



2018-2019 Self-Assessment



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Introduction

Annually, Head Start programs must conduct a Self-Assessment of their effectiveness and progress in meeting program goals and objectives and in implementing Federal Regulations. The Self-Assessment must measure the agency’s strengths and areas for growth, allowing for continuous improvement of the program to increase impact for children, families, and communities.

Tri-County Head Start

Tri-County Head Start (TCHS) began in 1972, and currently serves 908 children in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties, in both their Head Start (3-4 years old) and Early Head Start (prenatal-3 years old) programs. TCHS operates both center-based and home-based programming, in 16 centers and 34 classrooms. The organization is a single-purpose, 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

Total Enrollment 908 Slots			
Head Start 704 Slots		Early Head Start 204 Slots	
Center-Based 632 Slots	Home-Based 72 Slots	Center-Based 60 Slots	Home-Based 144 Slots

Context for Self-Assessment

Tri-County Head Start was in the 4th year of a 5-year grant cycle, from February 1, 2018 to January 31, 2019 and has experienced significant changes in this time. The Self-Assessment is conducted on the same timeline as the Fiscal Year and the Grant Year. During this time, a change in organizational leadership occurred with the departure and replacement of both the CEO/Executive Director and the Finance/HR Administrator. Since that time, there have been many changes and updates to Policies and Procedures within the organization.

Prior to the beginning of the Self-Assessment process, a Self-Assessment Plan was designed with the assistance of Training and Technical Assistance provided during the training of the new Executive Director with the input from staff, and input and approval of the governance team.

Program & School Readiness 5-year Goals

February 1, 2015 – January 31, 2020

Every five years, each program decides on broad goals and initial short-term objectives, annually reviewing and revising if necessary. The programs 5-years goals for the 2015-2020 grant cycle are as follows:

- Children will comprehend and use increasingly complex and varied vocabularies in their home language and English.
- Families will form connections with staff about the important role they play as it relates to the school readiness of their children.
- Families will participate in the school readiness of their child by assuring regular daily attendance in the classroom and home based.
- To assure funding is available to maintain qualified staff and to assure continuous maintenance and improvements of current facilities.
- To continue to strengthen partnerships and collaborations with community organizations in order to assure a strong foundation for success of the children and families we serve.

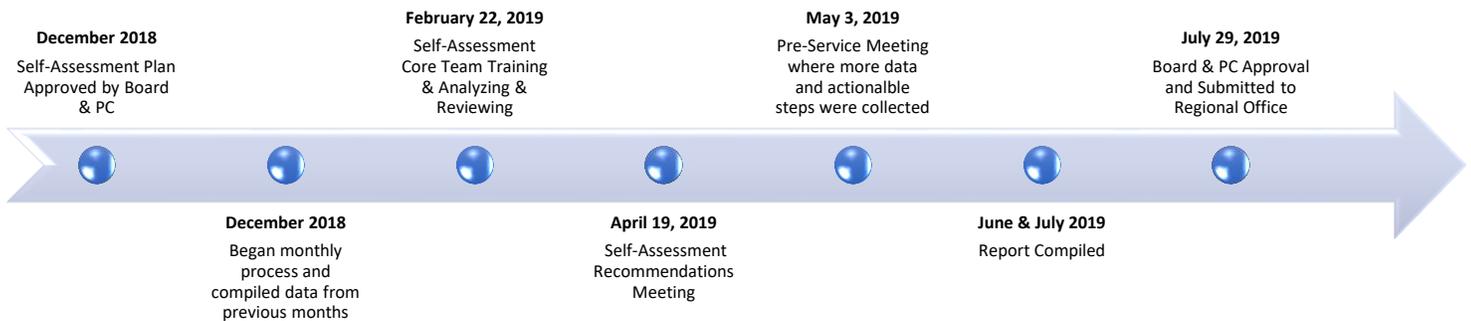
Methodology

Self-Assessment Design

The newly designed Self-Assessment process includes the following steps that were followed:

