Facilitator's Guide
for Self-Assessment:
Your Annual Journey

Early Childhood
National Centers

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Program Management and Fiscal Operations

Table of Contents

Overview
Duration: 5 minutes

Phase 1:
Design the Process
Duration: 10 minutes

PRE
Self-Assessment
Duration: 5 minutes

Phase 2:
Engage the Team
Duration: 5 minutes

Phase 3:
Analyze and Dialogue
Duration: 15 minutes

Wrap-Up
Duration: 2 minutes

Phase 5:
Prepare Report
Duration: 5 minutes

POST
Self-Assessment
Duration: 5 minutes

Phase 4:
Recommend
Duration: 5 minutes

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Program Management and Fiscal Operations

Early Childhood
National Centers

Introduction

- Self-Assessment: Your Annual Journey is a self-directed, interactive training module that leads participants through the process of planning and executing an annual Head Start program self-assessment.

- The information in this guide is designed to support the individual leading and facilitating a self-assessment. This may include planning the process, prioritizing issues, building the team, and conducting the self-assessment. At the end of the guide is a sample self-assessment report and three fillable forms, an Ongoing Monitoring Summary and two versions of Progress on Goals and Objectives.

Best Practices for Self-Assessment

A "best practice" is a method that has been shown to give high-quality results. These best practices can help you design and conduct an effective self-assessment process. It is wise to hear the advice of others who have tried something before you. It does not prohibit you from taking your own path, and there are typically some useful best practices you can adopt.

Keep these best practices in mind during your journey through self-assessment:

- Self-assessment occurs once annually, and the best time to begin self-assessment is when you have a full set of program-year data.
- Self-assessment teams are made up of management and staff members with a good mix of outside members.
- Self-assessment team members will need inquiry skills, group processing skills, data analysis techniques, and at times, facilitation skills.
- The self-assessment team analyzes ongoing monitoring results and reviews multi-year data.
- Health, safety, and school readiness contribute to continuous quality improvement and are important areas to be included in self-assessment every year.
- Recommendations from your self-assessment process should help you answer the question, "How can we get even better at what we do?"
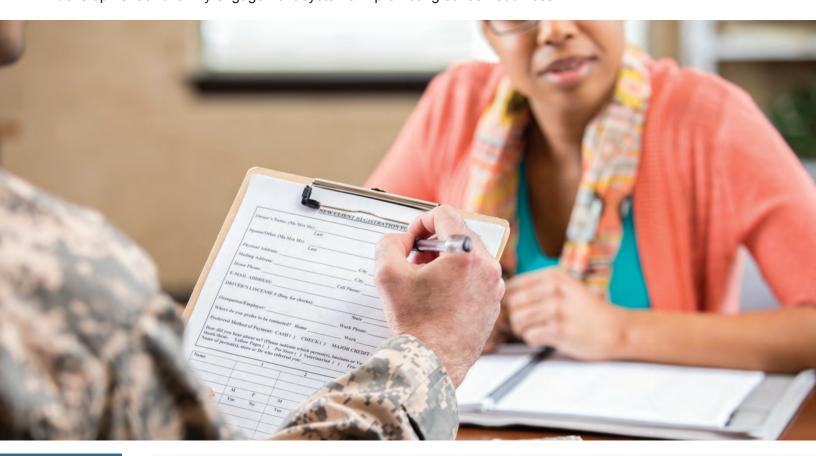
Questions to Help Prioritize Topics for Self-Assessment

Head Start leaders may find it difficult to determine their focal points and topics to bring into self-assessment. The questions below will help formulate fruitful discussion among all those tasked with determining the topics for this year's self-assessment.

The following questions may help you to prioritize each issue that emerges:

- Does it relate to a bigger theme?
- Is it systemic?
- Is it an urgent issue that wasn't resolved through ongoing monitoring?
- Is it an issue identified through the community assessment?
- Does it relate to our program goals?
- Would it benefit from a fresh perspective?
- Does it affect our ability to do everything we can to ensure the best outcomes for our families and children?
- Does it represent a strength that could be applied in other areas? What strengths do we have that we can use to address other issues?

