Welcome to the Head Start Self-Assessment:

Your Foundation for Building Program Excellence

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Introduction

What is a Self-Assessment and why should we do it?

Continuous quality improvement is a central tenet of the Head Start program, with the goal of meeting *Performance Standards* and moving toward program excellence for serving children and families throughout the country. As part of this process, the annual Self-Assessment provides programs with the means to regularly assess their own management systems and program operations in order to continually strengthen the program and the services delivered to children and families.

Head Start Performance Standards clearly state that at least once each program year, with the consultation and participation of the policy groups and, as appropriate, other community members, grantee and delegate agencies must conduct a Self-Assessment of their effectiveness and progress in meeting program goals and objectives and in implementing Federal regulations.

The objectives of Head Start and Early Head Start are clear:

- Enhance children's growth and development
- Strengthen families as the primary nurturers of their children
- Provide children with educational, health and nutritional services
- Link children and families to needed community services
- Ensure well-managed programs that involve parents in decision-making

How can Head Start programs be sure that the services they provide meet these objectives as well as strive to continuously improve the quality of services?

By using the Self-Assessment process described here, grantees can annually assess how specific aspects of their program's operations impact services delivered to children and families. Self-Assessment is not an isolated event, but along with ongoing monitoring, is an integral part of a program's planning cycle. Programs seeking continuous improvement should constantly ask the questions:

- Is the program meeting all national *Head Start Performance Standards*?
- Are our services responding effectively to the changing needs of children and families?
- Are we doing what we need to, or are we just doing it the way we have always done it?
- Can we refine our program design and management systems to further improve outcomes for children and families?

The Self-Assessment process involves the collection of information from a variety of sources to determine if systems and services have been implemented and are working effectively. In the Self-Assessment process we encourage programs to analyze, review and incorporate information from multiple sources, such as ongoing monitoring reports, the *Program Information Report (PIR)*, child outcome data, Community Assessment, and the

Program Review Instrument for Systems Monitoring (PRISM) report. In total this information is used to identify program strengths, determine areas to strengthen, and plan appropriate strategies to effectively address the identified weaknesses of the program.

Who is responsible for the Self-Assessment?

Section 1304.50, Appendix A (Governance and Management Responsibilities), of the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* designates the Head Start program director as having operational responsibility for carrying out the Self-Assessment. Most Head Start directors engage a team of program managers and leaders in outlining a process and timeline for conducting the Self-Assessment and analyzing the results. The results of the Self-Assessment serve as a driving force in determining needs for program improvement. The Self-Assessment portion of the Governance and Management Responsibilities chart is provided below:

Grantee Agency		Delegate Agency		Grantee or Delegate Management Staff	
Governing Body has general responsibility	Policy Council must approve or disapprove	Governing Body has general responsibility	Policy Committee must approve or disapprove	Head Start program director has operating responsibility	Agency director's responsibility is determined locally

How do we ensure shared decision-making?

The Head Start director does not pursue this process alone. The Self-Assessment process provides an opportunity for involving program leaders, such as parents, Policy Council members, governing body members, and community stakeholders, and for making staff more aware of how the program operates and is viewed by its consumers. Through Self-Assessment, Head Start programs reinforce how program leaders engage in shared decision-making.

How does a Self-Assessment differ from the Federal monitoring that occurs every three years?

The primary purpose of Federal monitoring is described in Section 641A(c)(1) of the *Head Start Act*:

> *…to determine whether Head Start agencies meet standards…and results-based educational performance measures developed by the Secretary…with respect to program, administrative, financial management, and other requirements…*

The purpose of Self-Assessment is explained in section 1304.51(i)(1) of the *Head Start Performance Standards* as a method of measuring agency accomplishments, strengths, and weaknesses. Self-Assessment promotes continuous improvement of program service delivery and quality, as well as focuses attention on issues that arise in the community, the program, and among enrolled families. The processes of Self-Assessment and Federal monitoring complement each other and both are intended to ensure quality. The following table **Comparing Self-Assessment and Federal Monitoring** distinguishes the features of the two forms of review.

Comparing Self-Assessment and Federal Monitoring

Review Process	Schedule	ResponsibleEntity	Instrument	Perspective	How Results are Used
Self-Assessment	At least once a year	Head Start Grantee	Self-Assessment Guide that is comprehensive and based on Head Start Program Performance Standards	Self-critique	Shared with managers, staff and governing bodies; used to develop Program Improvement Plans to reach and exceed compliance
Federal Monitoring	At least every three years	Federal Regional Office	Standardized; Program Review Instrument for Systems Monitoring of Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees (*PRISM*)	Outside Experts	Shared with managers, staff and governing bodies; used to ensure program compliance

Although these two forms of review and quality assurance are similar, Self-Assessment is the annual opportunity for programs to obtain objective and reflective feedback about their ability to meet *Head Start Program Performance Standards* and ensure the delivery of quality services each year.

How long should a Self-Assessment take?

The time required to perform a Self-Assessment will vary with each program. While many programs have thought that the Self-Assessment is extra work, well-managed Head Start programs view the time and effort needed to complete the annual Self-Assessment as an important, integral part of the program year. The Self-Assessment process should allow for the continuation of Head Start services without interruption, yet provide time for staff participating in the process to both gather and contribute information through observations, document reviews, and interviews.

How will this Guide be useful?

This Guide is intended to be a workbook that will help you:

- Review your program's operations and program's management systems
- Analyze the results of the Self-Assessment
- Assess your program's progress in meeting its own goals and objectives
- Identify program strengths
- Identify areas where improvement is needed
- Develop and implement strategies for program improvement
- Identify training and technical assistance needs
- Prepare for a Federal monitoring review
- Ensure quality Head Start services are delivered each year

About this Guide

One of the key management responsibilities of all Head Start programs is to:

> *conduct a Self-Assessment of their effectiveness and progress in meeting program goals and objectives and in implementing Federal regulations…at least once each program year* (1304.51(i)(1) *Head Start Performance Standards*).

Programs are also required to incorporate child outcome data into their Self-Assessment process (ACYF-IM-HS-00-18).

Each Head Start program is required to develop a comprehensive process for Self-Assessment that addresses all of the management systems and service areas that are part of every well-run Head Start program. *Head Start Self-Assessment: Your Foundation for Building Program Excellence* supports programs with their Self-Assessment process.

Historically, many Head Start programs have struggled to develop a system for Self-Assessment. Consequently, many programs have used the existing Federal monitoring instrument, *PRISM*, as a basis for creating their own system because it addresses all of the Federal requirements that Head Start programs must meet.

This Guide, *Head Start Self Assessment: Your Foundation for Building Program Excellence,* assists programs to create a system that provides an in-depth assessment of all Head Start service areas and management systems, yet remains user-friendly and manageable for staff, parents and other participants. This Guide incorporates the essential ingredients of the *PRISM,* as well as feedback received from experienced Head Start directors, program managers, parent leaders, Head Start Bureau and Regional Office staff, the Regional Technical Assistance (TA) Network, and program review team members.

Principles

The workgroup that originally convened to create a vision for this resource developed four key principles to guide the work. They determined that local programs will benefit from a Self-Assessment instrument that:

- Adequately addresses all areas of the *Head Start Performance Standards*
- Can be administered by a diverse Self-Assessment team that includes not only child development and family services professionals, but also governing body members, parents and community representatives
- Promotes an efficient use of time and resources
- Provides valuable information to inform program leaders about ways to strengthen and improve the program

Four Stages of Self-Assessment

This Guide outlines four distinct stages of the Self-Assessment process. Each stage is critical and supports programs in meeting *Head Start Performance Standards* and in building programs of excellence. While it requires programs to devote significant time and energy, this process will culminate in the development and implementation of a plan to meet and exceed standards and promote continuous program improvement.

