

Core Competencies for Family Advocates

Core competencies, also known as essential functions, are expected criteria that family advocates should be implementing as part of their work with families. The core competencies for Family Advocates in Mid-America Head Start are: Assessment of Families, Community Connections, Relationship Builder, and Health/Education Liaison.

In order to further conceptualize these competencies, Practice Profiles were created by practitioners and family members. The Practice Profile framework has recently been developed by the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) as a way of outlining the key components of an intervention with clearly defined practice-level characteristics (NIRN, 2013).

The Family Advocate Practice Profile template includes six pieces and is anchored by the essential functions:

- A header that includes the foundation that philosophically grounds implementation,
- Essential functions of the intervention,
- Implementation performance levels, and
- Assessment which provides evidence for determining implementation levels,
- The knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes needed by Family Advocates to implement the essential functions; and
- Professional development topics that may enhance the work of Family Advocates.

Practice Profile Components¹

Foundations of the model present in the implementation of each essential function				
Essential Function of the Family Advocate	ACTIVITIES			Assessment
	<i>Expected Level of Performance</i>	<i>Developmental Level of Performance</i>	<i>Unacceptable Level of Performance</i>	
Identifies and describes the essential function	Describes how the essential function is performed most effectively The Family Advocate is able to perform these activities consistently and independently	Describes how the essential function may be performed inconsistently Developmental performance warrants additional coaching, professional development, or supervision	Describes unacceptable performance of the essential function Unacceptable performance may result in harmful intervention practices Unacceptable performance warrants suspension from service implementation until the Developmental Level of Performance is reached	Includes the way(s) in which the essential function can be assessed
Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Attitudes			Professional Development	
Lists the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes needed by the Family Advocate to effectively implement the essential function			Identifies the professional development topics that may serve as competency builders for the TIES Specialist	

¹ Adapted excerpts from: Rohs, J.; Templeton, O., Fuger, K., & Jenson, R. (2013) TIES Implementation Blueprint.

MAHS Form 7020 – Family and Community Engagement Practice Profile

Foundations of family advocacy:				
Essential Function: Assessment of Families	Activities			Assessment Method
	Expected Level of Performance	Developmental Level of Performance	Unacceptable Level of Performance	
Ensure confidentiality for the family	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure assessments are conducted in a private space and shared only with involved professionals	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides a private space only if one is available and shares information only with involved professionals	<input type="checkbox"/> Holds meetings with a family in an open, non-private space, and shares assessment information with anyone that inquires	Family Needs Assessment Goal planning sheet Case notes Supervisory feedback Client Satisfaction Survey Child Plus assessment components
Ensure sensitivity, respect and acceptance of all families	<input type="checkbox"/> Respect family's time <input type="checkbox"/> Present them self in an emotionally sensitive and individualized manner without judgment <input type="checkbox"/> Builds rapport with family <input type="checkbox"/> Consistently utilizes appropriate interpersonal communication skills (Be attentive, even tone, active listening, descriptive feedback)	<input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally begins late or takes more time than scheduled <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistently presents them self in an emotionally sensitive and individualized manner without judgment <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistently builds rapport with families <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistently utilizes appropriate interpersonal communication skills (Be attentive, even tone, active listening, descriptive feedback)	<input type="checkbox"/> Consistently begins late or takes more time than scheduled <input type="checkbox"/> Does not consider family context while interacting with an individual family <input type="checkbox"/> Does not build rapport with families <input type="checkbox"/> Does not utilize appropriate interpersonal communication skills (Be attentive, even tone, active listening, descriptive feedback)	
Support the family in understanding the complete assessment cycle	<input type="checkbox"/> Educate family on the history and purpose of the tool and explain assessment questions as needed	<input type="checkbox"/> Educate family on the purpose of the tool and explain assessment questions as needed	<input type="checkbox"/> Begins assessment prior to explaining the history and purpose of the tool	
Assist parents in understanding basic needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Educate family on the history and purpose of the tool and explain assessment questions as needed	<input type="checkbox"/> Educate family on the purpose of the tool and explain assessment questions as needed	<input type="checkbox"/> Begins assessment prior to explaining the history and purpose of the tool	
Effectively and accurately use the assessment process to support families	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide individual support for family and define roles and expectations of the assessment cycle	<input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistently provides individual support for the family and partially define roles and expectations of the assessment cycle	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not individualize support for the family and does not define roles and expectations of the assessment cycle	
Create connections between identified needs at intake and family chosen goals	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that the tool is being used accurately by referencing intake information while completing Needs Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistently referencing intake information while completing Needs Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not refer to intake information while completing Needs Assessment	

