

Understanding the Approach to Program Services

Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Focus Area 1 Monitoring Protocol



Purpose

Focus Area 1 (FA1) is an opportunity for grant recipients to discuss their program design, management, and governance structure. Grant recipients will describe the program's approaches to staffing structure, program design, education, health services, family services, fiscal infrastructure, and program governance.



Approach

The FA1 review is an off-site discussion. The review begins with the Review Lead conducting a document review using data and reports from the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES) and other sources to learn about the grant recipient's program design and understand the needs of the children and families the program serves. Before the call with the grant recipient, the Review Lead will speak with the grant recipient's regional program specialists for additional context about the program.

Following the document review, the Review Lead will conduct a series of off-site virtual interviews with the grant recipient over the course of three consecutive days. These discussions will provide an understanding of the program's design and plans for implementing and ensuring comprehensive, high-quality services that meet the needs of children and families.



Methodology

Document Review. The Review Lead will focus on the following listed documents located in the HSES or other available sources:

- Grant Application/Goals, including the budget
- Program Information Report (PIR) data
- Community Assessment Summary
- Past Monitoring Data
- Self-Assessment Data
- Annual Report
- Audits

Virtual Discussions. The Review Lead will work with the grant recipient to identify the appropriate individuals to participate in the off-site discussions (e.g., the governing body, the policy council, managers, and direct service staff).

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Road Map to the FY 2023 Focus Area One Monitoring Protocol

This protocol will guide the discussions between the grant recipient and the reviewer during the FA1 review. It includes the topic areas for discussion, specific performance areas for assessment, and the federal regulations associated with each area of performance. The protocol is divided into the following five topic areas:

- Program design, management, and quality improvement
- Designing quality education and child development program services
- Designing quality health program services
- Designing quality family and community engagement program services
- Developing effective Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) strategies and fiscal infrastructure

Federal Regulations

Each section of the protocol includes a list of the federal regulations grounding the discussions. This list ensures transparency regarding the regulations used when assessing program performance. Grant recipients should note that they remain accountable for all the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) and other federal, state, and local regulations guiding program operations, management, and oversight.

What We Want to Learn

This section of the protocol outlines the topics for discussions between the Review Lead and grant recipient. We designed the statements and questions listed in this section to stimulate a meaningful discussion that provides grant recipients with an opportunity to describe the intentionality behind their program design, decisions, and operations; their challenges and strengths; and their strategies for continuous program improvement.

Questions and statements in the *What We Want to Learn* section are not intended to be exhaustive or to limit discussion. Using these sections as a guide, the Review Lead and grant recipient may engage in discussion beyond the questions included in the protocol.

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Program Design and Management

Overview

Purpose

Each grant recipient must design a program that meets the community's needs and ensures a program, fiscal, and human resources structure that provides effective management and oversight of all program areas. This section focuses on the intentionality of the grant recipient's program design and its ability to address the characteristics, strengths, and needs of children and families they serve. The purpose of this section is to gain a foundational knowledge of the grant recipient's program design and structure.

Approach

The grant recipient will have the opportunity to share what it has learned about the needs of children and families in its community and how the program design is responsive to those needs and promotes school readiness. The governing body, policy council, and Management Team should be prepared to share lessons learned from the program's internal and external data and how the information ensures quality program services. This section contains three areas for discussion: *the program's understanding of the needs within the community; the program's approach to providing effective management and oversight; and how the policy council and the governing body fulfill their roles and responsibilities.*

Program Outcomes

Grant recipients use data from the Community Assessment to inform the grant application based on the needs of the community. However, the community changes over time. OHS is interested in understanding the type of data the grant recipient collects to understand these changing needs (e.g., natural shifts in the community, natural disasters, public health crises) and how the management system provides effective oversight—both program data and external information—to oversee the provision of quality services for children and families and to ensure progress toward school readiness.

Federal Regulations

1301.2(a-b) Governing body

1301.3(b-c) Policy council and policy committee

1302.11(b) Determining community strengths, needs, and resources

1302.20(a) Determining program structure

1302.101(a-b) Management system

1302.102(a-d) Establishing program goals

1302.102(c) Using data for continuous improvement

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What We Want to Learn

Program Design

Performance Measure 1 (PM1): The grant recipient's program structure and design is informed by the community's strengths and needs.

1. The grant recipient will describe how the program took into account various characteristics, such as ethnicity, language, disabilities, mental health, children in foster care, homelessness, and working families, when designing the program. 1302.11(b)(1)
2. The recipient will discuss their agency's strategies for addressing inequities and promoting diversity, belonging, and inclusion among staff, families, and children.
3. The grant recipient will describe how the program selected program option(s) and program location to meet the needs of children and families, including any recent community changes. 1302.20(a)(1)

Management and Quality Improvement

PM2: The grant recipient has an approach to providing effective management and oversight of all program areas and fiduciary responsibilities.