The Guide is divided into four sections representing the stages of the Self-Assessment process:

Stage 1: Preparing
Stage 2: Collecting and Synthesizing
Stage 3: Interpreting
Stage 4: Strengthening

The first stage is *Preparing Your Self-Assessment*

The Head Start director must take steps to prepare for Self-Assessment by convening a team to lead the process, determining how the program will use the Guide, informing the Policy Council and governing body, selecting and recruiting qualified participants to serve on the various Self-Assessment teams, and informing others who will be affected. Team members need to receive training on the regulations as well as the process they will use to complete the Self-Assessment booklets assigned to their team.

The second stage is *Collecting and Synthesizing the Information*

Once the program has identified the Self-Assessment teams and recruited and trained the members, the teams engage in the actual assessment process. Team members observe activities, review documents, interview people, and record and summarize their findings according to the instructions provided in the eighteen individual Self-Assessment booklets. Using this information, which is based on the eighteen Core Questions in the *PRISM*, team members begin the *analysis process* by synthesizing the data from multiple sources and consolidating this information into a Booklet Analysis. This Booklet Analysis identifies program strengths, specific weaknesses and areas to strengthen.

The third stage is *Interpreting the Information*

Once the Self-Assessment teams have completed their assigned booklets and the team leaders have analyzed the results, their work is then forwarded to the Self-Assessment leadership team. The Self-Assessment leadership team closely examines the booklet analyses. This information is *further analyzed* by displaying the data in a useful manner; establishing patterns of identified needs; uncovering underlying causes and systemic issues; and determining priorities for change and improvement. At this stage, programs should ask for clarifications on regulations or policy from Federal staff, if needed.

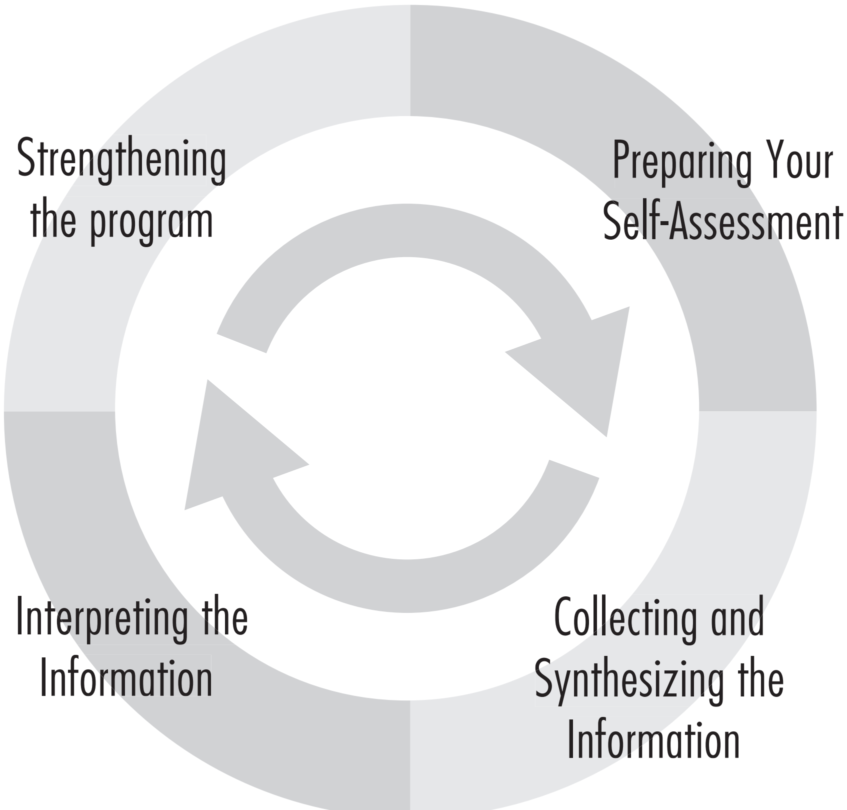
The fourth stage is *Strengthening Your Program*

The Self-Assessment has little value unless the program uses the information to drive program improvements. In this final stage, leaders use Self-Assessment results as a driving force to develop program improvement goals, desired outcomes, and action plans.

Both the results of the Self-Assessment and the plan for program improvement should be communicated widely to the governing body, staff, Policy Council, parents, and community partners. Both the Regional Office staff and the TA Network staff can provide assistance and support to Head Start programs as they develop and implement Program Improvement Plans.

Self-Assessment is a Cyclical Process

As indicated below, Self-Assessment is a cyclical process founded on the principles of *Continuous Quality Improvement.* This process requires continually monitoring, evaluating, and improving program quality and outcomes for children and families.

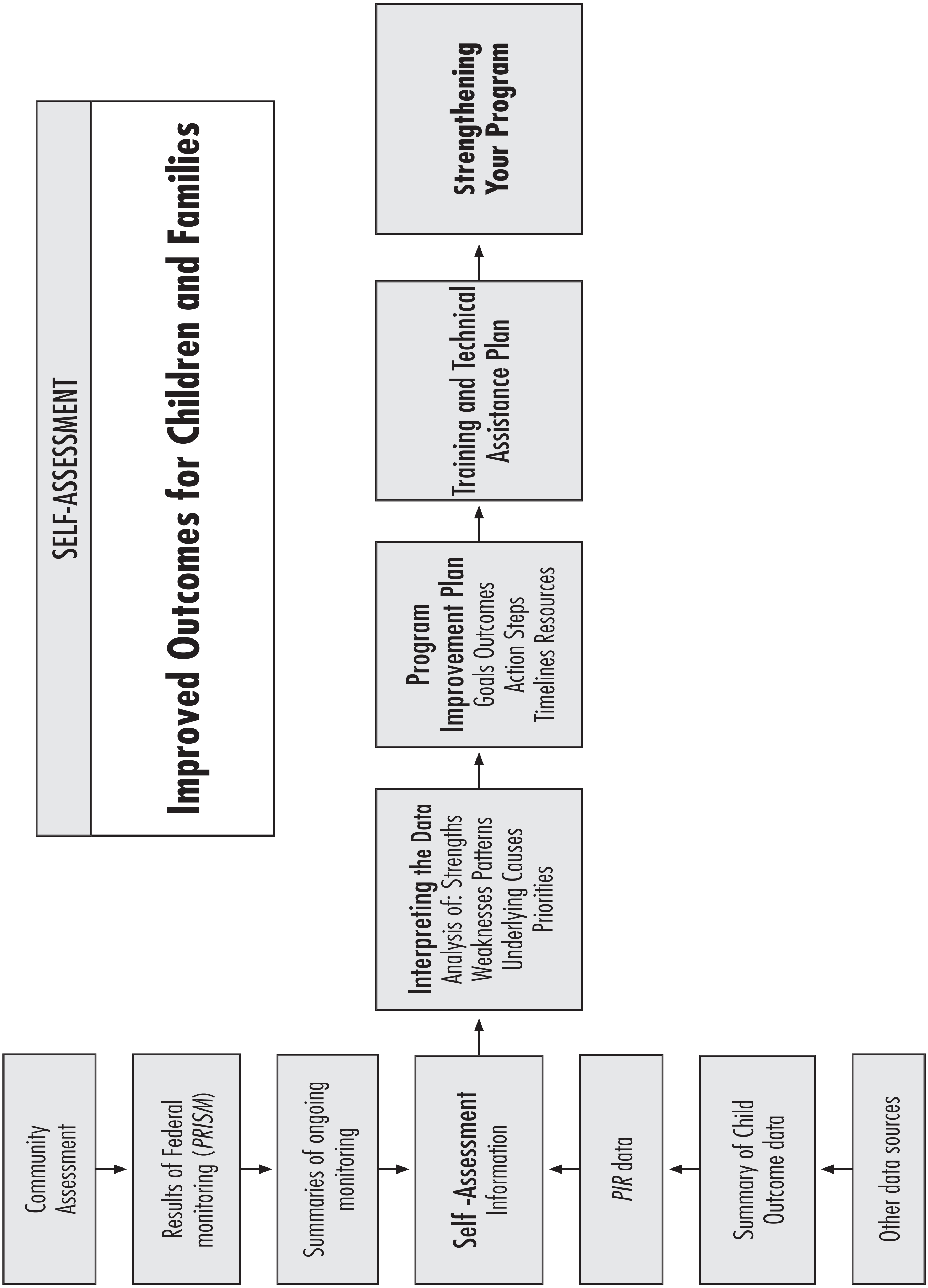


The impact of *Quality Self-Assessment*

As a result of using *Head Start Self-Assessment: Your Foundation for Building Program Excellence*, programs benefit from:

- Obtaining objective, reliable information about Head Start services and systems
- Promoting shared understanding and appreciation of Head Start goals and *Performance Standards* among the governing body, program stakeholders, and community partners
- Integrating multiple sources of data
- Conducting a thorough analysis of program data
- Creating effective Program Improvement Plans
- Designing meaningful training and technical assistance plans

Together these elements strengthen the program's foundation, support program excellence and lead to the ultimate goal—improved outcomes for children and families.
(See chart on the following page).