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Assessment of Families	
Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities	Professional Development Topics
<p>Working knowledge of the Needs Assessment and goal setting process.</p> <p>Understanding the use of Child Plus as a reflective practice tool that tells the family story.</p> <p>Knowledge to know when stress will occur/situations will be stressful and the working knowledge of coping skills.</p> <p>Ability to link school readiness to family engagement and educational success.</p> <p>Engages in collaborative problem solving with families, staff, and community partners.</p> <p>Recognize the importance of relationship building to constructively coach families through SMART goal setting and behavior change.</p> <p>Recognize the importance of time management and being prepared to work with families.</p> <p>Working knowledge of Head Start Performance Standards and how they are linked to the needs assessment.</p> <p>Empowering families to recognize strengths that may support identified needs.</p> <p>Ability to individualize according to the needs of families from diverse and complex backgrounds.</p> <p>Staff are committed and engaged in collaborative work with families to create change.</p> <p>Understanding how to conduct family triage.</p>	<p>History and purpose of the Family Needs Assessment</p> <p>Implementing the Family Needs Assessment Process</p> <p>Case Management skills</p> <p>Customer Service/Interaction skills</p> <p>SMART Goals/Case Notes</p> <p>Child Plus and Case Notes as reflective practice tools</p> <p>Reflective Practice</p> <p>Self-care</p> <p>Family Support readiness</p>

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Foundations of family advocacy:				
Essential Function: Education/Health ERSEA Liaison	Activities			Assessment
	<i>Expected Level of Performance</i>	<i>Developmental Level of Performance</i>	<i>Unacceptable Level of Performance</i>	
Empower the family to ensure that the child’s health/education needs are met; including mental health and special needs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Create connections with family about the importance of health and education success to prepare children for school readiness	<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss the importance of health and education success to prepare children for school readiness	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion of the importance of health and education success to prepare children for school readiness does not take place	Health requirements are met Portrait of a Healthy Child Shared screening results with families Completed application and required documents are completed and reflected in Selection Criteria
Effectively communicate to the family necessary requirements to participate in HS including income and eligibility requirements.	<input type="checkbox"/> Effectively communicate to families the static and fluid requirements to participate in HS.	<input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistently communicate to families the static and fluid requirements to participate in HS	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely communicate to families the static and fluid requirements to participate in HS	
Collaborate across content areas in the transition of children and families.	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in problem-solving with content areas to overcome barriers or challenges <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize the Basic Family Needs Assessment and Family Goal Planning to support the work in the learning environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Share barriers and challenges with content areas <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize the Basic Family Needs Assessment and Family Goal Planning without consistently considering the support of the work in the learning environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Barriers and challenges are not shared with content areas <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize the Basic Family Needs Assessment and Family Goal Planning without considering how the work in the learning environment is supported	
Engage educators in conversations around child/family goals.	<input type="checkbox"/> Gather and disseminate family goals that are set during home visits to close the circle of information <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborates with educators to plan and conduct home visits for families found to need additional support	<input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistently gather and disseminate family goals that are set during home visits to close the circle of information <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborates with educators to plan or conduct home visits for families found to need additional support	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely gathers and disseminates family goals that are set during home visits to close the circle of information <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely collaborates with educators to plan or conduct home visits for families found to need additional support	

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Education/Health Liaison	
Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities	Professional Development Topics
<p>Understanding of health/education screening requirements.</p> <p>Understanding of the ERSEA requirements</p> <p>Understanding of the early intervention/early childhood special education/mental health referral process.</p> <p>Basic knowledge of classroom curriculum and assessment system.</p> <p>Working relationship with classroom staff for continuity of family goals.</p> <p>Ability to process procedures and priorities with families within time requirements outlined in Head Start standards.</p> <p>Understanding of the connection between health/education.</p>	<p>Child Plus health section</p> <p>Child Plus dashboard</p> <p>Child Plus application and data entry</p> <p>Intent of the Head Start standards</p> <p>How the content areas interface</p> <p>Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education/Mental Health referral process</p> <p>Organizational/time management skills</p> <p>Health Services 101 (e.g. Why the Head Start standards are in place and how to communicate the information to families.)</p>

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Foundations of family advocacy:				
Essential Function: Community Connections	Activities			Assessment
	<i>Expected Level of Performance</i>	<i>Developmental Level of Performance</i>	<i>Unacceptable Level of Performance</i>	
Establish connections with community agencies to support family/agency needs (Family Advocates members on boards/committees).	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop reciprocal relationships with supporting community agencies and value the supporting role of the agency	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop reciprocal relationships with a few supporting community agencies and value the supporting role of the agency	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop no relationships supporting community agencies	Case note referral logs Planning for family meetings Child Plus report 4120 ERSEA reports Fliers sent to families
Creating a system of referrals that connects community agencies with up-to-date information.	<input type="checkbox"/> Update agency connections on a regular basis	<input type="checkbox"/> Update agency connections on an inconsistent basis	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely update agency connections	
Assisting families in connecting with area agencies.	<input type="checkbox"/> Connecting families with area agencies that support family needs (e.g. geographically, culturally, and/or linguistically diverse). <input type="checkbox"/> Connect family to community services and follow through until needs are met	<input type="checkbox"/> Connecting families with area agencies that support family needs while inconsistently considering the context of the family <input type="checkbox"/> Connect family to community services	<input type="checkbox"/> Connecting families with area agencies that support family needs without considering the context of the family <input type="checkbox"/> Make referrals for family to community services	
Ongoing sharing of community resources within the service area.	<input type="checkbox"/> Support peers in connecting families with area agencies that support family needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Support peers in connecting families with area agencies that support family needs when asked directly	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely supports peers in connecting families with area agencies that support family needs	
Teach families to independently locate resources and function as expert consultant.	<input type="checkbox"/> Assist family to independently pursue necessary community support services	<input type="checkbox"/> Assist family to pursue necessary community support services	<input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistently assist family to pursue necessary community support services	

