

Head Start Manager/Coordinator Interview Protocol

Before we begin, I would like to note that all information we collect from you and all others today and in the future will be kept private. Your responses today will be used to help better understand how Head Start programs, elementary schools, and community organizations are supporting children and families as they transition into kindergarten. We estimate our conversation today to last approximately one hour and thirty minutes. Additionally, federal law states that 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 data collection is 0970-0XXX and the expiration date is XX/XX/XXXX. I can repeat that, if you'd like to keep it for reference.

In this interview, we would like to learn about your role, what you and your center do to support children and families' transition into kindergarten, and specifically about collaborations you may have with local elementary schools.

We recognize that this past year or so has been unprecedented with the COVID-19 pandemic. For the purpose of our study, we would like you to think about your experiences during this [program/school] year.

I. Background

I'd like to begin by learning a little about you and your background.

1. How long have you been a [*insert HS manager/coordinator title*]? How long at this Head Start center?
 - a. What age children do you work with?
2. What did you do prior to becoming a [*insert HS manager/coordinator title*]?

- a. *Probe for prior ECE experience (elementary-level teaching or staff, childcare settings, school-based preschool settings)*
- b. *Probe for how long they have been in elementary education and ECE-based work altogether*

II. Transition Perspectives and Supports

In this next set of questions, we would like to learn more about your views about transitions into kindergarten, including how you define successful transitions, who you engage with around transitions, and what roles and responsibilities people in your center take on.

3. What does a "successful transition to kindergarten" mean to you?
 - a. *Probe for what it means for children, families, and teachers*
 - b. *[If school readiness comes up] Probe for how school readiness is tied to transitions*
4. When do you consider the transition process to begin and end? *[Share that for the remainder of interview, we will be thinking about transitions as from year before kindergarten, through their entry into kindergarten, until the end of their kindergarten year]*
5. What types of training or supports are provided by your agency to improve children's transition from preschool to kindergarten? Can you share a specific example?
 - a. *Probe for roles and responsibilities of agency staff.*
 - b. How do directors support managers/coordinators around the kindergarten transition?

- c. How do you and other agency staff support teachers around the kindergarten transition?
6. What do you do to support children around the transition to kindergarten? Can you give me an example?
 - a. What do you do to support families? Can you give me an example?
 - b. How do you support children and families with specialized needs?
 - c. *Probe for differentiated supports for special populations of students and families (e.g., exposure to trauma, special education needs, cultural and linguistic variations, exposure to the child welfare system)*
7. What kinds of transition activities do you think are most beneficial to children? To families?
8. Do some children or families benefit more than others from certain types of transition activities? If so, please explain.
9. Who else in your center is responsible for supporting transitions?
 - a. How do you collaborate with these other Head Start staff around kindergarten transitions?
10. Do you work with any community or social service organizations/agencies to help support families and children's around the transition into kindergarten? [If yes:]
 - a. What is your relationship with these organizations/agencies?
 - b. In what ways, if any, do you work together to support children and families around the kindergarten transition?

III. Family Engagement in Transition Process

Now I'd like to learn a little more about how you involve families in the transition process.

11. How does your agency involve or engage with families around the transition to kindergarten?
 - a. How, if at all, has this changed since COVID?
12. What strategies has your agency used to involve families that are harder to reach?
 - a. How successful have those efforts been?
13. What benefits have you seen as a result of families' efforts to help their child prepare for the kindergarten transition?
14. What challenges do families face in preparing their child for the kindergarten transition?
 - a. *Probe for challenges as experienced by special populations of students and families (e.g., exposure to trauma, special education needs, cultural and linguistic variations, exposure to the child welfare system)*

III. Partnership with Elementary School Teachers and Staff

Now we will focus on how you collaborate with teachers and/or staff in local elementary schools.

15. Do you collaborate with any teachers or staff at any elementary schools around kindergarten transitions? *[IF NO, move to question 28.]*
 - a. *[If yes]* With how many different schools?

