Home Visit
Observation Tool

Home Visitor: _____

Family: _____

People in the Home: _____

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Name of Observer: _____

NOTE TO USERS:

This observation instrument was designed for use only for home visits at Mid-America Head Start. The indicators in the left column of each page were drawn from the references below. Observers should write comments in the space provided to evidence whether indicators are met.

REFERENCES:

Head Start ECLKC: Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center. *Home visitor handbook.* https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov

Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc. (2015). *Parents as Teachers: Foundational curriculum.* St. Louis, MO: Parents as Teachers National Center.

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start. (2016). *Head Start program performance standards and other regulations.* Washington, DC: Administration for Children and Families.

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start. (2015). *The Head Start early learning outcomes framework: Ages Birth to Five.* Washington, DC: Administration for Children and Families.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

STRUCTURE OF THE HOME VISIT	Page 4
HOME ENVIRONMENT	Page 5
APPROACHES TO LEARNING: Self-Regulation / Attention	Page 6
APPROACHES TO LEARNING: Curiosity	Page 7
APPROACHES TO LEARNING: Problem-Solving/Persistence	Page 8
SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT:	Page 9
LANGUAGE & LITERACY	Page 10
COGNITION	Page 11
PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT: Health and Safety	Page 12
PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT: Physical and Motor	Page 13
FOUR TYPES OF PLAY	Pages 14
INFANT/TODDLER PLAY EXPERIENCE OFFERED	Page 15
PRESCHOOL PLAY EXPERIENCES OFFERED	Page 16

STRUCTURE OF THE HOME VISIT

Indicators	Comments

Head Start Program Performance Standards
1302.35(b) *Home-based program design*. A home-based program must ensure all home visits are:
(1) Planned jointly by the home visitor and parents, and reflect the critical role of parents in the early learning and development of their children, including that the home visitor is able to effectively communicate with the parent, directly or through an interpreter;
(2) Planned using information from ongoing assessments that individualize learning experiences
(3) Scheduled with sufficient time to serve all enrolled children in the home and conducted with parents and are not conducted when only babysitters or other temporary caregivers are present
(4) Scheduled with sufficient time and appropriate staff to ensure effective delivery of services.
Parents as Teachers
• The home visit includes the following elements from the Parents as Teachers curriculum:
  ○ Opening
  ▪ Connect
  ▪ Reflect
  ▪ Agree
  ○ Parent Child Interaction
  ▪ Parent Child Activity Page
  ▪ Parenting behavior
  ▪ Book Sharing
  ○ Development Centered Parenting
  ▪ Developmental Topic
  ○ Family Well Being
  ○ Closing
  ▪ Review
  ▪ Revisit
  ▪ Evaluate
  ▪ Share
  ▪ Affirm
  ▪ Look Ahead
• The parent education cycle of Partner-Facilitate- Reflect is followed.	

HOME ENVIRONMENT

Indicators	Comments
Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302.35(c) *Home Visit Experiences*. A program that operates the home-based option must ensure all home visits focus on promoting high-quality early learning experiences in the home and growth towards the goals described in the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five* and must use such goals and the curriculum to plan home visit activities that implement: (3) Strategies and activities that promote the home as a learning environment that is safe, nurturing, responsive, and language- and communication- rich. **Home Visitor Handbook** • Thinking, with parents, about what part of the environment might help learning including environmental supports such as: o Having a limited number of interesting materials that the child can safely explore within his reach o Limiting TV watching and screen time as much as possible o Keeping hazardous, fragile, or very important or valuable items out of the reach of children; and o Providing engaging play materials, a safe play area, and ways to enrich or expand play and exploration. • Thinking, with parents, about what part of the environment might hinder learning including distractions such as: o Noise o Nearby activity o Televisions or CDs in the background, and o Too many things in the play area. • Exploring the environment with parents to discover learning opportunities. • Being aware of what is safe for exploring, building the parent's capacity to provide a safe learning environment.	