SELF-ASSESSMENT
Improved Outcomes for Children and Families
Community Assessment
Results of Federal monitoring (PRISM)
Summaries of ongoing monitoring
Self -Assessment Information
PIR data
Summary of Child Outcome data
Other data sources
Interpreting the Data
Analysis of: Strengths Weaknesses Patterns Underlying Causes Priorities
Program Improvement Plan
Goals Outcomes Action Steps Timelines Resources
Training and Technical Assistance Plan
Strengthening Your Program

FOUR STAGES OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

Stage 1: Preparing Your Self-Assessment

The Self-Assessment leadership team consists of a team of managers who work together to design the Self-Assessment process. The team is led by the Head Start director and may include program managers, representatives from the governing board and policy groups, and community partners.

Helpful Tools:

- Team Assignment Worksheet
- Team Leader Worksheet
- Team Participant Worksheet
- Self-Assessment Training Worksheet
- Focusing the Assessment Worksheet
- Self-Assessment Timeline Worksheet

Stage 2: Collecting and Synthesizing the Information

Team leaders recruit staff, parents, and community volunteers to serve on their individual assessment teams. Each team is responsible for collecting the information for their assigned Self-Assessment booklets. This information is consolidated and synthesized into Booklet Analyses.

Helpful Tools:

- 18 Self-Assessment Booklets, which include sample observation tools, charts, checklists, and interview questions

Team Team Team Team

Stage 3: Interpreting the Information

The Self-Assessment leadership team reconvenes to review the summary reports prepared during Stage 2. These summaries are reviewed to: identify contained areas of weaknesses, patterns of identified needs and systemic issues; reveal underlying causes; and determine priorities for change and improvement.

Helpful Tools:

- Program Strengths Worksheet
- *PRISM* Framework
- Priorities Worksheet

Stage 4: Strengthening Your Program

In this final stage, members of the Self-Assessment leadership team design and oversee plans for program improvement and establish a time frame for monitoring and assessing progress.

Helpful Tools:

- Identifying Resources Worksheet
- Program Improvement Plan
- Evaluating Your Self-Assessment System
- Regional Office Summary Report

Format

Overview of Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4

The first page of each stage of the Guide begins with an overview. The overview identifies key participants and outlines the specific activities that will take place.

Booklets

The largest of the four sections is Stage 2, *Collecting and Synthesizing the Information,* which contains 18 booklets. The booklets correspond to the *PRISM* core questions and each addresses a critical Head Start management system or service area. The *PRISM* core question on Health is made up of two parts, (a) Prevention and Early Intervention and (b) Tracking and Follow-Up. They have been divided into two separate booklets in the Guide. In addition, unlike the *PRISM*, the Guide does not contain a booklet to address Self-Assessment. Instead, you are encouraged to evaluate your Self-Assessment process after completing all four stages. An evaluation form follows in Stage 4 of this Guide.

Sample observation tools, charts, checklists, and interview questions are included as helpful tools in each booklet. Team members may use these tools or modify them as needed to support the Self-Assessment process. Some of these tools have been adapted from the *PRISM* instrument.

All 18 booklets follow a similar format. Each booklet opens with a core question describing the system or service area to be assessed. Next is a compilation of related performance standards and a number of bullets that capture the essence of each section in user-friendly terms. Assessment team members are instructed to pay close attention to this bulleted description to gain a better understanding of the critical elements of each section. Team members are encouraged to review all related Performance Standards and to refer to them repeatedly during the assessment process.

Team members are expected to use the following data collection methods to gather information to complete their booklets:

- Observe (e.g., observing classrooms, Policy Council meetings)
- Review (e.g., various data sources, such as *PRISM, PIR,* Community Assessment, as well as ongoing monitoring reports, written plans, documents, records)
- Interview (e.g., interviewing managers, direct service staff, parents)

Individual team members summarize their work and submit these summaries to their team leaders. Team leaders review these summaries and consolidate and synthesize the information into a Booklet Analysis. These 18 separate Booklet Analyses provide the basis for further distillation and analysis in Stage 3. The Self-Assessment leadership team works to: display the data in a useful manner through the *PRISM* Framework; establish patterns of identified needs; reveal underlying causes and systemic issues; and prioritize goals for strengthening the program.

Assistance is Available

You are not alone in conducting your Self-Assessment. The Regional Office staff, the Regional TA Network, and your colleagues in other Head Start programs are available to support you. In particular, the members of the Head Start TA Network can serve as coaches and facilitators throughout the continuous quality improvement process. The TA staff is trained in the use of the Self-Assessment Guide and can support you through all four stages of the process. We encourage you to fully utilize these resources as you work through the Self-Assessment process to build your program of excellence.

Self-Assessment and the Technical Assistance Network

The TA Network is available to support you throughout your Self-Assessment process. While the TA specialist is not to be assigned to a particular Self-Assessment team, your TA specialist can work with you as you design how the Self-Assessment process will look in your program and assist you in the synthesis and analysis of information, as well as in the development of the Program Improvement and T/TA Plans.

To obtain or download copies of this document…

Head Start Self-Assessment: Your Foundation for Building Program Excellence, is available in electronic format at:

www.HeadStartInfo.org

Stage 1: Preparing Your Self-Assessment

Overview

Key participants in Stage 1 include:

The Self-Assessment leadership team, which is made up of the Head Start director (or designee) and a team of managers and program leaders. The leadership team designs and leads the Self-Assessment process, analyzes the results, and incorporates the results into program improvement efforts. Your assigned TA specialist can work with you as you design how the Self-Assessment process will look in your program.

In this stage you will:

Determine how the Self-Assessment process will look in your program by:

- Introducing *Head Start Self-Assessment: Your Foundation for Building Program Excellence* to Self-Assessment leaders
- Dividing and assigning the responsibilities to make the process more manageable
- Selecting team leaders
- Recruiting participants to serve on your Self-Assessment teams
- Training Self-Assessment teams
- Focusing your assessment
- Establishing a timeline

Consult with the Policy Council in order to:

- Meet the regulatory requirement
- Ensure meaningful participation

Stage 1: Preparing Your Self-Assessment

Determine How the Self-Assessment Process Will Look in Your Program

The *Head Start Self-Assessment: Your Foundation for Building Program Excellence* is a guide to be adapted to meet the individual needs of your program. Stage 1 provides you with helpful tools to assist you as you plan how the Self-Assessment process will look in your program. This planning is essential for the development and implementation of a comprehensive Self-Assessment that yields valuable information for continuous program improvement.

To plan your Self-Assessment, you will need to:

- Convene the Self-Assessment leadership team and introduce them to the Self-Assessment Guide
- Divide the responsibilities among various teams
- Designate Self-Assessment team leaders
- Recruit participants to serve on the Self-Assessment teams
- Provide training for participants
- Focus your Self-Assessment by selecting representative child and family records, centers, classrooms, program options, child care partners, and delegate agencies
- Establish a timeline for completion of Self-Assessment activities
- Present this plan to the Policy Council for review

These steps are described in detail on the following pages, along with examples and helpful worksheets to support the planning process.