- **Pre-Assessment**
 - The administrative team on a regular basis reviewed data as it related to the organizations program and school readiness goals, in addition to any other important department data
- **Process Design**
 - The Self-Assessment process was designed, then approved by the Board and Policy Council
 - Core Team members were selected and invited to take part in the process. The team consisted of the Executive Director and the Administrative Team, Policy Council members, Board members, Community Partners, and a select team of staff members from each department.
- **Engage the Team**
 - The team met for a training to learn about the Self-Assessment process.
- **Analyze and Dialogue**
 - During a meeting they made comments on each piece of data to reflect the strengths, opportunities, and to ask any questions about the data.
- **Recommendations**
 - During a meeting they examined the analysis of the data from the previous meeting then selected five major themes to make recommendations on. With those major themes a “Creative Matrix” was used to narrow the focus and establish actionable steps. The “Creative Matrix” was also used with all staff members to gather further input.

Time Frame



Tools

Data collection tools used in the Self-Assessment process include the following:

- **Monthly Monitoring Chart**
 - This chart was designed during the creation of the Self-Assessment plan and is a document completed monthly on an ongoing basis by the Directors team. Because the plan was created after the grant year had begun, the Directors team filled in the data from the prior months.
- **Parent Survey**
 - The Parent Survey was sent out in a Survey Monkey questionnaire in January and had 160 responses.
- **Staff Survey**
 - The Staff Survey was sent out in a Survey Monkey questionnaire in January and had 127 responses.

- Have We Met Our Goals Survey
 - The have we met our goals Staff Survey was sent out in a Survey Monkey questionnaire in January and had 97 responses. The purpose of this survey was to gage staff understanding and engagement in the organization’s goals.
- Creative Matrix
 - The Creative Matrix was used during both the Self-Assessment Recommendations Meeting and also the All-Staff meeting. The Creative Matrix is a way of brainstorming a broad list of ideas and recommendations to a questions or problem. Each Creative Matrix answers a question that begins with “How might we...”.
 - The questions asked were...
 - How might we find ways to gather in-kind that takes the pressure off parents?
 - How might we set goals that are measurable?
 - How might we cross train more staff to better support transportation?
 - How might we stress to staff the importance of attendance?
 - How might we improve our image in the community?

Answers to the questions are written on sticky notes and placed on the Matrix. Seven of the top ideas are then placed in order of importance and placed in the 4 categories of Long-Term (Luxuries & Strategic) and Short-Term Goals (Targeted & High-Value). These ideas were then used to develop the recommendations from the data.

Additional Information

The Directors team decided to work through the current 5-years goals being that the new goals for the 5-year grant cycle will be set by November of 2019, as the new grant is submitted to the regional office.

Key Insights

Program Strengths

The Self-Assessment process included examining data from the key areas of the organization, in addition to the program goals.

Attendance

Attendance program wide was observed in addition to the Chronic Absenteeism Report. The standard from the Office of Head Start is for Head Start programs to be at 85% ADA (Average Daily Attendance). At the time of the analysis, the ADA for the program was at 84.55%, previous years were at 81.95% (17-18), 80.66% (16-17), 81.47% (15-16). It was observed that attendance has improved over the previous year, indicating that the Comprehensive Attendance Plan implement has made an impact, in addition to the additional trainings and organization awareness of the impact of student absenteeism has on child outcomes.

Enrollment

Programs nation wide have been struggling with maintaining enrollment, however Tri-County Head Start continues to maintain full enrollment. Additionally, the number of children dropping from the program has decreased. In 2017-2018, TCHS had 399 drops and in the 2018-2019 program year reduced drops by 42.6% to 229. This saves the organization time and resources and indicates that the Family Services staff are better able to knowledgeably explain the program to families, deliver superior customer service, and Education staff are able to provide a richer learning experience for the children in the program. This will lead to better outcomes for children and families as families are able to maintain enrollment and receive the most benefits from the program.

