

achieving program goals that support child and family outcomes • achieving program goals that support child and family outcomes

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topic 3

achieving program goals that support child and family outcomes



Getting Started

Topic 3 explores the importance of program goals and how they ensure high-quality, culturally and linguistically responsive comprehensive services. This critical function of the Head Start planning cycle underscores how important it is for programs to plan strategically and to retain an unwavering focus on program goals including school readiness goals and parent, family, community engagement goals. These components work together to support progress toward child and family outcomes.




Learning Objectives

Programs will explore different types of goals and consider how specific data sources and tools can help them track their progress towards desired family outcomes.

topic 3: achieving program goals

As outlined in Topic 1: Nuts and Bolts of Strategic Planning, program goals related to child and family outcomes are broad statements that describe what a program intends to accomplish through its work with (and in support of) children and families. The ongoing partnership between program staff and families is crucial in supporting children's school readiness. As your program implements child development services and constructs school readiness goals that align with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF), you will also need to integrate parent and family engagement strategies into all systems and program services. This will enable you to promote family growth and development as exemplified in the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework. Families play a critical role in helping their children be ready for school, and Head Start programs are valuable partners in this endeavor.

 Families are critical in helping their children be ready for school. Head Start programs can be partners in this endeavor.


What is the ELOF?

The ELOF:

- Is a guide for programs to plan and implement a comprehensive, yet focused, early learning program
- Reflects research on what young children should know and be able to do in the following five domains:
 1. Approaches to Learning
 2. Social and Emotional Development
 3. Language and Literacy Development
 4. Cognition
 5. Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
- Applies to all Head Start program settings serving children ages birth to 5, including center-based, family child care, and home-based programs
- Applies to all children, including children who are dual language learners (DLLs) as well as children with disabilities
- Provides rich descriptions of children's developmental progressions, which can help program staff implement intentional teaching practices to support children at various ages
- Informs many aspects of program practices, such as:
 - Establishing school readiness goals
 - Selecting and implementing a curriculum
 - Selecting assessment instruments
 - Planning professional development

Prioritizing Program Goals

Head Start programs frequently ask how many program goals they should have. You can answer this question with the juggling test: How many balls—goals—can your program realistically keep in the air? Moreover, make sure the program goals are connected to data that can be analyzed, aggregated, and compared in order to measure progress. To ensure minimal bias, objectivity is important. Programs should not tailor the data they select based on what they want to see. Consider the following questions when you develop your program goals and objectives:

 Data-informed continuous improvement is only possible with good quality data.

- What is the data telling you, and what are the most urgent family, child, and community needs?
- How will program goals be developed and communicated internally (e.g., to staff, families, governing body/Tribal Council, and Policy Council members) and externally (e.g., to community partners and funders)?
- How will you make sure that program goals embrace culturally and linguistically responsive practices and outcomes?
- How would each group of stakeholders embrace and articulate these program goals?
- How will programs track, monitor, and evaluate activities and progress?
- How much data is currently used to measure progress, and what new data is needed to determine progress?
- What is realistic given funding constraints and opportunities?

These questions indicate how important it is to plan strategically. Families, staff, governing body/Tribal Council and Policy Council members, and other key stakeholders have a role to play in supporting a program's goals. Being strategic takes more planning time, but the results are well worth the investment. When a program's direction is established, it is easier to prioritize a manageable number of program goals and a clear method for achieving expected outcomes. Ultimately, the decision on how many program goals to have should be guided by the program's data. Although there is no required number of program goals and objectives, programs need to focus on the five central domains of the ELOF when addressing school readiness-related goals.

School Readiness Goals

The HSPPS require programs to establish school readiness goals that are aligned with the ELOF, state, and tribal early learning standards as appropriate, and the requirements and expectations of the schools that Head Start children will attend. At a minimum they must address the domains of language and literacy development; cognition and general knowledge; approaches toward learning; physical well-being and motor development; and social and emotional development. Programs will likely establish a goal for each of the ELOF's five central domains. Many programs serving infants, toddlers, and preschool children develop one set of school readiness goals appropriate for all children birth to 5.

