Family Partnership and Goal Setting

**Policy/Approach:**

SOHS/EHS engages in collaborative partnership-building with parents to establish mutual trust and to identify family goals, strengths, and supports. This process begins as early after enrollment as possible and is respectful of each family’s readiness and willingness to participate.

We offer parents opportunities to develop individualized family partnership agreements that describe family goals, responsibilities, timetables and strategies for achievement, as well as progress in achieving them.

To avoid duplication of effort, we obtain any pre-existing family plans from the family and other community agencies. SOHS coordinates, to the extent possible, with families and other agencies to support the accomplishment of goals in the preexisting plans.

Policy Council Approval 8/19/2014
Board Approval 8/21/2014

**Head Start Program Performance Standards:**

1304.40(a) Family goal setting
1304.40(a)(3) pre-existing plans

**Head Start Procedures:**

- The Family Partnership Agreement is a process, not merely a series of forms. From the first contact with a family, the Family Advocate will endeavor to build rapport and create a trusting relationship in order to understand, as early as possible, the strengths, ambitions, skills, and hopes of family members.
- Family Advocates will aim to engage all parental figures in the partnership process, remaining sensitive to the differing needs, roles, and interests of each individual.
- Goals need to be achievable in two to three months in order for families to feel successful.
- Break down bigger goals into small steps in order to develop an attainable outcome.
- Each goal will be recorded on a goal worksheet, signed by the parent/s and by the Family Advocate at the time of setting the goal.
- Progress towards achievement of goals will be reviewed frequently with the family; updates or completion dates will be added as goals progress.
Family partnerships are shaped by our mission to equip all children, regardless of family or community background, with the skills and attributes necessary for kindergarten readiness. We use the Family Strengths Assessment to gain information about family practices/circumstances that the research consistently links with child outcomes. These four areas are:

- Family Life Practices that Promote Healthy Child Development
- Family Self-Sufficiency
- Support for Families with Children with Chronic Health Conditions or Special Needs
- Support for Families Impacted by High Risk Behaviors

The Family Strengths Assessment Tool captures information in 18 categories in the four areas above, and incorporates scoring guidance that provides an objective assessment of a family’s status in each of these categories. The scoring is not intended to label families, but provides an outcomes-based method to track progress and to assess a family’s level of need. By assigning families to a level of need, Family Service program staff can prioritize certain families for higher levels of contact and support, and work to assure that family circumstances that could put children at risk are immediately addressed.

Scoring indicates the priority areas for setting family goals and meeting family needs.

- All families with children who do not have a continuous source of medical or dental care (i.e. medical and dental homes), or who have chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, obesity, or MH/Disabilities special needs, should have family goals set in these areas, so that the FA or HV, teachers, and relevant Coordinators collaborate with the family to provide on-going support and follow-up.

- Families scoring at levels indicating immediate needs (which must be addressed regardless of whether a family sets a goal in these areas) should be discussed with the PFCE Supervisor, and a case conference scheduled if appropriate.

- Finally, due to the clear research linking stable family life practices with positive child outcomes, staff should work with all families to set a goal in this area unless a current crisis or critical need requires immediate follow up.

The Family Goal-Setting Resource contains many goal sheets, both pre-set and customizable. Each goal corresponds to a specific item or area on the Family Strengths Assessment. In this way, goals emerge directly from the discussion and scoring of the Family Strengths Assessment. The goal sheets are signed by staff and family, thus serving as a Family Partnership Agreement, or goals can be transcribed on to attractive card stock FPA goal sheets suitable for display at home, and also signed by both parties.
I. Timeframes for Completing the Family Partnership Agreement

- The Family Strengths Assessment (FSA) parts A and B, and corresponding life practice goal sheet, will be completed at registration so a goal can be addressed at home during the intervening weeks or months until school starts.
- FSA parts C and D and the corresponding FPA Goal Sheets are completed within 60 days of a family’s entry into the HS/EHS program, usually at the advocate’s first home visit.
- For returning families, the FSA should be updated at the end of the program year, and modified and/or new goals set for the summer.
- If a family declines to participate in the Family Partnership Agreement process, share that our program has set a goal to assist all families in the area of family life practices, and that we’d like to find an area that they’d like to focus on. Goals will also be triggered by certain medical, developmental or social-emotional circumstances. If families still decline, document in the data system, with follow-up each month to try and engage the family in the FPA process.

PRE-EXISTING FAMILY PLANS:

- If a Family Agreement or Plan has been made with another agency, the FA will offer to support the family in attaining these goals. The FA will obtain a signed release (Form E-10) from the parent, request the pre-existing plan from the other agency and retain it in the paper file.
- The FA will document the receipt of the plan in the data management system.
- The Family Advocate will work in cooperation with the family, and the other agency, to support goals that have already been made.
- The FA’s and family’s pre-existing family goals, responsibilities, timetables and strategies for achieving these goals as well as progress in achieving them will be tracked as FPA’s in the data management system.
- Additional Head Start goals will be developed and documented only if the family chooses.

INFORMAL FAMILY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT:

- In some situations the Family Partnership Agreement (FPA) will be developed informally as, for example, when the parent and Family Advocate are working on immediate crises, that do not allow for the lengthier process involved in the creation of formal goals.
- Once the family’s situation stabilizes, the Family Advocate may schedule a home visit to develop written FPA’s.
- Informal FPA’s may also be used with a family not willing to complete a formal agreement.
- Document the goals and steps informally agreed on as FPA’s in the data management system.
- For families with limited literacy skills, utilize alternative means of recording the Family Partnership process, and individual goals. These could take the form of collages, recorded statements, or photographs of activities, for example. Evidence of the informal Family Partnership must be documented as an FPA in the data management system and stored in the paper file, if this is appropriate for the medium used.