1. The grant recipient will discuss how the program supervises all staff and ensures professional development opportunities. 1302.101(a)(2)
2. The grant recipient will describe the process for using child-specific and program-level data to monitor program improvement in all services areas, including education, family services, health, fiscal, ERSEA, and program management. 1302.102(c)(2)(ii)
3. The grant recipient will discuss how the program ensures sufficient staffing and staffing patterns support the provision of a full range of services. 1302.101(a)(3)

Program Governance

PM3: The grant recipient maintains a formal structure for program governance that includes a governing body, a policy council (or policy committee for delegates), and parent committees.

1. The grant recipient will describe the composition of the governing body and the policy council, and the grant recipient's strategy for how the members of these bodies support the program. 1301.2(a-b) and 1301.3(b-c)

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Designing Quality Education and Child Development Program Services

Overview

Purpose

This section focuses on the program’s approach to providing high-quality early education and child development services that promote the cognitive, social, and emotional growth of children, including those with disabilities, for later success in school.

Approach

The grant recipient will have the opportunity to describe its strategy for designing and implementing effective teaching practices and implementing safe, well-organized learning environments (and group socialization opportunities in home-based programs) that meet each child’s needs. This section contains four areas for discussion: *how the program aligns with school readiness; the program’s strategies for ensuring effective teaching practices; how the program supports teachers in promoting school readiness; and how the home-based program option helps parents provide high-quality learning experiences.*

Program Outcomes

The grant recipient will describe the data used to assess progress toward meeting the program’s school readiness goals and the data used to understand, track, and address children’s individual needs. The grant recipient will also describe how the data are used to inform continuous improvement related to curriculum selection, instruction, and professional development.

Note: *Receiving schools refers to schools and programs where enrolled children will attend upon completing the Head Start or Early Head Start program.*

Federal Regulations

642(f)(3) Curriculum

1302.31(b) Effective teaching practices

1302.35(a) Education in home-based programs

1302.91(a) Staff qualifications and competency requirements

1302.102(a)(3) School readiness goals

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What We Want to Learn

Alignment with School Readiness

PM1: The grant recipient's approach to school readiness aligns with the expectations of receiving schools, the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF), and state early learning standards.

1. The grant recipient will describe how the program plans to align the program's school readiness goals with the expectations of receiving schools, the HSELOF, and the state early learning standards. 1302.102(a)(3)
2. The grant recipient will describe why the program chose its curriculum, how it is responsive to the needs of the children, and how the curriculum will help the program meet school readiness goals. 642(f)(3)

Effective and Intentional Approach to Teaching Practices

PM2: The grant recipient has strategies to ensure teaching practices promote progress toward school readiness.

1. The grant recipient will describe the program's strategies for ensuring teaching practices are responsive to and build on the developmental progressions of children. 1302.31(b)(1)(ii)

Supporting Teachers in Promoting School Readiness

PM3: The grant recipient has an approach for ensuring teachers are prepared to implement the curriculum and support children's progress toward school readiness.

1. The grant recipient will describe the qualifications required for education staff, and if staff currently meet those requirements. 1302.91(a)

Home-Based Program Services

PM4: The grant recipient has strategies to ensure home-based program services help parents to provide high-quality learning experiences.

1. The grant recipient will discuss strategies for promoting secure parent-child relationships and helping parents provide high-quality learning experiences. 1302.35(a)
2. The grant recipient will describe their process for tracking interactions with expectant families, including the services expectant mothers and their families may receive from community partners.

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Designing Quality Health Program Services

Overview

Purpose

This section focuses on how the grant recipient provides high-quality health, oral health, mental health, and nutrition services that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and are supportive of each child's growth and school readiness. This section also focuses on the program's approach for maintaining a system of health and safety practices and how the program provides quality services for expectant families.

Approach

The grant recipient will describe the program's approach for ensuring the delivery of high-quality health, oral health, mental health, and nutrition services. The grant recipient will also describe how they ensure children's safety.

Program Outcomes

The grant recipient will share the type of data used to understand child health outcomes and describe how the data are used along with the expertise of the Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) to inform continuous improvement.