Programs are required to establish school readiness goals in consultation with the families whose children are participating in the program. There are a variety of ways a program can do this. Consider forming an implementation team or school readiness committee that includes staff and parents. Examine data gathered through parent interest surveys. Ask parents for input during home visits and on lesson plans.

◀ Tell Me More!

Learn more about the expectations around establishing program goals with HSPPS regulation 45 CFR § 1302.102(a).

◀ Tell Me More!

Guidance on how programs can revise or create a school readiness goal as a type of program goal can be found in the Implementation Guide: Using the ELOF to Establish School Readiness Goals, which is part of the ELOF Implementation Toolkit.

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Table 1 compares the characteristics of program goals and school readiness goals. Note that school readiness goals are a type of program goal.

Table 1: Characteristics of Two Types of Program Goals

Program Goals	School Readiness Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BROAD statements of strategic direction that are compelling and engage everyone in the program in some level of related effort• Answer two questions:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What is to be accomplished?2. Why is it important?• Describe the program’s focus and priorities• May generally or specifically support the attainment of school readiness goals (most program goals do this)• Must include goals for the program’s provision of educational, health, nutritional, and PFCE program services• Must be responsive to culturally and linguistically diverse populations of children and families served in the program• Are phrased as statements and begin with words like “Program will...”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BROAD statements of expectation around children’s status and progress that address the five central domains of the ELOF• Reflect the age of the children being served• Answer two questions:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What will children accomplish?2. Why is the goal important for kindergarten entry?• Describe what the program wants children to know and be able to do at the end of their Head Start enrollment• Encompass the range of children served (e.g., are applicable for children who are DLLs and children with disabilities or suspected delays)• Are phrased as statements and begin with the words “Children will...”



School readiness goals are a type of program goal.

Tell Me More! ▶

The ECLKC offers resources related to the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to 5.

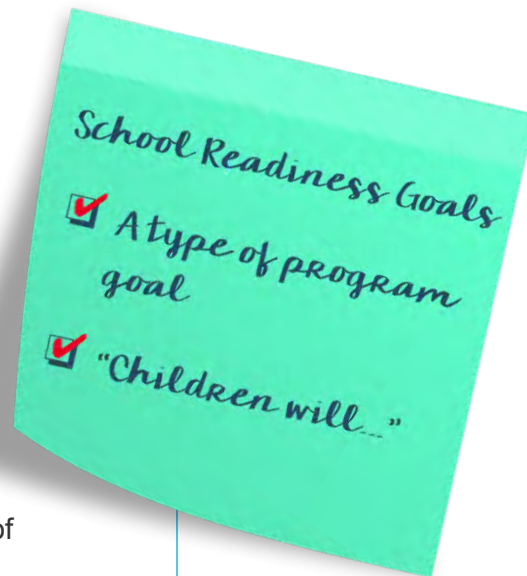
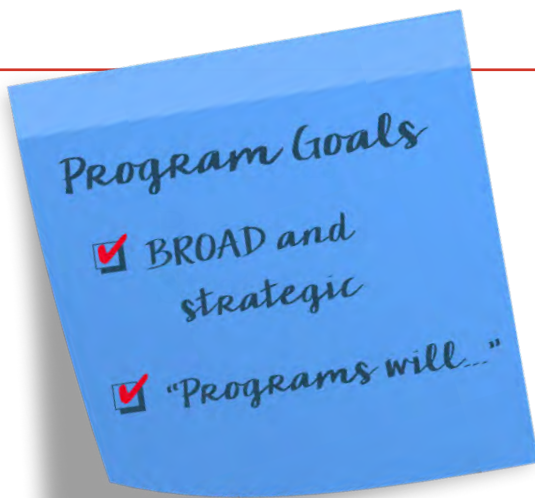


Table 2 compares the development process for the different types of Head Start goals.

