

Instrument 3: Head Start Administrator/Family and Community Partnerships Manager 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 0970-0538 and the expiration date is 04/30/2021.

Semi-Structured Interview with Head Start Administrator/Family and Community Partnerships Manager

This protocol is written to be generic, so it can be used with different respondents with varying roles – for example, respondents at the grantee level versus respondents at the center level or Head Start Administrators versus Head Start Family and Community Partnerships Managers. This protocol represents the full list of questions we may ask respondents, but the full list may be cut down depending on who we are speaking with and whether we spoke with them during the pre-visit call.

Some of the questions may ask for information that was already gathered during prior discussions with representatives from this site or may be available from the PIR. In that case, the interview will focus on briefly reviewing information that has already been collected and will ask for updates or corrections. Other questions and probes are structured assuming the team does not have this information already. Interviewers will tailor the questions to confirm or verify information for any item we already have from the PIR or previous phone calls – i.e., instead of saying, “How many staff do you have?” the interviewer would say, “From the PIR I can see that you have [#] staff. Is that still correct?”

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

The items listed as “probes” in this protocol are items we expect respondents to touch on when they answer the primary (bold) question – however, they are listed for interviewers to ask in case the respondent does not understand the primary question or if they give a very brief answer. The (not bolded) sub-bullets listed in this protocol are all example questions that may be asked if the respondent doesn’t touch on that topic in their first response or needs further clarification about a question. 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 Overview

Thank you for meeting with me today! As you may recall from our phone call, I’m [NAME] and I work for [MDRC, MEF, OR NORC – SHORT DESCRIPTION]. I know we discussed Head Start Connects during our call, but to refresh your memory, I’ll give you a quick overview. Head Start Connects is 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 services for parents/guardians 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 understand that the service coordination processes may have changed as a result of COVID-19; while we are primarily looking to understand what service coordination was like prior to COVID-19, I will also ask you about how processes have been affected by COVID.

I would like to interview you today because your site is participating in the Head Start Connects case study, along with five other Head Start programs. Along with interviewing you, I am also interviewing other staff at your site, parents/guardians, and community providers. We will discuss how your site coordinates family support services. Your opinions and ideas will provide valuable information about how programs coordinate Head Start family support services, which will help us figure out how to improve the services offered to parents. I emailed you an information sheet about the study for you to keep for your records – did you have a chance to read it? If not, please feel free to read the full form now and I’ll also now give you an overview. [IF DIDN’T RECEIVE INFORMATION SHEET VIA EMAIL, SHOW SHEET ON VIDEO CALL, SUMMARIZE, AND GET EMAIL TO SEND AFTER INTERVIEW.]

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 the families we discuss, as we want to maintain their privacy.

As discussed on our earlier call, I’d like to conduct this interview in two parts. This first part – today – won’t take more than an hour and a half, and the second part – after all of the other interviews at your site are complete – will take about 30 minutes; your participation in both is voluntary. If you need to leave early or don’t want to answer certain questions, that’s fine – just let me know. Your name will be protected and will never be shared outside the research team. While we may use what you say during the interview in our reports, we won’t include your name or the name of your site. 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 0970-0538 and the expiration date is 4/30/2021.

Do you agree to participate in this 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, the recordings will be deleted after transcription, and your name will not be attached to the transcription.

Do you agree to be recorded?

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.

INTERVIEW PART A

Section 2. Background and Family Support Services Overview

Let’s start by discussing your background and your site.

- 1. Please tell me a little about yourself – your professional and educational background.**
[PROBE: What were you doing before you came to this site? What are your degrees or other credentials?]
- 2. During the pre-visit call we learned the site [IS A SINGLE CENTER OR IS ONE OF MULTIPLE CENTERS OPERATED BY THE GRANTEE OR IS A CENTER OPERATED BY A DELEGATE]. Is that correct?**

Section 3. Family Needs and Types of Family Support Services

Next, I’d like to understand the needs of the families enrolled at your site and how you may address these needs. I’m going to ask you a series of questions about various things different families may be interested in or need.

[IF ANY OF THESE QUESTIONS ARE ANSWERED VIA THE PRE-VISIT CALL, CONFIRM THE RESPONSE HERE RATHER THAN ASK THE QUESTION AGAIN]

- 3. What are the education- and career/employment-related needs and interests of parents enrolled at your site?**
 - o What do you or your site provide to meet this need/interest for parents?
 - o Under which circumstances does it involve referrals outside of your Head Start program to another program operated by the same parent agency? What about to an external community provider?
- 4. 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 do you or your program provide to meet this need/interest for parents?
 - o Under which circumstances does it involve referrals outside of your Head Start program to another program operated by the same parent agency? What about to an external community provider?

