

1304.40 Family Partnerships

As part of the application process, the Family/Community Partnership Specialist will complete a Family Partnership Agreement identifying with parents the goals and strengths of the family. A Family Partnership Agreement Plan will be established and implemented for each family of an enrolled child within 30 days of enrollment into the Head Start Program.

A primary concern of the Head Start Program in general, and the Family/Community Partnership Specialist in particular, is to assist the parent/guardian of Head Start children, to assume more active and confident roles in identifying the needs of their children and families. In conjunction with the parent/guardian, the Family/Community Partnership Specialist will identify needs, both of their children and other family members, and set goals to improve the conditions and quality of their family lives. Information obtained during the family assessment process will result in the development of the Family Partnership Agreement Plan geared toward helping families reach their desired goals.

The Agreement Plan will include, but is not limited to, family goals and responsibilities, and strategies designed for family members to achieve these goals within reasonable time frames. The Family/Community Partnership Specialist will assist parent/guardian through referrals to local community partnership agencies, i.e., Department of Human Services, Family Resource Center, G.E.D., and other Educational Resources, Housing Assistance, Child Support Services, etc.

Follow-ups will be made to ensure services are being obtained and provided. Close contact will be kept with partnership agencies and resources to eliminate the duplication of services.

Referrals will also be made to other Head Start staff members, i.e., the Health/ Disability Specialist, for assistance in additional areas of family life. They will be assisted in understanding a system of ongoing health care, and the importance of becoming a partner in their child's medical and dental health care process.

The Family Partnership staff will maintain contact with the families of Head Start children, monitoring each family's progress and offering assistance as needed throughout the child's Head Start enrollment period. This will be

done by phone calls, contact at the center or on bus routes, parent meetings and trainings, other events and home visits when needed.

A family's diversity, cultural and ethnic background will be considered when obtaining services and making referrals.

The Family Partnership staff will assist by education and referral to appropriate resources, the families of all Head Start children during times of emergency, i.e., loss of home, family income, transportation, loss of utilities, and lack of food and/or clothing.

Training will be offered throughout the school year aimed at educating and providing resources in the areas of achieving educational goals and acquiring employment opportunities. Trainings in conjunction with other Head Start areas will be offered as a deterrent to at-risk behaviors such as substance abuse, child abuse/neglect and domestic violence.

Whenever possible and as required, transportation and child care services will be provided by the Family/Community Partnership Specialist to facilitate participation in parent activities.

Through follow-ups made with parents/guardians, the staff will obtain feedback using evaluation forms as to the quality and usefulness of services and trainings provided. Resources in the form of education materials and requested trainings are made available to all pregnant and nursing mothers.

The Family/Community Partnership Specialist staff will conduct a Parent Interest Survey during the first weeks of the school year. On the survey, parents will be asked to list their interest and preferences concerning training activities to be held throughout the school year. Training opportunities provided, but not limited to, health needs, nutrition, mental health issues (as stated in 1304.20, 1304.22 and 1304.23) will be matched to information received on the Interest Survey and will be scheduled at a convenient time for parents.

Parents/guardians will also be trained in all other areas of Head Start. The Family/Community Partnership Specialist will be responsible for developing, arranging and coordinating training. All training will take place at center level. Parents/guardians will be encouraged to visit the center and take part in daily activities as observers, volunteers, and paid employees.

Teachers and staff will invite parents to participate in activities, such as reading stories, assisting on the playground, serving as bus monitors, assisting with painting, lunch, etc. A record will be maintained of all parent volunteer hours. All staff are encouraged to award parents for their time.

The Family/Community Partnership staff will then arrange for a Parent Committee to be held, through memorandums sent home by children, personal phone calls and calling system. All Head Start parents will be invited to attend. At this training, parents/guardians will be trained in all areas of Head Start and parent committee officers will be elected: a Chairperson, Co-chair, and secretary. Parents/guardians may choose to do this at the 2nd meeting but it is mandatory that it is done by that time. The Parent Committee, along with the Family/Community Partnership Specialist, will assess needs and set priorities for parent training, develop a training plan and schedule training sessions. Trainings will be set accordingly. The Family Partnership staff will arrange and assist with the organization of the Policy Council and their related meetings.

Parents/guardians are always welcome to observe at their convenience. If parents/guardians have exhibited outstanding performance while volunteering in the center and classrooms, they will have priority consideration for employment, as positions become available.

Parents/guardians will be allowed and encouraged to form new activities and/or projects that will benefit the children or themselves as well as the Head Start program.

Socializing events and “fun-time” activities will be scheduled at least three times per year and more when possible. Parents will be encouraged to participate in games, prizes, and enjoy refreshments. This will give them a chance to “loosen up” and socialize with staff. Family Partnership staff will publicize parent participation in the program periodically. Success stories and any significant accomplishments regarding parents and families will be publicized throughout the program year. Parents will be notified of cultural events in the community.