Table 2: Process for Developing Two Types of Program Goals

Program Goals	School Readiness Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically developed for the baseline application of the five-year project period through the organization’s strategic planning and Head Start planning processes • Informed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community assessment for new grantees ○ Annual self-assessment, updated community assessment, and program-specific data sources, including aggregated PFCE data for existing grantees (e.g., summaries of conversations and observations, family strengths and needs, surveys of family satisfaction with services and referrals, and family partnership agreements) • Developed in consultation with and approved by the governing body/ Tribal Council and Policy Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically developed for the baseline application of the five-year project period through the organization’s strategic planning and Head Start planning processes • Aligned with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ELOF ○ State or tribal early learning guidelines ○ Requirements and expectations of schools • Developed in consultation with the families of the children participating in the program • Developed in consultation with and approved by the governing body/ Tribal Council and Policy Council • Mapped to align with indicators of child outcomes from the program’s child assessment system



Head Start Approach to School Readiness

- Children are ready for school
- Families are ready to support children’s learning
- Schools are ready for children

topic 3: achieving program goals

Table 3 compares how each type of goal is reviewed, revised, tracked, and analyzed to support program-level school readiness goals.

Table 3: How Different Types of Goals Support School Readiness

Program Goals: Reviewed and Revised	School Readiness Goals: Reviewed and Revised
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed and revised only if program/ community assessment data indicate the goal is no longer relevant • May be revised as other goals are accomplished • May be revised as program, state, national or tribal priorities are modified or emerging issues are identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not change from year to year unless the context changes (e.g., there is a shift in program demographics, a need to realign with local education agency, state, or tribal early learning standards or guidelines, or need to incorporate parent input)
Program Goals: Tracked and Analyzed	School Readiness Goals: Tracked and Analyzed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives related to program goals are measurable to enable programs to track progress throughout the five-year grant cycle, as well as analyze impact at the end of five years • Progress toward goals is tracked by using different tools or methods and by analyzing relevant data sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on child-level assessment data this is aggregated and analyzed at least three times a year. Except in programs operating fewer than 90 days, aggregation and analysis includes sub-groups as appropriate, such as DLLs and children with disabilities² • Includes data that measures features such as adult-child interaction, professional development efforts for staff, responsive environment, curriculum fidelity, parent and family input, etc. • Includes disaggregated child assessment data that is compared with other data collected by the grantees, such as individual child health data, individual child attendance data, human resource data, and fiscal data • Includes the collection and analysis of individual child attendance data within the first 60 days of program operation (fewer than 60 days for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start), and on a regular basis thereafter, to identify children with patterns of absence that put them at risk of missing 10 percent of program days per year³ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In some cases, includes comparison with other aggregated child level assessment data from the state, local pre-K programs, and other sources

Understanding the similarities and differences between program goals and school readiness goals is an important part of planning. Ultimately, program and school readiness goals, along with measurable objectives, all work together to strengthen high-quality, comprehensive services to children and families. ■

Family and Community Engagement Program Goals and Outcomes

The PFCE Framework is your guide to program planning for parent, family, and community engagement. It encourages programs to explore effective ways to design and implement systems and services to achieve expected outcomes for families and children. In Topic 1: Nuts and Bolts of Strategic Planning, we defined the term “expected outcomes” to be results the program anticipates. The PFCE outcomes are defined areas of expected outcomes that all Head Start programs must work toward.

The PFCE Framework helps programs plan with the end, or expected results, in mind. When collecting and using data, it is helpful to consider from the outset what you want to achieve with families and children and which outcomes are most important to work toward over the projected five-year period. Many programs use their data and the expected PFCE outcomes to design their PFCE program goals. Just as the domains in the ELOF are made more specific through the development of school readiness goals, PFCE outcomes can also be tailored to support the strengths and needs of unique populations. This can be done through the development of specific program goals for the provision of family and community engagement program services.



How does your program ensure that the program goals and school readiness goals are aligned?



