

Mid America Head Start Implementation Guide

Family Assessment

Please think of the Family Assessment as Chapter One of a family's Head Start story. You are instrumental in how this story will be told, written and shared.

What will be possible...? How will the accumulation of experiences add to their story positively or negatively? What will it look like? Who will become part of the story? What will your thoughts and actions lead to? Will your support be singular or cooperative? Are you listening critically not to just what you are hearing but thinking about what you are learning?

It takes courage to change, to take risk and to imagine what is possible and what can happen.

Recognize and honor the family's fears, apprehension and discomfort.

Education is a privilege and a right... use the knowledge that you have of this family to explore and build a relationship. Remember that just beyond the comfort zone is the learning zone

Step one; Data Collection: Prior to scheduling an assessment meeting with the family, use the cross walk to gather the family's information (data) for use in completing the Family Assessment.

- Identify possible data sources outlined in the crosswalk (selection criteria, application, ChildPlus, etc.) to inform the assessment tool. What do you know?
- As you review the family's data, think of the following things and ask yourself these questions:
 - What experiences have you had with this family and how might it inform the Family Assessment? What have you observed?
 - Is there other current documentation that provides additional insight?
 - What family and child strengths can you identify?
 - What are the barriers to achieving success?
 - What might success look like for the family?
 - What else do you want to know? Make notes about questions you have for the family when you schedule an assessment meeting. Is there additional information that would provide clarity or a more complete picture of their current situation?

Step two; Analysis: After you have assembled the family's data and reviewed it, you will then complete the Family Assessment Form 7000 based on what you have learned from the information you collected.

- Review all of the data sources for each domain use the crosswalk to identify where to begin
- Think critically about each domain, what description best fits the information you have gathered?
- Develop knowledge and awareness of possible safety issues, e.g. clothing, food or housing needs, co-pays, or outstanding medical bills. Are their additional unaddressed needs such as; depression, trauma, homelessness, domestic violence, mental illness and medical needs?
- Prepare resources based on the data that you have collected.

Stage three; Interview: Schedule an appointment with the family. An interview in person is always preferred.

- **Remember this is an assessment of their situation not of them as individuals. Reserve judgement, provide hope, and use appreciative inquiry? Use the information below to prepare to introduce the family assessment.**
- Where are you sure that you need to make a referral or address a critical need.
- What do you want to explore and learn about this family? What questions came to mind when you were preparing for the interview with the family?
- What additional information do you have to gather to complete the family assessment? What do you want to learn from the family?
- As you begin your interview thank the family for meeting with you.
 - Acknowledge all of the information that they have shared in the application and selection process.
 - Explain that you have reviewed all of the documents and begun to complete the assessment tool based on the information completed.
 - Review that the family assessment is a tool that helps you and the family identify their strengths, needs and possible resources.
 - Explain your role as an advocate is to provide support to the family to reinforce school readiness. This is an opportunity for them to use the family assessment to identify how Head Start can help them.

Stage four; Develop Family Goals: After completing the assessment tool, things to think about as you are communicating with the family about goal setting. What new ideas or perspectives have been confirmed or discovered?

- Do you have a better understanding of where the family is?
- Did the family identify, or are they utilizing any informal or formal support networks?
- What strengths do they have to overcome challenges?
- Make some suggestions on possible goals based on the conversation that you have had while completing the family assessment interview; ask yourself and the family
 - What would you like to happen as a result of the family assessment?
 - What strategy, new idea or activity has been identified to support this family with identified goals?
 - What resources can you identify that can increase the family's awareness of and ability to address risks and stressors in their lives.
 - What educational opportunities can you offer based the information you have collected?
 - What other program staff (if any) should be identified to offer additional supports.

Step five; Reporting: After completing the family assessment and setting an initial goal what discoveries have you made? How will you document your experience, observations and work with this family.

- Use SOAP notes. Identify a plan, prepare for follow up, and schedule your next meeting, phone call or activity.
- What types of links/training can you offer that will contribute to self-sufficiency and to reaching goals?

Step six; Communication: What does the data tell you about future program planning, possible parent meetings or activities, how can you collaborate with other staff and community partners.

- Review what you have learned about all of your families...
- What are the commonalities?
- What resources would be beneficial for all families?
- How else can you use this information to change the resources and services you offer to families?
- What Head Start resources do you need to support this family in achieving their goals? What staff support would enhance this process?