As stated in the Education plan, (1304.21), parents will be trained in the areas of parenting skills, knowledge and understanding of educational and developmental needs and activities of their children. They will be

encouraged to provide input into services and curriculum provided at center level.

A literacy program is established to encourage parents and families to obtain the necessary skills required to advocate for them and their families. Adult Basic Education and G.E.D. classes are made available to assist families in this goal. The need of this service is established generally, prior to school during the Family Assessment process. The program will provide activities that encourage the use of skills obtained through Basic Education in the way of take home projects. A library has been established for parents/guardians and staff to utilize, with various levels of reading materials and interests. This will expand vocabulary and enrich knowledge. Through this service we encourage parents and staff to set the proper example for our children by teaching and developing good reading skills. The preschool child is impressionable and enjoys imitating peers and parents/guardians; thus the adults and teachers that surround the child daily play an important role in molding the child's attitude toward school and learning.

Through parent/teacher conferences, home visits, training, educational materials and anecdotal notes, parents are made aware of the child's needs and are provided adequate opportunity to assist in meeting the needs of their child.

The Family/Community Partnership Specialist is responsible for making parents aware of community services and resources thus facilitating their use and making community agencies aware of Head Start families' needs and ways of meeting them.

Each summer, The Family/Community Partnership Specialist and Health Services Specialist will revise and update the Head Start Community Resources Directory. During Phase-In, staff will provide this to each family and explain its use.

The Family/Community Partnership Specialist will work closely with existing community resources in order to assist Head Start parents and families. By working with other neighborhood and community groups with similar concerns, communication and referrals to those resources better educates Head Start families and allows their needs to be met. The Family/Community Partnership Specialist will facilitate this communication with other service agencies by:

1. Visits to the agencies
2. Inviting agency representatives to visit the Head Start program and serve on the Policy Council and Multi-Services Advisory Committee
3. Placing agencies on newsletter mailing list
4. Include agency descriptions in Head Start Resource Guide
5. Provide copies of the Community Resource Guide to community agencies

The Family Partnership Specialist will establish and maintain a comprehensive and confidential record keeping system for the Social Services Area. Every Head Start child/family will have a file maintained in the Family/Community Partnership Specialist's Office location. The files will be stored in a locked drawer with access to limited Head Start staff. Parents may examine their child's file, when necessary. The Family Partnership Specialist will be responsible for establishing the social services file system.

Each file will contain the following information:

1. Up-to-date enrollment information including Application, Income Verification, Birth Certificate, Eligibility Criteria and Change of Status forms.
2. A written Family Partnership Agreement Plan and Responsibility Agreement which will include a general assessment of the family and specific service goals for meeting their needs.
3. Copies of all correspondence which pertain to social service involvement with the family, with the exception of child abuse reports which are handled by the Director and kept in the Central Office.
4. Family Contact Notes which record all social service work with or for a given family. All home visits, telephone contacts, and all correspondence pertaining to the family will be documented on Family Contact Notes and/or in the Galileo reporting system. The Family Contact report will present a composite picture of the interaction with the family by Head Start staff.

The Family/Community Partnership Specialist will be responsible for maintaining confidentiality and protecting the privacy of personally identifiable information regarding Head Start children and their families.

There will be equal protections to FERPA (Family Education and Privacy Rights Act).

A notification of family needs through contact notes/Galileo staff to staff notes is used by the teachers and other Head Start staff to notify the Family/Community Partnership Specialist of a child's/family's social service needs which they have been trying and/or unable to meet, and ask for assistance. Home visitors will use these forms to notify the Family/Community Partnership Specialist of family needs. Telephone contact for emergencies needs and referrals will be documented and reported on the phone log.

There are many phases involved in the transition process. Transitioning into Head Start can cause anxiety for the child as well as the parent. Staff will assist parents in understanding the requirements of enrollment in Head Start. Efforts will be made to encourage parents to begin advocating for their children during the enrollment period and continuing into orientation and throughout their Head Start experience.

Staff will provide parents/guardians with materials on preparing their child to enter a preschool program, assist families in relieving anxiety by answering questions, provide initial times for families and children to visit the center and become familiar with the environment. During Orientation/Phase-in, staff will inform families as to what they can expect while their child remains in the program and prior to kindergarten. Enrollment parents will be provided training to include, but not limited to: the kindergarten screening process initialized by the LEA, policies of the LEA, how to advocate for your child during their academic years, and the importance of parent involvement in their child's education and success in public schools. Staff will organize an orientation meeting between parents and the school system and encourage parents to attend.

Prior to the home visits, during the initial application process, parents are informed as to the purpose of home visits. Permission is obtained from the parent/guardian to allow the home visits. Refusal to allow home visits will not prevent a child's participation into the program. Parents are contacted prior to the home visit to schedule a time that will accommodate the parent and staff. Documentation will be maintained on all contacts before, during and after home visits occur. In the case of a home visit planned to occur

outside the home, both staff and parent will agree upon the location to ensure safety, comfort and privacy.

Revised 6-10 UCHRA Head Start