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Partnering with IDEA Providers to Support Inclusion: Part 1

Viewer's Guide

This viewer's guide will help you capture your ideas as you engage with the webinar content. During this webinar, we will focus on the importance of collaborative relationships and how strong partnership agreements with IDEA partners can improve coordination and services for children with disabilities or suspected delays and their families. Helpful resources can be found in the Resources section of this guide.

Partnerships for Effective Inclusion



Strong, collaborative relationships are the foundation of high-quality inclusive services. Effective collaborations ensure children and families receive coordinated, seamless services that support full and effective participation.

As a disability services coordinator (DSC), you must become familiar with partnership-building essentials. This includes knowing who your partners are, strategies to form and maintain strong partnerships, and about the formal documents, sometimes called memorandums of understanding (MOU), that maintain effective partnerships.

Head Start and Early Head Start programs are required to establish an MOU with the local agencies that provide services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). An MOU is a document that guides how programs provide disabilities services to children and families. MOUs also help Head Start programs and IDEA agencies define areas of collaboration that will improve coordination and services.

The people responsible for creating and signing the MOU will vary from program to program, but DSCs have an important role in ensuring that each MOU supports the program's commitment to children with disabilities and their families. Remember that an MOU is not just a formal agreement, it is also an active dedication to building and maintaining a strong partnership with your IDEA partner agencies.



National Center on
Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning

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Collaboration & the Head Start Program Performance Standards



Head Start Program Performance Standards have specific requirements related to collaboration for the purposes of identification of children with disabilities or delays and service provision in inclusive environments, including:

- **Part 1302 Subpart F – Additional Services for Children with Disabilities**
 - **1302.60 Full participation in program services and activities.**
 - A program must ensure enrolled children with disabilities, including but not limited to those who are eligible for services under IDEA, and their families receive all applicable program services delivered in the least restrictive possible environment and that they fully participate in all program activities.
 - **1302.61 Additional services for children.**
 - (c) *Additional services for children with an IFSP or IEP.* To ensure the individual needs of children eligible for services under IDEA are met, a program must:
 - (1) Work closely with the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA, the family, and other service partners, as appropriate, to ensure:
 - (i) Services for a child with disabilities will be planned and delivered as required by their IFSP or IEP, as appropriate;
 - (ii) Children are working towards the goals in their IFSP or IEP;
 - (iii) Elements of the IFSP or IEP that the program cannot implement are implemented by other appropriate agencies, related service providers, and specialists;
 - (iv) IFSPs and IEPs are being reviewed and revised, as required by IDEA; and,
 - (v) Services are provided in a child’s regular Early Head Start or Head Start classroom or family childcare home to the greatest extent possible.
 - (2) Plan and implement the transition services described in subpart G of this part...
 - **1302.63 Coordination and collaboration with the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA.**
 - (a) A program must coordinate with the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA to identify children enrolled or who intend to enroll in a program that may be eligible for services under IDEA, including through the process described in §[1302.33](#)(a)(3) and through participation in the local agency Child Find efforts.
 - (b) A program must work to develop interagency agreements with the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA to improve service delivery to children eligible for services under IDEA, including the referral and evaluation process, service coordination, promotion of service provision in the least restrictive appropriate community-based setting

and reduction in dual enrollment which causes reduced time in a less restrictive setting, and transition services as children move from services provided under Part C of IDEA to services provided under Part B of IDEA and from preschool to kindergarten.

- (c) A program must participate in the development of the IFSP or IEP if requested by the child’s parents, and the implementation of the IFSP or IEP. At a minimum, the program must offer:
 - (1) To provide relevant information from its screenings, assessments, and observations to the team developing a child’s IFSP or IEP; and,
 - (2) To participate in meetings with the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA to develop or review an IEP or IFSP for a child being considered for Head Start enrollment, a currently enrolled child, or a child transitioning from a program.
- (d) A program must retain a copy of the IEP or IFSP for any child enrolled in Head Start for the time the child is in the program...

When Head Start programs have strong collaborative partnerships families receive consistent information, different providers can work together to share and build on one another’s expertise, and children receive coordinated, effective services.

Reflect: What is your role in supporting inclusion through collaboration with IDEA partner agencies? Who else in your program is involved? What is their role? Where might clarification be needed?

Characteristics of Effective Partnerships



Strong partnerships result in high quality services for children and families – but what makes an effective partnership? Characteristics of effective partnerships include:

- Communication occurs regularly, openly, honestly, and transparently
- Team has a shared purpose and clear goals that drive collaboration
- Clear governance structures that define partner roles and responsibilities have been established
- Team has established and adheres to a set of ground rules that guide the partnership and its work
- All partners are flexible, adopt an innovative mindset, and adapt to changing conditions and resources
- Partners cultivate teamwork, enabling the entire group to benefit from the partners' collective strengths and contributions
- Partners identify and resolve conflict swiftly and creatively resolve challenges

Team Building Strategies



Creating collaborative partnerships can be a challenge and takes time and effort. Effective teams intentionally engage in stages of partnership and make decisions and develop processes for how they will work together and communicate, including processes for decision making and conflict resolution.

Our partners at the National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations (PMFO) have developed some great resources for developing strong collaborative partnerships, including the [Foundations for Fostering Partnerships in Head Start and Early Head Start](#) guide. The guide lists key strategies for building collaborative teams, including:

- **Share a vision:** The team should determine a shared philosophy and mission and establish principles for action. These provide a solid foundation and focus for the partnership and can help with decision making and conflict resolution.

