



Hidalgo County Head Start Program

Self-Assessment
Final Report 2025

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INTRODUCTION

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program (HCHSP) is focused on providing high-quality services to promote children’s optimal development and family well-being. HCHSP is designed to address the needs of the community and utilizes its strengths to generate a process that includes data collection from the community assessment, surveys, meetings with stakeholders, and groups such as, parents, members of the Policy Council, the Governing Body, community partners and Head Start staff.

The service and recruitment area encompasses 1,569 square miles of territory and is situated in the southernmost tip of Texas along the U.S.-Mexico border and flanked by Starr County to the west, Jim Hogg and Brooks Counties to the north, Willacy and Cameron Counties to the east, and the Rio Grande River to the south. We continue to deliver HS services to 3,060 children, ages 3-5, through a network of twenty-eight (28) campuses located in the cities and urban areas where the largest targeted population and greatest needs exist.

PROGRAM GOALS

The Program goals remain focused and informed by the needs and strengths reflected in the Community Assessment and are responsive in meeting our community needs as well as any new developing challenge. By using the Self-Assessment process, the Program can annually assess how specific aspects of the program’s operations impact services delivered to children and families, and identify the progress made in meeting its goals and objectives.

HCHSP Program's Goals:

- **To provide high-quality comprehensive services to the highest need children and families and maintain 100% funded enrollment.**
- **To promote workforce professional development for employees and parents**
- **To increase parental engagement in the areas of literacy and social emotional development**
- **To promote the health and safety of staff, children, and families**
- **To sustain the School Readiness Partnership Model (SRPM) Teaching Together, with all school districts in our service area**

SELF-ASSESSMENT

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program (HCHSP) Self-Assessment is conducted annually in accordance with CFR 45, Subpart J, 1302.102(b)(2)(i)(ii)(iii) of the *Head Start Performance Standards*. *The Head Start Program Performance Standards* requires that at least once each program year, with the consultation and participation of the policy groups and, as appropriate, other community members, the grantee conduct a self-assessment. HCHSP is committed to providing quality services for children and families in Hidalgo County. This is demonstrated through ongoing training, coaching, and the establishment of monitoring practices.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Self-Assessment is multifaceted, offering both personal and professional benefits.

- **Enhance Self Awareness** – By critically evaluating performance, strengths, and weaknesses, the program gains deeper insights into areas requiring development.
- **Guide Professional Development** – It identifies specific areas where improvement or upskilling is needed, facilitating targeted growth plans.
- **Boost Motivation and Engagement** – Recognizing achievements and understanding how contributions impact broader goals can significantly increase motivation and engagement.
- **Inform Goal Setting** – Self-assessment helps in setting realistic and challenging goals for future performance, based on past achievements and lessons learned.
- **Facilitate Feedback and Dialogue** – It creates a foundation for open dialogue with peers and supervisors, offering a structured way to discuss achievements, expectations, and areas of growth.
- **Improve Performance** – By continuously identifying and addressing areas for improvement, the Program can enhance staff performance, contributing to success.
- **Enhance Accountability** – Regular self-assessment encourages individuals to take responsibility for continuous improvement and achievements, fostering a culture of accountability.

Overall, self-assessment is a crucial practice to provide a structured approach to reflect on progress, refine goals, and develop strategies for future success.

METHODOLOGY

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program's annual Self-Assessment was conducted January 20, 2025, through January 31, 2025. The Office of Head Start Focus Area Two Protocol was used in this year's Self-Assessment.

Data was collected from program sources including program records, reports, policies and procedures, interviews, and observations. HCHSP uses the web based GoEngage child and family tracking system, Children's Learning Institute's Circle Progress Monitoring, MIP and other computerized systems for data and document management. The data was analyzed by the Self-Assessment team and presented to the Assistant Program Director for Programmatic Services for review and the development of the final report.

The Self-Assessment process was led with a focus on strengths and successes. A positive approach was used to encourage teams to focus on what is going well and to use those successes to help guide other projects. The teams were instructed to concentrate on the patterns and trends to address key systemic issues or concerns, what strategies were implemented to address these concerns, where the program is now and what the plan is moving forward. Discoveries and recommendations from the Self-Assessment team will be used to inform program planning and continuous improvement.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TEAMS:

Fiscal

Elma Carrera, CFO

Elizabeth Cortina

Mental Health/Disability

Martha Rodriguez

Elizabeth Gonzalez

Zacarias Martinez

Natalee Alvarez

Mirna Gonzalez

Emmarlyn Villegas

Child Health & Safety

Yesenia Quintanilla

Jeanette Perez

Maria Martinez

Paulita Gonzalez

Child Development

Consuelo Casas

Hector Guerra

Yolanda Castillo

Maria A. Reyna

Linda Soto

Ruth Salinas

Ana Reyna

Melissa De La Garza

Child Nutrition

Gilbert Silva

Cristina Garza

Erica Nunez Perez

Field Operations/Transportation

Azucena Saenz

Ramiro Guerrero

ERSEA/Family Services

Sonia Balderas

Debra Gamboa

Cidelia Monteagudo

Krystal Alvarado

Human Resources

Marissa Reyes

Brenda Garza

Christina Gutierrez

Denisse Barba

Compliance/Com. Part/Trans.

Azalia Rios

Nadia De Leon

Each aspect of the program was carefully examined, and the outcomes were analyzed. Key insights from the annual self-assessment will help the Program evaluate the progress toward meeting goals, compliance with regulatory requirements, and the effectiveness of professional development and family engagement systems in promoting school readiness.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

The Program extends its appreciation to the six-hundred and four (604) parents that participated in our Self-Assessment process by answering our survey. Their participation in the Self-Assessment strengthens our commitment to engage parents in the decision-making process to improve services to children and families.

Parent responses can be found in **Exhibit A**.

KEY INSIGHTS

FISCAL

Federal Laws and Regulations for FISCAL

**75.302(a-b);75.303(a)(c);75.305(b)(1);75.320(d-e);75.327(c);75.328(a);
75.403(a); 75.414;75.416;75.430(i); 1302.91(c);1302.101(a)(4);1303.4;
1303.5;1303.12;1303.46(b)**

Does the Program maintain an automated accounting system for financial information and personnel costs?

Yes, the Program utilizes the Micro Information Products (MIP) Fund Accounting Software to maintain financial information and personnel data collection capable of producing timely and accurate reports. With the use of MIP, the Program ensures Budget Management, Human Resources Management, Financial Reporting, Payroll, General Ledger, Fixed Assets Inventory, Electronic Requisitions and Purchase Order Processing, Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, Bank Reconciliation, Direct Deposit, Electronic Funds Transfer for Accounts Payable, Encumbrances, Forms Designer, Journal Vouchers and Financial Resources Management.

Does the Program maintain complete and accurate financial records that identify Head Start funds and line-item cost categories that align with the Head Start operating budget? Explain.

Yes, line-items costs categories are aligned in accordance with the Head Start operating budget and the Notice of Award. All Program assets, liabilities, equity, revenue, and expense accounts are categorized accordingly by utilizing general ledger account codes. Line-item costs are captured utilizing a Monthly Encumbrance Budget Report which includes total budgeted appropriations by budget line-item costs category, year to date encumbrances, year to date expenditures, year to date budget balances and monthly expenditures.

Does the Program meet on demand and routing reporting requirements on the requested dates? Explain.

Yes, reporting requirements are met on demand with the utilization of the MIP Fund Accounting Software. With MIP, we can retrieve the general ledger, trial balance, encumbrances reports, and other financial reports used to capture data needed to complete various federal financial reports and submit electronically on required due dates. Data is readily available and up to date ongoing transactions are reflected in the general ledger.

Does the Program maintain and implement written fiscal policies and procedures? Explain.

The Program has developed sound fiscal systems to effectively manage grant awarded funds and ensure that the management team and fiscal staff work together to support the delivery of Head Start services.

The Program has established written accounting procedures which outline the financial management systems that ensure budget management, human resources management, financial reporting, payroll, general ledger, fixed assets inventory, electronic requisitions and purchase order processing, accounts payable, encumbrances, forms designer, journal entries and financial resources management. The procedures incorporate strong internal controls to ensure and safeguard financial resources including fixed assets inventory.

In March 2021, the Administration for Children and Families' (ACF) Office of Grants Management (OGM) conducted an Enhanced Federal Review to examine the Fiscal Policies and Procedures Manual. The purpose of the review was to determine if the policies under 45CFR Part 75 and the Government Accountability Office's Standards for Internal controls in the Federal Government (GAO Green Book) were identified accordingly in the Fiscal Manual. The OGM provided three areas of recommendation which were subsequently included in the Fiscal Manual. There were no deficiencies noted as per letter dated June 26, 2023, from the ACF OGM Office.

On June 11, 2024, procedures were approved by the Head Start Policy Council and approved by the Grantee Board on June 20, 2024.

Does the Program ensure fiscal staff members are qualified and supported to fulfill their responsibilities? Explain.

Yes, the Assistant Program Director for Fiscal Operations (25 years' experience) and the Assistant Chief Financial Officer (12 years' experience) hold a Bachelor of Business Administration Accounting degree. The qualified fiscal staff members manage and analyze the Program's financial resources. This includes creating and monitoring budgets, preparing financial reports, and ensuring compliance with all the financial and Program regulations.

Does the Program minimize the amount of time elapsing between drawing down Federal funds and disbursing funds for Head Start program costs? Explain.

Yes, it is the policy of the Head Start Program to ensure that advance payments to the Program are limited to the minimum amounts needed and be timed with the actual, immediate cash requirements of the Program. The procedure ensures that the time elapsing between the transfer of funds and disbursement by the Program will be as close as is administratively feasible to the actual disbursements.

Cash drawdowns are processed weekly from the Division of Payment Management (DPM). Funds are deposited into an interest-bearing cash account for the purpose of processing payroll and accounts payable. Cash drawdowns are limited to the minimum amounts needed for actual disbursements.

Cash drawdowns are initiated on Wednesdays no later than 2:00 p.m. from the DPM website at after the Chief Financial Officer and/or Assistant Chief Financial Officer have reviewed and approved the request. A cash drawdown payment confirmation is printed and retained for supporting documentation. An electronic funds transfer is deposited the following day into the

Head Start Cash Account by DPM. On Thursday morning, a fiscal staff member will verify the bank account to ensure that electronic funds are received. A bank printout of the deposited amount, a DPM printout of a Payment Data Report that depicts YTD cash drawdowns, and a copy of the journal entry prepared to record the cash received is attached to the cash drawdown form for supporting documentation.

Does the Program engage in an internal monitoring process to ensure fiscal compliance? Explain.

Yes, the implementation and monitoring of written policies and procedures which include Head Start Program Performance Standards, the Head Start Act rules and regulations, and the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 75, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements are always adhered to. Our Program also implements the separation of duties and responsibilities within the fiscal staff. This process ensures all transactions posted onto the Program's general ledger require at a minimum, three staff members who create, review, and post general ledger transactions. The approval process for all posted ledger transactions also requires the Assistant Chief Financial Officer's and/or Assistant Program Director's approval.

Does the Program implement an ongoing account reconciliation process and monitor financial statements for accuracy and checks for fraudulent activity? Explain.

Yes, the Program has implemented an ongoing account reconciliation process, monitors financial statements for accuracy, and checks for fraudulent activity daily by developing policies and procedures to include strong internal controls for fiscal staff to adhere to. The segregation of duties ensures that there is oversight and review to detect errors and helps to prevent fraud/theft. In addition, the MIP Fund Accounting Software, systems, and the tools created to reconcile transactions, i.e. cash drawdowns, cash management, bank reconciliations, interfund account balances, and data entries, include audit trails to identify changes made by fiscal staff. This process

ensures that financial statements are accurate, free from error, and that fraudulent activity does not occur.

Does the Program ensure safeguards to prevent loss, damage, or theft of program property or equipment? Explain.

Yes, the Program's internal controls ensure safeguards to prevent loss, damage, or theft of program property/equipment. The MIP Fund Accounting Fixed Assets Software enables the Program to store pertinent data information for all assets, i.e., model number, make and year, item description, cost, location, serial number, department number, fund account, asset tag number, etc. All Program property/equipment is retained under lock and key, with a burglar alarm system, a fire alarm, camera and video surveillance equipment, and a siren system at all Program locations. Vehicles, including buses, are all stored and retained behind a chain linked fence under lock and key. The Multi Factor Authentication process is also implemented and required by all staff members working with fixed assets and financial records.

Does the Program establish a system for confidential and anonymous reporting of inappropriate financial management activities? Explain.

Yes, the Program has established a confidential and anonymous reporting system to allow staff to report inappropriate financial management and/or inappropriate activities. Staff is encouraged to report inappropriate behavior by filling out an Anonymous Report and submitting it to the Human Resources Department. In addition, the MIP Fund Accounting Software system contains an audit trail of all staff activity made onto financial accounting records including bank account information.

Does the Program promote separation of financial responsibilities? Explain.

Yes, the Program's financial management system provides effective internal controls which include the separation of financial responsibilities. The Fiscal policies and procedures described in the manual clearly indicate the processes which entail separation of duties amongst the staff and

prior approvals by the Assistant Chief Financial Officer and/or the Assistant Program Director for Fiscal Operations. Finance staff is properly trained to adhere to the implemented procedures.

All transactions and fiscal responsibilities within the Finance Department which include bank reconciliations, journal entries, preparing checks, voiding checks, employment taxes, request for funds, payroll processing, financial reporting, accounts payables, In-kind etc., contain supporting documentation and proper approvals including the separation of financial responsibilities by Fiscal staff. Bank reconciliations, for example, are approved by the Assistant Program Director for Fiscal Operations and/or the Assistant Chief Financial Officer to ensure that outstanding checks are cashed within 30 days and that the general ledger concurs with the bank statement balance. Checks are always secured under lock and key. Journal entries are approved by the Assistant Chief Financial Officer to ensure that proper documentation is provided and that journal entries are prepared correctly. Transactions are posted only upon approval of the Assistant Chief Financial Officer.

Yearly audits are conducted by the independent auditor to ensure that policies and procedures which incorporate strong internal controls and separation of duties are adhered to.

Does the Program determine and document costs for goods and services that are necessary and reasonable to the Program's Head Start award? Explain.

Every department is responsible for initiating an electronic purchase requisition when goods and services are needed. Department Directors submit the electronic purchase requisitions to the Procurement Department for review, approval, and processing. The Procurement Department assigns a purchase order number to the corresponding electronic purchase requisition upon determination that items for purchase are necessary, reasonable, and allocated appropriately as stated in CFR §75.403 Regulations Factors affecting allowability of costs. Goods and services are carefully reviewed to ensure that they are necessary for program performance.

Upon approval from the Procurement Director, the purchase order is then submitted to the Finance Department for additional review and approval by the Assistant Program Director for Fiscal Operations. Once the Assistant Program Director for Fiscal Operations approves the purchase order and concludes that goods and services are necessary and reasonable, a final review and approval is required by the Assistant Program Director for Operations.

Does the Program establish and implement the cost allocation plan? Explain.

N/A

Does the Program establish and implement a procurement process? Explain.

The Program has established written Procurement policies and procedures which outline every activity involved in obtaining goods and services needed to support Program goals and needs. The procedures include systems that guide employees with their respective responsibilities to ensure that the integrity of all procurement practices is adhered to. All purchases of goods and services are secured utilizing an electronic requisition and a purchase order. All staff must follow a practice of ethical, responsible, and reasonable procedures related to all purchases.

The Program's procurement policies reflect rules and regulations as mandated by the Head Start Performance Standards the Head Start Act, and the Code of Federal Regulations Part 75 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Head and Human Services. On June 11, 2024, procedures were approved by the Head Start Policy Council and approved by the Grantee Board on June 20, 2024. The Procurement Manual describes in detail the principles and procedures that all staff will adhere to in the completion of their job responsibilities.

Does the Program track administrative costs and non-Federal match? Explain.

MIP enables the Program to easily track Programmatic and Administrative Costs, revenues, expenditures, non-federal match, and direct costs. Administrative Costs are recorded in MIP utilizing a Function Account Code (10) and Programmatic Costs have a function Code (20) that can easily be tracked. The Non-Federal Match is recorded in the financial statements as a revenue account and an expense account that can easily be tracked.

Does the Program separately identify allowable direct and indirect costs? Explain.

All Program costs are direct costs and pertain to a specific grant award.

Does the Program file or post the required notices of Federal interest for property and facilities? Explain.

Yes, when the Program receives funding from the Department of Health and Human Services to purchase equipment, intangible property, real property, construct, and/or renovate a facility, the Program will post a Notice of Federal Interest clearly visible on the exterior and interior of the real property or facility that reads the following:

“On 01/01/1993, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) awarded Grant Number _____ to Hidalgo County Head Start Program. The grant provided Federal funds for the conduct of a Head Start Program, including purchase of this modular unit. The grant incorporated conditions which included restrictions on the use and disposition of this property and provided for a continuing Federal interest in the property. Specifically, the property may not be used for any purpose other than the purpose for which the facility was funded, without the express written approval of the responsible DHHS official or sold or transferred to another party without the written permission of the responsible DHHS official. These conditions are in accordance with the statutory provisions set forth in 42 U.S.C. 9839;

the regulatory provisions set forth in 45 CFR Part 1309, 45 CFR Part 74 and 45 CFR Part 75; and Administration for Children and Families' grants policy.”

The Program will record a Notice of Federal Interest in the appropriate official records for jurisdiction in which the facility is located. The notice will be recorded, stamped, and validated by the County Clerk's Office and the original notice will be retained in the Finance Department's Assets records.

Does the Program maintain required records for equipment purchased with Head Start funds including a physical inventory? Explain.

Property records are maintained utilizing the MIP Fixed Assets Software to include a description of the property, a bar code number, a serial number or other identification number, funding source, title, acquisition date, fixed asset cost, percentage of costs for the Federal award under which the property was acquired, location, estimated useful life, and any ultimate disposition date including the date of disposal and sale price of the property.

A physical inventory of fixed assets must be conducted and reconciled with the property records at least once every two years. Effective policies and procedures must be developed to ensure adequate safeguards to prevent loss, damage, or theft of property. The Program utilizes the MIP Fixed Assets Software to record all fixed assets utilizing a bar code tag number which is assigned and affixed to the property/equipment. The MIP Fixed Assets Software enables the Program to produce Fixed Assets reports by location, tag number and/or acquired date, and a physical inventory once every two years is conducted by Fiscal staff.

How does the Program engage stakeholders in the budget development process?

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program's (HCHSP) budget development process begins during the month of May. Department Directors receive a budget memorandum from the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and the Program Executive Director which indicates a scheduled time to meet with

the CFO to plan individual department's (*Administration, Personnel, Finance, Procurement, MIS, Field Operations, Health, Family Services, Disability, Education, Community Partnerships, Compliance, Pre-K Collaboration, and Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) Nutrition*) budgetary needs. Included with the memorandum is a budget package which contains the following:

- Budget Worksheet
- Current and previous year-to-date department encumbrance budget reports
- Technical and Training Assistance (T&TA) Form
- Budget Needs and Assessment Form
- Vehicle Purchase Request Form
- Large Equipment Request Form
- Small Equipment Purchase Form
- Training and Travel Summary
- Forms (i.e., office supplies, medical supplies, playground equipment, etc.)

Department Directors shall prepare a preliminary budget for his/her department utilizing the budget packet prior to meeting with the CFO. The department directors shall meet with the Program Director, Assistant Program Directors, and the CFO to discuss their budgetary needs. Budget line items are discussed to ensure that appropriate funding is secured to meet the needs for Head Start services.

A consolidated proposed budget with supporting documentation is prepared for review by the Budget Committee. The Budget Committee is comprised of the Executive Director, Assistant Program Directors, and four Policy Council members.

The documentation provided to the Budget Committee contains the following:

- A. Letter from the Administration of Children and Families, Office of Head Start
- B. Budget Memorandum to Hidalgo County Policy Council & Grantee Board
- C. Proposed Head Start Budget and Proposed TDA Budget
- D. Proposed Salary Scale
- E. Proposed Budget Graph by Department
- F. The number of budgeted positions in each department
- G. Yearly Budgeted Positions

The Budget Committee will meet to review, discuss, approve, and answer any questions regarding the proposed budget and supporting documentation.

Once the Budget Committee has approved the proposed budget, the budget is then presented to the HCHSP Policy Council for approval. Upon approval by the HCHSP Policy Council, the Executive Director presents the budget to the Grantee Board (Commissioner's Court) for final approval and submission.

It is the procedure of Hidalgo County Head Start Program to obtain final budget approval 90 days before the beginning of the Program's calendar year. The budget is submitted electronically via the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES) at www.hses.ohs.acf.hhs.gov no later than September 30th.

The accounting procedures manual clearly outlines the budget development process and describes how the governing body and the Policy Council are engaged in the budget development process.

How does the Program use the financial management system to capture actual-to-budgeted costs monthly?

Actual-to-budgeted costs are captured utilizing a Monthly Encumbrance Budget Report which includes total budgeted appropriations by budget line-item category, year-to-day encumbrances, year-to-date expenditures, year-to-date budget balances and monthly expenditures. The Fiscal department monitors expenditure utilizing a detailed budget encumbrance report and compares actual expenditures with appropriated balances in each budget line item. Encumbrance reports are monitored monthly by Fiscal staff.

How does the Program regularly examine and address the financial impact of emerging program needs and changes?

The Senior Management Team (Executive Director, Assistant Program Directors, and Program's Chief Officers) meet weekly on Monday mornings to discuss areas of concern, progress, and year-to-date status regarding delivery of services to children and families. The Senior Management Team discusses upcoming services and/or needs i.e., staffing, transportation, education curriculum, state certifications, budgeting and target spending rates and trends, safety equipment needs, technology, etc.

The Fiscal department submits a monthly encumbrance budget report to all Department Directors for review. They monitor their respective budget reports to gauge revenues and expenditures accordingly. The Policy Council also receives a monthly budget encumbrance report for approval every month.

How does the Program ensure costs are allocated appropriately?

All costs for goods and services are allocable and necessary to the overall operation of the Head Start Program and are in accordance with the Notice of Award. Purchase orders are coded

accordingly with a Fund, Function, General Ledger Account Code, Location, and Department Number utilizing MIP Accounting Software.

Identify areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds Performance Standards in your department.

- **Abila MIP Fund Accounting Software** is utilized for budgeting, financial reporting, electronic requisitioning, general ledger, payroll, accounts payables, bank reconciliations, expenditure forecasting and analysis, fixed assets, and Human Resources Management.
- **Human Resources/Benefits module** integrated with the payroll module ensures data can easily and readily be accessible for payroll and HR processing; eliminates the number of times data is entered into the database, saves time, provides less probability for error, and enables the separation of duties.
- **EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer) module** was recently implemented for submitting online electronic payments to vendors.
- **Microix Biometric Time Keeping Software System** was recently implemented for all staff to punch in and out daily from their respective locations. Microix payroll data collection is transferred to the MIP Accounting Software module used by the Program to process payroll on a bi-weekly basis.
- **School district partnerships** generate approximately \$8.7 million dollars annually of Non-federal Match contributions to the Program by providing school district teachers and classroom facilities at the school district campuses. Some school districts also provide bus transportation for several Head Start centers.
- **Certified Independent Appraisal** has been secured to establish a current fair market value on real property and space donated by local school districts which is used for valuation of Non-federal Match generating approximately \$5.2 million dollars annually.

