coordination of family support services more broadly. All potential respondents will receive a copy of the HS Connects project description.
- **Trained and experienced staff:** During the recruitment phase, respondents will be contacted by senior members of the research team who have substantial experience working closely with program staff, participants, and community providers on similar projects. These researchers have had a high level of success in gaining cooperation for on-site data collection activities. Similarly, most of the data collection will be conducted by senior members of the research team. Members of the research team will receive extensive project-specific training. This will include securing respondents' cooperation and appropriately handling refusals.
- **Respecting respondents' preferences:** Pre-visit calls and interviews during site visits will be scheduled at respondents' convenience, to include the time of the interview and location.
- **Tokens of appreciation:** As described in SSA, we will offer parents/guardians who participate in interviews a token of appreciation intended to offset their costs of participation in the study.

B6. Production of Estimates and Projections

This data collection request is for qualitative data collection and does not include the use of survey data.

B7. Data Handling and Analysis

Data Handling

The main data sources for the case studies will be audiotapes and electronic notes gathered during the pre-visit calls and interviews. The audio recordings are gathered on secure, password-protected recorders, downloaded onto a computer at the end of the day, and then stored in a secure, password-protected folder that only the research team has access to. Every effort will be taken to safeguard the audio recorders so that they are kept on the person conducting the interviews or in a safe, secure place to reduce the likelihood of misplacing the recorders before the audiotape has been deleted from the recorder. Electronic notes will be stored in a secure, password-protected location as soon as they are taken.

Errors due to coding will be minimized by regular meetings of the coding team to review coding assumptions and determine interrater reliability.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis will follow a deductive coding process. Codes will be developed to capture family support services activities and coordination processes based on our team's knowledge of the field, information gained from a review of the literature, and landscaping activities. The coding team will be trained on the scheme prior to coding and, during the coding period, will meet regularly to review assumptions (ensure inter-rater reliability); address analytic challenges; discuss, compare, and cross-check themes; triangulate emerging findings with other data sources (e.g., PIR data); identify major themes that were not reflected in the deductive coding scheme; and, reach shared understandings that are valid and reliable. These analyses will form the basis for a synthesis memo, which is a foundation for the outline and report summarizing case study findings, and later, the descriptive study design options.

Additionally, the research team will pull characteristics from, and if warranted calculate descriptive statistics, using PIR data to describe the organizational characteristics (e.g., whether the grantee provides direct services or delegates service delivery to other agencies, program size, number of Head Start funded slots) and structural characteristics of the participating sites.

Data Use

A report will be published that summarizes the findings from the HS Connects case studies. It will include details on the qualitative data analysis conducted and interpretation of the findings. Data from the case studies will also inform the design of a large-scale descriptive study.

B8. Contact Person(s)

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Attachments

Appendix A: Conceptual Map
Appendix B: Cross-walk of Research Questions and Constructs for Data Collection Protocols
Appendix C: Federal Register Notice
Appendix D: Public Comment – Truth Initiative
Appendix E: Public Comment – NHSA
Appendix F: Head Start Connects Project Description
Appendix G: Contact and Informational Materials for Head Start Staff
Appendix H: Contact and Informational Materials for Head Start Families
Appendix I: Contact Materials for Community Providers

Instrument 1: Head Start Administrator/Family and Community Partnerships Manager Pre-Visit Call
Instrument 2: Head Start Family Support Staff Pre-Visit Call
Instrument 3: Head Start Administrator/Family and Community Partnerships Manager Interview
Instrument 4: Head Start Family Support Staff Interview
Instrument 5: Head Start Other Staff Interview
Instrument 6: Parent/Guardian Interview
Instrument 7: Community Provider Interview