Family Needs Assessment/Family Partnerships

Every program must have a process for conducting a needs assessment with each family in addition to completing a Family Partnership Agreement with families to assist the families in setting a goal. The tool that is being used is the Family Mapping program from the University of Arkansas. Family Mapping is intended to identify children and families who may be at risk for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). By using this tool Family Advocates and Home Visitors are getting to know families at a deeper level and helping them set meaningful goals.

Finance Department

The Finance reports were reviewed, in addition to discussions of the new changes to the department. The new Finance Director, is making positive changes to the department including changes to improve forecasting and the budgeting process.

Health Services Department

Documents including all of the Health Services data was reviewed. The Health Services department has maintained all of the required levels of health data. In the past year, the organization has increased the number of children with IEP's/IFSP's. This is a reflection of the relationship building and training that has happened in the past year.

Human Resources Department/Staff Survey

Data from the Human Resources department in addition to the Staff Survey were examined. Since April of 2018, staff turnover has decreased significantly from 25.67% to 6.52%. Additionally, all new Policies and Procedures are being updated, developed, and created which has contributed to improving staff morale because expectations are being set and formalized. The staff survey displayed overwhelmingly positive feedback from staff compared to previous years.

Transportation Department

The Transportation Department has conducted a preventative approach to monthly bus maintenance checks to help stay ahead of breakdowns.

In-Kind

The Office of Head Start awards community organizations 80% of the cost of the program and expects the agency to fund 20% from cash or in-kind donations. The program has been successful in meeting and exceeding the in-kind match requirement.

Parent Survey

The Parent Survey was conducted and the organization is meeting families expectations, and creating positive changes in families lives.

Program Goals

A survey was conducted to gage if staff were inspired and engaged with the organizations goals. Staff are beginning to increase awareness of program goals.

School Readiness Goals

The organization is charged with creating Program and School Readiness Goals. The program is very close to or above the National Average for Head Start CLASS scores.

Areas for Improvement

During the assessment the following areas were determined to be areas of improvement.

In Kind

The organization should take the burden of gathering in-kind predominantly from parents and refocus on community support for meeting in-kind requirements.

Program and Fiscal Goals

The Director's need to ensure that staff are more involved with the creation and the implementation of the organization's goals, to ensure staff is inspired and motivated by the goals. Also to help staff to understand the organization budgeting and forecasting process.

Staff Attendance

In the process to becoming a more employee friendly organization and to ensure the health and wellbeing of staff all employees have been given more paid time off. This has increased the need for additional staff or solutions to ensure classrooms remain fully staffed and open and buses run as expected. Staff attendance in Transportation and Education is causing transportation or classrooms to be canceled. This creates a few issues; one, being that the organization is seen as unreliable and not high-quality, two, for children, the organization is creating the environment where they are not attending and missing out on quality learning time.

Community Awareness/Image

As TCHS makes this transition under new leadership, repairs to relationships with key community partners need to continue, in addition to work to improve the overall image in the community. This includes increasing community awareness of what the organization does and the impact that TCHS has on families and children.

The organization needs to ensure that it has the data and evaluation capacity to demonstrate the organizations impact on children and families. This will ensure that the organization has a superior quality improvement plan, and has the capabilities to meet the grant requirements of validating the data story of the organization.

Relationships with local schools need to be improved, so they understand what the organization does to prepare children and their families for school and how kindergarten readiness will look different with some of the children we serve.

Parent Leadership/Advocacy

Head Starts are charged with the unique opportunity not only to impact children's educational outcomes but also families lives. One of the ways programs do this is by the organizational governance structure and giving families a leadership role in the organization. The organization needs to create more intentional trainings and parent committee meetings to enhance the leadership skills of families in the program.

Human Resources

With the desire to continue to expand, secure additional funding, and to continuously improve, the organization needs to ensure that all staff are of highest quality, including ensuring that staff are highly trained and educated. This includes not only continuing to contribute to the education of current staff but also working with community organizations to build the pipeline of highly-qualified staff throughout the tri-county area.

Goal and Objective Progress

Program Goal: To ensure funding is available to maintain qualified staff and to assure continuous maintenance and improvements of current facilities.