- **E-Services** are accessed through IRS website to verify Vendor W-9's Employer Identification Numbers (EIN's). This service enables the Program to conduct business with eligible vendors that are not debarred from conducting business with a Federal Program.
- **MIP Requisition module** item codes have been expanded to account for individualized items purchased throughout the year.
- **Strong collaboration** with the County of Hidalgo Purchasing Department.

What are critical areas of concern your TEAM has identified?

- Migrating MIP Accounting Software, Microix Payroll, Human Resources, and Electronic Requisitioning to the MIP Cloud. This would increase security measures for all data and enable staff to retrieve files and work from home in case of an emergency.
- Migrating electronic requisitions/purchase orders to the MIP Cloud and utilizing the Microix Electronic Purchase Order Software would eliminate the 5-part carbon copy purchase orders.
- A travel log software Program is highly recommended for staff traveling to and from centers for Program business.
- High rising benefits costs for Employee Health Insurance.

What strategies have your TEAM identified to address concerns:

Where are we now?

What is the Plan for the Future?

- The Biometric Time Clock system has been implemented.

- Fiscal staff are also in the process of meeting with a Trip Log software representative to explore the possibilities of implementing a travel software to keep track of travel time and travel destinations for Program staff.
- Migrate to the MIP Cloud for safety, security, and protection of Program data.
- Purchase the Moderate Phase of the MIP Fund Accounting Software which features built in bar graphs and a dashboard which depicts current and year-to-date actual financial data.

MENTAL HEALTH AND DISABILITY

Federal Laws and Regulations for MHS

1302.40(b);1302.45(a)(3);1302.17(a)(b);1302.46(b)(1)(iv)(2)

Does the Program maintain representation of the Program, community, and health professionals in the Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee? Explain.

Yes. HCHSP maintains representation through community and mental health professionals to establish and ensure comprehensive services are in place for our children and their families. The Mental Health Advisory Committee is made up of a diverse group of local Mental Health Specialists and Special Services ISD professionals that together discuss ways to build a strong service delivery program for children with disabilities or suspected disabilities as well as for those with mental health concerns. Some of these partners include but are not limited to Texas Tropical Behavioral Specialists, (LPC's, SW's), Region One Special Services Dept., Licensed Professional Counselor is on contract through The Groves Assessments and Psychotherapy Agency, Head Start Mental Health Counselor's, ISD Special Services Director's, Head Start Department Directors, and parents. These representatives join yearly at an Advisory Committee event to streamline program plans for the upcoming year. This practice not only enhances support for campus staff, children, and their families by connecting them to vital tools, techniques, and community resources

but sets up strong collaborations between vested partners to develop policies and procedures to have profound impact for the children and families we serve. Meeting agendas and signing sheets are kept on record by the Transition dept.

- The Groves Assessment and Psychotherapy (Outside Agency)
- Employed staff with Mental Health Certifications or equivalent certifications (HS)
- Local School District Director's (9-ISD's)
- Texas Tropical Behavioral (Community Agency)
- Region One Special Services Coordinator: Mr. Aliber Pena (Community Education Center)

Does the Program assist families to navigate health and mental health systems? Explain.

Yes. The HCHSP Mental Health Department provides individual services and support, to the maximum extent possible, to meet all child and family needs. The program conducts Mental Health Screening / Assessments for all enrolled children within a 45-day timeline from the first day of enrollment to identify early needs and concerns in the social and emotional growth and development of each child. The Devereux measures protective factors where children are to reach a level of resilience based on their age and developmental growth. These targeted areas include “Initiative, Self-Regulation, Relationship/Attachment and Behavior Concerns”. The e-Deca equips teaching staff with on-the-go strategies to model and build targeted skills they currently need more help with. Through the Program’s insurance provider AETNA, staff and family members can access mental health services through various outside providers with zero to minimal cost. The Employee Assistance Program, available through our Hidalgo County’s Health and Wellness Program, is just one of several options we offer our families and staff. Other services given through

our Head Start Mental Health staff is working daily with families to provide them with informational resources on ways to work with their children at home when they are struggling with behavior. Tangible tools and resources are made available to families to engage and work with their children at home to support practices in the classroom. One example is the use of “After School Schedules” that will help parents teach to make connections while simultaneously enabling kids to pinpoint similarities on how transitions exist both at home and at school. This parenting skill among others shared; allows the teacher and parent to join to work on similar goals to help the child not able to accept change easily. In some instances, the child may need added support therefore an external referral may be started. Such added support may be available through a child’s health insurance when the program cannot meet the immediate need of the child to the extent necessary. The Mental Health staff aids families to navigate through Mental Health systems by ensuring connections with outside agencies are in place and will work with campus staff to prove those connections. The staff provide families with a community directory of available resources and agencies in their areas to simplify the transition and accessibility of services. The Mental Health Department and campus staff use and implement the Mental Health Process to provide ongoing support to children with behavioral needs in Head Start classrooms throughout the county of Hidalgo. HS Counselor’s prepare guidance lessons to help prevent and stabilize mental health concerns to all children at campuses on a six-week basis. Lastly, Mental Health-Disability staff hold Staff Wellness informational and interactive sessions with campus staff to provide guidance on developing positive and meaningful home-work life balance by placing significant importance on self-care.

- Community Directory of outside Agencies for Social-Emotional Support/Well-being
- Employee Wellness Flyer

- Mental Health Process Guides
- e-Deca Screener – Strategy Six weeks posters
- Guidance Lessons
- Staff-Wellness Sessions

Does the Program maintain an active arrangement with a mental health consultant who is a licensed mental health professional or who is supervised by a licensed mental health professional? Explain.

Yes. The HCHSP established a written agreement for Mental Health Services through The Groves Assessments and Psychotherapy out of the McAllen, Texas. The Mental Health Department currently works with three staff members, all certified Licensed Professional Counselor's-Applied; and are supervised by Mrs. Lamara Martin, Director of Operations. Through the written contract, Mrs. Martin oversees all functions and services thoroughly explained at the BOY to her staff on program expectations of services they are to provide at our campuses, staff, and our families. Mrs. Martin analyzes all data her staff sends to her for accuracy and accountability of each classroom to then submit an electronic file of all observations signed and completed along with any recommendations made to us. An invoice for processing payment each month is included (if submitted on time). Follow-ups will be entered during the Spring observations.

- The Groves Assessment and Psychotherapy
- Head Start Employed staff: Certified Counselor's, and Mental Health-Disability Coordinators

Does the Program annually evaluate how the mental health consultation services meet the needs of the Program? Explain.

Yes, as services are completed throughout the year, the Mental Health Department Director along with dept. staff keep records of submitted data monthly (as made available) and follow up with

The Groves staff as needed to ensure all expectations are met and submitted on a prompt basis. This process initiates at the start of each semester for the program year: Fall and Spring. Additionally, a survey will be sent out electronically to campus staff to gather valuable data on how they believe the Mental Health Consultants supported their classrooms, children, and families to plan for the following program year and adjust as needed. This survey will go out in February for semester 1 and in May for Semester 2.

Does the Program use the mental health consultant to build the capacity of adults to support the mental health and social and emotional needs of children? Explain.

Yes. The Mental Health Consultants on contract hold multiple responsibilities that are not limited to performing observations, meeting with campus staff to share recommendations to assist staff as needed and based on observables about children's social and emotional development. These Mental Health Consultants work with staff to provide on the spot strategies to help children showing difficulty adapting to the classroom environment through research-based teaching approaches. Mental Health Counselor's from outside agencies attend parent meetings as invited by campus staff in extreme cases. Observations are made twice a year, once in the Fall and in the Spring to follow up on recommendations made. This applies to MHC on contract and excludes internal MHC that must follow up on children being serviced regularly.

The HCHSP Disability Department works closely with the MHC and HS Mental Health staff to perform dual services interchangeably for children identified as LEA's that do require added support for behavioral concerns. This continual support is in place while working with local education agency staff simultaneously for the purpose of giving the most credible and immediate support when needed. These practices are followed to the maximum extent possible, to meet the child's and family needs. Such additional support may be available through a child's health

insurance, or it may be proper or required to provide the support needed under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. When such support is not available through alternate means, pending the evaluation results and eligibility determination, the program aims to individualize program services based on available information such as parent input and child observations and assessment data. The program may provide funds for these purposes. families to navigate through Mental Health systems by ensuring families keep connections with outside agencies when in need of added support outside of our ability.

- Classroom Observations
- Parent Meetings
- Conferences with Campus Directors
- Follow-Ups

Does the Program implement various methods and approaches to build skills and capacity of all staff members who regularly interact with children? Explain.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program provides comprehensive training for staff to effectively support children with special needs/disabilities. These include learning about specific disabilities, responsive behavior interventions and ongoing supportive strategies. Staff receive training on managing challenging behaviors and attend sessions on the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Additionally, the staff take part in Child Find meetings and workshops in collaboration with Local Agencies to enhance their skills and knowledge. working with challenging behaviors, and training related to the ADA. Head Start program staff meet with families concerning children with unique/specific diets, and/or allergies). These meetings address necessary accommodation and modifications to best serve children. Effective communication with families is essential for adequate preparation and the best service delivery tailored to each child's individual requirements.

The professional development training focuses on competency and data gathering and collection while working with children with diverse disabilities, addressing staff attitudes and unfamiliarity of department systems which may include parent involvement as needed. Recommendations and strategies to build resilience in children presented through an educational approach incorporate Conscious Discipline along with PBS to rectify the social-emotional learning attributes in gradual increments through repetitive and consistent practices proven to help children repair bad behaviors and respond to classroom expectations smoothly. Responsive behavior interventions and strategies are part of on-going staff training for those working with children.

The staff learn the needed strategies and utilize them with children with fidelity while progress is documented on case notes to support social and emotional intelligence and cognitive performance by HeadStart teaching staff.

The e-DECA screening is administered to every child and is a web-based platform for use of the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA). The e-DECA Program focuses not only on promoting the resilience and social and emotional health of young children, but on the adults caring for them too.

- Mental Health-Disability Trainings-Positive Behavior Support-Children with individual education plans-IEP's (ongoing)
- e-Deca strategy posters for children with BC on screen
- ISD partners
- Child Find Transition Meetings
- Region One Trainings (face to face/virtual)

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program collaborates with 9 local school districts in all processes

involving dually enrolled children including those with behavior concerns and or a suspected disability.

Does the Program prohibit the use of unenrollment from the Program in response to children's behaviors? Explain.

Yes. Head Start prohibits any child from unenrolling due to behavior concerns no matter what the degree. The Mental Health staff instead work with families, staff, and the child to find ways to allow the child to gradually gain trust and a feeling of acceptance from all individuals working with him/her. As per the Hidalgo County Head Start Program policies and procedures, expulsion is prohibited by any means and instead work with the Rapid Response Team to develop a plan of action to offer support in social-emotional and wellness areas that may be affecting children with challenging behaviors or suspected disabilities. Part of the services include providing recommendations establishing preventive and corrective measures that not only focus on child needs, but staff needs as well. In addition to this, recommendations on setting goals and using data to monitor progress in preventing, severely limiting, and ultimately eliminating expulsion and suspension practices in early childhood settings are provided. Exclusionary measures should be used only as a last resort in extraordinary circumstances where there is a determination of a serious safety threat that cannot otherwise be reduced or eliminated by the provision of reasonable modifications and strategies. Even in such extraordinary cases, the program assists the child and family in accessing services and an alternative placement through, for example, community-based childcare resources and referral agencies. The program has a procedure in place of a 1-day deferment for children that may need more time to adapt to a school/classroom setting and serves to uphold parents in providing missing data to better help us serve their children. The Mental Health and Disability Director will approve this deferment once verification has been made on all data collection of MHP was followed with fidelity and all possible support was provided prior to

a temporary placement. If the MH-Disability Director is absent, an Executive Team Director will finalize this approval.

The Hidalgo County Head Start promotes children's social-emotional and behavioral health and appropriately addresses challenging behavior, forms strong, supportive, nurturing relationships with children and families. In addition to this it conducts ongoing developmental monitoring, behavioral screenings and collaborating with community -service providers. The program also emphasizes cultural awareness training to address biases and eliminate discriminatory practices.

- Rapid Response Team – BAP
- 1 Day Deferment

A Rapid Response Team (RRT) is a group of specialists from each HS department who provide immediate, on-site support to early childhood educators and families facing challenges with behavioral issues, special needs children, and classroom disruptions. The purpose of this team is to intervene swiftly, offering strategies, resources, and hands-on assistance to address these challenges before they escalate to suspension or expulsion.

RRT is crucial for the following reasons:

- **Immediate Support for Teachers**-Educators often feel under-equipped to manage behavioral challenges in the classroom. The RRT provides teachers with immediate support and guidance, ensuring that behavioral issues are handled effectively and in compliance with our Head Start regulations.
- **Resources for Families**- Families of children with special needs or behavioral challenges feel frustrated by the lack of resources. The RRT not only assists in the classroom but also guides families to continue interventions at home. By offering resources and tailored

support, RRT's empower families to be active participants in their child's education.

- **Individualized Support for Children**-The HS RRT ensures that each child receives educational support for children with disabilities, or behavior concerns, providing individualized care and intervention plans. Children benefit from personalized strategies that cater to their unique needs, which help improve both behavioral and academic outcomes in the long run.

Does the Program prohibit and/or severely limit the use of suspension in response to children's behavior? Explain.

Yes. HCHSP policy prohibits or severely limits the use of suspension due to a child's behavior and may only be temporary in nature. If a temporary suspension is deemed necessary, the MHC and campus staff help the child return to full participation in all program activities as quickly as possible while ensuring child safety by continuing to engage the parents. The Mental Health Counselor's and staff contact families and evaluate the need to refer the child to outside agencies for added behavioral support. Teachers are expected to implement and are trained in a Positive Behavior Support Plan. When staff encounter a child with challenging behavior the Mental Health Counselors and Mental Health Coordinator develop Individualized support and interventions tailored to meet the specific needs of child who require the most intensive level of attention.

Does the Program develop and implement developmentally appropriate behavior guidance and positive discipline policies and practices? Explain.

- The HCHSP subscribes to the Positive Behavior Support approach to guide teachers and classroom staff with strategies to be implemented in the classroom to promote the social emotional development of children in the program.
- The Positive Behavior Support approach is designed in three steps where the teacher can implement preventive strategies such as universal support, target on focused behavior, and

the development of the BIP. The Mental Health Counselors and Mental Health Coordinator provides continue monitor and support to the PBS process.

Does the Program collaborate with families to understand and respond to children’s behaviors and development? Explain.

The Mental Health and Disability department attends parent meetings and presents to families at parent meetings regarding the development of children and the behavioral assistance that can be provided to parents when in need. On an individual basis, staff meet with parents to discuss any behavioral or developmental concerns with their child. Staff provide them with resources and strategies to implement with their child that can help address their concerns. Staff share resources that describe milestones of child development and growth and explain to parents the need to advocate for services for their children. Staff also connect our HS parents to outside agencies that can further assist them with any concerns they may have through an external referral. Staff support families all through the referral process with the ISD up to the ARD date and on if child qualifies for services. The Program has certified staff that work with campus staff to coordinate meetings to ensure questions are answered regarding a child concern they may have.

- Parent Meeting Logs-Agenda
- Mental Health Behavior Strategist/counselors

Does the Program support family mental health and wellness? Explain.

Hidalgo County Head Start has a list of community service agencies that can be used as a resource to connect and refer families to support their mental health and wellness. The staff also refer to UTRGV Counseling and Training Clinic that provides free counseling services such as individual, couples, and group counseling. The Mental Health Department employees work directly with families as needed when clear needs for family intervention and support are evident or requested

directly from parents. This is part of our daily service where 95 % of the time assistance is provided at the child's campus through a direct parent conference. The program develops monthly flyers for Mental Health and Wellness that are distributed to campuses via e-mail and posted on the parent bulletin board for parents and staff to read.

Does the Program maintain at least 10 percent of the program's actual enrollment with children eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)? Explain.

As of January, we are at 11.5% enrollment of children identified under IDEA

Does the Program collaborate with local early intervention and special education services to support enrollment? Explain.

- Recruitment
 - Attending events held by LEA/ISD
 - Setting up booths to engage families
 - Child Find
 - Campus connections w/ Sped Dept.

Identify areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds Performance Standards in your department.

DATA COLLECTION has been the most efficient and effective process to gather pending data to monitor and ensure services are in place for all children stemming from both programs: Mental Health and Disabilities

TEAMS enable the Mental Health/Disability staff to communicate with campus staff to request parent information and upload pending student information, monitor, and keep on top of processes for both departments primarily with the use of the Weekly Tracking Log. Staff can send out messages through the day when corrective action needs to take place instantly. This has been by far an area that exceeds performance standards as it addresses immediate concerns about fixing

them as discrepancies are identified. Training done on Teams and the accessibility to multiple campuses at once allows the Mental Health staff to provide added support to staff for proper data collection of services and to gather the masses when working with 28 campuses simultaneously.

LEA PARTNERSHIPS have strengthened the ability to process children more efficiently by keeping those lines of communication open to ensure both vested parties are on top of deadlines and program and ISD expectations.

COHESIVE/TEAMWORK/Meetings allow the department to flourish in understanding the needs that should be kept in place for services and processes yet allows room to discuss modifications to systems when they may not be in the best interest of our staff, services, or program delivery.

STAFF WELLNESS ACTIVITIES have been a staple to immerse staff into a mindset of valuing themselves first by practicing vital core habits to transform their daily lives in a way where showing gratitude becomes second nature. Not only does the Mental Health staff guide staff on how to focus on self-care skills, but they promote the need and urgency to find a balance between their work, family, and friendship circles to help them build a strong foundation of empathy for self and others. The Mental Health staff develop flyers of Mental Health Tips through a monthly dose of wellness message that is sent to campuses to share with staff at their monthly meetings.

RAPID RESPONSE TEAM is a cohesive integration of departments that meet as children at campuses are having continuous meltdowns despite all efforts made by vested groups. Some children may be maladapting to the learning environment or simply not able to respond to teacher directives due to having a suspected disability that they too are learning to live which could include environmental factors feeding in as well. The RRT aims to offer children exhibiting extreme

behavior concerns, and their families wrap around support they may need in one or more areas of family engagement, nutrition, health, and mental health. In holding these meetings, the team goal is to provide services to help the children meet both their social-emotional and physical needs to therefore respond well to the educational goals and outcomes set forth for children by the teacher. Parent communication and consultations are ongoing and do require follow-ups established through phone calls or staffing's held at various times during the year. The Mental Health and Disability staff strive to make timely visits as they are made aware of situations and are always reachable and available to staff and families 5 days a week.

What are Critical Areas of concern your TEAM has identified?

- Use of disability aide floaters to cover classrooms when a child is in great need of close supervision is left with no added support can add tension to classroom environment.
- Not sure where to input data on GoEngage
- Staff do not follow recommendations provided despite continual training, both virtual and face to face.
- Observations are not completed accordingly and on a timely basis questioning the MHP in place. (Possible modifications coming for next year).
- Teachers have a negative perception of children before the Intervention Plan is presented or introduced.
- Lack of data entry by campus director on weekly monitoring/observations
- Better understanding of the Head Start Program and its Framework by ISD personnel.
- Some FSW's do not pick up the skills despite many attempts to train them
- Campus staff need to generate referrals so children can get support early on

- Lack of consistency in active monitoring across the Program

What strategies have your TEAM identified to address concerns:

Where are we now?

- Training is ongoing and done as needed and at the BOY/On board Training
- Working with MIS staff to configure smoother data inputting on system
- Visit campuses to discuss concerns and help correct issues
- Dis/MH Team assists FSW's to input data
- Staff intercede in all areas of the child's well-being
- Weekly meetings being held to handle campus/parent concerns as needed

What is the Plan for the Future?

- Training will be modified as changes have occurred throughout the year to simplify processes.
- Training courses will be held in person/small groups (when available) whole group
- Meet with other departments regularly; monthly, if possible, to streamline issues
- All staff to be familiarized on CLASS to assist with special education department (ISD) concerns and support parents when explaining child progress.
- Bi-Weekly-Monthly Team meetings for updates on program changes/updates/possibly virtual at times

CHILD HEALTH AND SAFETY

Federal Laws and Regulations in HEA

1302.17(a-b); 1302.21(d); 1302.31(e);1302.40(b); 1302.42(b); 1302. 42(d); 1302.43; 1302.44(a); 1302.45(a)(3); 1302.46(b); 1302.47(b); 1302.90(b)

Does the Program confirm that a health care professional has made determinations of medical and oral health care for all children within 90 days of enrollment? Explain.

Yes, the Hidalgo County Head Start Program (HCHSP) requires that within 90 days of a child's enrollment, determinations must be made by health care and oral health care professionals regarding the child's medical and oral health status. This includes ensuring that the child is up to date on age-appropriate preventive and primary medical and oral health care. The 90-day deadlines are helpful in tracking the health services for children:

- Hidalgo County Head Start Program (HCHSP) Health Services nurses and campus staff help parents to obtain the necessary documentation from health and dental providers before the deadline.
- The Go Engage program helps generate monthly reports that are useful to keep staff up to date with campus deadlines. HCHSP Health Department nurses and campus staff will print condensed summary reports, vaccination reports, and other reports to ensure that all needed health requirements are fulfilled.
- These reports are emailed, faxed, or delivered by the nurses to the campus staff to help them identify any past due documents, abnormal values, or anything that may be due soon.
- Staff at the campuses ensure that parents make the required arrangements to take their children for follow-up if anything abnormal is identified or missing.
- Staff will send notices and check the records by monitoring GoEngage.
- The HCHSP Health Services nurses carefully monitor PIR, POP and other reports.

Does the Program support children and families to become up to date on preventative medical and oral health care? Explain.

Yes, the Hidalgo County Head Start Program (HCHSP) actively supports children and families in

becoming up to date on preventive medical and oral health care.

- Initial Assessments immediately to meet the 30-45-90 days of enrollment, the program ensures that children receive comprehensive health assessments, including medical and dental evaluations by scheduling our mobile clinics.
- The program collaborates with health care providers to offer preventive services such as immunizations, well-child visits, and dental check-ups.
- HCHSP Health Services Department nurses and Campus staff assist parents in obtaining necessary paperwork and encourage parents in making appointments with health and dental providers. Staff coordinate services by seeking and addressing the child/family needs and referring families to outside agencies as needed.
- The nurses and campus staff both use tools like the GoEngage and monthly reports to track health services and ensure that all requirements are met. Staff monitor records and send reminders to parents for follow-up if any abnormalities or missing information are identified.
- When necessary, the health department and campus staff provide education to parents about the importance of regular medical and dental care and offers resources to help them navigate the health care system.
- HCHSP establishes referral relationships with local health professionals and organizations such as: (Ashley Pediatrics, Dr. Orfanos Pediatric Hidalgo County Health Department, Nuestra Clinica Del Valle) to ensure continuous and accessible care for children.

