

A Suggested Outline for a Community Assessment

Step 1: Plan and Organize

Part 1: Introduction “State of the Grantee”:

Include a brief history, general description and overview of your agency—its size, purpose/mission, clients, funding sources and clearly defined service area for the Head Start – Early Head Start Program. Describe how the Community Assessment is used by the program.

Step 2: Design the Data Collection

Part 2: Methodology—The CA Process:

Describe the process used to conduct the community assessment, including the role of parents, staff, the PC and the Board as well as the dates or time periods of completed tasks. Describe the process used to gather and analyze the data including time frames.

Step 3: Gather Data

Part 3: Service Area Data:

Describe the basic geographic, economic and demographic features of the service area of the HS-EHS program. The service area may be one county, many counties within a state, or a combination.

Part 4: Racial and Ethnic Composition, Culture and Language(s):

Provide data on the racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic composition of the service area in general, the local communities including public schools in particular, and compare it with that of the HS-EHS children and staff. Discuss needs and characteristics of specific racial, ethnic and cultural groups and their implications for HS-EHS program design and service delivery.

Part 5: Community Resources to meet the Needs of Head Start – Early Head Start eligible Children and Families:

List relevant resources which are used or may be used directly and indirectly by Head Start – Early Head Start eligible children and families. Identify problems in resource availability or accessibility.

Gather data from internal and external sources such as; focus groups, program service delivery records, parent satisfaction surveys, internal self-assessments, enrollment and attendance reports, year-end reports on Family Needs Assessments, Family Partnership Agreements, service area reports in the areas of health, education, family literacy, staff development, and any other information from the program or agency itself and from the community (such as interagency coordinating councils and advisory groups) that will illuminate the status and demonstrate needs of migrant and seasonal families in the local community over time.

Part 6: Information on Children with Disabilities:

Present data on the number of Head Start – Early Head Start and other children with disabilities by category and services currently available to them. Grantees serving an unusually low or high proportion of children with disabilities should address possible reasons with supporting data for such a situation and implications for Head Start – Early Head Start programming and recruitment.

Step 4: Review and Analyze Data (Note: This section synthesizes Part 1 and Parts 3-6.)

Part 7: Strengths and Needs of Head Start – Early Head Start Children and their families:

Identify the most significant strengths and needs of HS – EHS eligible children and their families. This must be based on data reflecting these strengths and needs, information from the HS-EHS program and opinions solicited from HS-EHS eligible families and institutions serving young children. Compare and contrast the opinions of the families with the opinions of institutions.

Part 8: Data Analysis of Head Start – Early Head Start Information

Present an estimate of the number of HS-EHS eligible children by geographic location, the number actually served by regional HS-EHS programs and other child development programs (including those preschool programs offered through local school districts) and the number not served by any programs. Describe the trends suggested by the numbers. Do not simply present numbers but include an interpretation of what the numbers mean in terms of results and benefits for families. In other words, you are trying to figure out trends. If data is extrapolated or estimated, state this. Discuss the reasons for selecting program options, center and / or family child care home locations, and recruitment areas. Include maps showing the location of current Head Start – Early Head Start offices, center and family child care home locations, recruitment areas and other child development facilities and areas where HS-EHS eligible families have children not yet served.

Step 5: Make Decisions

Part 9: Identification and Prioritization of Issues and Problems:

Based on information from all aspects of the CA process, identify and prioritize issues and problems to be addressed by the Head Start – Early Head Start program. Refer to data that pertains to eligible families. This is the section to propose any changes in service area, program option, etc. based on the findings from the CA.