Federal Regulations

1302.40(b) Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC)

1302.42(a-d) Child health status and care

1302.45(b)(1) Mental health consultants

1302.47(b)(1-4) Safety practices

648A(g)(3) Staff recruitment and selection procedures: criminal record checks

1302.90(c) Standards of Conduct

1302.102(d)(1)(ii) Reporting of child safety incidents

1302.17(a)(1-4) and (b)(1-3) Suspension and expulsion

What We Want to Learn

Child Health Status and Care

PM1: The grant recipient has an approach to ensuring delivery of high-quality health services.

1. The grant recipient will discuss the approach to ensuring children have continuous ongoing health care. 1302.42(a)

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2. The grant recipient will discuss the approach to ensuring children are up-to-date on a schedule of age-appropriate preventive and primary medical and oral health care. 1302.42(b)(1)(i)
3. The grant recipient will discuss the approach to ensuring ongoing care and extended follow-up care. 1302.42(c-d)
4. The grant recipient will describe how the program leverages expertise of the HSAC, including Head Start parents, health professionals, and community members, to learn about and support each child's health and mental health needs. 1302.40(b)
5. The grant recipient will describe how the program secures a mental health consultant to implement strategies to support children, staff, and families to meet mental health and social-emotional needs, including support for children with mental health and social and emotional concerns. 1302.45(b)(1)
6. Does the program prohibit or severely limit the use of suspension due to a child's behavior? 1302.17(a)(1-4) and (b)(1-3)

Health and Safety Practices

PM2: The grant recipient has strategies for maintaining healthy and safe environments and for ensuring all staff have complete background checks.

1. The grant recipient will describe the program's approach to ensuring safe learning environments (e.g., indoor and outdoor facilities, equipment, materials are safe and free of environmental toxins). 1302.47(b)(1)(ix) and (b)(2)(v)
2. The grant recipient will describe their process for inspecting facilities to ensure there is not lead in paint or lead in water.
3. The grant recipient will describe the program's process for ensuring all staff have background checks, including the timeliness of the background checks. 648A(g)(3)
4. The grant recipient will describe the program's strategy for training staff on safety practices and procedures including suspected child abuse. 1302.47(b)(4)
5. The grant recipient will describe how they ensure all staff abide by the program's Standards of Conduct. 1302.90(c)
6. The grant recipient will describe any incidents of violations of supervision, unauthorized release, or inappropriate discipline that occurred in the last two years and whether those incidents were reported to their Regional Offices by the grant recipient. 1302.102(d)(1)(ii)

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Designing Quality Family and Community Engagement Program Services

Overview

Purpose

The grant recipient must integrate parent and family engagement strategies into all systems and program services to support family well-being and promote children's learning and development. Programs are encouraged to develop innovative two-generation approaches that address prevalent needs of families across their program and leverage community partnerships or other funding sources.

Approach

The program will provide information about its strategy for integrating high-quality family engagement services into all areas of programming that are responsive to the needs of families. The grant recipient will have the opportunity to discuss the expected outcomes for families and how the program design supports achieving those outcomes. This section contains two areas for discussion: *the program's approach for collaborating with families* and *for providing services that strengthen parenting skills*.

Program Outcomes

The grant recipient will describe how the program determines the resources needed to support family well-being, either within the program or through community partnerships. This includes sharing how the program measures the impact of family support services.

Federal Regulations

1302.51(a-b) Parent activities to promote child learning and development

1302.52(c) Family partnership services

1302.53(a)(1) Community partnerships

What We Want to Learn

Family Well-Being

PM1: The grant recipient has an approach for collaborating with families to support family well-being.

1. The grant recipient will describe the approach to supporting family goal-setting and tracking family strengths, needs, and progress toward goals. 1302.52(c)(3)
2. The grant recipient will describe the strategies for obtaining resources that support family well-being, either within the program or through community partnerships. 1302.53(a)(1)

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Strengthening Parenting and Parent-Child Supports

PM2: The grant recipient has an approach to providing services that strengthen parenting skills.

1. The grant recipient will describe how the program plans to support parents in strengthening parenting skills. 1302.51(a)

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Developing Effective ERSEA Strategies and Fiscal Infrastructure

Overview

Purpose

In this section, the grant recipient will describe how the program's recruitment and selection strategies are responsive to the needs of the community's eligible children and families, and the strategy for maintaining their funded enrollment level. The grant recipient will also provide information about the program's fiscal capacity and financial infrastructure.

