

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 0970-0538 and the expiration date is 4/30/2021.

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 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-19.

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 interviews with staff, parents, and community providers from the six programs participating in the case study. 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 SEND EMAIL AFTER INTERVIEW.]

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 0970-0538 and the expiration date is 4/30/2021.

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?]

- o Are you a former HS parent?

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?]

- o 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?
- I know the COVID-19 pandemic – that is, the illness caused by the coronavirus that has closed non-essential businesses in many areas – may have affected your work. Has COVID-19 affected the role you play in coordinating family support services? If so, tell me about what changed.

Section 3. Family Interactions and Communications

Next, let's talk about how you interact and communicate with families at this site. I understand that the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected how you do your work. First, though, let's talk about what your process looked like prior to the pandemic. Afterwards, I'll ask you how your process may have changed because of the pandemic.

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?
- In what ways, if at all, has the COVID-19 pandemic changed how you interact with families?

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?

- o In what ways, if at all, has the COVID-19 pandemic affected what you discuss with parents?

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.]

- o 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?
- o In what ways, if at all, has the COVID-19 pandemic affected how you build and maintain relationships with parents?

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 role you may play in coordinating services for families at your site. Let's first discuss what this looked like prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; afterwards, I will ask you about how the COVID-19 pandemic may have changed families interests or needs.

9. From my interview with [HS ADMINISTRATOR/COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS MANAGER], I learned that families at your center have [SUMMARIZE NEEDS/INTERESTS FROM HS ADMINISTRATOR/COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS MANAGER INTERVIEW] and receive [SUMMARIZE SERVICES OFFERED FROM HS ADMINISTRATOR/COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS MANAGER INTERVIEW]. Is there anything I'm missing about the needs and interests of families at your site and the services your site provides to address these needs/interests?

10. I'd like to understand the role you play in coordinating these services for families. What are some specific ways you are involved in coordinating or providing services to meet these needs/interests for parents – if at all?

- o Tell me some specific ways you are involved in coordinating [ASK ABOUT EACH SERVICE MENTIONED BY HS ADMINISTRATOR/COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP MANAGER, IF NOT MENTIONED ALREADY] (if at all).

11. What are some ways the COVID-19 pandemic 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.]

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. Again, please first think about what this looked like prior to the pandemic; afterwards, I will ask you how the pandemic may have changed this process.

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

12. 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?]

- 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)?]

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

13. 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?

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

14. 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?

15. In what ways, if at all, has the COVID-19 pandemic changed how you learn about a parent's needs and connect them to support services?

[PROBE: For example, changes because you moved to remote learning and didn't see children in the classroom and didn't see parents in-person at your center, changes because you don't see other staff in-person due to remote learning]

[IF PROVIDES SERVICES DIRECTLY]:

16. Please share an example of a time you coordinated services for a parent directly.

- What specific things did you do with this parent to provide family support services?

17. Walk me through your process for determining parents' needs and strengths and setting goals with them.

18. What are some specific ways you track parents' progress towards their goals and follow-up with them?

19. In what ways, if at all, has the COVID-19 pandemic changed how you coordinate services for parents?

[PROBE: For example, changes to how you set goals with parents and tailor services, changes to how you track parents' progress and follow-up with them]

[IF FAMILY SUPPORT WORKERS ARE INVOLVED]:

20. Please describe a circumstance when you reached out to a family support worker on behalf of a parent.

- What were the reasons?
- What did you ask of the family support worker?
- What follow-up, if any, happened after this referral?

21. 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)

22. 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)

23. 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?]

- What are some specific ways you share information about parents with family support workers?
 - Is it ever shared electronically?
- 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?
- In what ways, if at all, has the COVID-19 pandemic changed how you collaborate with family support workers to coordinate support services for parents?
[PROBE: For example, any changes caused by switching to working from home?]

24. *Do you ever address parents' needs directly without involving family support staff or with minimal involvement of the family support staff?

- If so, in what situations? That is, for what type of needs and why?
- 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?
- 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. Let's first talk about how you may have worked with community organizations prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Afterwards, I will ask how the pandemic may have changed this process.

25. 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?

- If so, which agencies do you coordinate with the most? Why?
- 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?

26. 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?

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

27. *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?]

- Do you maintain a directory or handbook of community resources?
 - Do you give parents a copy?

28. 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?

29. 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?

30. What are some specific ways the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected your process for working with other agencies and external community providers?

[PROBE: How you find out about services, the types of services you seek out, how you communicate with external providers]

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.

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

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

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

- o What are some specific reasons parents declined services?
[PROBE: 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]

33. 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.

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

- o When you meet, do you discuss topics related to service coordination? If so, tell me about what you discuss related to service coordination.
- o *To what extent does your supervisor provide the support and guidance needed for you to generate answers to your own questions?
- o 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?

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

36. 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?]

- o If so, please describe what that looks like.

37. 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?

- o In what ways, if at all, has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the training, professional development, and or technical assistance needs you might have?

Section 9. Staff Wellness and Morale

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

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

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

- o Does this differ by the staff position? For instance, would you say there is more positive morale among administrators than there is among teachers?
- o What is morale like with the staff who provide family support services, specifically?
- o In what ways, if at all, has the COVID-19 pandemic affected staff morale?

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

- o What do you think causes these feelings? Are there specific aspects of your job or tasks that cause more stress than others?

40. 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?

- o 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.

41. What are some specific things that have been challenging about providing parents with support services?

- o Why do you think this is the case?
- o How have you addressed these challenges?
- o What are some things that have been challenging about providing parents with support services specifically because of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- o To what extent has remote service delivery been challenging?
[PROBE: For example, internet access issues]

42. 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?

43. 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?
- Have there been any unexpected positive outcomes from changes you have had to make because of the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, tell me about that.

44. *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.