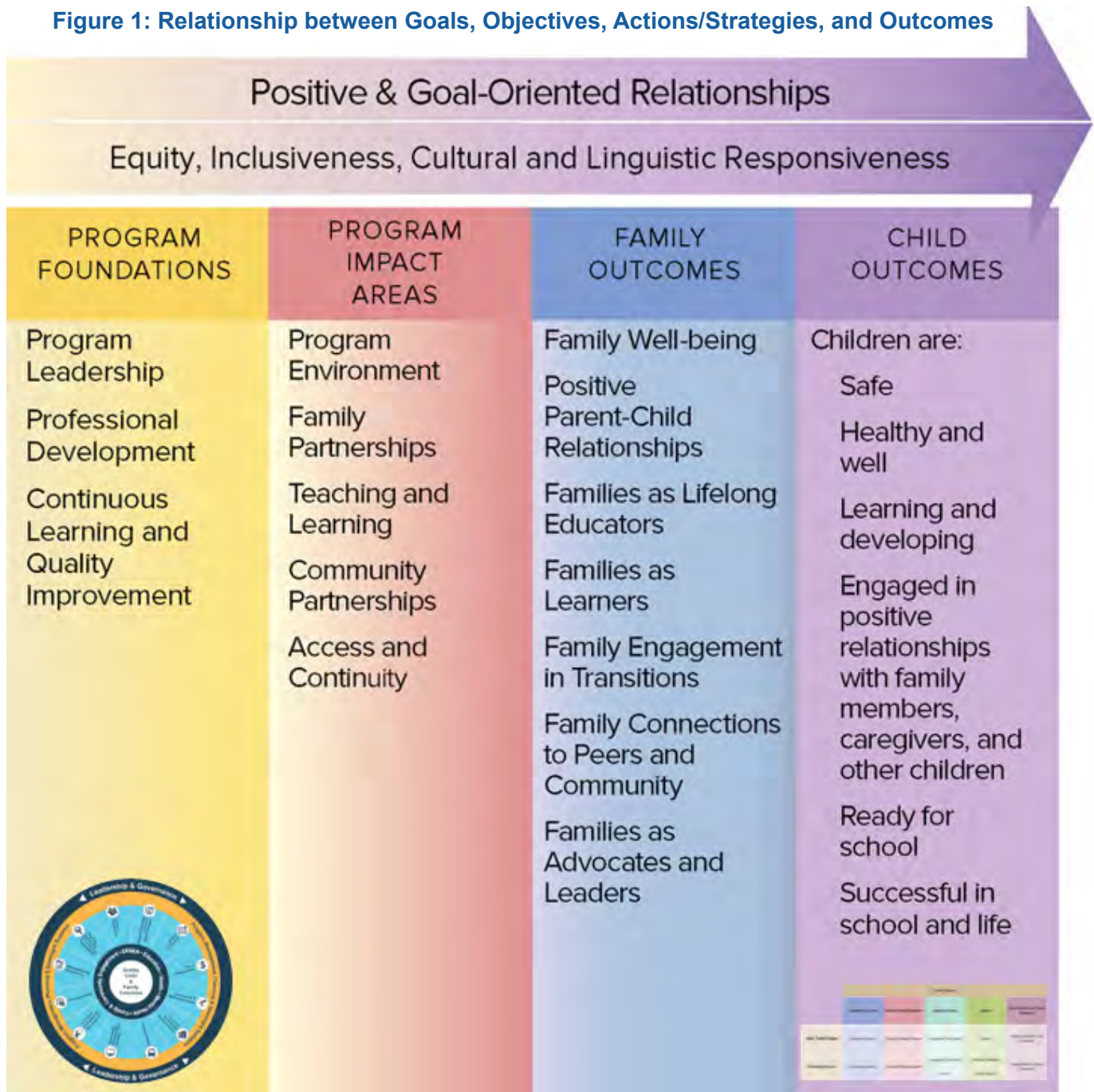
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Tell Me More! ▶

Learn more about the PFCE Framework, Version 2 on the ECLKC.

As program-level goals are developed, consider objectives that will help you meet your program goals. Many programs use the PFCE Framework Foundations (Program Leadership, Professional Development, and Continuous Learning and Quality Improvement) and the Program Impact Areas (Program Environment, Family Partnerships, Teaching and Learning, Community Partnerships, and Access and Continuity) to develop objectives and actions/strategies. As shown in Figure 1, objectives and actions/strategies link across systems (yellow column) and services (pink column) to support overall program goals that support family and child outcomes.