Remember that self-assessment should evaluate the progress in meeting programs goals, ensure compliance, including around health and safety, and measure the effectiveness of the professional development and family engagement systems in promoting school readiness.

Core Members of the Self-Assessment Team

In the self-assessment process, you delegate a big part of the analysis to a diverse team of both internal and external members. It's important to pick a good variety of internal staff members for the team as well as members who represent your community, have expertise and an interest in what you do, and have the time to participate.

These core members should be a part of every self-assessment team:

- Director
- Policy Council members
- Governing body/Tribal Council members
- Management team members and other staff representatives
- Community partners and other community members
- Parents of currently enrolled children

In addition to the core members, consider:

- Advisory committee members, such as health services or, if established, school readiness committee
- Civic or business leaders
- Content-area experts
- Others whom you feel would add value and fresh perspective

Inviting Self-Assessment Team Members: The Elevator Speech

You need to be thoughtful about how you will get members to commit to serving on your self-assessment team. Preparing a brief speech may be useful as you plan to approach new team members.

Focus your short invitation on three key pieces:

- Provide an overview of the self-assessment process.
- Add a personalized touch that makes it clear you recognize the value this person would add to the team and the reason you think he or she can help Head Start with this process.
- Offer clear next steps.

Sample completed speech:

- **Brief overview:** Our Head Start program is beginning our annual self-assessment. We conduct one every year to help us check the progress we're making on our goals and objectives, identify systemic issues, and consider new innovations. It would involve a few meetings, fruitful discussions, and good use of everyone's ideas to make our Head Start program the best it can be.
- **Personalized touch:** One of our self-assessment sub-groups will be focused on child health and safety. I know you have many years of experience working in this area with playground inspection. You could share insights and ideas that would help us make important adjustments to how we get children ready for school!
- **Clear next steps:** I'm really excited about the possibility of having you join our team. We would all benefit from your expertise, and I think you'll enjoy the process, as well. Let's set up a time next week to talk more. What works for you?

Being an Effective Team Facilitator

Once the course is set for self-assessment and your passengers are on board, it is up to the facilitator to drive. The facilitator's actions and words provide support and can help the team stay on course.

Keep in mind such practices as:

- **Plan an orientation:** An orientation will help team members understand your program and describes the work that lies ahead of them. Download the Orientation to the Self-Assessment Process in Head Start PowerPoint presentation, which can be customized.

- **Start with strengths:** Lead the self-assessment process with a focus on strengths and successes. A positive approach encourages teams to focus on what is going well and to use those successes to help guide other projects.

- **Guiding (instead of controlling) the process:** Welcoming input from the team encourages dialogue and brings new insight garnered from an outside perspective. Engage the team by being honest and open about concerns that need attention.

- **Include all team members:** Use facilitation techniques such as a round robin, where everyone on the team takes a minute to weigh in, or ask for written feedback. These techniques may help all team members feel valued and included.

- **Use multiple strategies to engage all members:** Try different groupings, like "pair shares" or breaking into small groups. A large-group discussion may be intimidating for some team members, while a smaller setting may bring out more creative thoughts and ideas.

- **Keep the dialogue flowing:** An effective facilitator keeps the dialogue flowing by encouraging follow-up on good ideas.

- **Focus on big picture versus details:** Stay focused on the overarching patterns and trends you notice as you ask questions and review the data.

Categorizing Recommendations

After each sub-group has had ample time to meet, analyze, discuss, and make discoveries, the larger self-assessment team reconvenes. At this time, the self-assessment team looks at all discoveries across sub-groups, identifies themes, and creates final recommendations. These recommendations inform the self-assessment report.

You can use the table below, which consists of four columns, to identify your team's recommendations (column 1) and indicate whether each should be categorized as one or more of the following::

- **Progress on goals and objectives (column 2):** Reflects progress toward an established goal
- **Systemic issues (column 3):** Related to the big picture of how your program operates or has program-wide implications
- **Innovations (column 4):** Cutting-edge practices or new avenues that will benefit your program

Recommendation	Progress	Systemic Issue	Innovation
	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐

Keeping Self-Assessment in Mind throughout Program Planning

Upon completion of the annual self-assessment, Head Start program leaders continue along the program planning cycle. The self-assessment report can be used in a variety of ways throughout the year. Some of these ways are outlined below.