Introduce *Head Start Self-Assessment: Your Foundation for Building Program Excellence* to Self-Assessment Leaders

One of the first responsibilities of the Head Start director is to provide Self-Assessment leaders with an understanding and appreciation of the role that Self-Assessment plays in maintaining program quality and fostering positive change and continuous improvement. The director, who by Head Start regulation has operating responsibility for the Self-Assessment process, may choose to facilitate the work of the Self-Assessment leadership team or designate that responsibility to one of its members.

When recruiting members to join the Self-Assessment leadership team, directors need to consider the role of governing bodies, delegates and child care partners on that team. As stated in 1304.51(i)(1) of the *Head Start Program Performance Standards*, the Self-Assessment is conducted *"…with the consultation and participation of the policy groups and, as appropriate, other community members."* Directors should recruit these partners to the table.

The group leader should then share the Guide with the membership. Team members should become familiar with all of the materials, including the instructions, booklets, and data collection instruments. They should discuss why the Self-Assessment is being conducted, who should be involved as team leaders and team members, and whose cooperation is needed in order for it to be successful.

Dividing and Assigning the Responsibilities to Make the Process More Manageable

A quality Self-Assessment takes considerable time and effort. The process of assessing all program services and systems may be more manageable if you divide the responsibilities among various teams, designating program managers and other key decision makers as team leaders. Creating teams will have several advantages:

- The work will be spread among a larger group of individuals to lessen the burden and add depth, knowledge and valuable perspectives of many individuals to the experience
- Staff, parents, Policy Council members, participants, community partners and others serving on Self-Assessment teams will have greater access to team leaders who can provide support and guidance throughout the process
- Individual teams can focus on particular areas or systems that are more appropriate to their experience (e.g. members with expertise in fiscal matters should be on the team which covers this system)
- By recruiting managers and staff representing delegates and child care partners, you are fully investing delegates and partners in the Self-Assessment process. They will gain a fuller understanding of the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* and their importance to a quality program

Programs can determine team assignments by dividing the 18 booklets in a way that makes sense for your program. Factors that can help you determine the number and composition of each group might be:

- Your program's organizational structure and the manner in which responsibilities are assigned to management staff
- The size of your program
- The time it will take to adequately complete each booklet
- Sufficient expertise of members

The following chart illustrates just two examples of ways that the Self-Assessment responsibilities can be divided among various teams. Use these examples to come up with your own configuration and record your decisions on the **Team Assignment Worksheet** provided on page 5.

Sample Team Assignment Worksheet

Example A	
TEAM 1: Management Systems	
■ Governance ■ Communication ■ Ongoing Monitoring ■ Fiscal Management	■ Planning ■ Record-Keeping & Reporting ■ Human Resources ■ Child Outcomes
TEAM 2: Child Development and Health Services	
■ Prevention & Early Intervention ■ Disabilities Services ■ Tracking and Follow-up	■ Individualization ■ Curriculum
TEAM 3: Family and Community Partnerships:	
■ Family Partnership Building ■ Community and Child Care Partnerships	■ Parent Involvement
TEAM 4: Program Design	
■ Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA)	■ Facilities, Materials, Equipment & Transportation
Example B	
TEAM 1: Management	
■ Community and Child Care Partnerships ■ Communication ■ Ongoing Monitoring ■ Fiscal Management	■ Planning ■ Record-Keeping & Reporting ■ Human Resources ■ Facilities, Materials , Equipment & Transportation
TEAM 2: Education and Disabilities	
■ Individualization ■ Disabilities Services	■ Curriculum ■ Child Outcomes
TEAM 3: Health, Nutrition, and Mental Health	
■ Prevention and Early Intervention	■ Tracking and Follow-up
TEAM 4: Family Partnerships and ERSEA	
■ Family Partnership Building ■ Governance	■ Parent Involvement, ■ Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA)

Team Assignment Worksheet

Record your decisions about how the Self-Assessment responsibilities should be divided. List the booklets that will be used by each of the teams.

TEAM __ :	
TEAM __ :	
TEAM __ :	
TEAM __ :	
TEAM __ :	

Selecting Team Leaders

Persons who serve as leaders for each Self-Assessment team are responsible for:

- Recruiting a diverse group of team members to engage in the assessment process
- Training members of the Self-Assessment team on the content of the regulations and the process they will use to assess the program
- Describing the program structure and layout to members, pointing out key locations they will visit, and introducing them to members of the staff and Head Start community who they may need to speak with
- Assisting team members in distributing the work load, assigning tasks that correspond to the skills and abilities of members, and pairing team members, as appropriate
- Establishing a time frame for completing the assignments
- Arranging to check in with members at certain intervals to assess their progress and assist with any problems that arise
- Providing on-going support to team members
- Assisting members in summarizing the data and information they have collected and drawing conclusions
- Synthesizing information into a Booklet Analysis that identifies program strengths and areas to strengthen
- Recognizing team members for their contributions to the program

Many programs choose leaders with experience and expertise in the service or management areas to which they are assigned. Other programs choose leaders from different content areas in order to enhance the objectivity of the process.

Team Leader Worksheet

Use the following **Team Leader Worksheet** to help you make decisions about what kinds of skills your team leaders should have and who would be the best candidate to assume a team leadership position.

Title	Skills/Perspectives	Team Leader (name, position)
Team 1:		
Team 2:		
Team 3:		
Team 4:		
Team 5:		

Recruiting Participants to Serve on your Self-Assessment Teams

Although the Self-Assessment process will be heavily supported by program staff, it provides a wonderful opportunity to involve others. The guidance attached to Regulation 1304.51(i)(1), program Self-Assessment and monitoring, reads: *"consider including staff, policy group members, parents, representatives from community organizations, governing body members, and staff from other Head Start agencies on the Self-Assessment team*." To the extent possible, it is desirable to recruit a team that is representative of the diversity of enrolled children, families and the local community.

Serving on a Self-Assessment team provides parents with an opportunity to learn important new skills that can be applied to their goals for personal or professional development. Including individuals from outside your program can offer a tremendous learning opportunity for both parties. You may want to contact peers from nearby Head Start programs and offer to assist with their assessment if they will assist with yours. Consider inviting early childhood development programs in the local area that would be willing to lend a hand. Affirmatively recruit team members who have the right skills and will contribute to the team. When recruiting, be sure your candidates have the time to engage in the process.

In selecting potential team members, take into consideration the different skills and qualities that the task requires. In addition to having an interest and/or expertise relating to Head Start services or systems, participants serving on the assessment team should have the following skills and qualities:

- Objectivity
- Professional conduct
- An appreciation for confidentiality
- One or more of the following:
  - ✓ Observation skills
  - ✓ Interview skills
  - ✓ Reading and documentation skills

Use the following **Team Participant Worksheet** to record your ideas for staff and volunteers who might serve on each of the Self-Assessment teams. We recommend that you list more persons than are actually needed, in the event that some volunteers have limited availability.

Team Participant Worksheet

List the positions, titles, or specific names (e.g., parent, board member, education content expert, Mary Jones, etc.) of staff and volunteers who you would like to recruit to serve on each of the Self-Assessment teams.