APPROACHES TO LEARNING:
Self-Regulation/Attention

Indicators	Comments
Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302.35(c) *Home Visit Experience.* Plan home visit activities that implement: (1) Age and developmentally appropriate, structured child-focused learning experiences (2) Strategies and activities that promote parents' ability to support the child's…development. **Home Visitor Handbook (ECLKC)** *Self-Regulation/Attention: The ability to manage—or regulate—your reactions to internal or external events. When a child is not easily distracted, he/she is able to focus, become engaged, and pay attention to exploration and interactions.* You support parents in nurturing self-regulation/attention by: • Helping parents maintain a calm attitude and presence when their child is upset. Children are "tuned in" to adults' emotions; calmness can help children manage strong emotions. • Acknowledging and commenting when parents identify self-soothing behaviors; for example, asking "What does Odele do to comfort herself? Does she suck her thumb?" • Suggesting ways to give toddlers and preschoolers simple choices such as, "You may have apple slices or orange slices." • Showing parents ways to help their child stay engaged and attentive, perhaps by commenting on what the child is doing or introducing a new aspect to the child's play or interaction. For example, saying to the parent, "You might ask Joie how she's going to put her baby to sleep now." • Creating an environment that allows safe exploration. • Learning routines such as washing hands before meals, wearing sunscreen before going outside, and holding Mom's hand while crossing the street. • Assisting parents to teach children to recognize and name their feelings. • Modeling ways in which toddlers and preschoolers can express their emotions effectively and appropriately (i.e., "you can say 'I'm mad' or 'I don't like that'; "you can scribble on paper when you are angry")	

APPROACHES TO LEARNING:
Curiosity

Indicators	Comments
Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302.35(c) *Home Visit Experience.* Plan home visit activities that implement: (1) Age and developmentally appropriate, structured child-focused learning experiences (2) Strategies and activities that promote parents' ability to support the child's…development. **Home Visitors Handbook** *Curiosity: A strong desire to explore and learn. Young children are constantly learning about themselves, others, and the world.* You support parents in nurturing curiosity by: • Joining parents in observing what children are doing. Explain to parents that observing is a process. When observing, parents should watch and listen for cues (e.g., body movements, facial expressions, vocalizations, children approaching) and offer comments or questions that reflect what children might be wondering, thinking, or trying to discover. For example, "Megan, it looks like you're trying to climb up on the sofa. You want to get up there." • Allowing children to explore open-ended materials; for example, toys that young children can use in many ways, like blocks, scarves, or boxes. Remember: There is a lot to learn about shapes, objects in space, balance, and gravity from stacking boxes or blocks! Creating safe environments and providing active supervision of children at all times. You support parents in nurturing information gathering by: • Encouraging parents to give children information about things that interest their child: Use words to describe the objects, people, actions, and feelings in the child's world. Expand on their interests. Watching the child together with the parents and exchanging ideas about what the child is interested in; for example, "I think he's listening to the paper crackle, trying to figure out what makes it crackle sometimes and be quiet at other times. He's looking for what causes the crackling." You support parents in nurturing memory by: • Encouraging parents to play peek-a-boo or hide-and-seek (without being completely hidden). suggesting that parents talk about events that happened earlier in the day, the day before, or even "a long time ago." Young children may not have a concrete sense of time but are often surprisingly good at remembering what happened before. Use photos of children, their families, and familiar objects to talk about children's past experiences. This will help them create and keep memories. reading books or talking about activities before they happen, and when you do the activity remind the child how you discussed or talked about it before.	

APPROACHES TO LEARNING:
Problem-Solving/Persistence

Indicators	Comments
Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302.35(c) *Home Visit Experience.* Plan home visit activities that implement: (1) Age and developmentally appropriate, structured child-focused learning experience; (2) Strategies and activities that promote parents' ability to support the child's…development. **Home Visitor Handbook** *Problem Solving: Figuring out how things work. Young children's curiosity and motivation to figure out how things work often lead them to discover or create their own "problems" to solve, such as, "How do I get my ball out from under the sofa?" or "How can I get these blocks to stay up?"* You support parents in nurturing problem solving by: • Assuring parents that young children get real satisfaction from solving problems by themselves if they can and with "just enough" help if they can't. You might say, "Let's watch for a minute. She's really working on it and doesn't seem frustrated." suggesting that parents ask their toddler, "What else might work?" and offering an idea, if the child needs it. *Persistence: The young child's ability to keep trying to do something even when she fails.* You support parents in nurturing persistence by: • Helping parents think of things to say to offer emotional support. For example, parents could use simple statements such as, "I can see how frustrating that is for you." They might add, "You are really working hard to figure that out." Even very young children can understand and benefit from knowing that someone recognizes they are trying. Children who are trying are still learning something—even if they don't reach their goal! • Assisting parents to recognize their child's tolerance for frustration. Some children are frustrated with one failed attempt, while others seem able to persist no matter what. Sometimes it is harder for adults to watch the child try and try and not succeed, reminding parents that we all learn from failures—even young children!	