Conducting or Updating Your Community Assessment: The community assessment can be an important data source for self-assessment. Changes in the community may result in the need for major program changes, such as new sites, adjustments in program options or ages of children served, or the need to hire staff who speak diverse languages. These changes in community needs may become a focus of self-assessment, benefitting especially from the input of other stakeholders in the community who are part of the self-assessment team. As you learn about your community, you may identify community members with specific skill sets that you will ask to join your self-assessment team.

Establishing or Reviewing BROAD Goals and SMART Objectives: Self-assessment provides data on your program's progress toward its goals and objectives. This information is essential both as you write the initial goals for your five-year grant and as you revisit those goals and objectives during each year of the five-year project period. You may find that you have accomplished a short term-objective over the course of the year and now the recommendations from the self-assessment team lead you to set a new objective to take the next steps toward your goal. Very occasionally, your self-assessment team may recommend developing a new BROAD (Bold, Responsive, Organization-wide, Aspirational, and Dynamic) goal, accompanied by SMART (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**imely) objectives.

Developing an Action Plan and Budget That Reflect Goals: The progress on goals and objectives noted during self-assessment guides your action planning and budgeting for the following year. Be sure to develop an action plan for any new goals or objectives you developed based on self-assessment recommendations.

Implementing an Action Plan: Knowing that you have based your plans on the progress noted in your self-assessment will keep your program moving forward to achieving your five-year BROAD goals.

Analyzing Progress and Compliance Through Ongoing Monitoring: Your ongoing monitoring system is the means by which you regularly check on how you are implementing your action plan. Data collected during ongoing monitoring serves as important information to guide next year's self-assessment. Be sure to check on the progress toward your goals and objectives at least quarterly to make sure you are reaching your benchmarks.

Responding with Regular Course Corrections: Making course corrections during ongoing monitoring will keep you on the track toward continuous quality improvement. Be sure to keep your action plan up to date, especially reflecting any changes in timelines. Remember to check on your course corrections as part of ongoing monitoring to ensure they are having the desired effect.

Next Year's Self-Assessment: The planning, implementation, and ongoing monitoring you have done throughout the year will inform next year's self-assessment. While the exact focus may not be the same in each year of your five-year project period, self-assessment will be one way you articulate progress on goals, objectives, and program impact.

The graphic below illustrates how self-assessment can inform all parts of the program planning cycle.

Conduct or update community assessment
- Analyze data
- Establish conclusions and recommendations
- Share results with *all* stakeholders

Every five years: Establish long-term goals and measurable objectives
Annually: Review goals and objectives
- Ensure goals reflect findings from key sources of data

Create an action plan and budget that reflect goals
- Identify desired data
- Determine data-collection methodologies
- Refine recordkeeping and reporting

Respond regularly with course corrections
- Implement course corrections

Implement an action plan
- Collect and manage data
- Ensure the availability, usability, integrity, and security of data
- Discuss findings regularly

Evaluate progress through the annual self-assessment
- Assess progress towards goals
- Evaluate compliance and efficacy of services
- Identify strengths and areas for improvement
- Share recommendations with *all* stakeholders

Analyze progress and compliance through ongoing monitoring
- Review goals and data for trends
- Analyze data across services
- Draw conclusions and identify course corrections
- Share findings

The Head Start Program Planning Cycle graphic depicts an ongoing sequence of planning, implementation, and evaluation. It promotes continuous quality improvement and allows programs to work toward the achievement of positive outcomes for children and families. The diagram consists of an outer circle connected to a smaller inner circle and labels that name each step in the cycle. Arrows lead from one step to the next, showing the sequence of the steps. Many of the steps happen repeatedly throughout the cycle, and the cycle itself is repeated throughout the five-year project period. Below is a list of the steps in the planning cycle and a brief description of each.