Does the Program track referral and follow-up services for children who have an identified health need? Explain.

Yes, the Hidalgo County Head Start Program (HCHSP) tracks referral and follow-up services for children with identified health needs.

- Children undergo an initial comprehensive health screening to identify any medical, dental, or developmental concerns.
- If a health need is identified, HCHSP refers the child to appropriate health care providers. This includes obtaining parental consent and coordinating with local agencies and health professionals who are partnered with Hidalgo County Head Start.
- The program ensures that follow-up services are provided by tracking the child's progress and maintaining communication with health care providers and parents
- HCHSP Staff document referrals and follow-up services by using tools like the Go Engage program to monitor and ensure that all health requirements are met.
- Collaboration with Community Partners: The program has MOUs with community partners, including medical and dental providers, to facilitate access to necessary services. Some providers - Ashley Pediatrics and Dr. Orfanos Pediatric offer pro bono services, and parents are encouraged to apply for Medicaid/CHIP benefits or are also referred to use available community resources.
- HCHSP Staff regularly review files to identify any required follow-ups and communicate with parents and other departments to support the child's health needs. Regular discussions and monthly notices are handed to the parent/guardian until the required paperwork or services are completed and/or suitable follow-up care is arranged.

Does the Program perform or obtain vision and hearing screenings for all children within 45 days of enrollment? Explain.

Yes, the Head Start Program requires that all children receive vision and hearing screenings within

45 days of enrollment.

- The Hidalgo County Head Start Program (HCHSP) ensures that children undergo evidence-based vision screenings to identify any potential vision issues early on. These screenings are crucial for detecting problems that might affect a child's learning and development. The HCHSP nurses and campus staff are trained and certified by the State of Texas to perform these vision screens on campus.
- Hearing screenings are conducted to identify any hearing impairments that could impact a child's ability to communicate and learn effectively. The HCHSP nurses and campus staff are trained and certified by the State of Texas to perform these hearing screens on campus.
- Both vision and hearing screenings must be completed within 45 days of the child's first day in the program.
- The program collaborates with community-based agencies or local health professionals to conduct these screenings. HCHSP works with organizations like our mobile clinics (Ashley Pediatrics and Dr. Orfanos Pediatrics) to ensure comprehensive screenings are done.
- If any issues are identified during the screenings, the program ensures that appropriate follow-up services are provided. This includes referrals to the child's medical doctor for more thorough screening and continuous monitoring to address any identified needs.

Does the Program assist families to navigate health and mental health services? Explain.

Yes, the Head Start Program assists families in navigating health and mental health services through a comprehensive support system.

- The HCHSP program conducts initial health and mental health screenings to identify any needs early on.
- If any health needs are identified, the HCHS program makes referrals to the appropriate health care providers and ensures follow-up services are provided.
- HCHSP programs establish partnerships with local health providers to facilitate access to necessary services. These partnerships help families connect with providers who can offer the required care.
- The HCHS program offers family support services that include helping families access health, nutrition, and mental health services. This support is tailored to meet the specific needs of each family.
- Parents receive education on the importance of health and mental health care, and are provided with resources to help them navigate the health care system
- HCHSP nurses, Mental Health staff and campus staff continuously monitor the child's health and mental health status, ensuring that any new needs are promptly addressed.

Does the Program remove barriers to improve access to health care for children and families? Explain.

Yes, the Head Start Program actively works to remove barriers and improve access to health care for children and families.

- The HCHSP establishes partnerships with local health and dental providers such as: Ashley Pediatrics, Dr. Orfanos Pediatric, Growing Smiles, Hidalgo County Health Department and Nuestra Clinica Del Valle are some of whom offer pro bono or low-cost services. This helps families who might otherwise struggle to afford care.

- **Support to obtain Health Coverage:** Families without medical or dental insurance are encouraged to apply for Medicaid/CHIP benefits. The program also provides lists of community resources to help families find affordable care.
- **Mobile Health Services:** staff coordinate with providers like Ashley Pediatrics or Dr. Orfanos to bring mobile health units to Head Start campuses, making it easier for children to receive necessary care
- The program tracks referrals and follow-up services through systems like Go Engage, to ensure a child's health, oral, social, emotional, and developmental needs are identified and addressed promptly.
- **Parental Support:** HCHSP Head Start offers advice to parents on the importance of health care and provides resources to help them navigate the health care system. Staff also assist with scheduling appointments and follow-ups if needed.
- The HCHSP Health Services department nurses continuously monitors children's records for medical and dental documentation, supporting staff as needed to ensure all health requirements are met.

Does the Program maintain representation of the Program, community, and health professionals in the Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee? Explain.

Yes, the Head Start Program maintains representation from the program, community, and health professionals in the Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC).

- **Diverse Membership:** The HSAC is composed of a variety of local health providers, including pediatricians, nurses, nurse practitioners, dentists, nutritionists, and mental health providers. This ensures a broad range of expertise and perspectives

- **Program Staff and Parents:** Head Start staff and parents also serve on the HSAC, providing valuable insights and ensuring that the needs and concerns of families are represented
- **Community Involvement:** The committee includes representatives from local social services agencies and community organizations, fostering strong community partnerships and resource mobilization
- **Decision-Making and Policy Development:** The HSAC helps programs make decisions about health services, develop plans, policies, and procedures, and address emerging health issues. This collaborative approach strengthens the health services provided to children and families
- **Regular Meetings:** The HSAC meets regularly to review and evaluate health services, ensuring continuous improvement and responsiveness to the needs of the community

This diverse and collaborative structure helps the Head Start Program effectively support the health and well-being of children and families.

Does the Program leverage the expertise of the Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee in addressing program health services? Explain.

Yes, the Head Start Program leverages the expertise of the Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) to address program health services effectively.

- **Decision-Making Support:** The HSAC helps programs make informed decisions about health services by providing expert advice and guidance. This includes developing plans, policies, and procedures to address emerging health issues

- **Comprehensive Representation:** The committee includes a diverse group of local health providers, such as pediatricians, nurses, dentists, nutritionists, and mental health professionals. This ensures a wide range of expertise and perspectives are considered
- **Community Collaboration:** The HSAC fosters strong partnerships with local social services agencies and community organizations. This collaboration helps mobilize community resources and strengthens the support network for Head Start families
- **Regular Evaluation:** The committee meets regularly to review and evaluate the health services provided by the program. This continuous evaluation helps ensure that the services remain effective and responsive to the needs of children and families
- **Resource Development:** HSAC assists in creating and sustaining resources, such as family workshops and staff training, to promote the health and well-being of children

By leveraging the expertise of the HSAC, the Head Start Program can provide comprehensive and effective health services, supporting the overall development and well-being of children and families.

Does the Program establish health and safety policies and procedures? Explain.

Yes, the Head Start Program establishes comprehensive health and safety policies and procedures to ensure the well-being of children and staff.

- **Health and Safety Screenings:** The program conducts regular health and safety screenings to identify and address any potential hazards or health concerns

- **Safety Practices:** Policies are in place to ensure that facilities, materials, and equipment are free of hazards. Staff are trained to promote safety practices, such as active supervision, to reduce the number and severity of childhood injuries
- **Emergency Preparedness:** The program has procedures for emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. This includes disaster preparedness plans and training for staff and families
- **Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting:** All Head Start staff are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. The program has clear procedures for reporting and addressing these concerns
- **Health Services Management:** The program ensures that health services are managed effectively, including obtaining necessary health screenings and follow-ups for children
- **Regular Monitoring and Evaluation:** The Health and Safety Screener tool is used to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of health and safety policies and procedures, ensuring continuous improvement

These policies and procedures help create a safe and healthy environment for children to learn and grow.

Does the Program provide training on health and safety expectations for staff members? Explain.

Yes, the Head Start Program provides comprehensive training on health and safety expectations for staff members.

- **Initial and Ongoing Training:** Staff receive initial training upon hiring and ongoing professional development to ensure they are up to date with the latest health and safety practices
- **Specific Health and Safety Topics:** Training covers a wide range of topics, including handwashing basics, diapering, safe sleep practices, food allergies, playground supervision, and more
- **Emergency Preparedness:** Staff are trained in emergency preparedness, including how to respond to natural disasters, fires, and other emergencies. This training includes regular drills and the use of resources like the "Emergency Preparedness Manual for Early Childhood Programs"
- **Active Supervision:** Training emphasizes the importance of active supervision to prevent injuries and always ensure the safety of children
- **Mandated Reporting:** All staff are trained on their responsibilities as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect
- **Professional Development Resources:** The program offers access to various professional development resources, including webinars, online courses, and training modules provided by organizations like the CDC and FEMA

These training initiatives ensure that staff are well-prepared to maintain a safe and healthy environment for children.

- **Initial and Ongoing Training:** Staff receive initial training upon hiring and ongoing professional development to ensure they are up to date with the latest health and safety practices.
- **Annual Trainings:** The program offers trainings on health and safety practices annually at the beginning of each school year, during preservice, and as needed throughout the year. This ensures that all staff have sufficient knowledge and experience to fulfill their health roles and responsibilities and deliver high-quality service to all families.
- **Specific Health and Safety Topics:** Training covers a wide range of topics, including:
 - Safe medication administration
 - Hearing and vision screenings (staff receive state certification)
 - CPR
 - Height and weight
 - Blood pressure monitoring
 - How to handle emergencies
 - Handwashing basics
 - Diapering
 - Safe sleep practices
 - Food allergies
 - Playground supervision

- **Emergency Preparedness:** Staff are trained in emergency preparedness, including how to respond to natural disasters, fires, and other emergencies. This training includes regular drills and the use of resources like the "Emergency Preparedness Manual for Early Childhood Programs."
- **Active Supervision:** Training emphasizes the importance of active supervision to prevent injuries and always ensure the safety of children.
- **Mandated Reporting:** All staff are trained on their responsibilities as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect.
- **Professional Development Resources:** The program offers access to various professional development resources, including webinars, online courses, and training modules provided by organizations like the CDC and FEMA.

These training initiatives ensure that staff are well-prepared to maintain a safe and healthy environment for children.

Does the Program establish systems to identify potential safety risks? Explain.

Yes, the Head Start Program establishes systems to identify potential safety risks to ensure a safe environment for children and staff.

- **Hazard Mapping:** The program uses hazard mapping to identify locations with a high risk of injury. This process involves creating detailed maps of classrooms, playgrounds, and other areas, and marking where incidents occur. This helps pinpoint systems and services that need strengthening and develop corrective action plans

- **Incident Reporting:** The program has a robust system for reporting and tracking child health and safety incidents. Significant incidents affecting the health or safety of a child must be reported to the responsible U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) official within seven calendar days
- **Safety Practices:** The program ensures that facilities, materials, and equipment are free of hazards. Staff are trained to promote safety practices, such as active supervision, to reduce the number and severity of childhood injuries
- **Regular Monitoring:** The Health and Safety Screener tool is used to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of health and safety policies and procedures. This ongoing monitoring helps identify and address potential safety risks
- **Safety and Injury Prevention Committee:** Programs may establish a safety and injury prevention committee, which can include administrators, staff, parents, and community partners. This committee reviews and analyzes incident data to identify patterns and develop strategies for injury prevention

These systems help create a safe and healthy environment for children to learn and grow.

Does the Program implement a plan to ensure that children are not exposed to lead in water or paint in any facilities? Explain.

The Hidalgo County Health Service Department took part in the Texas Lead Testing in School and Child Care (LTSCC) Program and obtained water lead test kits that provide results for water quality and lead levels. Additionally, to conduct paint lead testing, the program purchased EPA-approved paint kits from Grainger. Testing was conducted at each location during the month of December 2024 and continued thereafter. Trained staff conducted assessments to determine the

extent of lead contamination, if present, and to recommend necessary actions to ensure that schools and campuses receive comprehensive support for remediation.

At the Hidalgo County Head Start Program, all the children exclusively drink bottled water supplied by the Nutrition Department. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate that even minimal exposure to lead can hinder healthy brain development in children. Infants and children who consume lead-contaminated water may experience delays in both physical and mental development, potentially exhibiting slight deficits in attention span and learning abilities. Additionally, adults who consume this water over an extended period may face health issues, such as kidney problems or high blood pressure. The tests obtained can help determine the extent of lead exposure from both drinking water and paint.

Water quality in older school buildings is particularly concerning, as these facilities are closed at night and at weekends, allowing more time for lead to leach from pipes into stagnant water. Lead typically enters water by leaching from older service lines, which are the pipes that deliver water from the main supply to the building—as well as from interior plumbing, fittings, and fixtures that may contain lead or lead-based solder. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established an action level for lead in drinking water at 15 parts per billion (ppb), at which point corrective measures must be implemented.

At the Hidalgo County Health Service Department, trained staff will collect the water samples tested using the kits, which are supplied in provided boxes with FedEx labels for easy return to the laboratory for analysis. The paint testing kits purchased from Grainger yield either a negative or positive result and are conducted according to the instructions included in the packaging.

The locally obtained paint test kit is branded as a Complete Lead Paint Test Analysis Kit. It contains multiple test units; however, only the lead testing component was utilized. The procedure

involves obtaining a small paint sample using a box cutter and placing it into lab vials filled with two solution components. After acquiring the paint sample and adding it to the vials with the solutions, a lead test strip is dipped into the mixture for 10 seconds. The solution is then transferred to another vial and left undisturbed for 5 minutes. Finally, the test strips are dipped again for another 10 seconds. Once the test is complete, the results are indicated by either two red or two green color changes on the test strips. Specifically, green indicates a positive outcome, whereas red signifies a negative outcome.

Each site was tested independently using these kits, and the data was documented by photographing the results alongside the actual test kits. Each image clearly displays the results, including the site name, the date of testing, and whether the test yielded a negative or positive result. Site directors, staff, and parents were informed about the testing process and will receive the outcome of the tests. To date, no action is required from any site.

All paint tests have returned negative readings. These results were interpreted according to the instructions provided with the kits, and photographs were taken immediately after testing for documentation purposes. Photographs serve as the most effective method for record-keeping.

Below are the findings from each site.

Does the Program establish and ensure staff members are ready to implement emergency management and disaster preparedness plans? Explain.

Yes, the Head Start Program establishes and ensures that staff members are ready to implement

By implementing these measures, the Head Start Program ensures that staff members are well-prepared to handle emergencies and protect the health and safety of children and families.

- **Emergency Preparedness Plans:** The program develops comprehensive emergency preparedness plans that address various types of emergencies, including natural disasters, fires, and man-made incidents
- **Training and Drills:** Staff members receive regular training on emergency procedures and participate in disaster response drills. This ensures they are prepared to act quickly and effectively in an emergency
- **Risk Assessments:** Programs conduct risk assessments to identify potential hazards and vulnerabilities. This includes evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of facilities and creating strategies to mitigate risks
- **Communication Systems:** Effective communication systems are established to ensure that staff, families, and emergency responders can communicate during an emergency. This includes protocols for notifying parents and coordinating with local authorities
- **Resource Allocation:** Essential resources, such as emergency lighting, first aid kits, and evacuation plans, are readily available and accessible
- **Continuous Improvement:** The program regularly reviews and updates its emergency plans based on feedback from drills and actual incidents. This continuous improvement process helps ensure that the plans remain effective and relevant

These measures help create a safe and resilient environment for children and staff, ensuring that the program can respond effectively to emergencies and protect the well-being of everyone involved.

Does the Program implement hygienic practices for children and staff members? Explain.

Yes, the Head Start Program implements comprehensive hygienic practices for both children and staff members to ensure a healthy and safe environment.

- **Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting:** The program follows a strict schedule for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting various areas and items, such as food preparation surfaces, eating utensils, toys, and classroom areas. This helps reduce the spread of infectious diseases
- **Hand Hygiene:** Regular handwashing is emphasized as one of the best ways to remove germs and prevent illness. Staff and children are encouraged to wash their hands frequently, especially before meals, after using the restroom, and after outdoor play
- **Oral Health Practices:** The program promotes good oral hygiene by ensuring that each child has their own toothbrush, which is labeled with their name and replaced regularly. Staff also follow the best practices for handling oral health emergencies and promoting healthy eating habits
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Staff use appropriate PPE, such as gloves, when necessary, especially during activities like toothbrushing or handling bodily fluids
- **Health Screenings:** Regular health screenings are conducted to identify any potential health issues early on. This includes vision and hearing screenings, as well as monitoring for signs of illness
- **Education and Training:** Staff receive ongoing training on hygienic practices and health protocols to ensure they are well-informed and can effectively implement these practices

These measures help create a clean and healthy environment, reducing the risk of illness and promoting overall well-being for children and staff.

Does the Program include toothbrushing in the classroom schedule at least once a day? Explain.

Yes, the Head Start Program includes toothbrushing in the classroom at least once a day.

- **Daily Routine:** Toothbrushing is incorporated into the daily routine to ensure that children brush their teeth with fluoride toothpaste at least once during the program day
- **Structured Activity:** Toothbrushing is often done at the classroom table, which is a quicker and more structured way to have children brush their teeth compared to individually at the sink. This method also promotes oral health and teaches children a lifelong habit
- **Oral Health Education:** Staff play an important role in helping children develop positive oral health habits. They model proper toothbrushing techniques and provide guidance to ensure children brush effectively
- **Supplies and Hygiene:** Each child has their own toothbrush, which is labeled with their name and replaced regularly. Staff follow best practices for handling and storing toothbrushes to maintain hygiene

By including toothbrushing in the daily schedule, the Head Start Program helps children develop good oral hygiene habits that can last a lifetime.

Does the Program follow appropriate practices to keep children safe during all activities? Explain.

Yes, the Head Start Program follows comprehensive practices to keep children safe during all activities.

- **Active Supervision:** Staff use active supervision techniques to ensure children are always within sight and sound. This includes positioning themselves strategically, scanning the environment, and engaging with children to prevent injuries
- **Safe Environments:** The program ensures that facilities, materials, and equipment are free of hazards. Regular inspections and maintenance are conducted to identify and address potential safety risks
- **Safety Training:** Staff receive ongoing training on safety practices, including emergency procedures, first aid, and CPR. This ensures they are prepared to respond effectively to any incidents
- **Emergency Preparedness:** The program has detailed emergency preparedness plans and conducts regular drills to ensure staff and children know how to respond in case of an emergency
- **Health and Safety Policies:** Comprehensive health and safety policies are in place, covering areas such as hygiene, illness prevention, and injury response. These policies are regularly reviewed and updated
- **Parental Involvement:** Parents are educated in safety practices and are encouraged to participate in safety-related activities and training sessions

These measures help create a safe and nurturing environment for children, ensuring their well-being during all activities.

Does the Program post necessary information related to child food allergies? Explain.

Yes, the Head Start Program posts necessary information related to child food allergies to ensure

the safety and well-being of children.

- **Food Allergy Emergency Plans:** The program requires that each child's food allergy emergency plan be posted in areas where food is prepared and, in each room, where the child may spend time and in the parent corner bulletin board with no names publicly displayed to protect the child's identity.

This ensures that all staff members are aware of the child's allergies and can respond appropriately in case of an emergency.

- **Visibility and Accessibility:** These plans are posted in visible and accessible locations to ensure that caregivers and employees who prepare or serve food are aware of each child's food allergies

This helps prevent accidental exposure to allergens.

- **Privacy Considerations:** While the plans need to be visible, the program also respects privacy requests from parents. For example, a child's allergy plan can be posted inside a cabinet door or covered with a sheet of paper to maintain privacy while still being accessible to staff
- **Regular Updates:** The program ensures that food allergy information is regularly updated and reviewed to reflect any changes in a child's health status or dietary needs

By implementing these measures, the Head Start Program helps create a safe environment for children with food allergies.

EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Federal Laws and Regulations in ECD

1302.31(b-d); 1302.32(a); 1302.33(a-b); 1302.35(d-e);1302.61(a); 1302.91(e); 1302.92(b-c)

Does the Program utilize a research-based curriculum, and trains staff members to support their effective implementation of the curricula? Explain.

Curriculum

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program, (HCHSP), is committed to deliver services for low-income children and families to be ready for kindergarten, and beyond. The program currently collaborates with 9 surrounding school districts in Hidalgo County to ensure that the mission and vision is fulfilled and lived. It offers a full day PK-3 and PK-4 in 28 campuses. Head Start ensures the implementation of the following curriculum programs that are adopted by the different districts.

- Frog Street
- Three Cheers
- Pre-K On MY Way
- Creative Curriculum

Other instructional resources utilized to complement the core curriculum are the following.

- Ignite by Hatch
- Circle Activity Collection
- Heggerty Phonemic Awareness

All these early childhood education curriculum programs and supplemental resources include

comprehensive scientifically-research based scope and sequence for literacy, math and content domains. The curriculums acknowledge the individual needs of all learners, these curriculums include strategies for:

- Individualization
- Differentiated instruction
- Adaptions for special needs and English learners

In addition, they offer developmental and learning continuums that allow children to build on previously mastered skills to achieve new skills more readily in a seamless and continuous while addressing cognitive, language, literacy, physical, and social emotional developmental domains of each child. Furthermore, the daily lesson plans reflect purposeful planned activities that support children's individual needs, abilities and learning styles with teacher nurturing interactions with a focused lens on developmentally appropriate academic lessons addressing the five central domains from the Head Start Early Outcomes Framework, (HSELOF), which include:

- Language and Literacy
- Social and Emotional Development
- Approaches to Learning,
- Cognition
- Perpetual, Motor Physical Development

Included in these lessons are multisensory pre-reading interactive, digital content that supports bilingual learners and children with special needs. Unique in their own way, they also provide instructional materials and resources to address children's needs. All these best teaching practices in these curriculum programs clearly indicate that they are aligned with HSELOF and the Texas

Pre-K Guidelines as required by the state and the federal standards.

The following are the instructional research-based curriculum programs that support the five central domains from HSELOF.

Frog Street Pre-K

- Contains an organized scope and sequence/pacing guide that progressively builds children's knowledge and skills as they move through the developmental progressions.
- Weekly Frog Street lesson plans to individualize instruction
- Flexibility to adjust the lessons to address children's learning based on their needs.
- Teachers may adjust the lessons, activities, and materials to ensure that children's needs are met
- Support for children to develop language skills
- Grouping of children according to language and individual needs during language and literacy throughout the day
- Access to many digital resources and packed with hundreds of ideas to become active participants in their child's learning

Three Cheers

- It is a purposeful, play-based curriculum where learning is initiated through skills-based experiences and structured around quality children's literature
- Has Nine Ready-to-go theme kits containing everything developmentally appropriate learning experiences across all skill domains around the big idea
- Focus on:

- Early literacy
- Family engagement
- Establishes a habit of reading at home
- Provides creative options for theme-specific centers that are routine-oriented plus simple ideas to refresh center activities throughout each theme.
- Includes hundreds of interactive digital gaming opportunities which help develop letter recognition, letter-sound, knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary knowledge, and math number recognition. As per the classroom
- Implemented daily for 45 minutes to support children as they develop their language and literacy skills. Children are grouped intentionally according to language and individual needs during language and literacy throughout the day.