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Indicators	Comments
Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302.35(c) *Home Visit Experiences.* Plan home visit activities that implement: (2) Strategies and activities that promote parents' ability to support the child's social, emotional development. **Home Visitor Handbook** You support parents as their child's partner in social and emotional development by: • Developing a warm, nurturing, respectful relationship with the parents. You provide an experience of a trusting relationship in which the parents are honored for their knowledge. • Noticing and admiring the parents' acts of nurturance; for example, "NaKeisha really needed you to pick her up and hold her close. You knew just how to help her stop crying. She's looking at you so lovingly now." • Sharing with parents how helpful it is when they respond sensitively to their child's needs and soothe their child when she is upset. When young children's needs are met by others, over time they eventually learn how to soothe and calm themselves when they become overwhelmed with emotion. Children who can manage their emotions are better able to concentrate on exploring, discovering and learning new skills. • Explaining that infants and toddlers need to learn to regulate their reactions so that they are not too excited or too uninterested to interact or explore. For example, "Valeria seems to wander around. I'm not sure what would interest her. Is there something we could do with her and keep her interested for a while? We want to help her be excited about learning." • Supporting parents in making sure their child is safe and secure and feels safe, especially as he begins to move and explore; for example, "See how Gabriel turns to look at you after he crawls about halfway across the room? It makes him feel safe to explore when he knows you're nearby, watching him." • Encouraging parents to show excitement and interest in their child's experiences; for example, "Charlie is really enjoying having you calling to him from the other end of the tunnel. I can see how much fun he has when you're playing with him." • Helping parents think of ways to tell their child that they see her as competent; for example, "You're working hard on that puzzle. You're good at putting puzzles together." • Helping parents think about how to provide just enough help to let the child stay engaged and be successful without solving problems for them; for example, "Try putting that big block on the bottom. The other ones might stack better."	

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Indicators	Comments
Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302.35(c) *Home Visit Experiences.* Plan home visit activities that implement: (2) Strategies and activities that promote parents' ability to support the child's language, literacy development (4) Research-based strategies and activities for children who are dual language learners that recognize bilingualism and biliteracy as strengths, and: (i) For infants and toddlers, focus on the development of the home language, while providing experiences that expose both parents and children to English; and, (ii) For preschoolers, focus on both English language acquisition and the continued development of the home language. **Home Visitor Handbook** You can support a family's facilitation of their child(ren)'s language and literacy by encouraging families to: • Talk to their children from birth on. Long before they can expect their child to understand their words, the child will begin to sense the rhythm of conversation and the hear the sounds of the home language. • Describe the child's actions, feelings, and surroundings; for example, "You are running so fast! I can see you breathing hard. But what a big smile; it looks like you're having fun." • Listen patiently and with encouragement to what the child is trying to communicate; for example, "Oh, you played with Sonia. What did you do?" • Ask the preschool child open-ended questions and try to extend the conversation. For example, if the child is playing with dolls, the parent might say, "So, you're the mommy. Tell me about your family." "I see you're cooking some food for your baby. What are you making? How do you cook that? What are your baby's favorite foods?" • Elaborate with their language as their child's understanding increases. For example, with a one-year-old, they might just name an object: "Mmmmm, carrots." With a five-year-old, they could elaborate about the meal: "We're having your favorite tonight—Tacos! Here are some corn tortillas. The chicken is just a little spicy. I cooked onions to go with this. That's not what we usually have, but I read the recipe, and it looked good. How do you want to build your taco?" • Interact with books and pictures with the child as soon as he/she can focus on a picture. Make daily reading a regular part of your routine. • Ask the child(ren) questions about the book: "Where is the baby's nose?" "How do you think Little Bear feels? Look at his face." "What do you think will happen next?" • Tell stories and encourage their child(ren) to tell stories. • Talk with their child(ren) about things that happened recently or will be happening soon.	