Moving Forward Head Start/Early Head Start Program Self-Assessment (SA) Report
Date: 20XX

Section I. Introduction

Program Description

An original 1965 grantee, Moving Forward Head Start (MFHS) is a single purpose agency operating Head Start and Early Head Start (EHS) through center-based, family child care, and home-based options. The program has a site in a small city as well as sites in several rural communities. Many of its classrooms are in local public schools. The program has strong ties to its local communities. Total enrollment for fiscal year (FY) 20XX was 422; 350 Head Start and 72 Early Head Start.

Program Goals

The Moving Forward Head Start (MFHS) program has identified broad program and school readiness goals for its five-year project period. For this year's self-assessment, MFHS has decided to focus on three of their broad goals, which are:

- **Goal 1:** MFHS will partner with parents to maximize child attendance to help children develop the habit of attending school regularly and be successful in kindergarten and beyond.

- **Goal 2:** MFHS will use evidence-based curricula and classroom strategies to provide children with foundational language and literacy skills, which will improve vocabularies and serve as a foundation for reading success.

- **Goal 3:** MFHS will align parent and community engagement to support increased family stability, as demonstrated through improved family well-being inclusive of financial security.

Context for Self-Assessment

Prior to this year's self-assessment, MFHS's management team began by reviewing last year's self-assessment report. Last year's self-assessment had two key recommendations for this year's process:

- Allow more time at the end of the process for the whole self-assessment team to consolidate and compare the insights from our different sub-groups and see if we can identify some common themes that can lead to stronger recommendations.
- Develop recommendations for innovations.

We updated our community assessment six months ago. The community assessment identified several new community agencies in the areas of mental health and family literacy. We held an initial meeting with these agencies. The management team decided that, during the self-assessment process, we'd like to evaluate potential partnerships with each of these new agencies.

Because our family child care option is only two years old, the Policy Council requested that this year the self-assessment process include a review of child outcomes for children enrolled in that option compared to child outcomes for children enrolled in our center-based options.

Each quarter, the management team summarized the data we collected through ongoing monitoring and then rolled them up into an annual summary. We noticed that there were a number of safety issues uncovered as part of our ongoing monitoring throughout the year. None of them were serious and all of them were corrected immediately. However, the frequency raised concerns and we decided to take a good look at our safety procedures during self-assessment.

We have also been tracking progress toward our goals and objectives on a quarterly basis. We want to take a look at progress for the year during self-assessment and ask ourselves whether we are satisfied with our progress and whether we need to revise our objectives.

Section II. Methodology

Design and Team Members

Based upon our community assessment and ongoing monitoring summaries, and with input from MFHS's governing board, Policy Council, and management team members, we identified following items for sub-groups of the self-assessment team to consider:

School readiness as it relates to language and literacy:

- How can we improve child outcomes for language and literacy?

- How do child outcomes for children enrolled in family child care compare with the outcomes for children enrolled in our center-based programs?

- How are infants and toddlers who are dual language learners (DLLs) being supported in their acquisition of their home language and English?

- What progress have we seen in relation to our Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) scores in the domain of Instructional Support?
  - What have we done in the past year to improve these scores?
  - How effective has our professional development been in this area?

Family child care:

- How do child outcomes for children enrolled in family child care compare with the outcomes for children enrolled in our center-based programs?
- Are environments developmentally and culturally appropriate for infants and toddlers?

Family and community partnerships, including local education agencies:

- What kinds of results are we seeing for families in improved well-being inclusive of financial stability?
- How is our Fatherhood Initiative progressing?
  - What are the strengths and challenges?
  - What might we want to change?
- What are the strengths and challenges of each new partnership?

Attendance and absenteeism:

- Have our efforts to increase attendance been successful?
- Has reduced absenteeism and tardiness impacted individual and aggregated child outcomes? How?

Safety:

- Are there things we need to do to strengthen our safety systems?
- What might have caused the spike in playground incidents at two of our centers?