Pre-k On My Way

- Utilizes an engaging approach that helps every child develop the skills they'll need to flourish as readers, writers, and explorers of the world
- Provides teachers with everything they need to engage their children in educationally rich, hands-on and diverse activities throughout the academic year
- Lessons are rich in language and vocabulary, teacher-friendly and easy to deliver and taught for 45 minutes a day
- Digital resources are also provided to supplement the lessons in the curriculum
- Provided in English and Spanish for our dual language children, (Uno, Dos, Tres, Pre-K)
- Comprehensive curriculum invites every child to take the first steps on their learning adventure through songs, games and books
- Home connections provide families with ideas for at-home play, literature and writing

prompts

Heggerty Phonological Awareness

- Provides children with consistent and repeated instruction which supports children in the development of decoding and encoding skills
- Gives children the opportunity to practice alliteration, segmentation, on-set rhyme, rhyming, initial, medial, and ending sounds
- These skills are what children need to master to be Kindergarten Ready
- Taught with fidelity and consistency for about 15 minutes daily

Ignite by Hatch

- A digital learning platform that offers a play-based curriculum that engages, instructs, and assesses children's skills in the broad areas of early learning and development
- Builds on the skills of each child
- Self-paced for individualized learning to ensure that children achieve kindergarten readiness
- It is directly aligned to the five domains of the HSELOF.

Circle Activity Collection

- Pre-K Supplemental resource materials used for individualization and teaching and learning
- Includes 500 classroom lessons in English and in Spanish
- Includes a tool that filters and saves activities
- Provide ideas that help scaffold lessons down and up as needed

- Supports teachers in the implementation of the lessons by using video exemplars, sample lesson scripts, scaffolding learning tips as needed.
- Data-driven instructional planning through integration with the Circle Progress Monitoring System
- Aligned to the state Pre-K Guidelines as well as the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework

Furthermore, it's important to mention that teachers provide:

- Print rich environment by labeling furniture and items in the classroom
- Create word wall that includes a child created alphabet, both languages, (English and Spanish)
- Children are also exposed to environmental print such as names and logos of local stores, restaurants, names of popular candy pictures of bags of different chips
- Use of language approach
- Dual Language classrooms are conducted according to the language of the day, provide opportunities for children to recognize their spoken words by daily chants, nursery rhymes, and bilingual pairs bilingual centers
- Use of daily journals, provide materials at the writing center, while exposing children to written daily messages on chart paper as they write the daily news on chart paper.

HCHSP validates and recognizes that a child's language is key to building strong readiness skills, cognitive, linguistic, social development as well as their long-term academic success. Therefore, the program implements and follows the Dual Language Program for our Dual Language children in accordance with each district. The model consists of children learning each language half of

the time throughout the program while acquiring the second language by designating a target language to academic subjects also known as Language of Instruction, (LOI). To expose children to both languages orally, two days out of the week in the first semester all incidentals are in English, the other three days of the week are done in Spanish. The second semester is reversed, so that a balance is created in both languages. The classroom staff is trained in the different components of the model which include the following:

- Dual Language Model
- Daily Schedule
- Lesson Plan Procedures
- Bilingual Learning Centers
- Conceptual refinement

To complement these curriculums, and address children's needs, their abilities and learning styles the program selects activities and implements the best teaching practices recommended by the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning, (NCQTL). Also, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System, (CLASS), is another tool used alongside the curriculum that provides opportunities that we ensure that no child is left behind. This instrument measures the level of adult-child interaction to gauge and adjust the interaction between the adults and the children. As the adults in the classroom follow a child's lead, the interaction is both targeted and spontaneous. The resources mentioned above, in conjunction with classroom schedule, ensure that opportunities for flexibility, small/large group instruction and spontaneous indoor and outdoor learning is provided to all children including our Dual Language Learners and children with special needs.

Training

Teachers are in the front line, therefore, the Program ensures that teachers get the necessary training and professional development and a firm understanding of the curriculum and necessary strategies to support implementation. Training is provided district wide in the beginning of the year, by each district's curriculum and instruction team. For the most part the trainings average about two and a half days. In addition to the school district's training HCHSP also provides annual and preservice training that addresses the implementation of the programs mentioned above. The training consists of going over daily lessons, objectives, best teaching practices, strategies, the thematic units, as well as presenting all the resources that are part of the curriculum. Teachers are provided with the tools they need to implement the curriculum with fidelity. Training does not stop there; it's an ongoing process that includes a variety of support and coaching. To continue this process, the campus director holds professional learning community (PLC's) to discuss objectives, share ideas, and best teaching practices and strategies. In addition, the campus directors are expected to conduct daily walk throughs, to ensure proper implementation. After each walk-through, the director meets with the teachers to provide feedback and to validate implementation and focus on areas of strength and needing improvement. It's imperative to provide supportive and constructive feedback to teachers so they understand what they are doing well, what they need to enhance their teaching and how to achieve their goals. This is done through the lens of a coaching model. Education Area Directors also continuously provide training for the campus directors, so that they internalize and disseminate information to the teachers.

Monitor Effective Implementation

Lesson Plans

Teachers create weekly lesson plans identifying daily learning objectives, organizing resources, manipulatives, and materials, and instructional activities, while differentiating a plan to meet the needs of different children's levels. In the process of creating the lesson plan, the teacher supports the curriculum by planning developmentally appropriate activities through:

- * Higher order thinking
- * Analysis and reasoning
- * Experimentation and exploration
- * Self/directed play and observation
- * Frequent conversations
- * Repetition and extension activities
- * Social Development
- * Language Development
- * Creativity in the Arts
- * Chanting, dancing, singing

Daily Schedules

Support the curriculum by allocating blocks of time to keep children engaged and on task. Also, children know what is happening now and what will come next. The daily schedule ensures that the staff has ample time to teach all components of the early learning domains that include Language/Literacy, Cognition, Social Emotional, Initiative, Curiosity and Creativity and Perceptual, Motor and Physical Development. In addition, the daily schedule also supports

curriculum implementation by allowing opportunities for small and large group instruction, independent and teacher guided instruction, independent and teacher guided instruction and indoor and outdoor learning.

Walk-Throughs

Support the curriculum by ensuring that teachers are following the scope and sequence as per the unit of study and learning objectives in the curriculum. The campus directors are required to conduct daily walk-throughs. After conducting a walk-through, the director provides supportive and constructive feedback on teaching practices and uses encouraging and positive words and a coaching approach.

Individualization

The teacher is required to individualize instruction based on the data collected from the Circle Progress Monitoring and Frog Street AIM tool. Once teachers review and desegregate the data, they create and form their groups based on these results. They quickly move to develop goals and objectives to differentiate instruction. Teachers ensure that three rounds of individualization are conducted for 45 minutes per day.

Supplemental Resources

The implementation of Heggerty Phonological Awareness, Ignite by Hatch, and Circle Activity Collection are other ways to supplement and support the curriculum.

Does the Program promote parent's role as the child's first teacher? Explain.

The following HCHSP activities promote and support parents as their child's first teachers.

- Teacher’s Parent/Teacher Conference (PTC)
 - Fall
 - Spring
- Report Cards
 - Every Marking Period-about 6 weeks to measure the progress of the children and provide resources for the families to work with their child at home.
- Progress Reports
 - Between Marking Periods-about 6 times a year
- Meet the Teacher and Open House
 - Fall and Spring
- Progress Monitoring (PM) Parent Reports
 - Three Times a Year after every PM Wave
 - Resources for the parents are provided
- Parents as Leaders through:
 - Volunteering
 - Serving on policy council
 - Serving in the Campus Parent Advisory Committee
- Resources for Parents
 - Home-School Connection Packet
 - Portal for
 - Children’s Learning Institute & LION PM
 - Hatch Ignite at Home
 - Campus Parent Meetings

Does the Program perform research-based developmental screenings for all children within the prescribed timeframes? Explain.

Hidalgo County Head Start Program utilizes the CIRCLE Progress Monitoring and LION to assist teachers in making relevant educational decisions about children's progress and to enable them to develop instructional goals and objectives. CIRCLE Progress Monitoring and AIM are administered three (3) times a year. Wave 1 must be conducted within forty-five (45) days of enrollment. Wave 2 in January and Wave 3 in April. At the end of each assessment administration, data is analyzed as a program, campus, classroom, and individual child to determine needs and professional development. Teachers meet with the parents after each Wave to share with the parents the progress their child has made. A Home-School Connection packet is provided for each parent to ensure that parents understand that they are their child's first teacher and that collaboratively with the teacher children and families will be ready for school. Our Chief Early Education Officer, along with the Education Area Directors, and the school districts train staff on the administration of the assessment process and monitors through Go Engage to ensure deadlines are met by the different colored flags.

Red – did not meet deadline (documentation as to why deadline was not met).

Green – met the deadline.

Blue - met the deadline but not the window.

Yellow – deadline window is approaching.

During our administrative meetings and through different modes of communication, Campus Directors and staff are continuously monitored of meeting the 45-day deadlines and administration of the monitoring tool.

Does the Program use tracking systems to ensure that any developmental concerns identified through the screening are promptly addressed through referral or follow-up? Explain.

The Circle Progress Monitoring System as well as LION are web-based user-friendly tools that enable classroom staff to quickly assess a child's progress. HCHSP Circle-PM and LION provide significant flexibility in administration, including choice of measures, assessment language (English and Spanish), timing of assessments and provides links to the CIRCLE Activity Collection and AIM Resources that target specific skills based on results. The Hidalgo County Head Start Program administers the full assessment to all children enrolled. This verifiable practice has been in place for over 30 years, and it was established with the guidance of the Hidalgo County Head Start Education Advisory Committee composed of parents, staff, and community leaders involved in the education of young children. The decision to implement a more rigorous approach to child screening and assessment came from the need to provide extensive Response to Intervention data to our Local Education Agencies when referring a child for further evaluation. HCHSP uses developmental screening and assessment as one process within the 45-day deadline. This information has also been provided annually through the Program Information Report which is uploaded to the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES). It provides comprehensive data on children's individual stage of development and allows the staff to provide individualized instruction as early as possible.

The researched based developmental standardized instrument utilized to conduct the screening/assessment for all children is the Circle Progress Monitoring (formerly known as C-PALLS), part of the Children's Learning Institute (CLI) at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and is conducted within 45 days of enrollment (WAVE 1). The Circle Progress Monitoring and LION instruments are valid and reliable for the population the Program serves and is conducted by qualified and trained personnel. The instruments are age appropriate,

developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and appropriate for children with disabilities.

The Circle Progress Monitoring and LION instruments assist the staff to identify concerns regarding children's developmental, behavioral, motor, language, social, cognitive, and emotional skills. Specifically, the instrument provides individual information for all children on the following HSELOF Domains: Language and Literacy, Cognition, Social and Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, Perceptual Motor and Physical Development. The practice of implementing child screening/assessment utilizing the Circle Progress Monitoring and LION instruments has allowed the staff to immediately provide individualized instruction, Response to Intervention strategies, and has provided the data necessary to make informed decisions regarding further evaluation.

Part of the developmental screening/assessment process involves parent input and teacher observations.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program also implements a program designed Classroom Environment Observation Checklist that ensures a safe, nurturing, and engaging learning environment for all children. The Program is in the process of transitioning to the Children's Learning Institute (CLI) Classroom Environment Checklist which is specifically for Pre-K children in the State of Texas.

In addition to the Circle Progress Monitoring, the Hidalgo County Head Start Program implements the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA), a strength-based assessment and planning system to promote resilience in young children and to further evaluate children's social emotional development.

In conclusion, the Hidalgo County Head Start Program has chosen to implement a more rigorous approach to child screening/assessment to ensure the children's developmental needs are addressed as early as possible and quality educational services are delivered to every child in the Program.

Does the Program conduct ongoing assessments of children's progress and development? Explain.

The Circle Progress Monitoring System as well as LION are web-based user-friendly tools that enable classroom staff to quickly assess a child's progress. Circle-PM and LION provide significant flexibility in administration, including choice of measures, assessment language (English and Spanish), timing of assessments and provides links to the CIRCLE Activity Collection and AIM Resources that target specific skills based on results. To cover all major objectives, Circle-PM and AIM have Direct and Observational Assessments. Both progress monitoring systems are aligned to the Pre-K Guidelines which aligns to the HSELOF Domains and have alignment documents that ensure that there is an alignment with HSELOF Domains.

Additionally, C-PM is thoroughly correlated to the Pre-K curriculum, Heggerty Phonological Awareness, Ignite by Hatch, and HSELOF.

Both Progress Monitoring tools are vetted through a rigorous state process to ensure that these tools are aligned to the state and Head Start standards. These two tools are on the Commissioner's List for measuring children's progress. As part of the vetting process all companies are required to include alignment documents for the state and Head Start Performance Standards and ELOF. These documents play a vital role for Teaching and Learning.

Desegregation of the data is conducted after every administration to provide teaching and learning support to all the teaching staff and campus leaders. The data is desegregated by age, special needs, second language learners, campus, classroom, child, etc. The data for these tools is used to make instructional decisions for teaching and learning as well as individualization. The

Beginning of Year (BOY) administration is used as a baseline for progress throughout the year. It gives the teacher vital information to prepare the lessons and activities for individualization in small groups and individual if necessary. The Middle of the Year (MOY) administrator measures the growth that children have made from BOY to MOY. Monitoring and adjustments are made in teaching and learning based on the results of the data. Right after each administration of the assessment teachers conduct a Parent Teacher Conference to go over the results and provide a Home-School Connection packet to support the children at home. The End of Year Results are used to evaluate teaching and learning practices and provide professional development or materials for the following school year. These results are also provided to the Policy Council Members.

The Chief Early Education Officer provides training to Education Area Directors, they provide training to the campus directors and the campus directors provide training to the classroom staff to analyze data using the CIRCLE, LION Progress Monitoring and Ignite by Hatch by implementing the Gradual Release Model. The Gradual Release Model is the best practice instructional model where teachers strategically transfer responsibility in the learning process from the teacher to the children's. Typically, the model of teaching has four phases: I DO- where the teacher models the lesson objective in a focus lesson, WE DO- guided instruction with both input from the teacher and the children, YOU DO TOGETHER: Collaborative learning in small groups or partners and YOU DO ALONE- independent practice.

After completion of training, campus directors are responsible for generating and analyzing the School Summary Report which indicates the scores for all measures assessed. This data is used to determine campus level of performance and to make relevant educational decisions. Furthermore, they are expected to follow the same model to train campus staff to determine their

classroom needs and provide individualization for children in need of additional support. Campus Directors monitor that individualization is provided based on the children's needs through daily walk-throughs and monitor and adjust as the children are progressing.

Does the Program individualize lesson plans and teaching strategies using child assessment and data? Explain

Beginning of Year (Wave 1) data establishes a baseline that helps determine current level of performance and serves as a crucial factor for individualized planning and instruction. Individualization takes place throughout the day; however, the teacher is required to intentionally individualize instruction based on data daily during Learning Centers. Lessons for individualization are documented on the lesson plans. Training on desegregation of data and the individualization process is provided to teachers and campus directors. During this training campus directors review their campus data to meet with the teachers to review their own classroom data and use the CIRCLE Progress Monitoring and AIM grouping to form groups for individualization based on assessment results. The individualization process is consistently done daily for 45 minutes and the expectations for teaching staff are as follows:

The teachers are expected to:

- Conduct individualization every day for 45 minutes
- Ensure that several rounds of individualization are conducted, introduction and explanation of the learning centers and activities
- Use the grouping tool data to plan, prepare the activities and materials one week in advance
- Record the individualization in the weekly lesson plans
- Plan weekly with the ISD teacher

The assistant teachers are expected to:

- Supervise and actively engage with the children by having parallel
- Conversation and support their learning
- Guide and encourage children to use theme related activities

and materials at the learning centers

- Reinforce the activities and expectations at the learning centers
- Scaffold children's learning during center time

Middle of the year (Wave 2) data gathered in the month of January is analyzed by the Education Department Staff, Campus Directors and Classroom Staff to assess the areas of need as a program, campus, classroom, and individual child. The data is used to adjust individualized instruction based on the current data. To ensure a more targeted individualized instruction, teachers update their grouping tool after each assessment administration.

End of Year (Wave 3) data is used to determine how much progress children have made throughout the school year and to individualize instruction for children who return to the program the following year. Additionally, Wave 3 data is also used by the program to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement to provide a more targeted professional development.

Does the Program support staff members to use teaching practices that are responsive, Language-rich, promote critical thinking, and motivate continued effort? Explain.

All the teachers are trained in the six (6) domains in CLASS. Teachers are observed with CLASS twice a year and feedback is provided based on the data results. Any teacher that does meet the criteria for intensive coaching is identified and assigned a coach that works side-by-side with the teacher to reach the quality thresholds set forth by the OHS. At the beginning and throughout the

year training is provided for the teachers on how to use the data and the Grouping Tool to respond to the children's needs. Whether it is to scaffold down for children who need support or scaffold up to enrich children's learning. Professional Learning Communities together with lesson planning are scheduled once a week. The campus director is part of the lesson planning to ensure that teaching practices for CLASS are integrated into the lessons and activities throughout the day. Teachers work on lesson plans, share ideas and review the upcoming week's teaching and learning. They also use the data tool from the Progress Monitoring tool to provide individual support to all the children. Children are also provided with a 30-minute weekly interaction with Hatch Ignite, a web-based interactive program that provides real-time data to intervene or to excel the learning. All the activities and lessons are intentionally based on the needs of the children using data and observational time during the day.

Does the Program support children's social -emotional and behavioral development through effective classroom management skills? Explain.

Progress monitoring data is used to identify and support any skills or concepts that children are struggling with or are successful in. The daily schedule, the classroom environment, lesson plans, and observations are used to identify children that are suspected to need more services. Campus Directors make weekly walk-through to ensure that teachers implement the best practices including classroom management. Data from the walk-throughs, CLASS observations, and PLCs are opportunities to improve classroom management skills. The campus director also uses the 15-minute in-service suites with the CLASS as a tool to provide professional development and improve classroom management skills. Practice-Based Coaching is another tool used to help teachers that need assistance. The coaches work side-by-side with the teachers supporting them to accelerate their teaching and learning.

Does the Program individualize classroom practices to meet the needs of enrolled children, including dual language learners and children with disabilities? Explain.

Circle Activity Collection and LION Activities are two separate supplemental resource Pre-K programs that are used for individualization and teaching and learning. It includes 500 classroom lessons in English and in Spanish. The collections have tools that filter and save activities and provide ideas that help scaffold learning as needed. It supports teachers in the implementation using video examples, sample lesson scripts, scaffolding learning tips as needed. In addition, it also supports data-driven instructional planning through integration with the Circle Progress Monitoring System, not to mention that it's aligned to the state Pre-K Guidelines as well as the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework.

The teacher is required to individualize instruction based on the data collected from the Circle Progress Monitoring and LION tool. Once teachers review and desegregate the data, they create and form their groups based on these results. They quickly move to develop goals and objectives to differentiate instruction. Teachers ensure that three rounds of individualization are conducted for 45 minutes per day simultaneously with Learning Center Time.

Beginning of Year (Wave 1) data establishes a baseline that helps determine current level of performance and serves as a crucial factor for individualized planning and instruction. Individualization takes place throughout the day; however, the teacher is required to intentionally individualize instruction based on data daily during Learning Centers. Lessons for individualization are documented on the lesson plans. Training on desegregation of data and the individualization process is provided to teachers and campus directors. During this training campus directors review their campus data to meet with the teachers to review their own classroom data and use the CIRCLE Progress Monitoring and AIM grouping to form groups for

individualization based on assessment results. The individualization process is consistently done daily for 45 minutes and the expectations for teaching staff are as follows:

The teachers are expected to:

- Conduct individualization every day for 45 minutes
- Ensure that several rounds of individualization are conducted, introduction and explanation of the learning centers and activities
- Use the grouping tool data to plan, prepare the activities and materials one week in advance
- Record the individualization in the weekly lesson plans
- Plan weekly with the ISD teacher

The assistant teachers are expected to:

- Supervise and actively engage with the children by having parallel conversation and support their learning
- Guide and encourage children to use theme related activities and materials at the learning centers
- Reinforce the activities and expectations at the learning centers
- Scaffold children's learning during center time

Middle of the year (Wave 2) data gathered in the month of January is analyzed by the Education Department Staff, Campus Directors and Classroom Staff to assess the areas of need as a program, campus, classroom, and individual child. The data is used to adjust individualized instruction based on the current data. To ensure a more targeted individualized instruction, teachers update

their grouping tool after each assessment administration.

End of Year (Wave 3) data is used to determine how much progress children have made throughout the school year and to individualize instruction for children who return to the program the following year. Additionally, Wave 3 data is also used by the program to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement to provide a more targeted professional development.

Does the Program use data to improve teaching strategies? Explain.

Teachers in our Head Start Program utilize The Circle Progress Monitoring and LION, which are developmental, and research based that assist the teachers in improving their teaching strategy skills and making relevant instructional decisions regarding children's progress in the process of enabling teachers to develop appropriate goals and learning objectives to meet children's needs. It is administered three times a year and it provides teachers with data to identify children's strengths and areas of improvement for each individual child and classroom instruction. Immediately after our first formal assessment, (Wave 1), teachers desegregate the data. The data establishes a baseline that helps teachers determine children's current level of performance and serves as a crucial factor for individualized instruction. Teachers create lesson plans that are tailored to address whole and small groups, and individualization. The teacher throughout the day, more intentionally during language, literacy and math. Small groups and learning centers are implemented where the staff ensures that scaffolding of concepts is done utilizing a different strategy and using hands-on activities. The Circle Active Activity Collection and LION lessons are tools utilized that supports data-driven instructional planning based on assessment results. These activities are available in both languages, (English and Spanish), and supports teachers' implementation through videos, lesson plan scripts, scaffolding tips, and alignments to state guidelines and the Head Start Learning Outcomes Framework. Ignite by Hatch Ignite is another

formal outcome-based program that collects real time data. It provides over 200 play-based curricular experiences allowing children to learn as they play while promoting a sense of autonomy. Classroom staff plan accordingly to provide opportunities for children to work on this self-paced educational digital application for at least 30 minutes a week. It is utilized as a resource to support individualized instruction during language and literacy, math, group rotations and learning centers. Furthermore, this digital tool automatically sets yearly goals to ensure children's progress and school readiness. In addition to what is being done in the classrooms in the area of individualization, staff extend this practice into the home. HCHSP involves parents in supporting individualization based on oral language, early literacy, and academic skills by providing a bilingual at home curriculum. An At Home Daily Practice Folder is created by teachers as per the data that has been gathered. Parents have the opportunity to review language, literacy and academic skills. The folder contains learning practices on Phonemic Awareness, Sight Words, Parts of a Book, Rhyming Words, Shapes, Numbers, Days of the Week and Months of the Year. Teachers model and explain to parents how to implement and roll out these activities to parents during Teacher Nights, Parent Meetings, Parent-Teacher Conferences, and Home Visits. Parent Teacher Conferences are held three times a year after each assessment and are conducted in the parent's language of preference. During this conference, teachers share the data and results. Together the teacher and the parents form a committee to develop the Child's Individual Plan (CIP). This CIP is implemented, monitored, and adjusted throughout the year as needed. Home Visits are also conducted by classroom teachers twice a year or as needed to continue supporting children's educational needs.