- **Short Term Objectives:**

- Explore opportunities for additional funding such as other grant opportunities. Child Care Partnerships and GSRP funding.
 - Outcome:
 - Has secured a Blend with GSRP classrooms in Cass County, and in talks with Van Buren counties.
 - Secured a 19.1% funding increase to expand hours in classrooms resulting in 6 new classrooms
- Full Implementation of a revised employee handbook.
 - Outcome:
 - Completed in August 2018, will revise annually based on newly implemented policies and procedures.
- Utilize a trainer to train policy council and board
 - Outcome:
 - Conducted in October 2018. Will continue to conduct governance group training with Board and Policy Council annually every August.

Program Goal: Continue to strengthen partnerships and collaborations with community organizations in order to assure a strong foundation for success of the children and families we serve.

- **Short Term Objectives:**

- Explore training opportunities for staff on being Trauma informed and the Opioid Crisis
 - Outcome:
 - Have added Trauma trainings to new hire training and onboarding and have introduced current staff to these trainings
 - Health Services Director attended Drug Endangered Children training and information taken to HSAC committee.
 - Additional Opioid and Substance trainings being delivered to staff
- Partner with other community organizations for training opportunities
 - Outcome:
 - Partnering with SMC to offer Associate level classes to staff
 - Partnered with Van Buren county on mindfulness training

School Readiness Goal: Children will comprehend and use increasingly complex and varied vocabularies in their home language and English

- **Short Term Objectives:**

- Implement Learning Genie Family Engagement App.
 - Outcome:
 - Implemented but it was not a successful implementation

School Readiness Goal: Families form connections with staff about the important role they play as it relates to the school readiness of their children

- **Short Term Objectives:**

- Revise PLAY and Freddy Nights to better suit the needs of families
 - Outcome:
 - Revised the implementation of PLAY and Freddy Nights and more than doubled attendance from previous years

- Explore ways to increase participation at Parent Committee Meetings. Provide training to Policy Council members about hosting/promoting a Parent Committee Meeting
 - Outcome:
 - PC members have been trained on how to run a Parent Committee Meeting.
 - Working with PC members on developing a Parent Advocacy group to build community and school leadership

School Readiness Goal: Families participate in the school readiness of their child by assuring regular daily attendance in the classroom and homebased.

- **Short Term Objectives:**
 - Implement a new attendance plan which will focus families on goals and reducing chronic absenteeism
 - Outcome:
 - A new, more intensive attendance plan was implemented. ADA was at 83.1% YTD, over LY of 81.95% at time of analysis.
 - Implement bus maintenance schedule to keep buses in good working order throughout the year.
 - Outcome:
 - Tracking bus maintenance, attempting to determine the best time to purchase new buses.
 - Implement new strategies in Home Visiting, including number of visits with multiple children and re-branding socialization
 - Outcome:
 - Doing a 90 minute visit for all children in 1 family has helped retain families and reduce the number of drops, but 15 families have both a HS and EHS Home Visitor
 - The GGK Socialization Curriculum has been implemented to help connect the Home Visitor to the group time.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed once the analysis of the data was concluded. These content areas and topics, the core Self-Evaluation team, determined would make the most significant impact on TCHS.

1. Staff Attendance – Develop a superstar substitute program to ensure staff has an adequate number of subs for backup to reduce the number of closed classrooms and bus cancellations. In addition to developing a policy to encourage staff to seek volunteers, or substitute coverage before considering closing a classroom or cancelling bus service.
2. Marketing – To increase community awareness of the program and to boost the image of the program implement a marketing budget and if budgeting allows, hire a Marketing and Communications Specialist.
3. Goal Awareness – Involve staff in goal setting and encourage each center to set goals and develop methods to contribute towards the organizations goals.
4. Transportation Reliability – staff attendance needs to be addressed to reduce the number of bus cancellations. This recommendation correlates with the staff attendance recommendation.
5. Utilization of social media – this recommendation correlates with the marketing recommendation, to increase community awareness and boost program image in the community.