Based on the questions to consider, we established a self-assessment team that included:

- Head Start/Early Head Start director
- Policy Council member/EHS parent
- Governing body member with fiscal expertise
- Education, health/nutrition, family services, and Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) managers
- Early Head Start lead teacher
- Head Start lead teacher
- Family support worker
- Local school district superintendent
- "Raising Readers" director
- Community-based financial counselor
- Early care and education faculty member from local community college

Timeframe

x/xx/20xx

Meeting with governing body and Policy Council to review last year's evaluation, tentative schedule, and key focus areas for this year's self-assessment and to recruit governing body and Policy Council members for the self-assessment team.

x/xx/20xx

Management team meeting to develop self-assessment plan with tasks and timelines. Based on the data as summarized in the Progress on Goals and Objectives and Ongoing Monitoring Summary forms.

x/xx/20xx

Email self-assessment plan showing tasks and timelines to governing body and Policy Council members in preparation for a joint meeting to review the plan.

x/xx/20xx

Joint meeting with governing body and Policy Council to discuss plan; obtained approval.

x/xx/20xx - x/xx/20xx

Recruitment and orientation of self-assessment team members, and assignment of team members to appropriate sub-groups.

x/xx/20xx - x/xx/20xx

Subgroup team meetings to discuss their focus areas, including exploring systemic issues, examining progress on goals and objectives, and formulating discoveries to be shared with the entire self-assessment team.

x/xx/20xx - x/xx/20xx

Meetings with entire self-assessment team to share discoveries from individual sub-groups, organize them into common themes, and make recommendations for self-assessment report.

x/xx/20xx - x/xx/20xx

Development of self-assessment report, including sharing with and obtaining approval from governing body and Policy Council prior to submission to the Regional Office.

Data Collection Tools

The following reports were used during the self-assessment process:

- Community assessment/update summary
- Summaries of self-assessment key insights and recommendations for past three years
- Monthly child attendance reports
- Summary of child safety incident reports
- Aggregated EHS child outcome reports
- Aggregated Head Start child outcome reports
- Family progress toward goals aggregated summary report
- Summary of memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and contracts

Additional Information Used During Self-Assessment:

Because we wanted to compare outcomes for children in our family child care option to those in our center-based options, we made sure to run reports based on type of care setting.

Section III. Key Insights

Program Strengths

- Our new family child care option is off to a strong start. We were pleased to see that our child outcomes for language and literacy for children enrolled in family child care were as strong as those for the children in our center-based program.
- 68 percent of our families report making progress on the goals set with their family service worker for this past year. This is up 20 percent from three years ago.
- Parent participation in family literacy activities was the highest in three years.

Systemic Issues

- Need to review and revise our emergency preparedness plans.
- Need to revise our staff orientation procedures to make sure that staff hired after pre-service training receive all training provided during pre-service, especially health, safety, and active supervision training.

Innovation Findings/Discoveries

- It will be beneficial to children and families for us to continue to evolve our partnerships with literacy agencies that are new in our community.

- The local community college is able to provide workshops throughout the year that are related to health and safety topics. This can help orient staff who are hired after our annual pre-service training is held.

Progress in Meeting Our Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: MFHS will partner with parents to maximize child attendance in order for children to develop the habit of attending school regularly and be successful in kindergarten and beyond.

We have not yet reached our objective of reaching 95 percent in average daily attendance. However, since we incorporated the practice of talking to parents about the importance of attendance into our recruitment and home visiting protocols, we have seen a 10 percent decrease in chronic absenteeism and tardiness except during the winter months when inclement weather impacts our attendance.

Goal 2: MFHS will use evidence-based curricula and classroom strategies to provide children with foundational language and literacy skills, which will improve vocabularies and serve as a foundation for reading success.

Child outcomes related to language and literacy have increased steadily over the past three years, including those for DLLs. Program-wide CLASS® scores for Instructional Support increased from 3.4 to 4.0 during this program year. We think both of these increases are due to our practice-based coaching initiative, which focused on dialogic reading. We think the increase in child outcomes related to language and literacy is also a result of the increase in parent participation in family literacy activities.

Goal 3: MFHS will align parent and community engagement to support increased family stability, as demonstrated through improved family well-being inclusive of financial security

Families are becoming more financially stable; there is an increase in the number of families reporting having bank accounts and full-time employment. Also, 85 percent of the families in our program that qualify for earned income tax credit are receiving it. Participation in fatherhood activities grew steadily over the year. In a pre-post survey, fathers report that they are spending more time reading with their children.