Figure 1: Relationship between Goals, Objectives, Actions/Strategies, and Outcomes



Tracking Progress toward the Achievement of PFCE Program Goals and Expected Outcomes

There are a variety of data-related tools that can be used to develop goals and measurable objectives and track progress toward achieving them. Many programs use published or locally designed tools to support their ongoing monitoring process. Other helpful sources of information include conversations with key staff and stakeholders (e.g., Policy Council and parent committee) and observations of staff who interact regularly with families (e.g., teachers, family service staff, home visitors, health services staff, bus drivers). Summaries of family input can also be invaluable.

One way to effectively track progress toward your program goals is to design objectives that address both the effort and the effect of your strategies. A program’s level of effort includes the type and amount of family programming offered. Your program’s effect focuses on whether your program’s activities have made a difference for children and families.

It is important to use data to identify the changes needed to achieve goals for families. For example, while working with individual families to set goals in the family partnership process, program staff may learn about family-specific trends and patterns that may inform program-wide goals setting and planning with community partners. This goal-setting process with families can provide another source of data to inform monitoring and decision-making about what improvements to make over time.

◀ Tell Me More!

To learn more about tracking progress, see *Measuring What Matters on Head Start’s the ECLKC*.

 *The Four R Approach to Support Family Progress*

- *Responsible*
- *Respectful*
- *Relevant*
- *Relationship-based*

Table 4: Sample Program Goal, Objective, Outcome, and Result

Sample Program Goal	Objective	Expected Outcomes	Outcomes (Actual Results)
“Moving Forward” Head Start program will support all parents through enhancing their parenting skills	Implement an eight-week research-based parenting curriculum offered to parents throughout the program year	Participating parents will increase their parenting knowledge and skills, increase positive interactions with their children, and have opportunities to connect with other parents and community agencies (<i>Positive Parent-Child Relationships</i>)	40 percent of enrolled parents participated in year one. Of those participating parents, 80 percent reported reduced parenting stress levels, increased knowledge about parenting better interactions with their children, and more connections to their peers and other community agencies

Differentiating between Program-level and Individual Family Goals

It is important to be able to distinguish between: 1) program-level goals to support PFCE outcomes; and 2) individual family goals that are developed with the family through the family assessment and family partnership process. At the same time your program is implementing intake and family assessment procedures, you must also identify family strengths and needs related to PFCE Outcomes. Both the family partnership process, as well as the family goals, should be aligned with the PFCE Outcomes.

Just as your program develops program-wide goals to support PFCE outcomes, you also will work with the family to develop individual family goals. They are based on the family assessment, family partnership process, and ongoing dialogue. ■

? How does your program track its progress toward the PFCE program goals and outcomes?

Table 5: Differences Between Program and Individual Family Goals

Type	Definition	Purpose	Informed By
<p>Program goals to support family outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals that are designed for all families or for specific groups of families in the program (e.g., immigrant groups, DLLs, fathers) and that support progress toward child and family outcomes Goals that affect all program services and systems Goals that are set at the program level and that may or may not affect all families in the program 	<p>To answer the question: <i>What should our program do to make a difference for children and families?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of trends and patterns that affect children and families through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community assessment Annual self-assessment Summary of family strengths and needs assessments (aggregated data) Summary of individual family goals from family partnership agreements (aggregated data) Aggregated child assessment data

Type	Definition	Purpose	Informed By
<p>Individual family goals reflect strengths, needs, and aspirations and are where progress is made toward one or more of the seven PFCE outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals set with an individual family to support progress toward child and family outcomes Goals developed by staff and parents together, based on the family's strengths, interests, and needs, and apply to all types of families (e.g., pregnant woman, expectant father, parent of a child with a disability, a couple whose child is transitioning to kindergarten, etc.) Goals may target adult learning, economic mobility, financial stability, and/or child outcomes related to early learning, school readiness, and healthy development Goals and related activities taken on by staff and families relate to PFCE Outcomes and ELOF 	<p>To answer the question: <i>How can we partner with this individual family to make progress toward the goals that family members set for themselves and their family?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family discussions about goals, interests, strengths, and hopes Recruitment and application process Regular communication with family Family assessment data Child assessment data

Tips for Linking Family Engagement and School Readiness Goals

Ensure families are a part of the program goal-setting process.