Team 1 — Title:		
Team 2 — Title:		
Team 3 — Title:		
Team 4 — Title:		
Team 5 — Title:		

Training Self-Assessment Teams

Team leaders should give careful thought to the training that they provide to team members so their team will be fully prepared to engage in the assessment process. The quality of the initial orientation and training as well as on-going support have a direct impact on the quality and usefulness of the results. Key elements of the training should include:

- Discussion of the purpose of Self-Assessment and how the results are an integral part of the planning process
- Overview of the program's organizational structure and description of program services and options
- Distribution of Head Start regulations and booklets relating to team assignments (duplicate the booklets as needed to provide everyone with a copy)
- Overview of regulations and discussion of their intent
- Review of the booklets and the three methods of collecting information: review, observe, and interview
- Distribution of written plans describing services in each of the content areas
- Review of important data sources that may be relevant to your work such as the *PRISM* Report, *PIR* data, Community Assessment, child outcome information, strategic plan, short and long term program goals, ongoing monitoring reports, and summaries of staff development plans
- Discussion of the qualities that make for a good team member (e.g. they are objective, honest, respectful of staff) and review of professional conduct expected of the team
- Sharing of the skills, expertise, and qualities of each member of the team

There are a number of different approaches to training staff and volunteers who serve on Self-Assessment teams. You may choose to:

- Keep all participants together for the entire training
- Provide an orientation to the full group followed by individual team training
- Conduct all training in individual teams

Use the following **Self-Assessment Training Worksheet** to assist you in designing the orientation and training session(s) for your Self-Assessment teams.

Self-Assessment Training Worksheet

Full Group	
Training Content	Trainer(s)

Individual Teams		
	Training Content	Trainer(s)
Team 1 — Title:		
Team 2 — Title:		
Team 3 — Title:		
Team 4 — Title:		
Team 5 — Title:		

Focusing Your Assessment

Many programs enroll large numbers of children and families and operate classrooms in more than one location. Your Self-Assessment leadership team may determine that including every classroom and every child's file in the Self-Assessment process will be too time-consuming. Decide if the Self-Assessment team will look at the entire program or focus their efforts on a representative sample.

A sample should be chosen which represents a cross-section of children, families, program options and services. Your sample should be large enough to establish whether quality is consistent throughout the program.

For grantees with delegate agencies and child care partnerships, it is important to make sure that these segments of your program are fully included in the Self-Assessment process. Determine if your Self-Assessment teams are responsible for assessing delegate programs and child care partners at this time, or if the delegate or partner will engage in an independent assessment.

Use the following **Focusing the Assessment Worksheet** to record your decisions.

Focusing the Assessment Worksheet

Select centers, classrooms, program options and records that will give you a full picture of the effectiveness of systems and services. Determine the approach you will take to assess partners and delegates. Record your decisions in the space provided.

Centers	
Classrooms	
Program Options	
Child and Family Records	
Child Care Partners	
Delegate Agencies	

Establishing a Timeline

Develop a timeline for teams to begin and end the process. Programs may wish to conduct Self-Assessment in phases. Others may choose to focus their efforts so that the Self-Assessment takes place over a number of weeks. Since Self-Assessment is an integral part of program planning, be sure to coordinate your Self-Assessment with your planning calendar. It is important that you adapt the process to best meet the needs of your particular program. Think about scheduling your own Self-Assessment at a time during the program year when:

- The Policy Council has enough experience to be full participants in the process
- Services are well underway
- Time remains before the end of the program year to correct any issues that arise, to maximize outcomes for children and families currently participating in the program
- The results can be used to support the development of the program's Training and Technical Assistance Plan and annual grant application

Many programs prefer to stagger their schedule so that the assessment of program services precedes the assessment of management systems. Teams assigned to assess Head Start management systems may benefit from the information gathered during the assessment of program services. They can use the information to draw conclusions about the relationship between systems and services and determine how systems are affecting services to children and families. Staggering the schedule also permits staff and volunteers to serve on more than one assessment team.

The following **Month-At-A-Glance Chart** shows, as an example, how the Self-Assessment might look in a program that chooses to complete Stage 2 of the process within one month.

Month-At-A-Glance			
1st Week	2nd Week	3rd Week	4th Week
▶ Self-Assessment Teams receive orientation and training	▶ Team conducts Self-Assessment	▶ Team conducts Self-Assessment ▶ Team Leaders check in with team's progress	▶ Team summarizes results

Use the following **Self-Assessment Timeline Worksheet** to set target dates for steps in the Self-Assessment process.

Self-Assessment Timeline Worksheet

	Activity	Date
Stage 1 Preparing	Recruit and convene the Self-Assessment leadership team	
	Convene the Self-Assessment leadership team to design the Self-Assessment process	
	Present process to Policy Council for consultation	
	Recruit participants to serve on Self-Assessment teams	
	Convene teams for orientation and training	
Stage 2 Collecting and Synthesizing	Draw on multiple data sources to complete service area booklets	
	Draw on multiple data sources to complete management system booklets	
	Summarize booklet information for Individual Team Member Summary	
	Consolidate information from individual team members into Team Leader Booklet Analysis	
Stage 3 Interpreting	Reconvene Self-Assessment leadership team to review and analyze results	
	Identify program strengths	
	Display information from the 18 Booklet Analyses in a useful manner	
	Establish patterns of identified needs	
	Reveal underlying causes and systemic issues	
	Classify and prioritize the identified weaknesses and areas to strengthen	
Stage 4 Strengthening	Develop a program improvement plan by identifying goals, desired outcomes, and specific action steps	
	Develop and implement a Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) Plan	
	Monitor and assess progress in implementing the Program Improvement Plan and T/TA Plan	

Including the Policy Council

Once you have completed the worksheets in Stage 1, present your completed package to the Policy Council for review. Ask members of your Self-Assessment leadership team who serve on the Policy Council to assist you in making the presentation.

Section 1304.51(i)(1) of the *Head Start Performance Standards* requires the consultation and participation of the Policy Council in the Self-Assessment process. Section 1304.50(d)(1)(viii) provides the following guidance:

> *As active participants in the ongoing process of annual Self-Assessment . . . the Policy Council and Policy Committee consider the extent to which:*
>
> - *The time schedule for Self-Assessment is reasonable*
> - *An appropriate assessment team has been formed, which includes parents and adequate representation from the community*
> - *The Self-Assessment team receives training on how to conduct an assessment*
> - *All team members are fully aware of the results of the last Self-Assessment, as well as of the Federal monitoring review*
> - *The measures used to conduct the Self-Assessment adequately evaluate the program*
> - *Findings from the Self-Assessment are reported to the Policy Council, Policy Committee, Parent Committees and governing bodies*
> - *Improvement Plans are appropriate and feasible in terms of resources and timeframes*

Stage 3: Interpreting the Information

Overview

Key participants in Stage 3 include:

Your designated team of managers and program leaders who are charged with leading the process, analyzing the information, and incorporating the results into program improvement efforts. In addition, your assigned TA specialist is available to support the work of the team as you interpret the information collected through your Self-Assessment. You may also want to seek input from and share key findings with program leaders, staff and other Head Start stakeholders.

In this stage you will:

- Review and further analyze all of the summary materials generated by each of the Self-Assessment teams
- Examine program strengths and accomplishments
- Analyze and interpret areas to strengthen
- Display the data in a useful manner
- Identify underlying causes and systemic issues
- Classify and prioritize health and safety concerns
- Classify and prioritize short-term improvements
- Classify and prioritize long-term improvements

Stage 3: Interpreting the Information

Interpreting the Information You Have Collected

After completing Stage 2, *Collecting and Synthesizing the Information*, you will find that your Self-Assessment teams have generated a great deal of information and data. A significant amount of effort went into completing each booklet, with notes reflecting the results of observations, document reviews, surveys, and interviews.

In this stage, the Self-Assessment leadership team will review, process and make sense of this information. This is one of the most challenging, yet critical, steps in the Self-Assessment process. This information analysis is necessary to draw meaning from the data that was gathered and compare existing program practice with *Head Start Performance Standards*.

Analysis of information requires:

- consolidating the data into a more manageable size
- displaying the data in a useful manner
- uncovering underlying causes, including systemic issues
- classifying and prioritizing the information

You have already begun the process of analysis in Stage 2 by having Self- Assessment team leaders consolidate the information into Booklet Analyses. At this point, it is necessary to further consolidate the data and display it in a way that enables you to identify weaknesses, and determine underlying causes and systemic issues. This process will enable you to gain insight and draw reasonable conclusions from the data, which is necessary for the development of your Program Improvement Plan and your Training and Technical Assistance Plan in Stage 4.