COGNITION

Indicators	Comments
Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302.35(c) *Home Visit Experiences.* (2) Strategies and activities that promote parents' ability to support the child's cognitive development. **Home Visitor Handbook** You support parents' ability to contribute to their child's cognitive development and general knowledge by: • Helping parents become accurate observers of the actions that demonstrate their child's learning. • Encouraging body awareness (e.g., "You are kicking, kicking, kicking!" "Where is your nose? Yes! Where are your eyes? Yes!" "Look at how high you're climbing!"). • Talking about developmentally appropriate ways to read or look at books. • Taking advantage of different items in the home to talk about textures; for example, "The sofa feels rough, the table feels smooth." • Using empty containers to offer olfactory experiences (for example, soak a cotton ball in vanilla extract or fresh lime juice, put it in a clean, empty container, glue the top on, and punch holes in the top for the child to smell). • Pointing out learning about cause and effect when the parent responds to an infant's cries or smiles or offering a kitchen pot and different, safe utensils that make sounds when the child bangs on the pot (a rubber scraper, a wooden spoon, a metal spoon, etc.). • Suggesting experiences that help a child discover object permanence, such as talking about things that are out of sight, playing a CD under a blanket, and even the often annoying but educating tossing food or toys on the floor for the adult to pick up. • Providing lots of opportunities to move and explore; for example, keeping one low kitchen cabinet not childproofed and filled with things that are safe for the child to explore or taking the child outdoors to play with sticks, leaves, grass, and stones. • Putting different toys in a special box every day for the child to discover. • offering opportunities for sorting and categorizing items such as stuffed animals and books or large and small containers. • Making bigger and smaller piles of sticks and saying, "Which one has more?" "Which teddy bear is bigger?" • Sharing the study and discovery of bugs or dandelions or what mud does. • Talking about appropriate technology experiences.	

PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT: Health and Safety

Indicators	Comments
Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302.35(c) *Home Visit Experiences.* Plan home visit activities that implement: (2) Strategies and activities that promote parents' ability to support the child's physical development. **Home Visitor Handbook** You support parents in protecting their child's health and safety and developing healthy habits by: • Providing information on well-child and immunization schedules. • Teaching songs that help parents and children time how long to wash their hands or brush their teeth. • Prompting parents to establish a routine to help their child wash their hands after outdoor play, before eating, and after toileting. • Knowing how to access resources in your community to promote safety, such as free outlet covers or car seats. • Having community partners who can help the family find a medical or dental home. • Being respectful of parents' beliefs and values concerning health. • Modeling healthy behaviors. Using motivational interviewing to discuss topics. • Introducing health literacy. • Talking about healthy nutrition and the value of physical activity. • Sharing information about the effect of secondhand smoke on children's health. • Maintaining a safe environment in their home. **MARC Head Start** • Follows "We're on the CASE" procedures.	

PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT: Physical and Motor Development

Indicators	Comments
Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302.35(c) *Home Visit Experiences.* Plan home visit activities that implement: (2) Strategies and activities that promote parents' ability to support the child's physical development. **Home Visitor Handbook** You support parents in promoting their child's physical development by: • Using and discussing home safety checklists and discussion. • Helping parents have realistic expectations of large motor developmental milestones. • Using the home environment to provide interesting physical challenges, such as putting a firm sofa pillow on the ground for an infant to crawl over. • Encouraging parents to take their child outdoors to play. • Finding objects in the home that can be thrown; perhaps a ball made from crumpled paper and taped into a ball shape. • Figuring out safe ways to hang toys for reaching infants. • Encouraging active, developmentally appropriate play with their child. • Talking with parents about their feelings and beliefs; for example, should girls be active? Should boys do artwork? Is it safe to play outdoors? Are they in a hurry to have their child walk or run? Do they prefer a child who can sit quietly? • Suggesting strategies for providing guidance to toddlers who want to climb on tables or other surfaces unacceptable to parents. You can support parents' promotion of fine motor development by: • Bringing recipes for play dough for their child to build hand strength by making the dough and forming small items using their fingers. • Using sidewalks or outside walls for broad strokes with water-filled brushes; moving to paper and markers as the child gains more finger control. • Using writing utensils and manipulative toys. • Singing songs with hand movements such as, "The Itsy-Bitsy Spider" and "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." Playing the "thank-you game": The child hands you an object, you take it and say thank you, and then you hand it back to the child. This grab-and-release activity not only supports fine muscle development but also helps reinforce the pleasure of taking turns.	

FOUR TYPES OF PLAY

Types	Examples	Comments
Sensory-Motor Play (Sometimes called Functional or Practice Play)	Children engage in sensory and motor exploration of toys, materials, spaces and people in order to learn about them. Sensory-Motor Play is more physical play like experimenting with the world through senses, manipulating objects, and crawling, rolling, running, and jumping.	
Constructive Play (Sometimes called Productive Play)	Children manipulate objects in order to create something. In Constructive Play, children play with toys and other objects and materials to accomplish a goal. Examples: • Using wooden blocks to build a tower, • Using playdough or clay to model an insect, or • Using art materials to represent a flower.	
Socio-Dramatic Play (Sometimes called Pretend, Dramatic or Symbolic Play)	Children pretend to be other than what they are and use actions, objects, or words to represent things or situations OR use small toys to play out themes. During Socio-Dramatic Play, children pretend, take on roles, and act out sequences of events. They can role play real characters and events such as mom and dad, store worker, dog and cat, or police officer. The play can also be fantasy themed—wizards, fairies, princesses, or superheroes. During Dramatic Play, children use small toy people, animals, vehicles, etc. to act out roles and sequences.	
Games with Rules	In solitary or group play, children recognize and follow rules that conform to the expectations and goals of the game in order to sustain play. Games with Rules can be movement games, board games, card games, or social games. Types of games include aiming, racing, chasing, hiding, guessing, card, board, and games involving verbal commands.	

