

Key Performance Area #1: Program Planning

Targeted Questions: Policy Council Interview

Purpose

The Office of Head Start wants to understand the Policy Council's active role in:

- Supporting the agency's mission
- Developing the program's goals
- Contributing to the program's plans for delivering high-quality comprehensive services
- Ensuring the health and safety of Head Start children and families

The Policy Council provides a forum to give parents a voice in program planning and decision-making for the Head Start program. The program relies on the parents and community members on the Policy Council to use their experience and expertise to assist in developing and reviewing program goals and plans. The Policy Council approves and submits to the governing board decisions about program planning and supports the program in implementing its plans.

Planning – CM 1.1

Think about your participation in planning and decision-making to ensure the program provides high-quality comprehensive services to children and families.

How do the plans for providing services align with the community's needs (e.g., are services provided in the necessary languages; are they culturally sensitive)?

The Policy Council should describe:

- *Its familiarity with the program's plans*
- *How the program's plans meet community needs*
- *How it created, reviewed, or provided feedback on the program's plans*

Think about how you participate in planning and decision-making to ensure the program ensures the health and safety of children at the program.

How do the plans ensure that children are healthy and safe?

The Policy Council should describe:

- *Its familiarity with the program's plans and how they meet the health and safety needs of children*
- *How it created, reviewed, or provided feedback on the program's plans*

**Key Performance Area #2:
Developing and Organizing Resources**

Targeted Questions: Policy Council Interview

Purpose

The Policy Council is the representation of parents and community members that serves as a valuable resource to inform relevant services based on community needs. Parent and community representatives provide expertise that supports the program in fulfilling its mission and achieving its goals. The OHS wants to understand how the Policy Council:

- Participates in recruiting and hiring staff
- Advises the program in creating relevant parental involvement activities
- Ensures that program services are culturally relevant
- Confirms the program meets the needs of children and families

In addition, the OHS seeks to understand how the Policy Council is involved in the budget-planning process.

Engaging the Governing Body and Policy Council– CM 2.3

How are new Policy Council members selected?

Policy Council members should explain:

- *How Policy Council members are elected by parents of children currently in the program*

What training have you received? How has it helped you make decisions and provide leadership for the Head Start program?

Policy Council members should describe:

- *The types of training they have received*
- *How they use the information provided in training*
- *What skills or information provided in training support them in fulfilling their leadership role*

Review training documentation to confirm the training described by the Policy Council (e.g., meeting agendas and minutes).

**How do you help the program address the needs of families and the community?
How does the program use your skills, resources, and connections?**

Policy Council members should describe their involvement in:

- *Parental involvement activities (e.g., parenting class topics, parent participation in the classroom, Fatherhood initiatives)*
- *Ensuring program services respond to family and community needs and are culturally relevant (e.g., providing English classes)*
- *Recruiting Head Start-eligible families (e.g., suggesting recruitment locations)*
- *Decisions regarding program staff (e.g., participating in discussions regarding hiring/termination of grantee staff)*

**Key Performance Area #2:
Developing and Organizing Resources**

Targeted Questions: Policy Council Interview (continued)
Engaging the Governing Body and Policy Council—CM 2.3 (continued)

How are you involved in the budget-planning process?

How often do you review the program's budget?

How do you use the information about the budget that is shared with you?

Policy Council members should explain:

- *Their active involvement in the budget-planning process, including reviewing proposed program expenditures*
- *How they submit the budget to the governing body for approval*
- *How they ensure the program's money is used appropriately*
- *How, when an issue arose in the budget-planning process, it was addressed*

How might the program better utilize your skills, resources, and connections?

**Key Performance Area #4:
Evaluating Performance and Stimulating Ongoing Improvement**

Targeted Questions: Policy Council Interview

Purpose

The Policy Council should receive regular reports to enable it to understand the program's performance and its progress in achieving its goals. In addition to confirming that the Policy Council receives all required reports and that they are timely and accurate, the OHS wants to understand how the Policy Council uses these reports. The Policy Council should understand what each report means and use the information to support their evaluation of the program's performance and the decisions they make to ensure continuous improvement in the program.

Policy Council and Governing Body Oversight of Program Evaluation—CM 4.4

How do you know that the program is providing quality comprehensive services?

What types of information do you receive to help you understand whether the program is delivering quality services and meeting the needs of the community?

How do you use the information you receive?

The Policy Council should describe the following reports and explain how they use their information :

Annual Reports

- *The Self-Assessment, including any related findings*
- *The Program Information Report (PIR)*

Monthly Reports

- *Program information summaries*
- *Program enrollment reports, including attendance reports for children whose care is partially subsidized by another public agency*
- *Reports of meals and snacks provided through programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)*

Additional Reports

- *Every 3 years, the Community Assessment*
- *Applicable current updates from the Secretary (e.g., Program Instructions, Information Memoranda)*

How do you know that the program is using money received from the OHS for its intended purpose?

The Policy Council should describe the following reports and explain how it uses their information :

- *The annual financial audit*
- *Monthly financial statements, including credit card expenditures (if the program uses credit cards)*

How do you feel the program is doing at providing services to meet the community's needs? Are you satisfied with the progress?

Governing Body and Policy Council Composition

Policy Council Pre-Site/On-Site Document Review

Purpose

The Policy Council provides the program with the expertise of parents and the community on important program decisions. The OHS needs to verify that the Policy Council has the required composition of parents and community representatives and that each member is elected. In addition, the OHS wants to understand how each member uses his or her understanding of the needs of the community and families the program serves to make decisions on behalf of the program. In order to effectively make decisions and fulfill their roles and responsibilities, it is critical that Policy Council members receive comprehensive training.

Policy Council Composition– CM 5.1

While scheduling the Policy Council interview, determine whether the Policy Council meets the composition requirements.

Does the Policy Council membership meet the following requirements?

- *At least 51 percent of the members are parents of children currently enrolled in the Head Start program (including delegate agencies).*

- *At least one member is from the at-large community served by the program or any delegate agency.*

- *Members are elected by parents of children currently enrolled in the program.*