By engaging families in Head Start planning, program plan design and implementation is strengthened and parents are involved as leaders and decision-makers. To engage families as program planners, be intentional in building a welcoming environment where families feel valued, supported, and ready to contribute. Strength-based attitudes and relationship-based practices help individual staff have positive goal-oriented relationships with families.

Families can be involved in all planning phases, including the development of five-year plans, program plans, and T/TA plans, among others. Parent input on program plans can be sought through Policy Council and parent committee meetings, parent focus groups, staff and parent conversations, parent representation on the Health Services Advisory Committee, and on

◀ Tell Me More!

To learn more about engaging families in program planning, see Building Partnerships: Guide to Developing Relationships with Families document on Head Start's ECLKC website.

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 *Engaging families in the program planning process strengthens child and family outcomes.*

planning committees. Be sure to thoughtfully include families in diverse circumstances (e.g., families experiencing transitions, families of DLLs) and different subgroups of families (e.g., fathers, grandparents, families of children with disabilities or special health care needs, pregnant women, refugee and immigrant groups, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT)-headed families).

Ensure families are providing input in the development of program school readiness goals. The HSPPS require programs to include parents and family members when setting school readiness goals. Many programs, for example, include parents on school readiness implementation teams and intentionally gather parent input on a range of topics.

Collect and review data about the strengths, needs, and personal goals of families from a variety of sources. Use data collected from the intake process, family and child assessments, ongoing communication with the families, and family partnership agreement process. You will find that family surveys, input from community partners, summaries of individual family goals, the community assessment, and the annual self-assessment are also good data sources. Staff can also use aggregated information about individual families and children—including their goals, strengths, and challenges—to set program goals and measurable objectives that link child and family outcomes. These sources of data can also help programs identify revealing trends and patterns that inform the development of their program goals and objectives.

Table 6: Sample Linking School Readiness and Family Engagement Goals, Objectives, Outcomes, and Results

School Readiness Goal	Objective	Expected Outcomes	Outcomes (Actual Results)
Children will engage in positive interactions through secure relationships with consistent, responsive adults. (Infant/Toddler Social and Emotional School Readiness Goal)	Implement a 12-week parenting curriculum to enable, at a minimum, 50 percent of families to practice skills related to nurturing their children	50 percent of participating parents will have enhanced warm relationships that nurture their child's learning and development	60 percent of enrolled families reported enhancements in relationships with their young child(ren) following participation in course Per ongoing child assessment data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 65 percent of infants (birth–18 months) demonstrate a secure attachment to their parent and to one or more familiar adults (e.g. primary caregiver, another teacher in their classroom, other family members) • 70 percent of toddlers (18–36 months) demonstrate the ability to depend on trusted adults (e.g. primary caregiver, another teacher in classroom, parent) to meet their needs appropriately

Ensure alignment between the goals families set for themselves and the goals set at the program level. Consider whether you have planned for services that are responsive to families' strengths and needs. At times, you may need to change a program goal (or objective) to address a gap in services identified during your planning process. You'll also want to consider how goals families set for themselves can support your program's school readiness goals for children.

In summary, programs and families set goals at the program and individual family level. Program goals related to family outcomes are intended to address the needs of all families in a program. These program-wide goals emerge from several data sources. Program leadership, governing bodies, community partners, staff, and families all work together to set and achieve these goals.

In addition, staff work with families to establish specific individual family goals based on the family's strengths, needs, interests, hopes, and progress. This goal-setting process helps programs identify recurring issues and remain responsive to the needs and aspirations of the families they serve. This kind of collaborative, data-informed goal-setting helps programs evaluate the efficacy of their services, monitor progress at individual and program levels, and engage in continuous quality improvement. ■

◀ Tell Me More!

For more information about goal-setting with individual families, see The Family Partnership Process: Engaging and Goal-Setting with Families on Head Start's ECLKC website.



How does your program engage families in setting goals and program planning?



In **Topic 3** you learned how to use different types of goals to provide responsive, high-quality services to children and families. In **Topic 4** four scenarios offer samples of program goals and measurable objectives, and show how each connects to a program's action plan. The scenarios also include sample data, tools, and methods for tracking progress.