Examining Strengths

Before turning your attention to the concerns and needs that emerged from the Self-Assessment process, take time to identify and document the key strengths and accomplishments of the program. Take stock of the information regarding strengths that appears in the Booklet Analyses prepared by team leaders. Focus on new accomplishments, exceptional strengths or other areas that exceed the *Head Start Program Performance Standards*, and record the information on the following **Program Strengths Worksheet.**

The information you record will inform your work in Stage 4 by providing a broader program context. To support continuous quality improvement, you will need to draw upon the strengths of the program in order to develop and support new strategies to improve outcomes for children and families. This information should also be included in any Self-Assessment summary reports you prepare for the staff, families, Policy Council, governing body, and the greater community. These reports will provide a balanced program perspective so that others are aware of the good work you do.

Program Strengths Worksheet

Record the key strengths and significant achievements that you want to share with others and build upon in the future.

Key Strengths and Achievements

Analysis and Interpretation

Analyzing information is a complex process. Analysis of data needs to be conducted in a systematic and logical way so that information can be reviewed and processed, and reasonable and reliable conclusions can be drawn. While some problems are readily identifiable, others may not be as obvious. In addition, while some issues may be limited to specific program functions or segments, others may be more overarching. The identification of problems, the determination as to whether they are contained or systemic, and the formation of conclusions about their underlying causes, will form the basis for developing the Program Improvement Plan and the T/TA Plan.

Displaying the Data

There are many different methods for the analysis of Self-Assessment information and data. As the purpose of the Head Start Self-Assessment process is to assure consistency with the *Performance Standards* and help programs strive for excellence, a method that has proven especially effective for Head Start programs is the use of the *PRISM* Framework. This framework, a matrix of all eighteen systems and services contained in the *Head Start Program Performance Standards*, provides a tool to display the information from the Booklet Analyses and identify systems and services needing improvement.

The *PRISM* Framework: Analysis of Areas to Strengthen is included on page 11 to assist programs in organizing and displaying their Self-Assessment data to determine areas of contained weaknesses, patterns of identified needs and systemic issues.

Take each of the specific program weaknesses and areas to strengthen that appear in the Booklet Analyses and use the *PRISM* Framework to determine the relevant service and system. Once you have made your decision, record the information in the corresponding square. Some programs use sticky notes to physically place each item onto the corresponding square on the grid. This will provide a picture or map of all the identified weaknesses and can assist you to identify any patterns within or across individual systems and service areas.

The sample *PRISM* Framework on page 13 shows examples of specific areas to be strengthened that are mapped onto the grid. For example, the Self-Assessment data may have demonstrated a lack of follow-up on recorded changes in children's behavior while on medication. This need would be mapped onto the grid along the system of *Record-Keeping and Reporting* and under the services of *Prevention and Early Intervention.*

Issues that have been identified through the Self-Assessment process may reflect contained areas of weaknesses, or they may reflect larger systemic problems. The *PRISM* Framework is a useful tool to help you visually display both isolated areas of weaknesses as well as systemic issues within or across particular systems and service areas.

Underlying Causes

Once you have displayed all the information onto the *PRISM* Framework, take time to review the weaknesses that you have identified. For each area to strengthen, you will need to uncover the underlying cause(s). Identifying these underlying causes will facilitate the development of appropriate and effective strategies to strengthen program systems and services.

To uncover underlying causes, it may be necessary to refer back to the information collected in each of the 18 Self-Assessment booklets. In addition, members of the Self-Assessment teams may be able to provide insight and clarification based on their review of particular program and service areas. Examples of common underlying causes include: lack of knowledge in a particular area; inadequate supervision and support for staff; and inadequate documentation systems (forms, communication mechanisms, tracking systems, etc) in place to facilitate and record the process or service.

Contained Areas of Weaknesses

Some items displayed on the *PRISM* Framework are contained problems that do not reflect larger systemic issues. For each of these items, the leadership team should review the information collected in Stage 2, as well as other relevant program documents and records to uncover the underlying causes.

In **Example A** on page 15, the issue of under-enrollment has been identified as a contained area of weakness. In order to develop effective strategies to address this issue, it is essential to uncover the underlying problems that have caused the under-enrollment. Underlying causes may include, but are not limited to: changes in community demographics, problems in the program's recruitment system, lack of transportation, lack of availability and accessibility of services, inappropriate program options to meet families' needs, or poor program reputation within the community.

Patterns and Systemic Issues

The *PRISM* Framework display may also demonstrate an underlying systemic problem within specific management systems and service areas. As your program's management systems exist to support program services, a breakdown in a key management system may result in negative effects in a particular program area or across multiple program service areas. A pattern of multiple issues within a particular system (along one row of the grid) often points to an underlying systemic issue. Similarly, multiple weaknesses within one service area (within one column of the grid) may indicate a significant problem in that particular service area. Identifying such patterns will help programs plan effective strategies to improve and strengthen management systems and program service areas.

In the sample *PRISM* Framework grid provided on page 13, multiple weaknesses have been mapped onto the system of *Record-Keeping and Reporting* and the service area of *Parent Involvement*. When patterns such as these emerge, programs must investigate these areas to uncover underlying causes of these systemic issues.

In **Example B** on page 16, Program XYZ has identified weaknesses within their system of *Record-Keeping and Reporting*. Underlying causes may include, but are not limited to: lack of understanding of the purpose and procedures for record-keeping; inadequate supervision to ensure staff follow-through; ineffective forms or tracking systems; and inadequate time allowed to complete records and reports.

Similarly, **Example C** on page 17 shows a weakness within the service area of *Parent Involvement.* Underlying causes may include, but are not limited to: staff not understanding the value of parent involvement or not knowing how to promote it; inadequate supervision to assist staff to support parent involvement; and ineffective tracking systems to promptly identify any problems.

Identifying underlying causes is critical for the development of effective strategies to promote continuous quality improvement. In Stage 4, you will apply the information you have uncovered about underlying causes to the development of a Program Improvement Plan and a T/TA Plan.

PRISM Framework: Analysis of Areas to Strengthen

Systems	Services and Partnerships								
	Child Development and Health Services					Family and Community Partnerships			Program Design
	Prevention and Early Intervention	Individualization	Disabilities Services	Curriculum and Assessment	Child Outcomes	Family Partnership	Parent Involvement	Community Partnerships	Facilities, Materials., Equip, Transp
Program Governance									
Planning									
Communication									
Record-Keeping and Reporting									
Ongoing Monitoring									
Self-Assessment									
Human Resources									
Fiscal Management									
ERSEA									

PRISM Framework: Analysis of Areas to Strengthen

SAMPLE

Systems	Services and Partnerships								
	Child Development and Health Services					Family and Community Partnerships			Program Design
	Prevention and Early Intervention	Individualization	Disabilities Services	Curriculum and Assessment	Child Outcomes	Family Partnership	Parent Involvement	Community Partnerships	Facilities, Materials., Equip, Transp
Program Governance							Parents on Policy Council rarely attend meetings	No community representatives on Policy Council	
Planning					No evidence of child outcome data being used for program planning		Parents were not involved in development of program plans and policies		
Communication							Limited materials for parents in languages other than English		
Record-Keeping and Reporting	Lack of follow-up on recorded changes in children's behaviors while on medication	Twenty-five percent of lesson plans reviewed lacked documentation of individualization	Interagency agreements with LEA's are outdated			Inconsistent Family Partnership Agreements—some missing information	Inconsistent documentation of parent involvement in classroom curriculum		No work order system for maintenance issues
Ongoing Monitoring									
Self-Assessment							Parents were not provided an opportunity to participate in last year's self-assessment		
Human Resources							Parents did not participate in the recruitment and screening of Head Start employees		
Fiscal Management									
ERSEA									Program is under-enrolled by more than 20%

Example A Identifying underlying causes for a contained area of weakness

Issue: Program XYZ is more than 20% under-enrolled.
What are the underlying causes of under-enrollment for this program?

