

Head Start Program Performance Standards: Family and Community Engagement

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Kiersten Beigel: We're going to talk with you about 1302 Subpart E, Family and Community Engagement Program Services. This is – in our previous regulations was 1304.40 and 41, Family and Community Partnerships, but now we have four sections that make up this new area. We essentially have 1302.50, which is Family Engagement. We have the 1302.51, which is parent activities that promote children's learning and development. The third section, 1302.52, is Family Partnership Services. And then finally, the fourth section, 1302.53, is the community partnerships and coordination with other early childhood and education programs.

So, we want to give you the highlights today. Let's get into

it. David Jones: Sure

Kiersten: Okay, let's start with the first section, Family Engagement Services. Basically, this is the front end of the section, and so it really outlines the purpose. And one of the main and most important tenets here is that family engagement strategies need to be integrated across program services and systems. And I think the Standards support this and that you will see family-related standards throughout the Head Start Performance Standards.

And also, there's a new provision that relates to coordination amongst staff, particularly teachers and home visitors and family services staff. The idea being that family engagement is everybody's business – not necessarily just the family services person – but that in order to be really effective, that these strategies are kind of everybody's business. Everyone has a role to play, if you will.

And then there's one other piece I'd like to highlight here for you that has to do with the fact that we specifically call out fathers here, and the importance of engaging fathers and father figures. Okay, well, let's move on to the Parent Activities section. Do you want to give us a few highlights there?

David: Absolutely. Well, while 1302.51 focuses on parent activities to promote children's learning and development, programs should also remember to review 1302.34 Subpart C for more information about parent and family engagement in education and child development services. But as for this section, there are a few things to note. First, programs will continue to support family literacy. There's nothing really new there, this is a carry forward. Second, OHS has included a provision about engaging families around the benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy. That is, we're looking to increase the focus on how we engage families whose children may be learning more than one language.

Third, there is new language related to engaging families around child attendance. This is less about tracking child attendance and more about how to engage families in a way that best ensures children attend and receive services. And finally, there is a new requirement that programs offer parents an opportunity to participate in a research-based parenting curriculum.

Kiersten: And in addition to that particular provision, there's a little caveat that has to do with programs when they want to make an adaptation to that curriculum to better meet the needs of their community, the importance of working with an expert on that particular curriculum.

David: That's correct.

Kiersten: Yeah. Well, let's talk about the Family Partnership Services section. This is a big part of the section in a way, this subpart. And there are a lot of the same requirements here in themes that relate to how we build relationships with families in respectful ways, how we try to build mutual trust, how we strive to support family needs and trusts. And of course, the opportunity to engage in a goal-setting process is also still here.

We did have a lot of folks comment on this section as far as the proposed rule, and they didn't see the Family Partnership Agreement there, so they were concerned that that meant we were doing away with family, which was really concerning to us because that is certainly not what we intended.

David: And I mean, Kiersten, as you know families are the heart of Head Start. But you were right, there were a lot of concerns expressed that this section was overly focused on child development and learning and not enough focus on the family's needs. So our partnerships with families are ultimately about children's success. But the family partnership process, as a way to set goals with families and support family needs and interests, remains a central part of Head Start work. And programs do have some flexibility with respect to how they set up their family partnership process.

Kiersten: Yeah, it really is a central part. So what we did is we took a close look at the proposed rule and tried to make some changes to ensure that, you know, people were very clear that this section is strong and that the family partnership still exists. Essentially, there's three parts here. One is that there's family assessment that's meant to look at family strengths and interests and needs. The second part has to do with the goal-setting process, individualized to what families', again, interests and needs are; and also that needs to result in a Family Partnership Agreement.

And then the third section has to do with how we look at the progress over time. So, how's the goal setting going? Are families' needs being met? And that kind of thing.

So those are really the three parts; and I think the emphasis was really trying to look at process and outcomes more. So you'll see that in that there is a requirement that programs use their family assessment to – they basically align it, if you will, with the Parent, Family, and

Community Engagement Framework, so those seven outcomes related to family well-being, the parent-child relationship supporting parents as educators and learners, supporting families when they transition to other programs and kindergarten. Looking at how – what parent's connections are to each other, their peers, the community. And then finally, the ways that we offer opportunities around family leadership.

So grounding the family assessment process in those particular areas is a bit of a change here. But just to reemphasize, we really feel like this Family Partnership section is very family-centered, needs to be family-centered, and ultimately, we know that this work is based on what families tell us is really important to them.

Alright, let's get to the last section, the Community Partnerships section. Why don't you go for it?

David: This section maintains provisions from the previous Performance Standards about ongoing, collaborative relationships and partnerships with community organizations. OHS did recognize and retitle this section, though. It's called Community Partners and Coordination with Other Early Childhood Education Programs. So this section actually highlights the active role programs have in promoting coordinated systems of comprehensive early childhood services.

Also, the Office of Head Start added a new requirement for a memorandum of understanding with the appropriate local entity that's responsible for managing publicly funded preschool programs. This was to reflect requirements from the Head Start Act. And of course, programs have been implementing this for a while now. And this section also includes new requirements for coordination with state and local quality rating and improvement systems and state data systems. American Indian and Alaska Native programs, however, do not have to follow these rules. But you can check the showcase for specific videos describing those requirements.

Kiersten: Yeah, I would add a couple of things here, too. One is that programs should know that the Health Services Advisory Committee has actually just been moved to the Health Services section; and then also in the list of required or recommended partners, if you will, there is a mention of the Medicaid-managed care networks as important community partners, as well as any types of organizations like banks or asset-building organizations, employment, job training kinds of organizations. The kinds of partners that can help programs support family financial capability and economic mobility. So, those are a couple of new things to note in there.

Lastly, we want to leave you with a few ideas about implementation resources that have been developed through our T/TA system. So take a look at some of these resources. We have the

Parenting Compendium, which can help programs learn about research-based curriculum they may be interested in offering families. We have the Head Start Family Engagement – sorry –

the Head Start Father Engagement Programming Guide, which is all about father engagement. And we have a goal setting guide that may be of interest. We've included also reference to the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework, which for a lot of newer staff may be something they want to start with.

And then finally we do have a whole series on – we call it Measuring What Matters – that is really about how we can think about understanding progress around goals related to our work with families and partnerships with families in Head Start, and some of that individual work around goal setting and looking at progress there. So those are some resources to keep in mind as you're implementing some of these Standards.

And lastly, I would just love to thank you for joining

us. David: Thanks, everyone.

Kiersten: And thanks for all that you do.

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