Approach

The grant recipient will describe the program's strategy for recruiting and selecting eligible children and families, the process for maintaining enrollment, and for ensuring children and families meet eligibility requirements. The grant recipient will describe how the program ensures its own internal monitoring against fraud, waste, and abuse. The fiscal representative will also discuss how the program supports the accomplishment of program goals and effectively oversees program funds and property through qualified fiscal personnel and a responsive budget. This section contains five areas for discussion: *strategies for enrolling children or expectant families who are eligible for the program; strategies for enrolling children eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); how the program maintains and tracks enrollment; how the grant recipient's fiscal staff have the qualifications to provide oversight of the grant; and how the grant recipient's budget development and revision process includes stakeholders, appropriate approvals, and ensures continuous alignment with program design, goals, and objectives.*

Program Outcomes

The grant recipient will share information about ERSEA practices and how data are used to ensure the program maintains funded enrollment based on eligibility criteria. The grant recipient will describe what data are used and how to inform the development and refinement of the program's budget. The grant recipient will also share how the program uses data to determine the effectiveness of the program's fiscal infrastructure.

Federal Regulations

1302.12 Determining, verifying, and documenting eligibility

1302.14(a) - (c) Selection process and children eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

1302.15(a) Funded enrollment

1302.91(a) and (c) Staff qualifications and competency requirements

1302.102(d)(i) Status reporting to governing body and policy council

75.308 Revision of budget and program plans

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642(c)(1)(E)(iv)(VII)(aa-bb) Governing body responsibilities

642(c)(2)(D)(iii-iv) Policy council responsibilities

What We Want to Learn

Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance

PM1: The grant recipient enrolls children or expectant families who are categorically eligible or who meet defined income-eligibility requirements.

1. The grant recipient will describe how staff verify eligibility and how the program maintains eligibility records, including:
 - How copies of any documents or statements, including declarations, that are necessary to verify eligibility are collected and maintained. 1302.12(k)(2)(i)
 - How program staff make reasonable efforts to verify eligibility by conducting either an in-person, virtual, or telephone interview with the family. 1302.12(k)(2)(ii)
 - How program staff collect statements that identify whether the family or expectant family meets the following eligibility requirement: 1302.12(c)(1-2), (d)(1), and (e)(1)(iii)
 - Income is equal to or below the poverty line
 - Receiving or is eligible to receive public assistance (Supplemental Security Income and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)
 - Experiencing homelessness
 - In foster care
 - Included in the 10% of children enrolled in the program above the income threshold
 - Included in the 35% of children who are not categorically eligible whose family income is between 100% and 130% of poverty

Note: For tribal programs, there are additional allowances provided under 1302.12(e).

2. The grant recipient will describe how the program ensures staff verifies and reviews all the documents available for determining eligibility. 1302.12(a)(ii)
3. The grant recipient will describe how the program ensures staff receive ERSEA training and comply with eligibility determination regulations, including having policies and procedures in place to describe actions taken against staff who violate these regulations. 1302.12(l-m)

PM2: At least 10% of the grant recipient's funded enrollment is filled by children eligible for services under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or the grant recipient has received a waiver.

1. The grant recipient will disclose the percentage of children enrolled under IDEA, or that the grant recipient has received a waiver. 1302.14(b)(1)

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Enrollment Verification

PM3: The grant recipient maintains and tracks full enrollment for all enrolled participants.

1. The grant recipient will describe the process for determining when a slot is vacant, process for removing from the enrollment numbers reported in the HSES children or expectant mothers who have not attended for 30 days, and filling slots that have been vacant for 30 days. 1302.15(a)
2. The grant recipient will describe the availability and use of a waitlist that ranks children according to the selection criteria. 1302.14(c)

Fiscal Infrastructure, Capacity, and Responsiveness

PM1: The grant recipient's fiscal staff have the qualifications needed to provide oversight of the grant.

1. The grant recipient will describe the fiscal complexity of the program and applicable financial management requirements, including the existence of multiple funding sources.
2. The grant recipient will describe the process for staffing fiscal responsibilities and how the staffing meets the financial management needs of the organization. 1302.91(a)
3. Does the fiscal officer have the required qualifications if hired after November 2016? 1302.91(c)
4. The grant recipient will describe how the staff develop and deliver usable financial information to the governing body and the policy council to inform their fiscal decision-making. 1302.102(d)(1)(i)

PM2: The grant recipient has a budget development and revision process that includes stakeholders and appropriate approvals, and ensures continuous alignment with program design, goals, and objectives.

1. The grant recipient will describe the budget development process, including:
 - o Who is involved. 642(c)(1)(E)(iv)(VII)(aa-bb) [governing body] and 642(c)(2)(D)(iii-iv) [policy council]
 - o How the budget aligns with the program's design and goals. 1302.101(a)(3)
 - o The grant recipient's process for tracking the budget, making revisions, and obtaining required approvals in compliance with federal regulations. 75.308; 642(c)(1)(E)(iv)(VII)(aa)