INFANT/TODDLER PLAY EXPERIENCES OFFERED

Experiences	Examples	Comments
Adult-Guided "Play-Like" Experiences (Home-Based Staff and Adult Family Members **initiate**, plan and facilitate experiences based on specific curriculum objectives. Some elements of play are present—e.g., joyful, engaged, interactive with hands-on materials provided.)	• Adults provide materials such as masking tape or tissue boxes filled with scraps of fabric and guide children's exploration. • Adults bring out toy phones and make pretend phone calls with the children. • Adults guide *Baby Doll Circle Time.* • Adults invite children to finger paint at the table. • Adults lead a game of *I'll Find You*--hiding a teddy bear for children to find. • Adults bury attribute blocks in sensory materials for children to uncover and explore. • Adults set up simple obstacle courses and use spatial words as children go in, out, under, over, and through.	
Free Play (Home-Based Staff and Adult Family Members provide blocks of time and set up inviting indoor and outdoor environments to encourage **child-initiated** play.)	• Children choose toys, objects, loose parts to explore with all their senses. • Children engage in child-initiated gross motor play in the home, yard, or playground. • Children explore drawing, painting, modeling, and building materials. • Children imitate others in socio-dramatic play—pretend to talk on phone, stir food, feed baby, ride in the bus. • Children initiate and play simple games such as Peek-A-Boo and Chase.	
Adult-Supported Play (After observing children at play, Home-Based Staff and Adult Family Members **respond** to them and offer intentional and individualized support for play and learning.)	• After noticing children getting into kitchen cabinets, adults offer pots, pans, and utensils and join Kitchen play. • After noticing children's interest in water during handwashing, adults play with children with soapy water in the sink or bathtub. • Children and adults build block towers, knock them down, and rebuild them. • Adults bring toy food, dolls, dishes, and blankets in the home, yard, or playground. Children and adults play picnic theme together. • After seeing children tear gift paper, adults provide paper for children to tear with their hands or snip with toddler scissors.	

PRESCHOOL PLAY EXPERIENCES OFFERED

Experiences	Examples	Comments
Adult-Guided "Play-Like" Experiences (Home-Based Staff and Adult Family Members **initiate**, plan, and facilitate experiences based on specific curriculum objectives. Some elements of play are present—e.g., joyful, engaged, interactive with hands-on materials provided.)	• Adults provide sets of objects (nature samples, lids, tools, shoes, manipulative toys) for children to explore with math goals in mind. • Adults bury letters in sensory materials and invite children to go on a treasure hunt. Children and adults talk about the letters as they find them. • Adults guide puppet or flannel board literacy activities. • Adults guide *Baby Doll Circle Time.* • Adults guide an activity with a toy tooth and toothbrushes. • Adults invite the children to kick balls high. • Adults lead games such as *Simon Says,* or *I Spy.*	
Free Play (Home-Based Staff and Adult Family Members provide blocks of time and set up inviting indoor and outdoor environments to encourage **child-initiated** play.)	• Children explore sensory materials, toys, objects, and loose parts with all their senses. • Children engage in child-initiated gross motor play in the home, yard, or playground. • Children use drawing, painting, modeling, and building materials in process-oriented constructive play. • Children direct their socio-dramatic play, choosing and negotiating their materials, roles, and play themes. • Children play games with other children or adults, creating and negotiating the rules as they go.	
Adult-Supported Play (After observing children at play, Home-Based Staff and Adult Family Members **respond** to them and provide intentional and individualized support for play and learning.)	• After noticing children getting into kitchen cabinets, adults offer pots, pans, and utensils and join Kitchen play. • After noticing children's interest in water during handwashing, adults put baby dolls, wash cloths, and soapy water in the sink or bathtub. • Adults provide toy vehicles and artifacts and talk to the children about vehicles as they play. • Children and adults play *Hide and Seek* or *Concentration* together. Children are encouraged to negotiate the rules. • Children display big feelings. Adults offer Feeling Buddies and fidget toys. • Adults invite children to document what they learn through art, modeling, or construction, such as the representation that occurs in project work.	