5. **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?**
- What do you or your program provide to meet this need/interest for parents?
 - Under which circumstances does it involve referrals outside of your Head Start program to another program operated by the same parent agency? What about to an external community provider?
6. **What kinds of supports do parents seek or need for their children – for example, wraparound childcare, assistance with children with disabilities, developmental concerns, kindergarten selection and transition?**
- What do you or your program provide to meet this need/interest for parents?
 - Under which circumstances does it involve referrals outside of your Head Start program to another program operated by the same parent agency? What about to an external community provider?
7. **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?**
- What do you or your program provide to meet this need/interest for parents?
 - Under which circumstances does it involve referrals outside of your Head Start program to another program operated by the same parent agency? What about to an external community provider?
8. **What are some ways the COVID-19 pandemic – that is, the illness caused by the coronavirus that has closed non-essential businesses in many areas – has affected the supports and assistance parents need?**
- [PROBE: Education- and career- related supports/assistance, emergency assistance, supports with parents’ health, supports for their children, supports and assistance related to acquiring new skills.]*
- What are some ways your program has adjusted services to meet these changed needs?
 - Have your priorities for which services to offer changed because of the pandemic? Have any services been more highly prioritized? Deprioritized? If so, why?
 - Have you added any new services?
 - Has your program made any changes to how services are provided?
[PROBE: Offering remote services? Changes to account for possible challenges with parents accessing phone service, internet, etc. ?]

Section 4. Service Uptake and Funding

Next, let's talk about parents' use of the services we just discussed. I'll first ask about prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and then will specifically ask about changes due to the pandemic.

9. Now, please tell me about parents who don't take up the family support services, thinking about times prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. What are some reasons why parents don't take up family support services?

- o 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
- o Are there common features of parents that tend to decline services?
- o Are there certain services that tend to be declined?
- o In what ways, if at all, has the COVID-19 pandemic affected service uptake?

10. Are there any family support services you are thinking about delivering on-site in the future?

- o If so, please describe those services and the reasons why you would deliver them in the future.
- o What about off-site?
- o Are there any services families at your center need, but your center and the community are not able to provide?

11. *Are there any family support services your site used to provide, but no longer do?

[PROBE: Why did you stop offering these services (for example, external providers/referrals are available, too few participants, too costly)?]

- o **[IF MENTIONS SERVICES NO LONGER PROVIDED]**: Have you stopped providing any of these services because of the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, which ones?

12. I imagine you serve families that come from many different backgrounds, cultures, languages - how do you take that into consideration when you provide services for these families?

[PROBE: In what ways do you tailor services so they can accommodate families with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds?]

13. Finally, how are your family support services funded?

- o Do you supplement your federal Head Start funds with other funds in order to provide services to families? If so, why did you decide to do this?
- o Have you received or anticipate receiving additional funding due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - [IF YES]:
 - Are the additional funds from Head Start through the CARES act or another source?
 - Have you or do you intend to use these funds to support service coordination?
- o If you had additional funds, how would you change/improve expand your services for families?

Section 5. Staffing and Process for Providing/Coordinating Family Support Services

Next, let's talk in more detail about your site's overall process for coordinating and providing these family support services, thinking across services both provided directly by and at your site and services that may be provided by external service providers (*an organization, agency, or people in your community that provides services to help families*). I know processes may have changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic – however, I also want to understand what the process looked like prior to the pandemic. Thus, I will first ask about your experiences prior to the pandemic, and then I will ask specifically about how the pandemic may have affected specific aspects of staffing and service coordination.

[IF RESPONDENT OVERSEES MULTIPLE SITES, CLARIFY WHICH SITE YOU'RE REFERRING TO WITH EACH QUESTION]

14. On our phone call before this visit, we learned that [STAFF] provide family support services at your site. That is, [BRIEF OVERVIEW OF WHAT WAS LEARNED ON CALL ABOUT NUMBER OF FAMILY SUPPORT WORKERS AND THEIR SUPERVISION AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE]. Is that correct, or am I missing anything about the staff at your site who provide family support services and their role?

- o Has your staffing for family support services changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic – for example, changes in staff roles, staff taking on different work?
 - Have you had to lay off any staff due to the pandemic? If so, have you had to lay off any family support staff?
- o What kind of credentials does your program require your family support staff to have?

- o What is the average salary or salary range for these staff?

15. What role do you play in coordinating family support services?

[PROBE: That is, helping link parents with services they may need? How much of your role is managing family support workers versus working directly with families?]

16. What are some specific ways you and your staff coordinate and work together to provide family support services?

- o Please describe how you communicate with other Head Start staff, including staff at your site and staff at the [GRANTEE/DELEGATE/CENTER] level, to provide these services. *[PROBE: For example, do you have regular meetings? Informal communications? What do you discuss at meetings? How do you work together to provide services? Who is in charge of which service?]*

17. What is your site's approach to individualizing or tailoring family support services for each parent? That is, how does your site personalize, match, or fit supports and services to meet parents' individual needs?