Does the Program create planned learning that is developmentally appropriate for children and aligned with the progressions outlined in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework? Explain.

The program currently collaborates with 9 surrounding school districts in Hidalgo County to ensure that the mission and vision is fulfilled and lived. It offers a full day PK-3 and PK-4 in 28 campuses. Head Start ensures the implementation of the following curriculum programs that are adopted by the different districts.

- Frog Street
- Three Cheers
- Pre-K On MY Way
- Creative Curriculum

Other instructional resources utilized to complement the core curriculum are the following:

- Ignite by Hatch
- Circle Activity Collection
- Heggerty Phonemic Awareness

All these early childhood education curriculum programs and supplemental resources include comprehensive scientifically-research based scope and sequence for literacy, math and content domains. The curriculums acknowledge the individual needs of all learners, these curriculums include strategies for:

- Individualization
- Differentiated instruction
- Adaptions for special needs and English learners

In addition, they offer developmental and learning continuums that allow children to build on previously mastered skills to achieve new skills more readily in a seamless and continuous while addressing cognitive, language, literacy, physical, and social emotional developmental domains of each child. Furthermore, the daily lesson plans reflect purposeful planned activities that support children's individual needs, abilities and learning styles with teacher nurturing interactions with a focused lens on developmentally appropriate academic lessons addressing the five central domains from the Head Start Early Outcomes Framework, (HSELOF), which include:

- Language and Literacy
- Social and Emotional Development
- Approaches to Learning,
- Cognition
- Perpetual, Motor Physical Development

Included in these lessons are multisensory pre-reading interactive, digital content that supports bilingual learners and children with special needs. Unique in their own way, they also provide instructional materials and resources to address children's needs. All these best teaching practices in these curriculum programs clearly indicate that they are aligned with HSELOF and the Texas Pre-K Guidelines as required by the state and the federal standards.

Heggerty Phonological Awareness

- Provides children with consistent and repeated instruction which supports children in the development of decoding and encoding skills
- Gives children the opportunity to practice alliteration, segmentation, on-set rhyme, rhyming, initial, medial, and ending sounds

- These skills are what children need to master to be Kindergarten Ready
- Taught with fidelity and consistency for about 15 minutes daily

Ignite by Hatch

- A digital learning platform that offers a play-based curriculum that engages, instructs, and assesses children's skills in the broad areas of early learning and development
- Builds on the skills of each child
- Self-paced for individualized learning to ensure that children achieve kindergarten readiness

Circle Activity Collection

- Pre-K Supplemental resource materials used for individualization and teaching and learning
- Includes 500 classroom lessons in English and in Spanish
- Includes a tool that filters and saves activities
- Provide ideas that help scaffold lessons down and up as needed
- Supports teachers in the implementation of the lessons by using video exemplars, sample lesson scripts, scaffolding learning tips as needed.
- Data-driven instructional planning through integration with the Circle Progress Monitoring System
- Aligned to the state Pre-K Guidelines as well as the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework

Furthermore, it's important to mention that teachers provide:

- Print rich environment by labeling furniture and items in the classroom
- Create word wall that includes a child created alphabet, both languages, (English and Spanish)
- Children are also exposed to environmental print such as names and logos of local stores, restaurants, names of popular candy pictures of bags of different chips
- Use of language approach
- Dual Language classrooms are conducted according to the language of the day, provide opportunities for children to recognize their spoken words by daily chants, nursery rhymes, and bilingual pairs bilingual centers
- Use of daily journals, provide materials at the writing center, while exposing children to written daily messages on chart paper as they write the daily news on chart paper.

HCHSP validates and recognizes that a child's language is key to building strong readiness skills, cognitive, linguistic, social development as well as their long-term academic success. Therefore, the program implements and follows the Dual Language Program for our Dual Language children in accordance with each district. The model consists of children learning each language half of the time throughout the program while acquiring the second language by designating a target language to academic subjects also known as Language of Instruction, (LOI). To expose children to both languages orally, two days out of the week in the first semester all incidentals are in English, the other three days of the week are done in Spanish. The second semester is reversed, so that a balance is created in both languages. The classroom staff is trained in the different components of the model which include the following:

- Dual Language Model
- Daily Schedule
- Lesson Plan Procedures
- Bilingual Learning Centers
- Conceptual refinement

To complement these curriculums, and address children's needs, their abilities and learning styles the program selects activities and implements the best teaching practices recommended by the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning, (NCQTL). Also, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System, (CLASS), is another tool used alongside the curriculum that provides opportunities that we ensure that no child is left behind. This instrument measures the level of adult-child interaction to gauge and adjust the interaction between the adults and the children. As the adults in the classroom follow a child's lead, the interaction is both targeted and spontaneous. The resources mentioned above, in conjunction with classroom schedule, ensure that opportunities for flexibility, small/large group instruction and spontaneous indoor and outdoor learning is provided to all children including our Dual Language Learners and children with special needs.

Training

Training is provided district wide at the beginning of the year, by each district's curriculum and instruction team. For the most part the trainings average about two and a half days. In addition to the school district's training HCHSP also provides annual and preservice training that addresses the implementation of the programs mentioned above. The training consists of going over daily lessons, objectives, best teaching practices, strategies, the thematic units, as well as presenting all the resources that are part of the curriculum. Teachers are provided with the tools they need to

implement the curriculum with fidelity. Training does not stop there; it's an ongoing process that includes a variety of support and coaching. To continue this process, the campus director holds professional learning community (PLC's) to discuss objectives, share ideas, and best teaching practices and strategies. In addition, the campus directors are expected to conduct daily walk throughs, to ensure proper implementation. After each walk-through, the director meets with the teachers to provide feedback and to validate implementation and focus on areas of strength and needing improvement. It's imperative to provide supportive and constructive feedback to teachers so they understand what they are doing well, what they need to enhance their teaching and how to achieve their goals. This is done through the lens of a coaching model. Education Area Directors also continuously provide training for the campus directors, so that they internalize and disseminate information to the teachers.

Monitor Effective Implementation

Lesson Plans

Teachers create weekly lesson plans identifying daily learning objectives, organizing resources, manipulatives, and materials, and instructional activities, while differentiating a plan to meet the needs of different children's levels. In the process of creating the lesson plan, the teacher supports the curriculum by planning developmentally appropriate activities through:

- Higher order thinking
- Analysis and reasoning
- Experimentation and exploration
- Self/directed play and observation
- Frequent conversations

- Repetition and extension activities
- Social Development
- Language Development
- Creativity in the Arts
- Chanting, dancing, singing

Daily Schedules

Support the curriculum by allocating blocks of time to keep children engaged and on task. Also, children know what is happening now and what will come next. The daily schedule ensures that the staff has ample time to teach all components of the early learning domains that include Language/Literacy, Cognition, Social Emotional, Initiative, Curiosity and Creativity and Perceptual, Motor and Physical Development. In addition, the daily schedule also supports curriculum implementation by allowing opportunities for small and large group instruction, independent and teacher guided instruction, independent and teacher guided instruction and indoor and outdoor learning.

Walk-Throughs

Support the curriculum by ensuring that teachers are following the scope and sequence as per the unit of study and learning objectives in the curriculum. The campus directors are required to conduct daily walk-throughs. After conducting a walk-through, the director provides supportive and constructive feedback on teaching practices and uses encouraging and positive words and a coaching approach.

Individualization

The teacher is required to individualize instruction based on the data collected from the Circle Progress Monitoring and Frog Street AIM tool. Once teachers review and desegregate the data, they create and form their groups based on these results. They quickly move to develop goals and objectives to differentiate instruction. Teachers ensure that three rounds of individualization are conducted for 45 minutes per day.

Supplemental Resources

The implementation of Heggerty Phonological Awareness, Ignite by Hatch, and Circle Activity Collection are other ways to supplement and support the curriculum.

Does the Program evaluate the success of learning experiences and activities in achieving desired outcomes for children? Explain.

HCHSP fosters a learning environment where children feel comfortable and safe, while creating learning experiences that are interactive and sensitive to everyone's culture, beliefs, and language needs. For example, the Program provide English Language learners with appropriate and relevant resources to help them better connect with the curriculum and gain more comprehension understanding to the subject matter when it's taught in their native language. The curriculum alignment with the Head Learning Outcomes Framework and the Pre-K Guidelines ensure that children are learning, and teachers are teaching. The experiences and activities are developmentally appropriate therefore ensuring that all children are successful in learning. Also, through the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), staff ensure that every child has the opportunity to succeed. As required in the CLASS domain of Emotional Support, the teacher provides opportunities for children to actively discover, explore, learn, minimize rigidity and promote a sense of self autonomy, among children. When walking into any classroom, teachers

are observed making eye contact and using a warm calm voice and respectful positive language as they speak to children, while enhancing each children's identity and fostering a caring positive classroom environment that's conducive to effective learning. Teachers demonstrate a genuine interest in getting to know each child and their culture which helps establish trust, thus creating a bond with them so they may feel valued and appreciated. Acknowledging children's needs and differences, and creating a safe space for conversations, helps promote children's success in the classroom and beyond. In addition to the social and emotional component, the classroom learning environment, also calls for maximizing instructional needs to address children's interest, unique learning styles, promoting cultural awareness always making teaching relevant, (regardless of the subject), and connecting to real world examples so that children may be able to relate and thus, be able to have better retention of the concepts being taught. Furthermore, classrooms reflect a full print rich environment, exhibiting an authentic children generated alphabet, word walls, labeling of furniture, and children work. All these artifacts are in both languages, (English and Spanish), to ensure children engagement and active participation. To sustain this actively organized and positive classroom environment, that supports curriculum implementation, teachers are also proactive by using a Management System that promotes a sense of independence as they are given free choices during learning center time. Weekly lesson plans reflect all the individualized lessons as well as learning centers learning objectives being taught. In ensuring individualized needs for the children with disabilities, they are fully provided with the necessary modifications to the environment, instruction, and individualized accommodations and support are offered. Literature and posters relatable and depicting children with special needs, are given to staff to teach and support inclusion in the classroom. Additionally, classroom staff in conjunction with parents work diligently with eligible children that receive services under IDEA implementing IEP's and

documenting on the weekly lesson plan. The curriculums, resources, lessons, activities, classroom environment, learning centers, daily schedules, etc. are in both English and Spanish to meet the needs of our Dual Language Learners.

Does the Program provide developmentally appropriate schedules that allow for various experiences throughout the day? Explain.

Below is a sample of the program’s Daily Schedule and the explanation of each component.



**Hidalgo County Head Start Program
Daily Schedule**

Campus:

Teacher:

Room #

___ Eng ___ Bil/Dual ___ 3 Yr Olds ___ 4 Yr Olds ___ Mixed

Time	Classroom Schedule
7:45-8:15	Family Style Breakfast/Hygiene/Social & Emotional Development/ Arrival Routine (Small Group & Individual)
8:15-8:45	Greeting Circle/Hygiene (Active Play & Whole Group) C T
8:45-9:30	Language & Literacy/Hygiene (Small Group) C T
9:30-10:00	Read Aloud/Emergent Writing Activity/Hygiene (Whole Group & Individual) C T
10:00-10:45	Math (Small Group) C T
10:45-11:15	Indoor/Outdoor Activities/Hygiene 10 min. Walk Start/10 min. Guided Outdoor Activity/10 min. Practice (Active Play, Group & Individual) 746.501 #18 A-D; F C T
11:15-11:30	Phonemic Awareness/Language & Literacy/Hygiene (Small Group) C T
11:30-12:15	Family Style Lunch/Hygiene/ Social & Emotional & Language Development (Small Group)
12:15-1:15	Rest/Nap Time/Oral Hygiene (Whole Group & Individual)
1:15-1:45	Circle Time: Moving & Learning/Science/Social Studies/Hygiene (Active Play, Whole Group) C T
1:45-2:30	Learning Centers/Individualization (Active & Quiet Play, Small Group & Individual) C T
2:30-2:45	Family Style Snack/Hygiene/Social & Emotional & Language Development (Small Group)
2:45-3:00	Closing Circle (Whole Group)
3:00-3:45	Indoor/Outdoor Guided Activities/Hygiene/ Planning and Preparation Time (Active Play, Group & Individual) 746.501 #18 A-D; F

Education Department
Procedures for Daily Schedule Components

The teacher effectively focuses children’s attention toward learning objectives and/or the purpose of the lesson.

Lesson plans can be modified according to the needs of your campus and classroom and posted.

A visual Daily Schedules must be posted in the classroom.

Dual Language Classrooms will follow the protocols for the School District Dual Language Model

- Breakfast** -The language for Teacher-child interactions will occur according to the ISDs
- Oral Language**
- Hygiene:**
- An objective and activity are provided
 - Promotes language and vocabulary development
 - Provides them opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas
 - Builds on children’s language using vocabulary such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives, as well as new or unfamiliar words
 - Encourages children to talk to one another by:
 - * Providing opportunities for peer interactions and model conversations
 - * Encouraging children to share stories
 - Uses self-talk and parallel talk as follows:
 - * Self-talk maps own actions with language
 - * Parallel talk- maps children action with language
- Arrival Routine** - Teacher must have on child’s table an independent activity daily such as:
- Hygiene:**
- *Sign-in folder
 - *Tracing
 - *Lacing
 - *Name/Number/Letter
 - Refer to CIRCLE Activity Collection and Appendix of your Frog Street Teacher Guide for more activity ideas
- Transitions:**
- Transitions should be occurring daily and changed weekly
 - All transitions must be cognitive and purposeful with an objective
 - Should occur in the Language of the Day (LOD)
 - Movement is encouraged
 - Transitions must occur after each of these components:
 - * Circle Time
 - Read Aloud
 - Phonemic Awareness

- Moving and Learning
 - * Before and after Outdoor Learning
 - * Lunch and Snack (Hygiene)
 - * Language & Literacy / Math /Individualization
- Refer to the Teacher Guide, CIRCLE Activity Collection, and Transition Booklet to make any modifications.

**Circle Time
Greeting Circle
Hygiene:**

- Children are seated at the carpet
- Refer to “**Greeting Circle**” section Teacher Guide
- Review Circle Time rules, if needed
- Welcome the children to a new day at school
- Prompt children with questions on how they are doing and if they would like to share something.
- Sing 1 to 2 welcome songs
- Theme discussions
- Conduct 2 to 3 content activities (Morning Message, sight words, letter wall activities, etc.)
- Non-negotiable: review letter name and sounds, numbers, colors, shapes, etc.
- Theme related activities will be gradually introduced at Learning Centers in Language of Day (LOD) for classrooms that follow PM Daily Schedules.

Language & Literacy

- Rotations will be conducted daily
- Children will remain in their assigned seats and teachers will rotate
- **Teacher**- Follow Curriculum Teacher Guide or ISD Lessons and activities
- **Assistant Teacher**- Reinforce the curriculum lessons and activities.

Hygiene:

**Weekly Learning
Centers**

- Active supervision of children at all times
- A minimum of one Theme Related Activity at each Learning Center is required weekly.
- Activities must be introduced
- Two activities per learning center must be introduced weekly prior to sending children to the centers.
- Activities suggestions can be found in the Teacher’s Guide
- Designate time on your lesson plan
- Engage children using the Hatch Ignite software

**Circle Time
Read Aloud**

- Children are seated in the carpet
- Refer to “Read Aloud Time” section in Teacher’s Guide for the following:
 - *Books, Rhymes, etc.
 - *Vocabulary words
 - *Guiding question

- Lesson will reflect all Books recommended by the curriculum, teacher can select one book for read aloud and use remaining selections throughout the day.
- Implement Read Aloud Chart
- Should be planned and conducted by teacher not computer

Emergent Writing

Hygiene:

- Must have an objective
- Activities should be planned and based on theme, teachable moments, extensions of read aloud, holidays, etc.
- Entries should be dated and with teacher comments

Math

Hygiene:

- Three (3) Rotations will be conducted daily in small groups
- Teacher- Use the curriculum lessons and activities
- Assistant Teacher- Reinforce curriculum lessons and activities
- All Teachers should reinforce non-negotiables:
 - *Math-Numbers/Rote Counting, Number Naming, Counting Set/Operations
- Math Instruction should be conducted in English
- Engage children using the Hatch Ignite software

Outdoor Learning

Hygiene:

- Should be planned with 10 min. Walk Start/ 10 min. Guided Outdoor Activity/ 10 min. Practice Skill

Circle Time

Phonemic Awareness

Hygiene:

- Phonemic Awareness by Dr. Heggerty
 - *Group children according to language of Instruction (2 Groups)

Lunch

Oral Language

Hygiene

- Teacher-child interactions must occur daily
- Promotes language and vocabulary development
- Provides them opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas
- Builds on children’s language using vocabulary such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives, as well as new or unfamiliar words
- Encourages children to talk to one another by:
 - * Providing opportunities for peer interactions and model conversations
 - * Encouraging children to share stories
- Uses self-talk and parallel talk as follows:
 - * Self-talk- maps own actions with language
 - * Parallel talk- maps children action with language

Rest Time:

- At rest time, ensure that children’s naptime mats are spaced out as much as possible,

Hygiene:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideally 6 feet apart. -Consider placing children head to toe in order to further reduce the potential for viral spread -Be sure to disinfect mats before and after each use -Must allow each child who is awake during resting or sleeping time to participate in a quiet activity
Circle Time	-Children will remain in their assigned seat/space while Moving and Learning is conducted
Moving & Learning Kindermusik Dr. Mike (ECISD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Refer to the Teacher’s Guide -A daily activity has been provided
Content Connection:	-Children will remain in their assigned seat as Content Connection is conducted
Science Social Studies Hygiene	-Refer to the curriculum Teacher’s Guide
Individualization	- Teachers will focus on differentiated instruction with each group using the Progress Monitoring (PM) platforms
Hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use the lessons and activities recommended by the PM platform -Engage children using the Hatch Ignite software
Snack Oral Language Hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Adult-child interactions must occur -Must be planned based on the snack menu -Promotes language and vocabulary development -Provides them opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas -Builds on children’s language using vocabulary such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives, as well as new or unfamiliar words - Encourages children to talk to one another by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Providing opportunities for peer interactions and model conversations * Encouraging children to share stories -Uses self-talk and parallel talk as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Self-talk- maps own actions with language * Parallel talk- maps children action with language
Closing Circle: Hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Closing Circle is conducted whole group seated in the carpet -Use the curriculum Teacher’s Guide to provide Closing Remarks and reflections for the day

PM Outdoor Activities: -Child initiated activities
-Adults must interact and engage in conversations with children

Hygiene

Special Services IEP -Refer to IEP for objective
-All children with an IEP must have reinforcement of objective daily throughout the day and documented in the Lesson Plans

Does the Program implement classroom environments to meet the needs of enrolled children? Explain.

Below is a model room design for the program.



Print Rich Environment

HCHSP ensures that the classroom environment meets the needs of all the children. The setup of the classroom allows for small and whole group and individual needs. Children are given freedom and flexibility to move from one place to another during the school day. The furniture is appropriate for preschoolers and is free of any obstruction. A visual daily schedule is at the eye level of the children and a print rich environment where the children can reach and use as a learning tool. In all the dual language classrooms labels are both in English and Spanish. The materials and shelves are labeled with words and pictures to go along with the words. Children's names are visible at least six times or more all over the classroom. Children's authentic work is displayed inside and outside of the classrooms. The curriculum theme is evident throughout the classroom. Nursery Rhymes are displayed and used to teach and learn rhyming words. Helper charts with words and pictures are displayed as well as books with a variety of genres and multicultural.

Classroom Management

The adults in the classroom are friendly and sensitive to children's needs. Rules are displayed, modeled, and reinforced as needed. Routines and cognitive transitions are well established, planned, efficient and intentional. Classrooms are well managed through assigned jobs and responsibilities. Adults help children and peers to resolve conflicts and use strategies for self-regulation as children participate in community and team building.

Language Development

Adults are actively always involved with children and provide for peer-to-peer interactions. Children are encouraged to speak in complete sentences and children's talk outweighs teacher talk.

Mealtime is used as a time to develop language and have children be the leaders in the classroom.

Learning Centers

All centers are defined and labeled with words and pictures and used daily. A management system is in place where children are free to select the center and interact with their peers and adults. Each center has a variety of planned, playful and purposeful activities and materials. There are books and writing materials at each center. The materials in the centers are labeled with a picture of the materials as present so children can return the materials back once center time is over.

Interactive Read Aloud

Read Aloud is reflected in the daily schedule as well as the lesson plans. The read aloud follows the theme and is in the curriculum Teacher's Guide. Props like puppets, costumes, and realia are part of the Read aloud routine. Closed and open-ended questions are prepared ahead of time to keep the children actively involved in the story.

Alphabet Knowledge

Letter walls, the alphabet are at the child's eye level and used daily for repetition. Children's names with their picture are on the letter wall. The children can also select the ABC/Writing center to reinforce the letters.

Emergent Writing

There is evidence of shared writing during Daily News and Morning Message. Teachers also share their experiences while the teacher writes what the children are sharing. Children can add to the experience throughout the day. Children have writing tools in the ABC/Writing Center to write

or draw their thoughts. Journals are accessible to children and are encouraged to write, scribble, and draw.

Mathematics

During Math time children use manipulatives to understand the concept being taught. The Math lessons progress from Concrete (manipulatives)-Pictorial (Pictures)-Abstract with support to understand the concept. Children manipulate, talk about and explain the concept.

Individualization

There is evidence of individualization daily that simultaneously happens during Learning Center Time. Teachers use Progress Monitoring data to individualize children. They use grouping tools from the PM platform. Children also interact with the software Hatch Ignite that individualizes the experiences according to their needs. Individualization is noted in the Daily Schedule.

Safe Space

Each classroom has a place around the room where they can go when they need to feel safe. Safe Space has different materials and feelings that children can use to help them self-regulate, feel better and return to the group or routine.

Does the Program follow up with education staff members after professional development sessions to support them to apply their learning? Explain.