In addition to the Self-Assessment Booklets, it would be helpful to review:

- Community Assessment
- Staff surveys
- Parent surveys
- Community partnership agreements
- Enrollment data from past years
- Program recruitment policies and procedures
- Program waitlists
- Other sources identified by the Self-Assessment leadership team

Questions to consider:

- Has the community population changed in the past year?
- How are program options meeting the community's needs?
- How does the program ensure services are available and accessible to families?
- Is the under-enrollment program-wide or limited to some sites?
- Is there a waitlist? Is this list program-wide or limited to some sites?
- How does the program know the extent to which parents are satisfied with services?
- What is the reputation of the Head Start program within the community?

Underlying causes:

A review of the Community Assessment shows that program options are meeting the needs of families in the community, but that there has been a change in the community population over the past few years; many families have had to relocate in response to increasing housing costs in the northern part of the city. A review of enrollment and wait list documents reveals that under-enrollment is limited to sites in the northern part of the city. Sites in the southern part of the city have long waiting lists. It appears that the services provided by Program XYZ are not available for many eligible families in the southern part of the city, while classrooms are under-enrolled in the northern part of the city where fewer eligible families reside.

Developing strategies:

Plans to address under-enrollment in Program XYZ will need to focus on these underlying causes, and consider issues related to program design, site locations, transportation, wait-list policies and procedures, recruitment strategies, resources, and facilities, as well as other relevant management systems and service areas.

Example B Identifying underlying causes of a systemic issue

Issue: Program XYZ has demonstrated significant problems in its system of record-keeping and reporting across program service areas.
What are the underlying causes of systemic record keeping issues?

In addition to the Self-Assessment Booklets, it would be helpful to review:

- Child records
- Family partnership agreements
- Lesson plans
- Home visit and parent teacher conference forms
- Policies and procedures manual
- Staff Training logs
- Staff surveys
- Staff evaluations
- Supervision documentation
- LEAs
- Work order system
- Program plans

Questions to consider:

- Do program plans, procedures and policies clearly reflect record-keeping and reporting responsibilities and requirements?
- Are staff receiving adequate and ongoing training regarding their record-keeping and reporting roles and responsibilities?
- Are current forms and tracking systems efficient and effective?
- Does the supervision system include regular review and discussion of record-keeping and reporting documentation?
- Do staff work schedules allow time for record-keeping?

Underlying causes:

A review of staff surveys and evaluations reveals a lack of staff understanding of the purpose and procedures of record-keeping and reporting. In addition, supervision documentation does not address record-keeping and reporting responsibilities, and the tracking mechanism is unreliable.

Developing strategies:

Plans for improving the record-keeping and reporting system will need to focus on these underlying causes and address: ongoing staff development and competence; tracking systems that monitor services and ensure program compliance; supervisory systems; program policies and procedures regarding record-keeping and reporting; as well as other management areas to ensure strong and comprehensive systems that will support quality services.

Example C Identifying underlying causes of a pattern of weaknesses in a service area

Issue: Program XYZ has demonstrated a significant lack of parent involvement in the program.
What are the underlying causes for the lack of parent involvement for this program?

In addition to the Self-Assessment Booklets, it would be helpful to review:

- Policy Council roster and minutes
- Bylaws, in particular sections on maintaining membership
- Program plans
- Annual Self-Assessment and minutes from planning meetings
- Child/family records
- Parent surveys and program evaluations
- Staff/parent training records
- Hiring procedures and documentation of interviews
- Parent Committee minutes and notices
- Notices for parent meetings and program activities

Questions to consider:

- Does the program philosophy and culture promote parent involvement?
- Is there an expectation that parents are partners in all aspects of program planning and policy development?
- Are parent involvement and education activities responsive to the ongoing expressed needs of parents?
- Are there opportunities to include parents in the development of the program's curriculum and approach to child development and education?
- What methods are used to communicate with non-English speaking families?
- What role does staff play in supporting parent involvement?
- Does the supervision system include regular review and discussion of parent involvement?

Underlying causes:

The review of the Policy Council materials revealed a well-defined process for establishing a Council but lacked a process for maintaining membership. Bylaws did not include a process to monitor Policy Council attendance or replace members who have not attended. Written program plans include a separate section dedicated to parent involvement but do not indicate how parents would be active participants in program operations, planning and development. A monthly calendar of parent activities is distributed to parents the last week of every month. It is the only method used to notify parents of upcoming events and is printed in English only.

Developing strategies:

Plans for increasing parent involvement in Program XYZ will need to focus on these underlying causes, and consider ways in which the program's mission statement, philosophy and culture are aligned with program practices and how policies and procedures integrate parent involvement throughout the program. In addition, plans to encourage parent involvement will need to address the program's communication systems and support effective staff and parent leadership.

Classifying and Prioritizing Areas to Strengthen

Use the information collected through the Self-Assessment process to classify the areas to strengthen. Complete the following **Priorities Worksheets** as you identify three types of concerns you want to address in your final Program Improvement Plan:

Section 1: Health and Safety. The team should determine if there are areas of concern that affect the health and safety of children, families and staff. The team will need to resolve these issues immediately. All health and safety issues should be considered *high priority.*

Section 2: Short-Term Improvements. The team should identify any service area or operational issues that managers and content area experts can address in a quick and efficient manner.

Section 3: Long-Term Improvements. The team should also identify any major areas of concern that require prolonged effort. Often, these are systemic issues that cut across program areas and services. These may necessitate major program improvement. Long term improvements typically require an action plan that entails a focused effort by key staff and program leaders, creative strategies, time commitment and the shift or addition of program resources through expansion or development of community partnerships.

Frequently, a team will need to prioritize multiple program improvement goals to ensure that it does not jeopardize its chance of success by spreading resources too thin.

As you prioritize the areas you want to strengthen, you may want to have the team revisit the core objectives of Head Start found at the beginning of the Guide:

- Enhance children's growth and development
- Strengthen families as the primary nurturers of their children
- Provide children with educational, health and nutritional services
- Link children and families to needed community services
- Ensure well-managed programs that involve parents in decision-making

Program managers will want to give priority to areas where they are not meeting these core objectives. Goals that address weaknesses in management systems or service areas also deserve top priority. For example, teams may place a priority on the following issues:

- Lack of an active Policy Council
- Significant under-enrollment
- Failure to conduct behavioral screenings
- Inadequate ongoing monitoring systems

PRIORITIES WORKSHEET

Section 1: Health and Safety

Health and Safety
Health and Safety issues are considered high priority and must be resolved immediately.
(List in order of importance)

Areas to Strengthen	Data Sources	Timeframe	Need for T/TA?

Use the last column of this worksheet to note the area where training and/or technical assistance may be needed.

PRIORITIES WORKSHEET

Section 2: Short-Term Improvements

Short-Term Improvements Operational issues that managers and content area experts can address in a quick and efficient manner. (List in order of importance)			
Areas to Strengthen	Data Sources	Timeframe	Need for T/TA?

Use the last column of this worksheet to note the area where training and/or technical assistance may be needed.

PRIORITIES WORKSHEET

Section 3: Long-Term Improvements

Long-Term Improvements Systemic issues and major areas of change that take significant time, resources and commitment of program leaders. (List in order of importance)			
Areas to Strengthen	Data Sources	Timeframe	Need for T/TA?

Use the last column of this worksheet to note the area where training and/or technical assistance may be needed.

Stage 4: Strengthening Your Program

Overview

Key participants in Stage 4 include:

Your team of managers and program leaders designated to coordinate the process, as well as analyze and incorporate the results into program improvement efforts. Again, you may want to include your TA specialist as you incorporate your results into program improvement efforts.

