

Head Start Health Managers Descriptive Study Summary

Study Overview

The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation within the Administration for Children and Families (Department of Health and Human Services) has contracted with the RAND Corporation to conduct the Head Start Health Manager Descriptive Study. The goals of the study are to:

- 1) describe the characteristics of health managers and related staff in Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start (HS) programs¹;
- 2) identify the current landscape of Head Start health programs and services being offered to children and families;
- 3) determine how Head Start health initiatives are prioritized, implemented, and sustained; and
- 4) identify the programmatic features and policy levers that exist to support Head Start health services including staffing, environment, and community collaboration.

The purpose of the study is to provide a current snapshot of health-related activities and programming within Head Start programs, to better understand the context in which the Head Start health service area operates, and to identify the current needs of health managers and health staff as they work towards improving the health of Head Start children, parents and staff. The study is intended to provide information on services currently provided and the challenges that Head Start programs face. This study is descriptive and is not designed to capture individual child or family data or program performance standards compliance. Data will be presented in the aggregate and will not be used to make individual program funding decisions or for the designation renewal system (DRS). The study included the universe of Head Start programs including Early Head Start, American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN), and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs.

¹ All EHS/HS grantees must have a health manager who is responsible for managing, facilitating and coordinating health services (including selecting providers and negotiating payments) that promote child health; supervising the nutrition and mental health staff or consultants and other HS staff as they perform health-related duties; and is responsible for maintaining, monitoring, tracking, overseeing and assuring the confidentiality of health records.

Approach

These study objectives were accomplished through four data collection components. Data was collected from December 2012 to March 2013. These components are:

- Head Start Director Survey. Based on contact information available in the Head Start Program Information Reports, directors for Head Start grantees and delegates—including Early Head Start, (AIAN), and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs—were invited to complete a short online survey to obtain basic information about the Head Start program and the activities in the health services area. 1,627 directors completed they survey (83% response rate). The director was also asked to provide the name and contact information for the health manager in their program.
- Head Start Health Manager Survey. Based on the contact information provided by the director, the health managers for Head Start grantees and delegates were invited to complete an online survey. This survey questionnaire took about 75 minutes to complete (including the time needed to gather relevant information) and included seven modules, summarized in the conceptual framework below. 1,465 health managers completed the survey (73% response rate).
- Head Start Health Manager Interviews. In order to obtain more in-depth information not possible with a structured survey question, a sample of 38 health managers that completed the online survey were invited to participate in a semi-structured telephone interview to probe more deeply into the topics covered by the online survey. The respondents were selected to ensure that the sampled respondents captured variation along key Head Start program features.
- Head Start Teacher, Family Service Worker, and Home Visitor Interviews. In recognition of the important role played by other Head Start staff in the delivery of the health services area, a sample of 52 teachers, family service workers, and home visitors, nominated by the health managers who complete the semi-structured phone interview, were invited to participate in a semi-structured telephone interview to learn more about their role in the provision of the health services area. The approach to selecting the sample for this component of the study was similar to that used for the semi-structured health manager interviews. We sought to obtain an interview from a health manager, teacher, family service worker and home visitor within the same program to provide a more complete picture of health services within a given EHS/HS program.

An additional component of this project is the identification and compilation of publicly available geocoded datasets relevant to health and health determinants. This aspect of the

project did not require contact with any individuals or Head Start programs. Given that a challenge of Head Start programs is identifying and establishing linkages with community service providers and other health-related experts, the data will be used by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation and the Office of Head Start to gain a better understanding of the geographic distribution of these resources in the communities surrounding Head Start centers, and may help to inform and elucidate some of the findings of the study. Given the utility of the geocoded data for other health-related inquiries and research projects, the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation may choose to release the geocoded dataset for use by the general public after the conclusion of the study; however this data will not be linked with the survey or interview data.

Conceptual Framework

We developed a framework to help conceptualize the vast components and activities of the health service area in Early Head Start and Head Start programs. The framework is presented visually at the end of this study summary, and described in more detail below. Although each program is likely to conduct at least some activities related to each level of the framework, we expect the relative emphasis to vary by program based on resources and needs of the population served. To ensure that the Health Managers Descriptive Study captured each of these activities, we divided the survey into the following seven modules:

- Modules 1 and 7 are focused on health managers, the health services advisory committee, staffing and management structure of the health component, and professional development. Module 7 contains additional questions about the health manager's background.
- Module 2 is focused on understanding the breadth and prevalence of health conditions among the Head Start population, the effort undertaken by Head Start staff in regular management of those conditions, and communication strategies with parents/guardians about specific health concerns of a child.
- Module 3 is designed to describe the screening and referral processes of Head Start programs including linkages with health providers in the community and availability of regular sources of care.
- Module 4 is focused on Head Start activities in the areas of health promotion and disease prevention/prevention including topic selection and prioritization, implementation challenges, other family health promotion activities and the influence of state or local policies on such activities.
- Module 5 describes the Head Start activities to support staff wellness.
- Module 6 is designed to capture the network of health-related community partners (beyond medical/oral health providers) that support health activities in Head Start, as well as community engagement strategies undertaken by the program.

- The broader administrative context (e.g., follow-up, funding, monitoring) is assessed in Modules 2-5, where applicable. Some of these questions are also included in the Head Start Director's Survey.

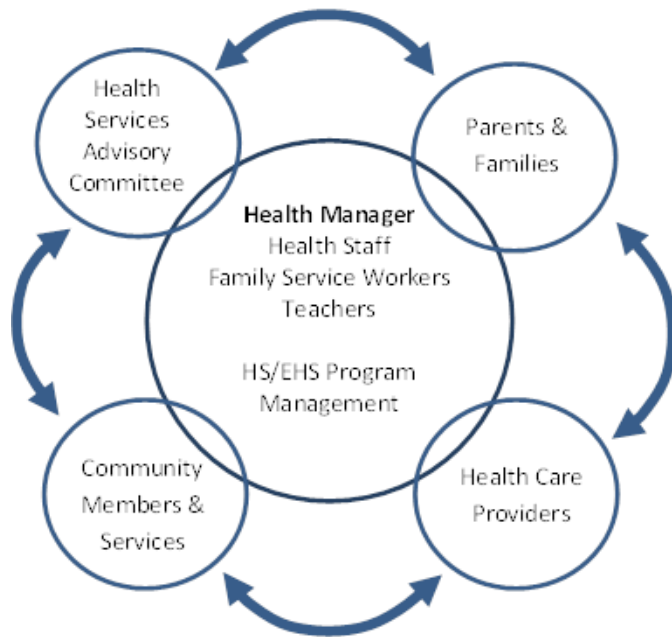
For More Information

Information about the study, including updates and publications can be found on-line at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/head-start-health-managers-descriptive-study>. You may also contact the RAND Study Directors or the Federal Project Officer for more information.

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Conceptual Framework

KEY STAKEHOLDERS (Modules 1-7)



HEALTH COMPONENT FRAMEWORK