For the next set of questions, we will focus specifically on your relationship with [district(s) / school(s) in our study].

16. How did your relationship(s) with these/this [district(s) / school(s) in our study] develop?

- a. Who do you or other center staff work with most closely within these/this [district(s) / school(s) in our study]?
 - i. *Probe for name(s), position(s), and title(s)*
 - b. How long have you had a relationship with [district / school(s) in our study]?
17. How often do you collaborate with staff at [district(s) / school(s) in our study]?
18. When you collaborate with [district(s) / school(s) in our study] staff around kindergarten transitions, what do you do together?
- a. *Probe for specific activities, such as: information sharing, meetings, professional development/training and/or coaching around transitions, opportunities to learn about kindergarten standards, etc.*
 - b. *Probe for strategies and practices that are differentiated for special populations of students and families (e.g., exposure to trauma, special education needs, cultural and linguistic variations, exposure to the child welfare system)*
 - c. Please describe how you collaborate around those practices?
19. How has the way you collaborate with [district(s) / school(s) in our study] staff changed since COVID-19, if any?
20. Please think of your own goals around supporting children's transition into kindergarten. How much are those goals consistent with those of [district(s) / school(s) in our study] staff?
- a. In what ways are they consistent?
21. In what ways are your kindergarten transition goals different from those of [district(s) / school(s) in our study] staff?
- a. *Probe: around planning for transitions, sharing information, engaging families*

- b. What would help create more alignment in those goals?
 - c. What are barriers to creating that alignment?
22. What, if any, barriers or challenges have you faced in working with [district / school in our case study] around kindergarten transitions?
- a. How, if at all, has this changed since COVID?
23. How has the way you collaborate with staff at [district(s) / school(s) in our study] changed since COVID-19, if any?
24. You just described your relationship with [elementary districts/schools in our study]. Is there anything notable that you would like to share about how you work with other [elementary districts/schools]?

Now, for these next questions, please think about your collaborations with districts and schools more broadly.

25. Of all the ways you have collaborated with elementary staff, what has been most useful?
- a. *Probe: For you? For other teachers? For children? For families?*
 - b. Can you give me examples of some of the benefits you've seen for children and families?
26. Of all the ways you have collaborated with elementary staff, what has been least useful? Why do you think that is?
27. What kinds of supports have helped you better collaborate with elementary staff around transitions?
- a. *Probe for the role that the center director plays in helping to initiate these opportunities*

- b. *Probe for time available to collaborate, professional development opportunities, etc.*
28. How has collaboration with elementary staff changed how you approach kindergarten transitions?
29. In your opinion, how necessary or important is it to connect with elementary school staff in order to successfully support children and families for the kindergarten transition?

IV. Transition Policies

Next, I'd like to learn more about the specific policies that are driving your work around kindergarten.

30. Do specific federal, state, or local policies directly influence your work around kindergarten transitions?
31. What, if any, policies, regulations, or formal guidance has your agency put in place around kindergarten transitions?
- a. Do any of these policies (either federal or ones your agency has put in place) specifically focus on collaborating with [districts / elementary schools]? In what ways?
 - b. Do any of these policies specifically focus on coordinating with community partners around transitions? In what ways?
 - i. *Probe for information sharing, cross-system professional development, etc.*
32. What supports do you think would help you and your staff implement these policies most effectively?

- a. *Probe for resources, professional supports, shared vision/values, partners, specific practices and strategies, other policies.*

V. Final Reflections and Wrap Up

I have a couple of final wrap up questions for you.

33. Among all of the practices and strategies you mentioned, what would you say are the ones you think are most useful/important for children and families transition success?
34. What do you think is needed to help improve and sustain coordination, collaboration, and communication between Head Start and Elementary School systems in order to have effective Head Start to kindergarten transitions?
 - a. *Probe for differences in needs based on specific populations*
 - b. *Probe for how COVID-19 impacts what they think is needed in these areas*

Those are all the questions I have for you. Is there anything else you think is important for me know about transitions that we have not discussed?