In this stage you will:

- Recall the areas to strengthen that you identified in Stage 3 and develop plans for program improvement by:
  - ➤ Identifying resources available to you that can support your program improvement effort such as:
    - ✓ Expertise within your program
    - ✓ Regional Office staff
    - ✓ Other Head Start programs
    - ✓ Outside consultants, trainers and technical assistance providers
    - ✓ Head Start Technical Assistance Network
  - ➤ Designing specific plans to achieve your goals that include:
    - ✓ Goal identification
    - ✓ Desired outcomes
    - ✓ Action steps
    - ✓ Persons responsible
    - ✓ Resources
    - ✓ Timelines
- Develop your Training and Technical Assistance Plan
- Determine how you will evaluate your progress toward completing your Program Improvement Plan
- Reflect on your experience with the Self-Assessment process and determine ways that it can be improved for the following year
- Provide your Head Start program specialist with a brief summary of your Self-Assessment including program strengths identified by the Self-Assessment team and your plans for addressing areas that need improvement

Stage 4: Strengthening Your Program

Developing Plans for Program Improvement

Now it is time to develop the goals for program improvement with members of the leadership team and make concrete plans to move the program forward in its quality improvement efforts. Leadership team members may choose to use the attached **Program Improvement Plan** on page 7 or use a format more familiar to the program for this purpose. The team begins this process by identifying all of the available resources that can be applied to the plan. Your TA specialist is available to assist you in this regard.

Identifying Resources

Engage members of the team in a discussion to generate a complete list of resources that can be incorporated into your plan for strengthening the program. Record their ideas in the **Identifying Resources Worksheet** that is attached on the following page. As you compile your list of resources, include resources that are available within the program, external to the program and within the TA Network.

Resources available within the program might include:

- Members of the governing body, Policy Council parents and community representatives, and members of your various advisory groups who have expertise in a variety of different areas
- Staff members who hold expertise in specific areas
- Other professionals within the grantee agency

External sources include:

- Community Partners
- Peers in other Head Start programs
- Workshops, conferences, and seminars
- Academic institutions and courses
- Consultants and trainers

Resources within the TA Network include:

- Your locally-based TA specialist who is available to support your improvement effort, can link you to TA content specialists, and help you to identify and access other resources both within and outside the TA Network

If you are seeking clarification on Federal policy or Head Start regulations, you should contact your Head Start program specialist at the Regional Office.

Identifying Resources Worksheet

The following resources are available to assist in program improvement efforts. These resources should be incorporated, as needed, into the action plans developed for each goal area.

Resources	Comments

Developing Your Program Improvement Plan

In Stage 3 you determined the specific health and safety, short-term, and long-term improvements you would like to see in your program. Your next step is to involve team members and staff with distinct expertise in designing specific action plans to serve as your roadmap for change.

Goals

Revisit the priorities you identified during Stage 3 and determine how they can be translated into goals that will strengthen the program and improve outcomes for children and families. Examples of goals might include:

- Redesigning Head Start management systems such as communication, record-keeping, or ongoing monitoring
- Improving services in a particular content area
- Strengthening professional development of staff

Outcomes

The team should identify the desired outcomes relative to each goal. A desired outcome should be stated as an end-result that will demonstrate improvement. For example, if the Self-Assessment or other data sources indicate that there is a lack of documented follow-up in child/family health files, a desired outcome might be: “All identified child/family health issues are tracked and appropriate follow-up action taken.” However, if the issue is actually that the health issues are being tracked and follow-up actions taken, but not documented, then the desired outcome statement might be: “All follow-up actions taken are documented in children’s health files”.

You may want to divide your leadership team into small groups, assigning members to work on one or two goals most aligned with their area of interest and expertise. Assign managers and your program’s content area specialists to address goals related to the service areas in which they work.

Action Steps

For each of your goals, you must identify the necessary steps to reach the desired outcome successfully. As you work through this process, consider ways in which the program can build upon its existing strengths.

Action steps might include:

- Modifying policies and procedures
- Shifting resources from one program area to another
- Securing new resources
- Developing new partnerships
- Obtaining training or technical assistance

Provide each team with copies of the **Program Improvement Plan** on the following page. The plan provides space for team members to identify:

- Goals
- Outcomes
- Action steps
- Person(s) responsible
- Resources that will be applied to the effort
- Expected dates of completion

As a final step, program leaders should coordinate the new **Program Improvement Plan** with other plans that address program improvement efforts such as a *Quality Improvement Plan* or strategic plan. This will help you to:

- Reexamine and identify the goals that are most critical to the program
- Avoid moving in too many different directions and spreading resources too thin
- Improve the likelihood of attaining goals and reaching higher outcomes for children and families
- Use the results to develop a comprehensive T/TA Plan for your program

Program Improvement Plan

GOAL:
DESIRED OUTCOMES:

ACTION STEP	PERSON(s) RESPONSIBLE	RESOURCES	DATES

Training and Technical Assistance Plan

One strategy related to the overall continuous quality improvement process will be the development and implementation of a Training and Technical Assistance Plan. The development of this plan should be a natural progression from the Self-Assessment process and the development of the Program Improvement Plan. The Regional Office and the TA Network will work with you as you develop and implement your T/TA Plan. This plan will need to be submitted with your annual grant application.

Your Regional Office and the TA Network will work together to support you through this process and help you implement the specific activities outlined in your T/TA Plan.

Monitoring and Assessing Progress in Reaching Goals and Improving Outcomes

To ensure that programs achieve the goals they have established, it is critical to identify a process for monitoring and assessing implementation of the Program Improvement Plan. When following up on the Program Improvement Plan it is important to ask:

- Have we completed the action steps as outlined in the plan? If not, why not?
- What barriers do we face in implementing change? How can they be overcome?
- Do we need to make adjustments to our plan?
- Are we making substantial and timely progress towards reaching our goal?
- Are we likely to attain our anticipated outcome at our present rate of progress?

By conducting routine follow-ups, the team can identify barriers to change and make necessary adjustments to the original plan. You may discover during a follow-up review that you need to institute new strategies and action steps to achieve your intended outcome or that you may want to apply new and different resources to the plan.

Evaluating Your Self-Assessment System

Before adjourning your Self-Assessment leadership team, while memories are still fresh, you should solicit their assistance in evaluating the entire Self-Assessment process. The feedback they provide will give you valuable information that can be used to refine and improve the process for subsequent years. The following **Evaluating Your Self-Assessment System Worksheet** can help you in that evaluation.

Evaluating Your Self-Assessment System Worksheet

Think about the process that you recently used to conduct your Self-Assessment. What worked well for team members, staff, parents, etc.?

What aspects of the Self-Assessment did not work well?

Were there enough participants so that the team was inclusive and able to spread the work out appropriately?

Was adequate time allowed for team members to complete their work? Did the time frame cause undue interruptions for staff or others who had to be responsive to the Self-Assessment team's need for information?

How do the results of the Self-Assessment compare with your most recent Federal monitoring review?

What would you do differently next year? Make specific recommendations that can be considered for next year's Self-Assessment.

Sharing Your Results with the Regional Office

The Head Start Bureau views Self-Assessment as a critical management and evaluation tool. Strong, well-managed programs conduct comprehensive Self-Assessments based on *Head Start Program Performance Standards* and use the results to guide continuous quality improvement towards program excellence. The following **Regional Office Summary Report** should be used to summarize the results of the Self-Assessment.

The following information should be submitted with your annual grant reapplication: summary of the annual Self-Assessment, Program Improvement Plan, and T/TA Plan.

Celebration

Now that you have completed this year's Self-Assessment process, it is time to celebrate this important team accomplishment and to acknowledge and thank all who have participated.

Program Self-Assessment Results
Regional Office Summary Report
Program Year 20___

Program Name:____

Dates of Self-Assessment:____

Participants in the Self-Assessment Process: Provide the positions or titles of the various stakeholders who participated in the Self-Assessment process such as staff, parents, Policy Council, governing body, community partners (no need to list specific names).

Program strengths identified:

Strength	Description
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
Other	

Goals for program improvement:

Goals for Improvement	Description
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
Other	

Head Start Director **Date** **Policy Council Chair** **Date**

Attach your Training and Technical Assistance Plan here.