[PROBE: How does your approach reflect available resources – or lack of resources – in the program and community? How does your approach incorporate individual parents' goals, needs, and resources?]

- o What guidance do you provide your family support service staff on how they should tailor their work with parents?

18. What are some specific ways your process for coordinating family support services has changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Section 6. Management Information System

Next, I would like to learn more about your site's data systems and records. [INTERVIEWER: IF SHORT ON TIME, YOU CAN HOLD ALL QUESTIONS IN THIS SECTION EXCEPT THE FIRST FOR INTERVIEW PART B]

19. Please describe the data systems or management information system (MIS) you use to provide and coordinate family support services.

[PROBE: How long has your program used this data system?]

- o If your MIS is from a commercial vendor (a business that sells develops and software), do you have any special modules that are not part of the standard package?

20. In what specific ways do you use this system to track family support services? For example, do you use it to track referrals, service take-up, family needs?

21. Is the family service information linked to children's records in your MIS?

- If yes, do you use these data to explore relationships between family needs or services and child outcomes?

22. *Who has access to your data systems?

[PROBE: Do any community service providers have access?]

- How do different staff in different roles use these data systems?

23. *Are records or information about program interactions with families – communications, goals, referrals, participation in services, monitoring, follow-up – maintained in any additional systems (including paper systems)?

- If so, can you describe how these systems are used and by whom?

Section 7. Partnering with Community Providers to Provide Family Support Services

Next, let's discuss how you partner and work with community organizations, including how you refer parents to services provided by external organizations. Let's first talk about how you partner and work with community organizations prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Afterwards, I will ask how the pandemic may have changed this process.

24. What are some specific ways you or your staff learn about new services in the community that might be beneficial for parents? For example, parenting classes, mental health resources, housing or food assistance, tax preparation assistance, physical health resources, education and training opportunities, job search and employment supports.

[PROBE: How do you determine which services are available in your community? How do you or your staff learn about the availability of these services – that is, whether there are open slots or a wait list?]

- Would you describe this as a resource-rich or resource-stressed community?

[PROBE: How do the services available in your community align with families' cultural values?]

25. Next, please describe how your site actively reaches out to people and organizations in your community that may be able to provide services, and develops relationships.

- Is it a mutual (bi-directional) effort? That is, do you both reach out to people and organizations in the community and they also reach out to you?
- What are your strategies for developing and maintaining partnerships with external service providers who might serve your parents?

- o What staff member(s) at your site is responsible for community partnership building and communications?

26. *What are some specific ways you work with community service providers or with community leaders?

[PROBE: In what ways do your program staff communicate with external service providers? For example, in-person meetings, phone calls, email, electronic forms? How often do you communicate with external providers?]

27. Which external service providers do you have formal agreements with such as contracts, Memorandum of Understanding (an MOU or a formal agreement between organizations to work together), or other kinds of arrangements?

- o How do these agreements address the sharing of information about families across providers?
- o How often do you revisit or update these agreements?
- o Are your arrangements with these organizations long-standing? Do you have relatively new arrangements with any organizations?
- o Are families ever referred to external service providers for which you do not have a formal agreement or partnership – for example, staff are aware of local dentists and distribute that information without the knowledge of the dentists themselves?
 - If so, are there particular services for which you are more likely to have a formal partnership than others?

28. Are most services provided by external providers offered at your site or at another location?

- o Thinking about the services that are not provided at your site, where are most of these services located in relation to your program's location (for example, across town, next door, a 20-minute bus ride away...)?
 - How do parents get to these locations to receive services?

29. How do your staff refer parents to services from external providers?

- o What formal or informal systems do your program staff use to learn whether the parents followed up on the referrals or participated in the services?
- o Do any of these providers refer families to your site?

30. How, if at all, has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your partnerships with community providers?

- o How, if at all, has the pandemic affected who you partner with?

- o What are some specific ways the pandemic has changed how you work with your partners (if at all)?

Section 8. Family Support Services - Successes and Challenges

To wrap up, let's talk about how it's going overall – providing family support services both on-site and off-site, provided by either Head Start staff or by external agencies.

31. How well do you feel your services are meeting parents' needs?

[PROBE: What tells you this? What are some specific ways you evaluate how your site is doing at delivering family support services?]

- o Have you received any feedback from parents? What about from staff?

