



FOCUS AREA 2:

Understanding Recipients' Performance and Continuous Program Improvement

At-A-Glance

OVERVIEW

Focus Area 2 is an opportunity for the recipient to demonstrate their effectiveness in implementing a high-quality program to promote positive outcomes and school readiness for children and their families. This focus area is designed to broaden our understanding of each recipient's performance and to determine if programs are meeting the requirements of the Head Start Program Performance Standards, the Uniform Guidance, and the Head Start Act.

APPROACH

Focus Area 2 is an on-site review that will typically last 5 days. On average, the Review Team will consist of a Review Lead, a Fiscal Reviewer, and two Focus Area 2 Reviewers.

On-site activities include conversations with program staff, who will share the tools and information they use to monitor program performance. Then, the Review Team will explore how program staff are supported in providing quality services to children and families.

METHODOLOGY

The Focus Area 2 review includes, but is not limited to, the ERSEA Child File Review, Data Tour, Center and Classroom Explorations, Management Team Discussions, Teacher Discussions, Governing Body and Policy Council Discussions, Parent Discussions, and Fiscal Explorations.

The Review Team will collect information on child outcomes related to the kindergarten assessment conducted in the receiving schools. Head Start services focus on the whole child, and it is important for programs to provide intentional programming that results in children being ready for kindergarten. Programs will discuss school readiness goals that ensure children are ready for kindergarten and the results from the kindergarten assessment.

Discussions and Analysis Will Focus on:

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Recipients will describe and demonstrate how they implement their program management system to promote quality improvement. This section of the protocol includes three areas: program management, ongoing oversight and continuous improvement, and program governance.

MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTING QUALITY EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

The Quality Education and Child Development Services section has a new focus: "Alignment with School Readiness." Recipients will describe how the program's school readiness efforts align with the expectations of the children's receiving schools and if they have information from the kindergarten readiness assessment of the receiving schools. Four areas are explored in this section: school readiness efforts, teaching practices that promote progress toward the next learning environment, the support for teachers in school readiness efforts, and the quality of home-based services. These sections are interrelated and collectively provide information about the program's ability to prepare children for their next learning environment.

MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTING QUALITY HEALTH PROGRAM SERVICES

Recipients will share how the program supports, implements, and monitors high-quality health program services that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate to support children's growth and school readiness. Five areas are measured in this section: timely health care and follow-up, mental health consultation, oral health and nutrition, safety, and services to expectant mothers.

MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTING QUALITY FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SERVICES

Recipients will demonstrate how the program provides quality family and community engagement services, and the Review Team will learn how the program provides services to support family well-being and promote school readiness. Three areas are measured in this section: family well-being, strengthening parents, and parent engagement in education.



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MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTING FISCAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Recipients will demonstrate the program's development of its annual operating budget and strategies for the budget's implementation, adjustments, and accountability. This section highlights the program's intentionality in its fiscal capacity and management; how the program shares information with the director, managers, the governing body, and the policy council; and how the program uses data to make sound fiscal decisions and ensure fiscal and legal accountability.

MONITORING ERSEA: ELIGIBILITY, RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, ENROLLMENT, AND ATTENDANCE

Recipients will share their strategies for ensuring compliance with ERSEA program requirements. Specifically, recipients will coordinate child files to enable the Reviewers to monitor that eligible children and families are receiving Head Start services. Recipients will also demonstrate how the program monitors, tracks, analyzes, and uses child attendance data to support families in promoting individual child attendance and to support the program in managing systematic program attendance issues.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. HOW DOES FOCUS AREA 2 FIT INTO AMS 2.0?

Focus Area 1 sets the stage for interpreting a program's performance over time by understanding the foundation for a program's services, management systems, and governance. Focus Area 2 does not exist to validate what was learned in previous reviews; rather, it allows the OHS to understand how well recipients have been able to implement the program and how practices and data are driving program improvements and progress toward goals.

2. WHAT IS THE GOAL OF FOCUS AREA 2?

The goal of Focus Area 2 is to acquire a holistic look across service areas and program management functions by observing practice in action. Focus Area 2 allows recipients to demonstrate how well they are working toward or achieving their program goals, how well they know their program's strengths and challenges, and how they address challenges that arise. Reviewers want to see what recipients do every day to manage their program by learning about how their program uses data in real time. Reviewers want to know how recipients support program staff so that they can provide quality services to children and families.

3. WHEN WILL FOCUS AREA 2 REVIEWS OCCUR?

Focus Area 2 reviews will occur in the third year of a recipient's 5-year cycle. In most cases, there will be approximately 1 year between Focus Areas 1 and 2.

4. WHAT IS THE FOCUS AREA 2 REVIEW PROCESS?

Recipient Notification	Review Lead Analysis	Recipient Planning Call	On-Site Review	Grantee Report
The recipient receives notification (45-day letter) prior to their Focus Area 2 review. Initial notification will be via email.	The Review Lead connects with the applicable Regional Office to better understand the recipient and reviews program documents.	The Review Lead connects with the recipient to plan for the review. Planning includes reviewing the schedule, coordinating explorations, and other logistics.	The Review Team (typically four people) travels onsite for approximately 5 days. The Reviewers will conduct conversations and explorations and review data.	The recipient and Regional Office receive a report after the Focus Area 2 review is complete.