**MISSISSIPPI COUNTY, ARKANSAS, E.O.C.**

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

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**FAMILY PARTNERSHIP BUILDING**

**POLICY:**

The program collaborates with families in a family partnership process that identifies needs, interests, strengths, goals, and services and resources that support family well-being, including family safety, health, and economic stability.

**PROCEDURE:**

**1.0 Building Relationships with Families**

1.1 As part of the process of collaborative partnership-building with parents to establish mutual trust and to identify family goals, strengths, and necessary services and other supports, the program offers parents opportunities to develop and implement individualized family partnership agreements that describe family goals, responsibilities, timetables and strategies for achieving these goals as well as progress in achieving them.

1.2 Meetings and interactions with families are respectful of each family’s linguistic diversity and cultural and ethnic background.

1. Materials are translated as needed to the parents’ preferred language.
2. Activities are planned at convenient times during the day and week to encourage as many parents as possible to participate.
3. The program provides alternative work schedules to allow staff to interact with working families during weekend events (such as picnics, religious and Tribal ceremonies, other cultural events) as necessary.
4. The program takes into consideration the needs of family members with children with disabilities, including assistance with planning meetings and activities.

1.3 The Family Partnership Agreement (FPA) process is initiated as early after enrollment as possible and it takes into consideration each family’s readiness and willingness to participate in the process.

1.4 Program Family Services Advocate explain the purpose of the Family Partnership Agreement, which includes family partnership building and goal setting through community services and resources, services to pregnant women, and parent involvement across all areas of Head Start – including child development and education, health, nutrition, mental health education, community advocacy, transition practices, home visits, and group socialization activities.

1.5 Program Family Services Advocate and/or Program Education staff work with parents to develop and complete an individualized *Family Partnership Agreement Form*, with:

1. Goal setting, in which the head of the household identifies family goals, action steps, persons responsible, and time frame.
2. Program staff utilizing the Needs Assessment section of the *Family Partnership Agreement Form* and *Parent Interest Questionnaire Form* to identify parents needs and interests as resources to identify potential goals.

1.6 The program requires that the Family Partnership Agreement be completed by each family even if they do not want to set a goal.

1. Program Family Services Advocate document and follow-up monthly with such families to inform them of parent meetings, program events, training opportunities, child development, and their work with families to help them identify goals.

1.7 The *Family Partnership Agreement Form* is completed when the parent and staff sign and date the Form.

1.8 Program Family Services Advocate store the completed *Family Partnership Agreement Form* in the child’s folder.

**2.0 Follow-up**

2.1 Program Family Services Advocate or Teacher, Home-Based Teacher, Home Visitor maintain and update the *Progress Notes* throughout the family’s enrollment in Head Start/Early Head Start.

1. Program staff continue to follow-up with the family at least quarterly or more often if needed to check progress on identified goals.

2.2 Program Family Services Advocate review, update, sign and date the *Family Partnership Agreement Form* with the parents for each program year in which their child participates.

**3.0 Pre-existing Family Plan**

3.1 As early in the relationship as feasible, Teaching Staff, Family Service Advocate or Home- Based Advocate /Home Visitors ask the parent/guardian if there is a pre-existing family plan.

1. If there is a pre-existing family plan, the Family Service Advocate or Home- Based Teacher /Home Visitor requests a copy from the third-party agency.
	* 1. Program Family Services Advocate and Teacher complete the *Release of Confidential Information Form*, and ask the parent/guardian to sign and date the *Form*.
2. Program Family Services Advocate and Teacher mail the *Release of Confidential Information Form* to the appropriate third party.
	* 1. To reduce burden on parents and to avoid duplication of effort, or conflict with any pre-existing family plans developed between other programs and the Head Start/Early Head Start family, the Family Partnership Agreement takes into account, and builds upon as appropriate, information obtained from the family and other community agencies concerning pre-existing family plans. The program coordinates, to the extent possible, with families and other agencies to support the accomplishment of goals in the pre-existing plans.
3. If it is determined that there is no pre-existing family plan, Program Family Service Advocate and Teacher follow the Family Partnership Agreement process.

**4.0 Related Policy**

4.1 See also  [(FCE) Family Partnership Services](#Pol70041_FCE_FamilyPartnershipServices).