Teachers have weekly planning and PLCs where they plan for their lessons. The campus director is with the teachers and jointly they reflect on the training and professional development provided during the year. This helps to ensure that there is support for the teachers through their peers or the campus director. The program also provides coaches that work with some of the teachers by observing them and providing supportive and constructive feedback. Teachers also can observe

other teachers to validate their teaching skills and also grow in the area of support. Campus Directors also conduct weekly walkthroughs and provide feedback to the teachers. This is also a way to hold everyone accountable for the teaching and learning.

Does the Program implement a research-based coaching strategy for staff members who would benefit the most from intensive coaching? Explain.

Practice-Based Coaching (PBC)

HCHSP implements a researched-based coordinated coaching strategy for all classroom staff to assist in enhancing their teaching skills for effective practices. The Education Department developed a Coaching Plan which consists of implementing the Practice-Based Coaching Program as recommended by the Office of Head Start. HCHSP is implementing the following two different coaching formats:

- Expert Coaches- Provide intensive coaching
 - Requires a bachelor's degree
 - Training in PBC
 - Adequate experience in adult learning, effective early childhood practices
 - Knowledgeable in data analysis

PBC will be delivered through the Education Coordinators and campus directors. The Education Coordinators meet the qualifications of expert coaches, as required by Head Start Performance Standard 1302.92 (c). Experts coaches provide intensive coaching to teachers prioritized based on CLASS data. The Education Department has currently identified 24 priority 1 and 2 teachers that will receive intensive coaching and support using the Head Start PBC program based on their individual needs. Eight Priority 3 teachers will receive support from the campus director via walk-throughs and monthly professional development using the 15-minute In-Service Suites. Twenty-

two teachers will receive intensive partnership coaching through Texas School Ready.

Identifying staff training and professional development needs

HCHSP identifies training and professional development needs in education by analyzing children's progress through CIRCLE Progress Monitoring and Frog Street AIM by looking at teachers' performance through the CLASS lens during the four cycles of CLASS observations conducted in a year, and through daily informal classroom observations/walkthroughs from Campus Directors and Administrators. In addition, the use of curriculum and resources such as, Scope and Sequence, Heggerty Phonological Awareness, Dual Language Program, Lesson Plans, Daily Schedules, Assessment tool etc. is evaluated and adjusted as needed on a yearly basis.

Program Planning

HCHSP is currently using overall program data to determine systemic needs. The Education Department is taking the approach of the Gradual Release Model (I DO, We Do, You Do) to properly equip and build capacity in our current Campus Directors. We have developed a timeline of cluster training for Campus Directors to further develop their knowledge on data analysis and quality interactions in the classrooms. Resources such as CIRCLE Progress Monitoring, Ignite by Hatch, and CLASS data as well as training sessions and other online resources from the NCQTL platform will be used to support Campus Directors' transition from managers to instructional leaders.

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

CLASS observations remain an effective way to understand and measure the quality of interactions in our Head Start classrooms. During these times, children need supportive interactions from adults and their peers. Pertinent feedback on the observation is provided that strengthens the

interactions between the children and classroom staff.

Emotional Support Domain

Dimension- Positive Climate

- **Relationships**
 - ✓ Teachers give their time and attention to children, moving around the room and checking in frequently
 - ✓ Teachers or children use photos to share their emotions when their faces are covered
- **Positive Affect**
 - ✓ Facial expressions evident through teacher and children's eyes, eyebrows, temples and cheekbones
 - ✓ Teachers nod and offer other affirmations
- **Positive Communication**
 - ✓ Teachers and/or children orient themselves toward the person speaking
 - ✓ Teachers bend down to get on child's level, even from a distance
- **Respect**
 - ✓ Children take turns
 - ✓ Children listen to one another

Dimension- Teacher Sensitivity

- **Awareness**
 - ✓ Teachers prepare differentiated activities to meet the needs of children who are on target for age level.

- ✓ Teachers notice children’s body language, such as raised hands, downcast eyes, or lack of engagement
- **Responsiveness**
 - ✓ Teachers verbally check in on children regarding their academic and emotional well-being
 - ✓ Teachers provide time for children to share their feelings

Dimension- Regards for Children Perspective

- **Flexibility and Children Focus**
 - ✓ When teachers must require children to do something, they provide choices within the experience
 - ✓ When teachers must interrupt a child’s individual pace (to follow a sanitizing schedule, to keep pods together), they involve the child in deciding if and how they will return to their work later
- **Support for Autonomy and Leadership**
 - ✓ Children lead morning routines from a distance
 - ✓ Children come to the board to demonstrate, or model for others from their seats
- **Restriction of Movement**
 - ✓ Children may sit, stand, lie, and move within their personal space
 - ✓ Teachers create routines or procedures to allow movement around the classroom

Classroom Organization Domain

Dimension- Behavior Management

- **Redirection of Misbehavior**
 - ✓ Quick verbal redirections
 - ✓ Redirections that use pointers or picture cards

Dimension- Instructional Learning Formats

- **Effective Facilitation**
 - ✓ Teachers add to what children are already doing by suggesting new ways of using materials or developing their activities
 - ✓ Teachers actively seek information about what children working on and how it is going
- **Variety of Modalities and Materials**
 - ✓ Teachers use digital devices and projection
 - ✓ Teachers help children use everyday objects in new and creative ways

Instruction Support Domain

Dimension- Concept Développement

- **Creating**
 - ✓ Children create their own products with the limited materials available
 - ✓ Children use everyday objects in new and creative ways

Dimension- Language Modeling

- **Repetition and Extension**
 - ✓ Create non-physical products, such as making up stories

- ✓ Acknowledging difficult to hear comments by asking children to repeat themselves

Observations are conducted once in the Fall and Spring in 2 cycles of observing and note-taking that last about 20 minutes in length and 10 minutes to record findings and coding and then another round of observation and 10 minutes of coding. After conducting CLASS observations, Campus Directors provide feedback to all classroom staff. This data is used to identify priority teachers for Practice-based Coaching as well as professional development.

To improve adult-child interactions, CLASS Domains, Dimensions, Indicators, and Behavioral Markers are added to the Classroom Walk-through Form and the program developed Focus of the Week document to ensure efficacy of interactions in the classroom. Additionally, the Education Department provides continuous Pre-K CLASS Training which helps us reach our goal of having 100% of current campus directors and education staff as CLASS reliable observers.

After analyzing the results of the CLASS data for Fall 2024 the education department and the Assistant Program Director concluded that more support is needed in Classroom Organization domain. After desegregating the data by campus, the need for each campus varies. Twelve (12) of the campuses need intensive professional development in Classroom Organization. The data will drive the Classroom Walk-throughs and Professional Development. The campus directors will be more intentional in the daily classroom walkthroughs and professional development based on the campus and teacher's CLASS results. Campus Directors will conference with the classroom caregivers about the data gathered in the walkthroughs and make recommendations. This year seven (7) of the education staff are reliable in CLASS 2nd Edition. All the PBC coaches, education directors, and the Chief Early Education Officer. This will ensure that the program provides high-

quality professional development to our teachers that are in most need to support.

Does the Program use data to adjust coaching opportunities and priorities? Explain.

Below is the selection criteria for intensive coaching.

Priority	Criteria	Professional Development	Person Responsible
Priority 1	<p>Teachers that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Did not meet the Competitive Threshold in all 3 CLASS Domains ➤ Did not meet the Competitive Threshold in 2 out of 3 CLASS Domains ➤ Did not exit PBC 	❖ Intensive coaching via an Expert Coach	❖ Expert Coach (Education Coordinator)
Priority 2	<p>Teachers that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Participating in TSR 	❖ Intensive coaching via an TSR Coach	❖ External Expert (TSR Coach)
Priority 3	<p>Teachers that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Met the threshold in each CLASS Domain ➤ All ISD Teachers not participating in TSR 	❖ PD at campus level	❖ Campus Director

The Fall CLASS data is used to select the teachers that will receive intensive coaching. The following are the details on the program’s coaching plan.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program (HCHSP) has a long history of providing high quality Head Start services in Hidalgo County. Under the auspices of the County, HCHSP has engaged families, staff and community partners in delivering comprehensive child development services to our children in the areas of education, health, mental health, nutrition and social services. HCHSP uses a holistic approach to address the individual children's needs using the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF) as the research-based guide to identify the age-appropriate skills, behaviors, and knowledge children need to succeed in school. Research based assessment, curriculum and best practices, Adult-Child Interaction, and research-based **Practice-Based Coaching** is at the core of teaching and learning. HCHSP utilizes a Management Systems approach to services, which ensures program effectiveness and accountability to stakeholders. These systems include Communication, Human Resources, Record Keeping and Recording, Program Planning, Self-Assessment, Eligibility-Recruitment-Selection-Enrollment-Attendance, Facilities, Fiscal, Program Governance, and Monitoring.

The Program's primary role as the biggest change agent in the community is best defined by our vision: *"To improve the well-being of children, empower families and strengthen communities."* We bring significant positive community changes and improvements in the lives of families we serve as we live our commitment to our mission: *"To provide high quality education and comprehensive services to children and families in a safe, respectful and inclusive environment that builds a foundation for life-long learning".*

Hidalgo County Head Start Program (HCHSP) utilizes a research-based Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) to support the quality of teacher-child interaction, implement effective teaching practices using research-based curriculum, CLASS, and other instructional resources, as well as using the data in Circle and Lion Progress Monitoring Tool to make instructional decisions. The Chief Early

Education Officer oversees, monitors and ensures that all requirements, tasks and activities are implemented throughout the school year. The 2023-2024 program CLASS data indicates that the area of need for improvement for 2024-2025 is Social Emotional-Regard for Children Perspectives and Classroom Organization-Instructional Learning Formats. The Professional Development, training, meetings and walk-throughs will focus on these areas.

HCHSP will implement the 3-Cyclical PBC model below set forth by the Office of Head Start to meet the Performance Standard 1302.92. The Coaches and Coachees will establish a Collaborative Partnership prior to implementing the 3-Cyclical PBC Model.

****3-Cyclical Model:***

- Component 1=Shared Goals and Action Planning
- Component 2=Focused Observation
- Component 3=Reflection and Feedback

PURPOSE:

The purpose of implementing PBC is to:

- improve the quality of teacher-child interactions
- increase the number of children who meet School Readiness Goals
- maintain and/or raise the Domain Scores in CLASS

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of implementing Practice-Based Coaching is to:

- increase the quality of teacher-child interactions
- maintain and/or increase CLASS Scores in the domains and dimensions for Emotional Support,

Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support

- provide more support and training for Coaches, Teachers, Campus Directors and Teaching Staff in the Instructional Support domain

TYPES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

HCHSP will use the following types of Professional Development experiences to increase knowledge and effective practices that will have a positive impact on the children, families and program.

- Training, Workshops, and Texas School Ready Participation
- Practice-Based Coaching

PBC DELIVERY FORMAT:

The following PBC format will be used to implement Practice-Based Coaching:

- Expert Coaches
- On-Site for the Campus Directors

IDENTIFICATION OF COACHES

- Expert Coach
 - Bachelor's degree in early childhood
 - Received Training in PBC
 - Knowledgeable and Adequate Experience in Adult Learning, Early Childhood Effective Practices, and Using Data

COACHES ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY

The coach will:

- implement the 3-Cyclical PBC Model with fidelity
- utilize a Coaching Calendar
- sign the Coaching Agreement
- develop a Shared Goals and Action Plan with the Coachee
- conduct Focused Observations
- meet with Coachee to Reflect, provide Feedback on effective teaching practices and make plans for the next steps of the cycle
- analyze the data to determine the effectiveness of the coaching with Chief Early Education Officer and determine the next steps of PBC implementation

EFFECTIVE PBC PRACTICES

- Implement Developmentally Appropriate Practices in the areas of:
 - Emotional Support
 - Classroom Organization
 - Instructional Support

Utilize data to make cognizant decisions that positively impact children's social/emotional, cognitive and linguistic needs

COACHING GUIDELINES

- Conduct an overview of PBC Model for Coaches and Coachees and share the roles and responsibilities for Coaches
- Establish and provide a meeting coaching calendar with CEEO
- Utilize the 3-Cyclical PBC Model

- Select the Coaches and Coachees based on criteria
- Use a Coaching Calendar to plan for PBC
- Establish a Collaborative Partnership between the Coach and Coachee
- Create Coaching as a Safe and Risk-Free Environment
- Use PBC Program Logs/Forms
- Conduct a Needs Assessment with the Coachee
- Coach and Coachee set Shared Goals
- Create an Action Plan
- Plan for and conduct announced Focused Observation
- Reflect and provide Feedback right after the focused observation or within a day
- Input appropriate coaching information on GoEngage
- Caseload for coaches is between 8-10 Coachees
- Upload all the Logs/Forms in a timely manner
- Evaluate and adjust the PBC Model using CLASS, CPM Data and PBC Surveys
- Provide results of PBC implementation to the Executive Team

MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS AND NEXT STEPS:

The Chief Early Education Officer ensures that the PBC Model is implemented with fidelity by conducting bi-monthly meetings with the coaches and providing Professional Development. A Spring PBC survey will be sent to the Coaches and Coachees to evaluate the implementation of PBC program. The program will use the following tools to evaluate PBC: CLASS, Circle Progress Monitoring, and Coach/Coachee Surveys. The result of the tools will be shared with the Executive Team for PBC next steps.

Sustainability:

HCHSP will provide on-going training to all new and existing Coaches and Coachees on how to build a positive, trustworthy and risk-free coaching environment. As the dynamics of each campus changes, the program will make immediate adjustments to ensure compliance of the PBC model.

Does the Program offer families opportunities to participate in at least two parent-teacher conferences each program year? Explain.

HCHSP parents participate in at least two parent-teacher conferences (PTC) every year. One PTC is held in the fall following the Wave 1 progress monitoring assessment. The other PTC is held in the spring following Wave 2 progress monitoring assessment. In Wave 1 and 2, the parents come to the campuses and the teachers provide the parents with the Parent Report that explains the strengths and areas of support on the assessment. The parents are also provided with a Home-School Connection packet that is explained by the teachers on how the parents can help their child at home to be ready for school. Together the teacher and the parents form a committee to develop the Child's Individual Plan (CIP). This CIP is implemented, monitored, and adjusted throughout the year as needed. Home Visits are also conducted by classroom teachers twice a year or as needed to continue supporting children's educational needs. Teachers explain that the role of the parent in their child's education is vital to their child's success. Collaboratively both the school and home can help their child succeed in life. The campuses also provide Meet the Teacher Night, Open House, Parent Meetings, Home Visits, and encourage parents to take a leadership role as a parent volunteer, member of the Parent Advisory Committee and a member of the Policy Council. All the curriculums have a parent engagement component to keep the parents informed on what their child is learning throughout the year. Different parental activities are held during the day or evening to involve the parents in the teaching and learning in the classroom. Progress Reports and

Report Cards are sent every third and sixth week to show the progress of the children. Parents are always welcome to visit their child's campus and ask at any time for a conference with the teacher or the campus director.

Identify areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds Performance Standards in your department.

Summary of strengths

- Successful partnerships with 9 local ISDs
- Research-based curriculum: Frog Street, Pre-K On My Way, Three Cheers and Creative Curriculum in the classrooms
- Alignment of curriculum and resources, HSELOF and Texas Pre-K Guidelines
- Research-based CIRCLE-PM and LION assessment instruments to measure children's progress
- CLI Engage and LION platform that offers immediate reports for data analysis and grouping tool for individualization purposes based on assessment scores
- Tablets with Ignite by Hatch to support individualization and teaching and learning
- Campus staff are provided with professional development to strengthen their understanding of proper implementation of curriculum and resources
- A total of 26 CLASS reliable staff, 19 are campus directors and 7 are reliable in CLASS 2nd Edition in the Education Department
- Total of 2 CLASS Trainers certified by Teachstone
- Evidence of quality teacher-child interactions
- Child-led activities and interactions that promote independence

- Participation of children in the Dual Language Model
- Disaggregation of data by Education Department staff to make informed decisions
- On-going Practice-Based Coaching Program
- Continuation of Texas School Ready (TSR)
- On-going department meetings for data analysis, planning and decision making
- Documented Campus Support Visits by the Education Area Directors
- Monitoring systems like GoEngage, Hatch Ignite, CLASS, PBC, Lesson Plans, Attendance, 45-day deadlines for Child Development Assessment, Parent-Teacher Conference, and Home Visits, etc.
- Processes for documentation and building leadership capacity
- Home-School Connection packet for Families
- CLASS Data to determine priority list of all teachers to provide support
- Inventories to purchase instructional materials and furniture for all classrooms
- The Teaching Together Model with the school districts are working well. The MOUs with 9 school districts where ISD and HS certified personnel in all classrooms. This allows for smaller child-staff ratio. Having smaller groups enhances the learning by providing individualized support.
- The implementation and monitoring of Ignite by Hatch during small group instruction and learning centers has improved children's achievement.
- Campus Directors and classroom staff can generate and monitor the class progress report, class play time report and support the needed report.

- Campus Directors and teachers are encouraged to review reports at the beginning of the week to determine if children are on track or if they might need additional time to meet their goal.
- Alignment of curriculum and resources for HSELOF, Texas Pre-K Guidelines, CLASS and Ignite by Hatch
- There is evidence that implementation of curriculum Thematic Units, Lesson Plans and Resources are utilized
- Participation of children in the Dual Language Program
- Head Start classrooms provide a print rich environment that allows children to recognize print in their dominant language.
- Classroom staff are trained with the ISD Dual Language Model
- On-going Practice-Based Coaching Program with three expert coaches
- Research-based Progress Monitoring instrument to measure children's progress using Average and Benchmark reports
- The use of children's individual performance data to develop the Child's Individual Plan, to plan for and organize instruction one on one, small group and large group based on need and mastery of objectives
- Provide an inclusive environment for children to thrive and succeed
- Progress Monitoring Parent Reports are shared with the parents after each administration to how the strengths and area for support
- Progress Monitoring platform that offers immediate reports for data analysis and grouping tool for individualization purposes based on assessment scores

- The implementation of the lessons and activities in Progress Monitoring platform in English and Spanish supports teachers' instructional planning and individualization
- The classroom environment checklist is used in the Fall and Spring by Campus Directors to ensure a print-rich environment and children's work is proudly displayed throughout the campus
- Total of 26 CLASS reliable staff
- Consistent Education Department meetings to review the teaching and learning and data in the classroom
- Frequent Campus Support Visits
- Dialogues between and amongst departments to share children's progress
- Children have access to technology via tablets and other devices throughout the day
- Daily schedules and Lesson Plans include Developmentally Appropriate Practices
- Progress Report and Report Cards sent to parents to show child's progress
- Data Sharing between Education Area Directors and Campus Directors
- Use of the Gradual Release Model for training
- Strong community partnerships

What are Critical Areas of concern your TEAM has identified?

In conclusion, after intentional reflection and examination of the different areas for support the Education Department has faced in the past year, the following are areas for potential growth and improvement have been determined.

- Building leadership capacity for our campus directors
- Continue to monitor the Education Performance Standards initiatives with fidelity

- Campus Directors ensuring intentional planning and delivery of instruction must occur daily by the Head Start Staff and District Teacher
- Use and monitor the Progress Monitoring group reports, lessons and activities to plan for individualization
- Upgrade internet services to improve performance of connectivity at the campuses
- Refine the use of Learning Center/Individualization using the Progress Monitoring and CLASS data
- Develop every piece of the daily schedule, align and train the leaders of each campus to be intentional with the daily walk-throughs
- The education department to monitor and empower the campus directors to monitor Learning Centers/Individualization to ensure that we are doing it with fidelity
- Training for The Learning Centers/Individualization Plan to be provided to all campus directors to train all their teaching staff
- Use CLASS Data to support and coach all teachers
- Create an area in GoEngage to Monitor the following:
 - Professional Development for all teachers
 - Campus Walk-throughs
 - Campus Support Visits
 - Expand the PBC app to include more CLASS data
 - Report Cards, Progress Reports, etc.
- Continue implementing daily schedule, routines, cognitive transitions and lesson plans with fidelity

- Intentional planning and delivery of instruction must occur daily by the Head Start Staff and District Teacher
- Continue providing teachers and classroom staff with training on Positive Behavior Support Strategies to identify and support children with social and emotional needs
- Work on delivery of instruction to promote higher order thinking skills (CLASS Domain: Instructional Support)
- Focus on Progress Monitoring by analyzing Progress Monitoring and Hatch Data
- Monitoring the teaching and learning daily through walk-throughs, documenting observations, providing feedback, strategies and support to all classroom staff by Campus Directors
- Use the progress monitoring data more intentionally
- Time management for the Campus Directors to be able to spend more time in the classrooms and planning with teachers
- Campus Directors need to follow the Mental Health Process more closely when addressing challenging behaviors or serious concerns with any child
- Staff development at the campus level provided by the Campus Director
- Customer Service practices
- Study and internalize the 2022 Pre-K Guidelines, Performance Standard, Child Licensing Minimum Standards and HSELOF
- Refine the outcomes for 3- and 4-year-olds
- Limit the number of children with special needs placed in the same classroom
- Strategies for teachers to work with severe challenging behaviors

What strategies have your TEAM identified to address concerns:

Where are we now?

What is the Plan for the Future?

- The Gradual Release Model is being implemented by the Education Department to train campus staff on individualization, Averages reports and Benchmarks reports
- Education Department staff and Campus Directors are being trained in how to conduct intentional walk-throughs focusing on CLASS domains, indicators, behavioral markers, individualization and teaching and learning
- Campus Directors are expected to train and support classroom staff on CLASS domains, indicators, behavioral markers, individualization and teaching and learning
- Campus Directors are using Classroom Observation Form, On-Going Classroom Support Timeline, and Crosswalk of 15-minute In-Service Suites with CLASS, and Training and Technical Assistance Form to indicate completion of task
- Campus Directors are required to be actively involved in the planning process with Head Start and ISD staff
- A Rapid Response Intervention Team was created to assist classroom staff, children, and families to address challenging issues
- Chief Early Education Officer, Education Area Directors, Education Coordinators, Campus Directors and Campus Staff will generate data reports to make informed decisions to meet the program, campus and classroom needs

- Campus Directors will submit walk-through forms and Training and Technical Assistance Form on any activities at the campuses. The Education Area Director will monitor submission of documents
- Education Area Directors and Campus Directors are conducting more intentional walk-throughs
- Education Area Directors will monitor and support all of the leadership daily tasks that Campus Directors are expected to perform via face-to-face campus visits, virtual leadership meetings, and electronic communication
- Conduct training on the 2022 Pre-K Guidelines for the Campus Directors and the teaching staff
- Review the outcomes for 3- & 4-year-olds and establish outcomes accordingly
- Seven (7) of the staff in education are reliable in CLASS 2nd Edition
- Provide campus director on-going professional development on how to teach and model Social Emotional Learning in all aspects
- Train campus directors in modeling proper language use of scaffolding conversations with children
- Training in the use of technology to enhance children's learning experiences without replacing hands-on learning

The Education Department is in the process of providing professional development to address areas of concern. Campus Directors will be trained in Progress Monitoring Wave 2 data analysis. They will be able to generate and analyze their campus scores and provide appropriate support to classroom staff and monitor the teaching and learning in the classroom. All Campus Directors are expected to conduct a minimum of 8 walk-throughs on a weekly basis, using the Classroom

Observation Form. The form was designed to guide observers to focus on the expected behavior markers in the three domains of CLASS. The Campus Directors are expected to meet with the teachers within a few days after the walk-through to provide feedback, strategies and support and acknowledge by signing the Classroom Observation Form. After three weeks of observing the classrooms, the Campus Director will analyze the data collected and will determine the professional development needed using the 15-minute In-Service Suites. This will provide coaching opportunities to help teachers improve their teaching practices by adhering to the On-Going Classroom Support Timeline.