32. What has been challenging about providing services for parents? Specifically, what's been challenging about:

- o Assessing needs?
- o Tracking services?
- o Individualizing and tailoring services?
 - How does it reflect the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of your families?
 - How often, when, and how do you measure goals, needs, and resources?
- o What are some specific ways you have tried to address these challenges?
- o What are some things that have been challenging about providing parents with support services specifically because of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - What are some challenges you have experienced with remote service provision?
[PROBE: For example, parents' ability to access phone service, internet]

33. What are some of the challenges associated with the different approaches for providing services: on-site and directly through your program, off-site and by your parent agency/grantee/delegate, by community providers off-site, by community providers on-site?

34. In what ways would you improve on these processes? What would you like to do differently?

- o To what extent do you need additional support to improve family support services?

35. Now, please tell me about what is going well, in terms of providing family support services.

- o What is unique about the services your site provides?

36. What are some specific ways the COVID-19 pandemic has affected how you provide services for families (besides what we have already discussed)?

[PROBE: For example, the mode for providing services, on-site vs. off-site services, internally-provided services vs. community provider services, which provide services at your center, how you communicate with parents and across staff to provide services]

- o Are there any changes you're considering making permanent?
- o Have you come across any unexpected positive outcomes or silver-linings from the pandemic – for example, new ways to connect virtually, more staff time to work parents, more staff time for professional development?

37. *Thinking about all the work your program does with families, what would you say your program really shines at? That is, what would you like to celebrate most about the work your program does with families?

Section 9. Part A Conclusion

Those are the last of my questions for today (interview Part A). 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 finish interviewing staff, parents, and community providers, and then we'll have the second part of our interview (interview Part B) so I can confirm everything I have been learning about how your site coordinates family support services.

INTERVIEW PART B

Section 10. Staff Training and Professional Development

Next, we have a few questions about how the staff who coordinate and provide family support services are trained and supported in their roles.

38. First, what are some specific reasons family support staff have left the program (both voluntarily and involuntarily) over the past year?

[PROBE: What did you learn about the challenges and constraints of this position at your site?]

- o Were there any positions left unfilled?

39. What are some specific ways your site supports staff as they provide parents with family support services?

[PROBE: For example, what kind of professional development or training do you provide for your staff? How often is it provided? Which staff are given which professional development/training opportunities?]

- Does your site provide guidance for sharing information about families among staff, or do you figure things out on a case-by-case basis?

40. For this program year, what content areas have you addressed related to coordinating family support services in the annual training and technical assistance (TA) plan?

- For example [**IF YOU HAVE TIME, ASK ABOUT EACH**]:
 - *Engaging or communicating with families? *(Actively reaching out to families in meaningful ways)*
 - *Building relationships with families? *(Getting to know families well and establishing trust)*
 - *Working in a culturally responsive manner? *(Working with families in a way that respects their culture, language, strengths, traditions)*
 - *Working with families in poverty? *(Working with families that have low incomes)*
 - *Family partnership process?
 - *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 a parent wants 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)*
 - *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)*
 - *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)*
 - *Providing or coordinating support services?
 - *Working with partners?
 - *Using a Management Information System (MIS)? *(Using a computer-based system to record and track your work with families)*

- *Analyzing and using data for continuous quality improvement? (*Applying information and lessons learned to improve your work with families*)
 - *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).
 - *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*)
 - *Other areas?
- *For these areas, do all staff need to build capacity or just some staff? Which staff attend these trainings? (*By build capacity we mean improving and maintaining skills, knowledge, tools, equipment and other resources needed to do their jobs well.*)

41. From your perspective, are there any areas where additional training, professional development, or TA is needed to coordinate family support services at your site?

42. *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?
- *Building relationships with families?
- *Working in a culturally responsive manner?
- *Working with families in poverty
- *Family partnership process?
- *Assessing or reassessing needs and strengths?
- *Setting goals?
- *Tracking progress?
- *Family well-being? (*For example, parents' and children's safety, stability, and positive functioning in physical, behavioral, social, and cognitive areas*)
- *Family leadership and advocacy?

- *Providing or coordinating support services?
 - *Working with partners?
 - *Using a MIS?
 - *Analyzing and using data for continuous quality improvement?
 - *Reflective supervision with family support staff?
 - *Organizational leadership for family support services?
 - *Trauma informed care?
 - *Other?
- o *Who provided the training?
 - o *Did you do this individually or as part of a team?
 - o *Did you find the training or PD helpful? Why or why not?

Section 11. Part B Confirmation and Conclusion

I have one last question, to confirm that I have the correct understanding of your site's process for coordinating services.

43. I've been hearing [GENERAL SYSTEM FOR COORDINATING FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES - STAFF INVOLVED, REFERRALS, SERVICES PROVIDED DIRECTLY]. Does that sound accurate to you? Is there anything I've missed?

Those are the last of my questions and my final interview with your site. 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!