Section IV. Recommendations

These recommendations encompass the categories of progress on goals and objectives, systemic issues, and innovations.

- Create a new program goal to support a culture of health and safety for children and staff.

- Revise orientation and staff training protocols and procedures to ensure that all staff, especially those hired after pre-service, receive all necessary trainings and ongoing support. Include collaborative efforts with the community college.

- Contract with a playground safety inspector to assess several playgrounds with a high number of incident reports.

- Capitalize on the interest families have shown in literacy by partnering with a local library and other community programs that promote literacy goals. Introduce a "read aloud to your children nightly" initiative.

- Develop an initiative to recognize and expand community partnerships that make a significant contribution to our goals related to family literacy and family financial stability and to our fatherhood initiative.

Ongoing Monitoring Summary

Date: _____   Monitoring Period: _____

What Was Monitored	What Was Monitored	Who Monitored	Data Sources	Areas of Strength	Areas of Concern, Including Fiscal Implications	Course Corrections	*Check to Refer to Self-Assessment	**Check if Goal Indicator
Program Governance, 45 CFR § 1301								
Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance, 45 CFR § 1302 Subpart A								
Program Structure, 45 CFR § 1302 Subpart B								
Education and Child Development Program Services, 45 CFR § 1302 Subpart C								

What Was Monitored	What Was Monitored	Who Monitored	Data Sources	Areas of Strength	Areas of Concern, Including Fiscal Implications	Course Corrections	*Check to Refer to Self-Assessment	**Check if Goal Indicator
Health Program Services, 45 CFR § 1302 Subpart D								
Family and Community Engagement Program Services, 45 CFR § 1302 Subpart E								
Additional Services for Children with Disabilities, 45 CFR § 1302 Subpart F								
Transition Services, 45 CFR § 1302 Subpart G								
Services to Enrolled Pregnant Women, 45 CFR § 1302 Subpart H								
Human Resources Management, 45 CFR § 1302 Subpart I								
Program Management and Quality Improvement, 45 CFR § 1302 Subpart J								

What Was Monitored	What Was Monitored	Who Monitored	Data Sources	Areas of Strength	Areas of Concern, Including Fiscal Implications	Course Corrections	*Check to Refer to Self-Assessment	**Check if Goal Indicator
Financial and Administrative Requirements, 45 CFR § 1303								
Other:								

*Summary Notes to Refer to Self-Assessment:

**Summary Notes if Goal/Objective Is Impacted:

Progress on Goals and Objectives

Goal: (Write goal here; use additional pages for each goal)	
Anticipated Outcome: (List anticipated outcomes here)	
Expected Challenges: (List anticipated challenges here)	

Quarter: _____1.   _____2.   _____3.   _____4.

Objectives (List One Objective per Row Below)	Activities or Action Steps	Data Sources	Outcomes	Challenges	Course Corrections	Issues to Track	Actual Outcomes

Objectives (List One Objective per Row Below)	Activities or Action Steps	Data Sources	Outcomes	Challenges	Course Corrections	Issues to Track	Actual Outcomes

Progress on Goals and Objectives

Date: _____   Reporting Period: _____

*Program Goals	**Measurable Objectives	Planned Activity or Action Steps	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress	Outcomes/Progress	Challenges
Goal 1:	A				
	B				
	C				
	D				
Goal 2:	A				
	B				
	C				
	D				

*Program Goals	**Measurable Objectives	Planned Activity or Action Steps	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress	Outcomes/Progress	Challenges
Goal 3:	A				
	B				
	C				
	D				
Goal 4:	A				
	B				
	C				
	D				

*Program Goals	**Measurable Objectives		Planned Activity or Action Steps	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress	Outcomes/Progress	Challenges
Goal 5:	A					
	B					
	C					
	D					
Goal 6:	A					
	B					
	C					
	D					

*Program Goal (Please feel free to adjust number of goals. Each program will be different.)

**Measurable Objectives (Please feel free to adjust number of objectives. Each program will be different.)

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

NATIONAL CENTER ON Program Management and Fiscal Operations

Early Childhood National Centers

Facilitator's Guide
for Self-Assessment:

Your Annual Journey