The Education Department also continues to collaborate with School Districts to ensure that all children are ready for school. The department will work on the topics and PowerPoint presentations for Annual Training and on-going professional development to support Head Start staff in the successful implementation of curriculum, assessments, CLASS, technology, instructional leadership and developmentally appropriate practices.

What is the Plan for the Future?

The Education Department will continue to deliver high-quality services to children and families of Hidalgo County through ongoing professional development, coaching practices, implementation of curriculum with fidelity and the establishment of monitoring protocols and procedures in accordance with Head Start Standards and the Pre-K Guidelines. Our department will continue working with the School Districts to provide training and support to strengthen School Readiness Partnerships. The Teaching Together Model is enhancing and refining the School Readiness Partnerships with the school districts to ensure all children are ready for kindergarten. This coming year our goal is to have all the campus directors and the education staff reliable in CLASS 2nd edition. The department will continue with the practice of videotaping

classrooms and review them for interrater reliability and maintain that practice. The department will work on a plan to train and collaborate with the ISD teachers on CLASS 2nd edition to ensure continuity of interactions between the educators and children. Foster regular meetings and joint planning sessions between Head Start and ISD administration, teachers, and specialists. Develop joint professional development for Head Start and ISD staff to ensure alignment in teaching practices, especially in developmentally appropriate practices, social-emotional learning, and literacy. Foster cross-district professional learning communities where both ISD and Head Staff can collaborate, share experiences grow and learn together. Develop transition activities with the campus directors for a smooth transition to kindergarten for children and families. Create a CLASS professional development plan for ISD staff.

CHILD NUTRITION

Federal Laws and Regulations for Nutrition Services

1302.31(e)(2);1302.44(a)(1)(2)(v);1302.47(b)(7)(vi)

Does the Program follow a process to accommodate the individual feeding requirements of children? Explain. Yes

- Every child undergoes a thorough Child Nutrition assessment upon enrollment.
- If areas of concern are identified, the parent is issued a referral and handed a **medical statement for children with special dietary needs** to take to their doctor.
- Once the form is completed by a licensed professional, the parent will return the form to the campus for review.
- The Campus will e-mail the form/prescription to our Child Nutrition Department for review.

- The form/prescription will be utilized by the Child Nutrition Department professional staff to revise the menu accordingly and e-mail it to the Kitchen Head Cook and Campus Director to modify the food given to the child accordingly.
- The Campus Director or Family Service workers will upload the menu, prescription, and any other additional documents onto GoEngage.
- If the menu is to be discontinued, we must receive a copy of a medical statement from the doctor's office.
- If the child drops from the program, an e-mail notification must be sent to our Child Nutrition Department for validation purposes.

Does the Program promote conversations and learning during meals and snacks? Explain.

Yes

- During every meal service delivery, all staff are trained to encourage conversations with children regarding nutritional wellness.
- The staff helps children identify food groups and food items for children when applicable and tells them what they are good for.

Does the Program develop strategies to address food insecurities? Explain.

Yes

- Parents are referred to local food banks and community organizations that provide significant support.
- The food program will donate food to the local food banks and churches to distribute food to the neediest families. This is done during long breaks, at the end of the year, or as needed depending on food expiration dates.

Does the Program post necessary information related to child food allergies? Explain.

Yes

- For every child with a child food allergy, a campus allergy list is made available via e-mail to the corresponding campus on which that child resides.
- The listing of all compiled food allergens at that campus level is posted in the parent corner, and an individual child allergy list for each classroom where the child resides is posted in the corresponding classroom.
- Each campus has a special diet log to keep track of all children with special diets including those with child food allergies.

Identify areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds Performance Standards in your department.

- Electronic meal claims have been expedited due to going electronic.
- Special Diets & Food Allergy controls.
- Campus monitoring has shown great campus-level improvement.
- Meal services/food production- quality.
- Expedited Meal claim reimbursements

What are Critical Areas of concern your TEAM has identified?

- The GoEngage system needs to be improved
- Additional Campus Director, FSW, and custodial training need to be provided.
- Some equipment is fully depreciated and needs to be replaced.

What strategies have your TEAM identified to address concerns:

Where are we now?

- Currently, the Child Nutrition Department is fully staffed and working well. The Program has identified a weakness in training that needs to be addressed with all staff.

What is the Plan for the Future?

- The ongoing plan is to provide additional training to all Campus Directors, FSWs, and Campus custodial staff. This will help clarify any concerns with system management and help structure a more manageable system of documentation.

FIELD OPERATIONS/TRANSPORTATION

Federal Regulations for FO 1302.47(b)(1)(ii)(iii)(ix)(2)(i)

Does the Program implement a system of ongoing preventative maintenance and corrects identified safety issues? Explain.

- The transportation department has implemented the pre-post inspection of all buses that are done at the beginning of routes and the end of the route. Bus Drivers will ensure that buses are safe to drive checking all equipment. If a bus driver finds an issue it will be posted through the Go-Engage system. The transportation coordinator will monitor through Go-Engage and advise the bus driver on how to proceed with the issue.
- Maintenance staff have assigned campuses individually. This is to ensure that all campuses are identified with any needs necessary and addressed right away.
- Safety issues are priorities.

Does the Program maintain safe indoor and outdoor equipment and materials? Explain.

- The program maintains safe indoor and outdoor equipment and materials by storing in a safe location such as a locked room or storage room and kept away from children.
- Through a Work Order system all outdoor and indoor equipment is properly maintained.

Does the Program maintain safe facilities that are free from pests, mold, pollutants, and safety hazards? Explain.

- The transportation buses maintain safety hazards in a shed located at the Bus Barn. This facility is locked and kept free from pests, mold, and pollutants. Most of the safety hazards are disinfectants cleaners and fluids which maintain buses safe from any viruses or bacteria and maintain the buses in safe driving condition.
- The Program works with an outside Pest Control company to ensure all facilities are free of pests, pollutants and always safe.
- Facilities submit a work order if they encounter any unsafe hazardous condition.

How do you make sure that the program's facilities, materials, equipment, and transportation services are appropriate for the children you serve?

- The Program ensures all required equipment is up to date in meeting all State and Federal standards.
- The Program ensure that our buses are always maintained through a pre-inspection and a post-inspection. All buses have a Child Restraint System that is adequate according to the child's age, height and weight.

How do you make sure that the program's facilities, materials, equipment and transportation services are appropriate for children with disabilities?

- The transportation department has three (3) buses with the capabilities to transport children with disabilities if the need arises. All bus drivers are trained to take and transport children with disabilities.

- The program ensures all buses are equipped to meet all requirements and regulations with ADA.

When choosing a facility, what things do you consider?

- The program takes into consideration location, safety of the area, condition of facility, utilities, size (square footage) bathroom facilities available, lighting inside and outside and safety around the facility.
- Meeting state and federal regulations.
- Money invested to meet requirements and regulations.
- Location to ensure we have children in the area for enrollment.

How do you ensure that required inspections, maintenance and repairs are taking place and the facility is in compliance with all other relevant Federal, state, tribal and local requirements?

- The transportation department has a Pre/ Post inspection before and after each bus route to ensure all buses are equipped and ensure that buses are safe to be on the road transporting children.
- Maintenance staff have assigned campuses individually. This is to ensure that all campuses are identified with any needs necessary and addressed right away.
- Safety issues are priorities.
- All campuses follow all State and Federal requirements to ensure inspection are met.

How do you ensure that the facilities, materials and equipment are accessible and useful to people with disabilities?

- All facilities have a ramp required by ADA.

- The Program ensures that equipment is accessible and useful to people with disabilities ensuring that buses have the capability for transporting children with disabilities. Bus Drivers are trained to transport children with disabilities.

How do you ensure that facilities are free of toxins such as smoke, lead, pesticides and herbicides?

- All program facilities are free of toxins such as smoke, lead, pesticides and herbicides.
- The Program secures a private Pest Control Company that visits all campuses and administration to control all free of pests.
- Children at all the campuses drink bottled water. Children drink water when they come from outdoor play, after breakfast, during lunch and as a child request it.
- The program is free from herbicides that can cause problems to all children and staff. Weeds are killed by using a weed eater.

For children who are transported to the program, how is the time spent riding the bus used to reinforce the curriculum and otherwise foster healthy child development?

- Bus monitor/bus aides ensure the safety of children by using a harness and making sure children are buckled correctly.
- Bus monitor/bus aides will converse with all children such as singing chants at times to make all children feel comfortable, and safe.

How does the program ensure that all parents and children are trained in pedestrian safety and bus safety practices?

- During all parent orientation when children are enrolled, all campus directors meet with parents and provide the Hidalgo County Head Start Parent Book with procedures on pedestrian safety and bus safety practices.

Identify areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds Performance Standards in your department.

- Maintenance Team is working as a team and meeting all necessary expectations for the program.
- Children are transported from home and brought to school safely every day.

What are Critical Areas of concern your TEAM has identified?

- There is a need for new buses
- The wear and tear of buses is a major concern

What strategies have your TEAM identified to address concerns:

Where are we now?

- Communication between Transportation and Maintenance is a big factor in addressing issues and concerns right away

What is the Plan for the Future?

- Continue to communicate and address things immediately

ERSEA/FAMILY SERVICES

Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, Attendance

Federal Laws and Regulations for ERSEA

1302.12(c-d)(k-m); 1302.13; 1302.14(a)(b)(c); 1302.15(a); 1302.16(a)(2)(i-iv)

Does the Program recruit children and families with the greatest need? Explain.

Yes, the Hidalgo County Head Start Program actively recruits children and families with the

greatest need. Recruitment strategies include community outreach, public awareness campaigns, door to door efforts, and collaboration with nine local partnering school districts. Eligibility criteria for the children are based on the premise that the children most in need (i.e., children of poverty-stricken families, categorically eligible children, and children with disabilities) benefit most from HS services; therefore, they are prioritized first according to the weighted selection criteria. Homeless children are categorically eligible, so they are ranked first in our Priority Rankings for Enrollment to ensure they receive HS services.

Does the Program strengthen recruitment and outreach efforts by evaluating strategies for effectiveness and customizing efforts based on current community needs? Explain.

Yes, the Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) practices include year-round recruitment by all campus staff, door-to-door recruitment, dissemination of door hangers, flyers, and posters, advertise extensively through social media, television commercials, conduct bus “parades” through neighborhoods and place banners on our buses. All the advertising is translated in English and Spanish language, the Program also advertises extensively on our HS website where families can use the QR Code to start the Pre-Application process for enrollment. The County’s official website is also used and has developed an online pre-application process thereby facilitating parents’ enrollment. The Program also installed a digital sign at the LBJ Administration Building used to advertise Head Start services and invested in the Hot Spots software available to all staff while recruitment is taking place in rural areas of the County. The HCHSP Facebook page includes information on how parents can apply for Head Start Services and serves as a gateway for attracting families in need. Through strong school district collaborations, the Program is now sharing enrollment lists and parental information on all children and together provide information to the parents on the benefits of Head Start as an added service to their children.

Information is also obtained from the Community Assessment to target areas populated with families that are identified as those with the most need.

In Addition, the Community Assessment has clearly identified a high need for Early Head Start services. *“According to data from organizations providing childcare services for low-income children in Hidalgo County, a total of 2,749 children aged 0-2 receive services through Early Head Start programs, public schools, and Workforce Solutions’ Child Care Management Services. To estimate the unmet need for children 0 – 2, we considered there are 44,793 children in this age group. Based on the American Community Survey, 37.9% of children under 3 in the county live in poverty, equating to 16,977 potentially income-eligible children. After subtracting the 2868 children currently receiving services, the estimated unmet need is 14, 109 children who could qualify for Early Head Start.”*

Does the Program develop selection criteria based on data from the community needs assessment? Explain.

Yes, the Program develops selection criteria based on data included in the most recent Community Assessment (CA) conducted by The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Data and Information Systems Center. The Community Assessment is revised annually and includes the number of eligible children aged 3-5 in Hidalgo County who are currently not receiving but could be eligible for Head Start Services. The CA includes data on the number of children that are experiencing homelessness, who are in foster care, children with disabilities, education, health, nutrition, and social needs, as well as geographical locations.

The Office of Head Start also provides the most recent annual U.S. Federal Poverty Income Guidelines and the Policy Council reviews and approves them once a year. Families must meet eligibility criteria to qualify for Head Start services. Target recruitment areas are identified through

the information collected from the Community Assessment.

Does the Program maintain a prioritized or ranked waitlist across all program options? Explain.

Yes, the Program maintains a prioritized or ranked waitlist using the Priority Guidelines for Selection and Enrollment which depicts Priority Ranking by families most in need. For example, children whose families are homeless, in foster care, disabled, and are recipients of public assistance are categorically eligible for Head Start Services and present high needs. The Program also identifies children through referrals from Child Protective Services (CPS). In addition, children who have been removed from their home and placed in foster care are referred to our Program.

Does the Program Manage enrollment including the percentages of applicants who are eligible for Head Start services and who are over income for Head Start services including:

- **Maintains less than 10 percent of children enrolled who may benefit from services but do not meet other eligibility requirements; and**
- **Maintains less than 35 percent of children enrolled whose incomes were between 100 percent and 130 percent poverty.**

Yes, all completed applications are screened for validity, income, and age verification prior to data entry into our Program's GoEngage Data Collection System. GoEngage enables us to retrieve and monitor data such as the percentages of homeless children we serve, foster care, public assistance, low income, over income from 100 – 130%, and children with over the 130% of poverty guidelines.

Does the Program train and monitor staff members on execution of eligibility interviews? Explain.

Yes, the Program's Family Services staff provide annual training on the Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) process and the GoEngage Data Collection System to all Campus Directors and Family Services Workers. Additional training is provided as

needed in small group settings or individually. Professional development opportunities continue throughout the year. The Family Services Coordinators are readily available to provide guidance to new employees who are trained within 90 days of employment.

Does the Program ensure eligibility records are free from documentation errors? Explain.

Yes, the Program ensures eligibility records are free from documentation errors by verifying the Head Start Eligibility Verification Forms and documentation. The Campus Directors, Family Services Workers and Family Services Coordinators also review documentation to ensure accuracy and ensure that every child enrolled is eligible for services. In addition, file audits and internal monitoring are conducted to help identify discrepancies if any. This process ensures that all supporting documentation is correct and free from oversight.

Does the Program maintain an eligibility verification process to protect against fraudulent enrollment? Explain.

Yes, the Hidalgo County Head Start Program maintains an eligibility verification process to protect against fraudulent enrollment. This process aligns with the Head Start Program Performance Standards (45 CFR §1302.12). Staff members responsible for eligibility determination receive training to ensure compliance with Head Start regulations. Once trained, an acknowledgement of ERSEA Policies and Procedures is secured. Parent or legal guardian signs a certification statement indicating all information is accurate. The Family Services Coordinators verify and certify documents. If fraud is suspected, there is a written policy which outlines steps for investigation and corrective action.

Does the Program establish written eligibility policies and procedures? Explain.

Yes, on June 11, 2024, the Policy Council approved the written policies and procedures. These

procedures outline the process for determining eligibility based on age and income along with other criteria ensuring compliance with federal regulations. They also include procedures for verifying eligibility and maintaining documentation and preventing fraud. The written procedures include standards and regulations outlined in the Head Start Program Performance Standards and the Head Start Act.

Does the Program identify, track, and fill program vacancies within 30 days? Explain.

Enrollment is tracked daily utilizing reports generated from the GoEngage Data Collection System. In addition, campuses notify the Family Services Department via email when there is a vacancy. Vacancies are filled utilizing the Application Pool for approved applications. Enrollment is based on priority and recruitment is done year-round.

Does the Program promote regular attendance for each child? Explain.

Yes, the Program promotes regular attendance for each child by providing perfect attendance incentives such as children's parades, student recognition, instructional materials/prizes that are donated by our community partners and providing perfect attendance certificates. In addition, the Family Services Workers utilize an attendance plan which identifies barriers, and a goal is established to improve the child's attendance. Average daily attendance has increased from 85 % to 90%.

Does the Program provide targeted support for children and families at risk for low attendance? Explain.

Yes, the Program's Family Services Workers each have a family case load of no more than 40 families. The GoEngage Data Collection system generates an alert for every child that is not present. Within an hour of instructional time, the FSWs reach out to the family and document case

notes regarding the absence. A home visit is also conducted and if a child appears to have moderate chronic absenteeism, then an attendance plan is completed with the parent. The attendance plan identifies barriers, and a goal is established to improve the child's attendance.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Federal Laws and Regulations for FCE

1302.34(b)(3,5);1302.50(b)(1-3,5);1302.51(a-b);1302.52(b-c);1302.53(a)(1);

1302.91(e)(7)

Does the Program use methods of two-way communication with families to create welcoming environments? Explain.

Yes, a variety of two-way communication with families to create welcoming environments is utilized to ensure families are aware of their child's progress, campus activities, and general campus information. Communication takes place via telephone, home visits, campus websites, social media, parent meetings, handouts, and parent teacher conferences. Effective communication between the Family Services Workers (FSW) and families is continuous throughout the Family Partnership Agreement Follow-Up process. Each FSW has a case load of 40 families.

Does the Program communicate in languages spoken by families? Explain.

Yes, the Hidalgo County Head Start Program is respectful of each individual family's primary language. Translation services are offered as needed. Communication is done with families as needed, including relevant handouts translated into the family's primary language.

Does the Program implement intentional engagement strategies to honor cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds and compositions of families in the Program? Explain.

Yes, the Program implements intentional engagement strategies to honor cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds and compositions of families in the Program. Classrooms, for example, are adorned with children's activities that depict the diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic

backgrounds of enrolled children and families. Books and materials are available in each classroom and our teachers also instruct the children about the diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic composition of families.

The Program also utilizes strategies for building trusting and respectful relationships with families and for providing a program environment and services that are welcoming, culturally, and linguistically responsive to families. For example, the parent engagement process is an interactive process, and the shared responsibility of families and staff is also used to build positive and goal-oriented relationships. It requires mutual respect for the roles and strengths each has to offer, including those specific to fathers.

Does the Program solicit and use input from families to improve programming? Explain.

Yes, Hidalgo County Head Start Program solicits and uses input from families to improve programming by encouraging feedback through various methods such as participation in the parent committees, policy council, surveys and feedback forms, family goal settings, conferences, and home visits. Family engagement is a core principle of Head Start. This feedback helps ensure Head Start remains responsive to the needs of children and families in the community.

Does the Program offer training and professional development for staff members to build effective, strength-based relationships with families? Explain.

Yes, the Program provides training and professional development to help staff build effective, strength-based relationships with families. These trainings focus on fostering trust, cultural responsiveness, and family engagement by using the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework (PFCEF). Family Services Workers receive training on how to complete the Family Partnership Agreement (FPA) properly and effectively. Through the FPA, the FSWs help families identify goals, access resources, and track progress. FSWs are also trained in case management

and home visits. Training on effective parent meetings is also provided to Campus Directors and FSWs by the Family Services Coordinators. Family Services staff attend training sessions and webinars offered through HeadStart.gov and the National Head Start Conferences.

Does the Program implement intake and assessment procedures that identify family interests, strengths, and needs? Explain.

Yes, the Program implements intake and assessment procedures to identify family interests, strengths, and needs. This is typically done through the FPA process. During enrollment or shortly after, the program collects detailed family information through the application for Head Start services, interviews, and home visits. FSWs regularly check in with families, update goals, and provide support services. FSWs help families connect with resources within the community such as employment services, housing assistance, and health care based on family needs.

Does the Program collaborate with families to develop and progress toward family partnership goals? Explain.

Yes, the Program collaborates with families to develop and document progress toward family partnership goals. FSWs work closely with parents and guardians to assess their strengths and needs, set goals, and access resources that support their well-being. This partnership is designed to promote self-sufficiency and positive outcomes for both children and their families. The FPA is done in phases to allow the family time to develop trust and understanding.

Does the Program conduct ongoing review of the progress toward meeting family goals? Explain.

Family Services Workers provide regular follow-ups through home visits, phone calls, and in person communication to check on progress toward family goals, offer encouragement and guidance, adjust goals if needed, and address new challenges.

Does the Program offer families opportunities to support family goals or needs, including opportunities for economic mobility? Explain.

Yes, the Program supports family goals and needs including opportunities for income mobility.

Through the FPA, FSWs work with families to identify their strengths, set goals, and connect them to resources like job training, education programs, financial literacy workshops-*Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors*, and employment opportunities.

Does the Program provide families opportunities to improve parenting knowledge and skills? Explain.

Yes, the parenting curriculum, *Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors* is a research-based curriculum that consists of 10 sessions offered to Head Start parents. Topics of interest include financial literacy, child development, health, and advocacy. Parents are encouraged to attend parent meetings, conferences, and other parent events throughout the year.

Does the Program engage fathers and other male caregivers? Explain.

The Program promotes father engagement because of the positive impact their participation will have on their child's development. Fathers are encouraged to participate in the application process, home visits, conferences, and other campus events such as Campus Committee Meetings, and *Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors* sessions throughout the year.

Does the Program provide families opportunities to participate and contribute to the Program? Explain.

Yes, the Program actively encourages family participation and contribution in multiple ways. Parents can also assist by volunteering at their Head Start campus, organizing activities, and participating in program events. Parents are also encouraged to attend workshops on parenting, and financial literacy.

Does the Program provide leadership opportunities for families? Explain.

Yes, the Program provides parents or guardians with leadership opportunities to engage in decision-making by being an active member of the parent committee or policy council. This empowers families to advocate for their children and communities.

Does the Program use a parenting curriculum that meets the needs of families served, builds on parent knowledge, and offers opportunities for parents to practice their parenting skills? Explain.

Yes, *Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors* is an evidence-based, culturally relevant parenting curriculum. It empowers parents with the knowledge and skills to support their children's learning and development while also fostering leadership with their community. *Abriendo Puertas* is aligned with Head Start's goals of promoting school readiness, family engagement, and lifelong success.

Identify areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds Performance Standards in your department.

