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. The Family Partnership Agreement is a process, not merely a series of forms. From the first contact with a family, the Family Advocate will 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.

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/EHS 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:**

1302.52 (a-d) Family partnership services

**HEAD START PROCEDURES:**

**Registration Questionnaire & Home Visit Questionnaire**

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 Registration, Family Interest Form and Home Visit/Questionnaires to gain information about **family strengths/practices/circumstances/needs** as research links stable family life practices with positive child outcomes.

These four areas are:
- Family Life Practices that Promote Healthy Child Development
- Support for Families with Children with Chronic Health Conditions or Special Needs
- Family Self-Sufficiency
- Family Health and Well-being

The Home Visit Questionnaire captures information in the four areas above. The information is used with the Family Success Rubric that incorporates scoring guidance to provide 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 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.

- The Registration and Home Visit Questionnaires are to be completed by the Family Advocate/Specialist and are to be used as a guide for conversation during those meetings.
- Advocates/Specialists can establish much of the needed information in the course of a positive and friendly conversation about family routines and traditions.

**Scoring the Registration & Home Visit Questionnaire**

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

- Score the questionnaires after the visit, using the Family Success scoring rubric to find a score that best meets and describes the family’s strengths and or needs. Higher scores reflect a higher number of family strengths.
- Scores will be entered in Shine, with entry score being entered at beginning of the year, and current score being updated continuously throughout the year as strengths and needs change.
- Families scoring at levels indicating immediate needs can be discussed with PFCE Supervisor and a case consultation scheduled if appropriate.
- Goals can emerge from information gathered about the family’s interests, strengths and needs in the areas addressed by the Registration, Family Interest, Home Visit Questionnaire and rubric scoring.

**Family Partnership Agreement & Goal Setting**

- Scoring the Registration and Home Visit Questionnaire helps indicate the priority areas for setting family goals and meeting family needs. The data system, SHINE, contains pre-set, but customizable goals, which shall be individualized for each family. 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.
- Goals are family driven. Parents/guardians come up with the steps to each goal. Family Advocates/Specialist are collaborative partners in this process.
- 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 in the SHINE database.
- If parent/guardian is interested, a goal sheet is available to fill out to display at home.
Monitor progress towards achievement of goals every 30 days, or more often if needed, with the family; updates or completion dates will be added as goals progress and follow-up notes will be documented within the goal in SHINE. New goals can be set at any time, as needs and interests emerge. Progress towards goal completion is presented to parents as a data set on their Family Progress Report. Goals may be set in partnership with family and teacher to support educational goals. Throughout the school year, if families are no longer interested, or the goal is no longer relevant, the goal should be inactivated. Upon completion or inactivation of a goal, a follow-up note must be added to explain the reason for the change. Goals for all families will be updated to either be inactivated or marked as completed at the end of the program year.

Family Life Practice Goal for All Families

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 attention that supersedes it.

- If a family declines to participate in the process, the Family Advocate/Specialist will share that our program encourages all families to set a goal in the area of family life practices, as data shows that partnership and growth in this area promotes future educational success. If families still decline, document in the data system (as a family background case note), with periodic follow-up throughout the year to encourage their engagement in the Goal Setting process.

Pre-existing family plans:

- If a goal or plan has been made with another agency, the FA/Specialist will offer to support the family in attaining these goals. The FA/Specialist will obtain a signed release (Form E-11) from the parent, request the pre-existing plan from the other agency and retain it in the paper file or scan and upload into SHINE database.
- The Family Advocate/Specialist will document the receipt of the plan in the data management system under case notes or Goal area.
- The Family Advocate/Specialist 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 in the data management system.
- Additional Family Life Practice Head Start goals will be developed and documented only if the family chooses.

Informal Family Partnership Agreement (FPA):

- In some situations, the Family Goal will be developed informally. For example, when the parent and Family Advocate/Specialist are working on immediate crises that do not allow for the lengthier process involved in the creation of formal goal steps.
- Once the family’s situation stabilizes, the Family Advocate/Specialist may schedule a home visit to develop any additional goals and steps needed.
- Informal FPA’s may also be used with a family not willing to complete a formal agreement.
- Document the conversation including goals and steps informally agreed upon in the data management system, SHINE. Informal goals must be set at a zero benchmark in Shine indicating a conversation took place, but the family is not yet ready to formalize the goal.
• 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. Evidence of the informal goal setting such as this must be documented as a goal in SHINE, and stored in the paper file or scanned and uploaded into the SHINE database.