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Community Connections	
Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities	Professional Development Topics
<p>Ability to establish relationships with other agencies.</p> <p>Knowledge of multiple agencies providing same resources.</p> <p>Ability to empower families to locate resources in the community.</p> <p>Ability to provide culturally sensitive options for referrals.</p> <p>Able to serve on agency committees.</p> <p>Working knowledge of community agencies.</p> <p>Ability and permission to attend meetings to build collaboration that we specifically addressing the needs of the population we are serving.</p> <p>Communication and/or knowledge of opportunities from the parents to the experts.</p> <p>Champion for connections</p> <p>Building – community by knowing case loads, their needs, and the demographics and resources.</p> <p>Knowledge of existing resources within the government agencies.</p> <p>Understanding your aim grantee/ goals objectives and performance indicators</p> <p>Do use and understand the community assessment and how to utilize.</p> <p>Cultural competency</p>	<p>Using Child Plus to share community resources with peers</p> <p>Using Child Plus to document community connections and follow through</p> <p>Creating community collaborations</p> <p>Building and maintaining professional relationships</p> <p>Head Start 101</p> <p>Sharing the message of Head Start to a variety of audiences</p> <p>Ethics</p> <p>Diversity</p> <p>United Way 211 on-line</p>

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Foundations of family advocacy:				
Essential Function: Building Relationships	Activities			Assessment Method
	<i>Expected Level of Performance</i>	<i>Developmental Level of Performance</i>	<i>Unacceptable Level of Performance</i>	
Ensure appropriate communication with families, children, and co-workers	<input type="checkbox"/> Talk directly with family about communication preferences and use in future interactions <input type="checkbox"/> Make connection to past conversations during interactions	<input type="checkbox"/> Talk directly with family about communication preferences and inconsistently use in future interactions <input type="checkbox"/> Connections are sometimes made to past conversations during interactions	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussions with family about communication preferences do not take place <input type="checkbox"/> Connections are rarely made to past conversations during interactions	360 Evaluation Case notes Goals sheet Client Satisfaction Survey Observations of interactions with families
Create environment that facilitates active listening and participation	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that the environmental needs of the family are met during individual conferencing <input type="checkbox"/> Clearly define an accurate time frame for scheduled interactions	<input type="checkbox"/> The environmental needs of the family are inconsistently met during individual conferencing <input type="checkbox"/> Clearly define a time frame for scheduled interactions that is not always accurate	<input type="checkbox"/> The environmental needs of the family are not met during individual conferencing <input type="checkbox"/> A clearly defined time frame for scheduled interactions is not provided to families	
Build trust	<input type="checkbox"/> Build trust through timely follow-through/follow-up of tasks/requests for information/guidance	<input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistently follow-through on tasks/requests for information/guidance	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not follow-through on tasks/requests for information/guidance	
Ensure all persons are respected based on their individual needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Be present and allow time for the family to process their individual needs even through difficult conversations	<input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistently allow time for the family to process their individual needs even through difficult conversations	<input type="checkbox"/> Interactions do not allow time for the family to process their individual needs	
Respect and understand cultural differences	<input type="checkbox"/> Gather cultural expectations of the family for interactions and put the expectations into practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Gather cultural expectations of the family for interactions	<input type="checkbox"/> Expectations of the family for interactions are not gathered	

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Building Relationships	
Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities	Professional Development Topics
<p>Knowledge of how body language is perceived and awareness of body language.</p> <p>Able to communicate with persons based on age, cultural background (individualized communication).</p> <p>Ability to provide choice in the environment/topic of conversation.</p> <p>Ability to provide a safe environment (confidential).</p> <p>Ability to know your work load limits (in regards to follow-up).</p> <p>Knowing and setting professional boundaries.</p> <p>Knowledge of documenting follow-up in Child Plus with families.</p> <p>Knowing audience, being prepared.</p> <p>Create environment: understand privacy, provide choice, be able to be quiet and is ok with silence, offer alternatives to ensure privacy, establish timelines for yourself and family well-being, ability to meet families where they are at, refining process offered solutions.</p>	<p>Diversity</p> <p>Interpersonal communication</p> <p>Learning styles</p> <p>Sociology (e.g. Ruby Payne; Maslow; genograms; ecological theory, Spheres of Influence; social work)</p> <p>Reflective practice</p> <p>Ethics</p> <p>Professional boundaries</p> <p>Cultural Sensitivity/Responsiveness</p> <p>Motivational Interviewing</p> <p>Self-advocacy</p> <p>Time management</p> <p>Customer service</p> <p>Family Strength-Based Training</p> <p>Emotional Intelligence</p>