- Campuses are maintaining an average ADA of 85% or greater. Each respective campus develops incentives to promote perfect attendance. Children with perfect attendance are recognized monthly during monthly parent meetings.
- When a child does not arrive at school, the Family Services Worker attempts to contact the parent to ensure the child's wellbeing within one hour of program start time. Case notes are documented for each absence on the GoEngage software system. Automated absenteeism alerts are sent to the families of children with a recorded unexcused absence for the day. Attendance Plans are developed in conjunction with parents of children displaying patterns of moderate to chronic absenteeism.

- ERSEA procedures are being followed. Eligibility determination records are obtained to verify age, income and/or eligibility category for all applications submitted for Head Start services. All procedures are automated using the GoEngage software system. All applications are reviewed by 1) FSW, 2) Campus Director, and 3) Family Services Coordinator as a part of a three-phase review process used to ensure accuracy of information and supporting documents collected for eligibility determination. Application intake is available by accessing www.hchsp.org or by calling the campus of interest.
- All Campus Directors and Family Services Workers (FSWs) are trained in Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) policies and procedures to include the process followed for any staff, family, or participant who misleads or knowingly provides false information for the purpose of qualifying for the program.
- Ten (10) session parenting curriculum “Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors” is offered to all Head Start parents/guardians. Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors is the nation's first evidence-based comprehensive training program developed by and for Latino parents with children ages 0-5 and is now being used throughout the United States. Sessions take place at each respective campus to promote parent engagement by empowering parents as they are “their child’s first teacher” because learning begins at home.

What are Critical Areas of concern your TEAM has identified?

- HCHSP is currently under enrolled; however, it has met the 97% enrollment that is required by the Office of Head Start using the 3% reserve for homeless families. The Program is currently on a Full Enrollment Initiative plan and continues to recruit and enroll children daily. Funded enrollment is 3060 for the 2024-2025 program year. Current enrollment is at 2946.

- The program engages families in self-empowerment. A referral process is used to assist families in achieving goals and/or meeting their basic needs. FSWs provide families with information on community services available in their area; however, they do not always give themselves credit. The program is currently transitioning to a fully automated tracking system to help track the services provided to Head Start families.

What strategies has your TEAM identified to address concerns?

Where are we now?

- All staff have been trained in recruitment procedures. Recruitment efforts continue a daily, weekly, and ongoing basis. Recruitment strategies being used to promote the program include canvassing area neighborhoods and businesses to distribute information flyers, attending community fairs, monitoring the pre-application queue on the GoEngage system, word-of-mouth, utilizing electronic billboards, social media platforms, program website, and public service announcements (PSAs). The Program collaborates with nine local school districts and partners with Early Head Start (EHS), Region One, and Easter Seals to increase enrollment.
- The Program is transitioning to fully automated systems and has developed an effective way of tracking referral data. This process was implemented recently on the GoEngage system. Campus Directors and FSWs have been trained in this effective systematic process for documenting and tracking referrals. This will allow the program to provide actual data of how many families have been referred and how many have received services.

What is the Plan for the Future?

- The application process for PY 2025-2026 is now underway. Campus Directors and FSWs have been trained in ERSEA policies and procedures and are working to acquire full enrollment by May 2025.
- To meet the identified unmet need for Early Head Start, the Program is in the process of submitting an application for conversion from Head Start enrollment slots to Early Head Start. The Program has already secured commitment from some of its existing ISD partners to extend the collaboration agreement to include Early Head Start. This agreement includes, but is not limited to, facilities for Early Head Start as well as staffing.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Federal Laws and regulations for HR

1302.91(e)(1)(2)(ii);1302.92(b)(6);1302.90(b)(1-5)

Does the Program ensure all center-based Head Start Preschool lead teachers have the appropriate qualifications? Explain.

The Program ensures that Teacher qualifications and competency requirements are met in accordance with the requirements of the Office of HeadStart Performance Standards §1302.91.

The program ensures that all staff, consultants, and contractors engaged in the delivery of program services have sufficient knowledge, training and experience, and competencies to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of their positions and to ensure high-quality service delivery. The program ensures that job descriptions reflect the appropriate staff qualifications. Lead teachers must have at least a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field. Additionally, our lead teachers must have at least one year of experience in education, which is often gained through student teaching or similar practice or experience. The Program also emphasizes ongoing

professional development to ensure teachers stay current with best practices in early childhood education. By maintaining these standards, Head Start aims to provide high-quality education and care to preschool children, ensuring our Head Start children are well prepared for future academic success.

Does the Program maintain any needed waivers or professional development plans related to staff member's qualifications? Explain.

Since the Program collaborates with nine (9) different independent school districts, the Program ensures that Texas Teachers are certified through the state to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to teach effectively. Certification also validates their qualifications and gives them credibility. This enhances the quality of education, professional standards, and student needs. In collaboration with the Texas Education Agency, the independent school districts have worked with the Program in providing waivers for Teachers that are working on completing the required certifications. Each employee is placed on an individualized professional development plan (IPDP) to set goals towards becoming fully certified. IPDPs are tailored to each staff member's needs, focusing on areas for growth and skill enhancement. The Staff Development Department conducts ongoing monitoring to ensure that employees are provided with the support they need to achieve their goals.

Does the Program implement a comprehensive approach to professional development? Explain.

Through ongoing professional development, the Program staff enhance their skills, and the competencies needed to effectively fulfill their roles and deliver high-quality services. The Program develops and implements a program-wide, systemic approach to staff training and professional development. The Program also creates individual professional plans with each employee, assisting employees to explore potential career goals and the steps needed to achieve

them.

The IPDP is used to:

- Increased earning potential
- Networking opportunities
- A boost in confidence
- Enhanced competency, capacity, and service delivery for children and families
- Timely attainment of required credential degrees or certifications

The IPDP process includes:

- Completing a Profile
- Creating an Action Plan
- Documenting progress

Does the Program complete and examine all necessary background checks for staff members? Explain.

The Program ensures that background checks and selection procedures are followed in accordance with Head Start Program Performance Standards §1302.90. Before a person is hired, directly or through contract, including transportation staff and contractors, our program ensures that an interview is conducted, references are verified, and a sex offender registry check is conducted by obtaining a State or tribal criminal history records, including fingerprint checks; or, Federal Bureau of Investigation criminal history records, including fingerprint checks. As per Head Start Performance Standard §1302.90 (2) a program has 90 days after an employee is hired to complete the background check process by obtaining all necessary information before the date of hire and, Child abuse and neglect state registry check, if available.

Does the Program ensure the safety of children during the background check process? Explain.

The Program ensures that newly hired employees, consultants, or contractors do not have unsupervised access to children until the complete background check process is complete. The Program reviews the information found in each employment application and completes the background check through the Texas Child Care Regulation Division to assess the relevancy of any issue uncovered which may include any arrest, pending criminal charge, or conviction to determine whether the prospective employee can be hired, or the current employee must be terminated.

Does the Program establish a process to update background checks every 5 years? Explain.

The Program conducts complete background checks for each employee, consultant, or contractor at least once every five years to ensure the safety of children and staff. Both initial and renewed (eligible) background checks are entered into the MIP Human Resources Module and are constantly monitored to ensure that they are renewed in a timely manner. The Texas Child Care Regulation Division notifies the program when a background check is due for renewal. The Program only allows employees, consultants, or contractors who are found “eligible” to provide services to Head Start children enrolled in the program.

Does the Program ensure family services staff members have the appropriate qualifications? Explain.

The Program ensures that staff who work directly with families on the family partnership process hired after November 7, 2016, have within eighteen months of hire, at a minimum, a credential or certification in social work, human services, family services, counseling, or a related field. The program ensures that all staff, consultants, and contractors engaged in the delivery of program services have sufficient knowledge, training and experience, and competencies to fulfill the roles

and responsibilities of their positions and to ensure high-quality service delivery. The Program ensures that job descriptions reflect the appropriate staff qualifications and that positions are advertised appropriately. During the applicant screening process, the program ensures that new hires meet the job requirements before they are considered for employment.

Does the Program offer training and professional development for staff members to build effective, strength-based relationships with families? Explain.

Yes, through ongoing professional development, the Program staff enhance their skills, and the competencies needed to effectively fulfill their roles and deliver high-quality services. Family services staff members are essential to helping families identify and progress toward their goals and dreams for themselves and their children. The Family services staff participate in training during onboarding (pre-service) and annually thereafter (annual training). These trainings focus on embracing cultural diversity and engaging families through effective communication. The goal of parent and family engagement is to work with families to build strong and effective partnerships that can help children and families thrive. These partnerships are grounded in positive, ongoing, and goal-oriented relationships with families. The relationships are based on mutual respect and trust. They are also developed over time, through a series of interactions between staff and families.

Does the Program ensure fiscal staff members are qualified and supported to fulfill their responsibilities? Explain.

The Program assesses staffing needs in consideration of the fiscal complexity of the organization and applicable financial management requirements and secure the regularly scheduled or ongoing services of a fiscal officer with sufficient education and experience to meet their needs. In accordance with program standard §1302.91, the program has ensured that the fiscal officer is a certified public accountant or has at a minimum, a baccalaureate degree in accounting, business, fiscal management, or a related field.

Does the Program provide eligibility training for eligibility staff members within 90 days of hire? Explain.

Yes, in accordance with program standard §1302.92, the Program provides all new staff, consultants, and volunteers an orientation that focuses on, at a minimum, the goals and underlying philosophy of the program and on the ways, they are implemented. In accordance with the Texas Child Care Minimum Standard §746.1301, all employees, caregivers, and directors must complete the following trainings: Human Resources mandated policies and procedures training, an orientation to the child-care center within seven days of employment and before having unsupervised access to a child in care, 8 clock hours of pre-service training before the caregiver may be counted in the child/caregiver ratio, 16 clock hours of pre-service training within 90 days of employment, pediatric first aid with rescue breathing and pediatric CPR within 90 days of employment and before having unsupervised access to a child in care, 24 clock hours of annual training (each caregiver) within 12 months of employment, 30 clock hours of annual training (each child-care director) within 12 months of employment, Transportation training prior to transporting children; and annually, thereafter.

Identify areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds Performance Standards in your department.

The Human Resources Department continues to work well in utilizing the documents required by the Hidalgo County Head Start Program Policies and Procedures, Personnel Policy Rules, and by the Texas Child Care Regulation Division. Numerous employee status reports are used to determine a variety of Human Resources needs. The reports are as follows: Drug Testing Reports, Finger Printing and Background Checks, Tuberculosis Testing Report, Health Appraisal Report, First Aid/CPR Report, List of Probationary Employees, Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Report, Workers Compensation Report, New Hire Employee Report, Sick Leave Pool, Reports for

Policy Council, Personnel Status Report, Employee Evaluation(s) Report, Individualized Professional Development Plans, Public Information Reports, Employee Vacancy Report, Staff Appreciation Award(s) Report, Screening of Potential Employee(s) Report, Termination Folders Report, Disciplinary Action Reports, Driver(s) License Report, Employee Resignation Reports, Parent List Report, Partnership Reports, PIR Reporting, PIS Reporting, Employee Benefits Reports, Resignation Report, Exit Interview Reports, and Employee Pension Reports.

The Human Resources Department conducted a review of personnel files. This included a review of personnel files which were monitored and selected randomly. Five (5) staff members assisted in completing this year's self-assessment initiative. There were relatively few corrections made to record files and these were generally items that were easily replaced and properly documented. In no instance was there any error in an employee file that would be a deficiency.

According to our records:

- 100% of all employees, volunteers, and ISD Teachers have a current Criminal Background Check as required by Head Start Program Standards and the Texas Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Regulation Division.
- All ISD Teachers have been provided all required Pre-Service Trainings and/or attended the required Annual Training.
- All ISD Teachers are classified caregivers and counted in the child staff ratio.
- 34.99% of HCHSP employees (211) are current or former Head Start parents.
- HCHSP is currently budgeted for 588 employees, of which 506 are full-time employees and 82 are educational substitute teachers. In addition to this we have 27 budgeted positions

under the Texas Department of Agriculture for the Nutrition Program. This brings a grand total amount of 615 positions.

What are Critical Areas of concern your TEAM has identified?

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program works in collaboration with the local independent school districts in the ISD/Head Start Teaching Together model to expand Head Start services to the Pre-K children enrolled. Due to the recent Change in Scope Model, one of the critical areas of concern for the program is finding fully certified bilingual teachers to meet the needs of the local independent school districts and the Texas Education Agency requirements. According to the Texas Education Agency, there is currently a teacher shortage for the 2024-2025 school year in Texas for Bilingual Teachers.

What strategies have your TEAM identified to address concerns:**Where are we now?**

- The Hidalgo County Head Start Program has made a commitment to financially support our current baccalaureate level teachers throughout the Alternative Certification Program and to obtain bilingual certifications. Currently, our program has 43 candidates enrolled in the Alternative Certification Program and 24 completers enrolled with their university. The program supports all teachers as well as Campus Directors throughout The Hidalgo County Head Start Program has made the program to ensure that they excel towards full certification.

What is the Plan for the Future?

- The program will continue to form collaborations with the local independent school districts in the ISD/Teaching Together model to expand our Head Start services to the Pre-K children enrolled. The plan is for the program to have fully qualified staff in order to

provide high quality services.

COMPLIANCE AND TRANSITION

Federal Laws and Regulations for Transition/Community Partnerships

1302.53(a)(1)

Does the Program collaborate with receiving schools to support smooth transitions for children and families? Explain.

The HCHSP has written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with nine (9) Independent School Districts. This MOU is a written collaboration agreement that will provide educational services to all the children enrolled in the Head Start Program. The children are dual enrolled with Head Start and the Independent School District and take part and experience lunch in campus cafeterias during the campus tour. Campus Directors schedule parent meetings to notify parents of the transition process to kindergarten.

Does the Program incorporate strategies to support successful transitions to new learning environments? Explain.

Yes, the program incorporates support for a smooth transition to those children transitioning to kindergarten. The Program shares data with the school districts and provides transition activities that support a blended Head Start and Pre-K program collaboration. ISD certified teachers and Head Start teachers co-deliver and share the responsibility of the lesson plans. As a team both teachers will collaboratively make instructional decisions and share the responsibility of student outcomes.

Does the Program build community partnerships that facilitate access to resources that align with families' needs or family partnership goals? Explain.

All parents are encouraged and are given the opportunity to participate in monthly parent meetings at their campus where their child is enrolled. They are given information on community services through: Networking Meetings, Conferences, Community Resource Directory, Child Find Fairs

(Children with disabilities) and Parent Workshops.

Does the Program use data driven strategies to evaluate and obtain new community partnerships as family and community needs shift? Explain.

Selection criteria are based on data from the community needs assessment. The assessment is based on the geographical areas of poverty in Hidalgo County. Enrollment is based on the greater needs of the families that apply for Head Start services. The Program is guided through the Income Priority Guidelines that are provided by the Office of Head Start on a yearly basis. Families must meet eligibility criteria to qualify for enrollment and services with the Head Start Program. The target areas for recruitment are based on the self-assessment information collected. Families with the greater need of services are from those populated areas identified as poverty areas.

Does the Program participate in community partnerships that support increasing the quality of local or state early care and education systems? Explain.

The Hidalgo County HeadStart Program participates in partnerships with local community agencies that collaborate with local school districts, Region One, and Easter Seals. A meeting with parents is conducted in person to explain all the different services that HCHSP offers to the children to include children with disabilities.

Does the Program collaborate with local early intervention and special education services to support enrollment? Explain.

The program will coordinate and collaborate with Region One, Easter seals, and (ECI) Early Childhood Intervention Agencies on children who are being referred to the Head Start Program. The program will conduct face to face meetings with the parents at the local districts or through a home visit. The program will ensure appropriate placement of children enrolled with developmental delays and provide them with the steps necessary to participate and enroll in the Head Start Program. The HeadStart Program will provide Staff to assist the parents in completing

the application process as needed and provide disability assistance to help those children with disabilities in the classroom.

Identify areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds Performance Standards in your department.

- The program encourages fathers to be more involved in their children’s educational development. They are provided with a Father-Engagement Event Calendar that is aligned with activities that meet Community Engagement Framework. Having fathers involved helps in the learning development of their children and will build a stronger bond between fathers and their children. It will build a relationship with parents and staff that will create welcoming respectful, ongoing two-way communication between parents and staff.
 - Participating in taking children on field trips
 - Father Breakfast or Dad Lunch
 - Reading with their child.
 - Volunteering time at their child’s campus
 - Attending Fatherhood Wellness Conference
- One of the HCHSP strengths is community services and resources. The Program maintains collaboration between the Head Start staff, school district personnel and community agencies. The program will sponsor a networking meeting to encourage community cooperation and to provide resource links in our communities.
 - Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
 - Partnerships
 - Networking Meetings
- Parents will be notified of all documentation needed to enroll their child in the designated local education school (Agency).

- The campus director will secure paperwork for the transition field trip. A field trip is requested at least two weeks in advance.
- Children will visit the school cafeteria.
- Invite kinder teachers to participate with the children in some type of activity
- Parent meeting with district Administration staff to advise parents on the policies and procedures.
- Pre-Registration dates for the upcoming school year.
- Invite kindergarten teachers from surrounding schools to come and visit children in Head Start classrooms.

What are Critical Areas of concern your TEAM has identified?

- To identify the GED and ESL referral processes on GoEngage.
- Documentation of referrals on GoEncage
- To input referral and follow up documentation on GoEncage

What strategies have your TEAM identified to address concerns:

Where are we now?

- The referral and follow up process has been addressed with MIS
- The process to document referrals and follow up has been addressed with the campus director and FSW at each campus.

What is the plan for the future?

- Work with new and existing community agencies that can provide training and resources on adult education, immigration and employment to parents.

CONCLUSION

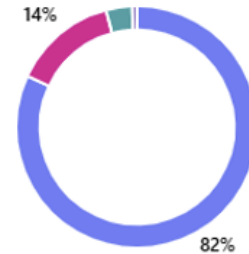
The Self-Assessment report offers a comprehensive reflection on the Program's performance, encapsulating the accomplishments, challenges faced, and the learning and growth that have occurred. This exercise not only showcases achievements but also sets the stage for identifying areas of improvement and strategizing future goals. By evaluating contributions and outcomes, this report serves a pivotal tool in professional development, ensuring continuous progress and effectiveness.

Incorporating learnings from the self-assessment into the report enriches its value, transforming it from a mere account of what has been done to a powerful tool for future growth. These learnings can include insights into strengths and weaknesses, a better understanding of the work and how it fits within a team, and the identification of specific areas where further skill development is needed. Additionally, reflecting on feedback received, both positive and constructive, and analyzing how it has been actioned, can provide a clear path for ongoing improvement.

EXHIBIT A

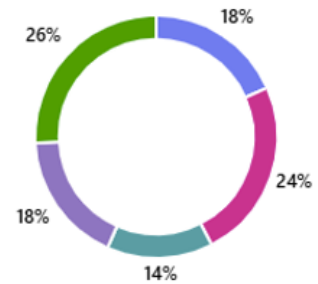
How would you rate the job Hidalgo County Head Start Program is doing in helping you and your child?
 ¿Cómo calificaría el trabajo que el Programa de Head Start del Condado de Hidalgo está haciendo para ayudar a usted y su hijo/a?

● Very Good/Muy Bien	494
● Good/Bien	84
● Can be Improved/Puede Mejorar	21
● Other	4



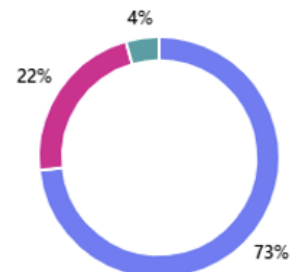
How will you be able to support parent engagement in Head Start? / ¿Cómo podrá apoyar la participación de los padres en Head Start? (choose all that apply / elija todo lo que corresponda).

● I will participate in center committee activities./ Participaré en las actividades del comité del centro	231
● I will assist in the classroom when needed./ Ayudaré en el aula cuando sea necesario	302
● I will participate in the parental curriculum "Abriendo Puertas". / Participaré en el currículo para padres...	178
● I will work with Head Start employees to develop and maintain my Family Partnership Agreement. / ...	221
● I will ask my Campus Director in what other ways I can become engaged in Head Start. / Le preguntaré...	324



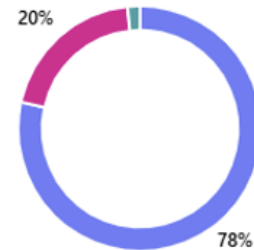
How would you rate the communication with your child's teacher? / ¿Cómo calificaría la comunicación con el maestro de su hijo/a?

● Very Good / Muy Bien	443
● Good / Bien	134
● Can be improved / Puede mejorar	27



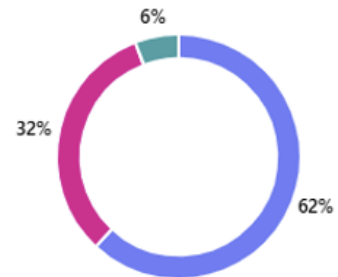
How well is Head Start preparing your child for public school? ¿Qué tan bien está Head Start preparando a su hijo/a para la escuela pública?

● Very Good / Muy Bien	474
● Good / Bien	120
● Can be improved / Puede mejorar	10



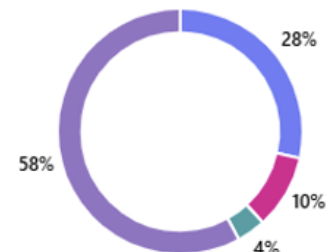
How would you rate the daily meals provided to your child? / ¿Cómo calificarías las comidas diarias que se le proporcionan a su hijo/a?

● Very Good / Muy Bien	374
● Good / Bien	195
● Can be improved / Puede mejorar	35



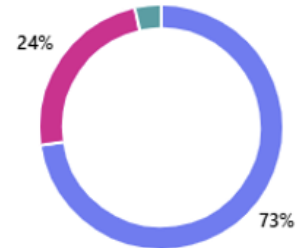
If your child has a disability, how would you rate the Special Services provided by Head Start? / Si su hijo/a tiene una discapacidad, ¿cómo calificaría los servicios especiales proporcionados por Head Start?

● Very Good / Muy Bien	172
● Good / Bien	59
● Can be improved / Puede mejorar	23
● Not Applicable/No Aplica	350



How would you rate Head Start's communication about your child's health status with you? ¿Cómo calificaría la comunicación de Head Start sobre el estado de salud de su hijo/a?

● Very Good / Muy Bien	439
● Good / Bien	144
● Can be improved / Puede mejorar	21



What is the best method of communication to inform you about Head Start activities? / ¿Cuál es el mejor método de comunicación para informarle sobre las actividades de Head Start? (choose all that apply / elija todo lo que corresponda)

● Telephone Call / Llamada Telefónica	438
● Text Message / Mensaje de Texto	467
● Email / correo electrónico	271
● Program's Newsletter / boletín del Programa	153
● Program's Website / Sitio Web del Programa	94