- **Communicate:** Partners should decide how and when to communicate, exchange information, and address emerging issues.
- **Work at it:** The team should determine its values, such as trust, communication, respect, and inclusion, which will guide how the group will work together. The team should also define success and what it looks like, document their progress, celebrate accomplishments, and apply what the partnership learns to future work.
- **Clarify expectations:** The team should begin by developing a common understanding of, and agreement with, partnership expectations. These expectations should be used to develop a detailed, written agreement with clear, measurable expectations, such as who does what, when, and how. The agreement should also list expected outcomes for all parties in the partnership.
- **Reach out:** Team members should network with, and learn from, colleagues who have experience with or specialization in similar partnerships. Don't be afraid to make the first step, reach out, knock on their door, introduce yourself and your team, invite them to visit your program, to your program's events (e.g., literacy day, etc.).

As you work to build your team, you can engage in intentional activities that will support and enhance your team's functioning. The SpecialQuest Multimedia Training Library has a series of interactive trainings on [teaming and collaboration](#). These resources include a variety of activities to support collaboration and team functioning, including information about elements of effective teaming, a self-assessment, and strategy guide for enhancing teamwork.

The [Session 6 strategy guide](#) includes self-assessments and support to create action plans to move teaming forward across several areas. See the examples below. How would you rate your team's collaboration from 1 — strong, clear, and intentional collaboration — to 5 — room for improvement in intentional teaming practices?

Team Mission and Goals		
1. Mission, vision, and goals are clear; understanding is shared by all team members.	1 2 3 4 5	Mission, vision, and goals are unclear, fluctuating, and conflicting.
2. Team is committed to the mission, vision, and goals.	1 2 3 4 5	Team displays lack of commitment to the mission, vision, and goals.
3. Priorities for action are established and realistic.	1 2 3 4 5	Team has too many priorities.
4. Team regularly reviews the mission, vision, and goals and updates action plans.	1 2 3 4 5	Team does little planning and goal setting.

Team Roles and Responsibilities		
1. Team roles and responsibilities are interrelated.	1 2 3 4 5	Team roles and responsibilities are unrelated.
2. Members are very clear about their roles.	1 2 3 4 5	Members are unclear about their roles.
3. Tasks are well organized.	1 2 3 4 5	Tasks are fragmented, not well organized.
4. Members coordinate their efforts.	1 2 3 4 5	Members do not coordinate their efforts.
5. Leadership is shared.	1 2 3 4 5	Leadership is held by one person.
6. Members are aware of others' skills.	1 2 3 4 5	Members are unaware of other's skills.
7. Members' abilities are used by the team.	1 2 3 4 5	Members' abilities are not used by the team.
8. Individual strengths are valued.	1 2 3 4 5	Individual strengths are not valued.

Communication and Interpersonal Relationships		
1. Our team communicates effectively.	1 2 3 4 5	Our team communicates ineffectively.
2. Feedback on individual work is effective and frequent.	1 2 3 4 5	Feedback on individual work is poor or non-existent.
3. Member's efforts are acknowledged.	1 2 3 4 5	Member's efforts are not acknowledged.
4. Members communicate openly.	1 2 3 4 5	Members are guarded when communicating.
5. Feelings are freely expressed.	1 2 3 4 5	Feelings cannot be freely expressed.
6. Members care about each other.	1 2 3 4 5	Members do not care about each other.
7. Members trust each other.	1 2 3 4 5	Members do not trust each other.

Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution		
1. The team uses an effective process for problem solving.	1 2 3 4 5	The team has no effective process for problem solving.
2. Decisions are made by the team.	1 2 3 4 5	Decisions are not made by the team.
3. Decisions are based on the best information.	1 2 3 4 5	Decisions are not based on the best information.
4. There is strong commitment to decisions within the team.	1 2 3 4 5	There is weak commitment to decisions within the team.
5. Conflicts are confronted appropriately within the team.	1 2 3 4 5	The team denies or avoids dealing with conflict.
6. There is harmony among members.	1 2 3 4 5	There is discord among members.

Reflection and Continuous Improvement		
1. Plans are fully implemented.	1 2 3 4 5	Plans are not implemented.
2. Spirits are usually high.	1 2 3 4 5	Spirits are usually low.
3. Our team works efficiently.	1 2 3 4 5	Our team works inefficiently.
4. Our team is meeting our goals.	1 2 3 4 5	Our team is not meeting our goals.
5. Team members are accountable for their commitments and plans.	1 2 3 4 5	Our team has no system of accountability.
6. Our team reflects on our progress toward action plans and goals.	1 2 3 4 5	Our team does not reflect on its progress.
7. Our team examines and evaluates the impacts of our team action plans and goals.	1 2 3 4 5	Our team does not evaluate the impact of our goals and action plans.

(From *SpecialQuest Multimedia Training Library, Collaboration and Teaming: Session 6, Handout 2*)

Reflect: What is your progress building collaborative relationships with your partners? What strategies have you tried? What might you try next?

What Should Be in a Partnership Agreement?



There is no standard format for a partnership agreement — each MOU is tailored for the specific characteristics and needs of the program, its partner agencies, and the community.

The MOU defines how the program and partner agency will work together implement requirement related to IDEA service provision. Common activities may include:

- Identify children who may qualify for services under IDEA, which could be through screening and evaluation process or with the local agency’s Child Find efforts
- Ensure effective, coordinated services for children who eligible under IDEA. This might include defining the referral and evaluation process, service coordination, service delivery in the least restrictive environment, and transition services
- Develop and review the IEP or IFSP, and plan for its implementation
- Ensure continuity of services as infants and toddlers move from Part C to Part B services for preschoolers, and as preschoolers move from Head Start to kindergarten

There are many processes and procedures that an MOU can outline to support effective partnerships, including:

- Joint use of screening results
- Coordination of evaluation timelines, sites, and schedules
- Parental consent for referral and for development of IEP or IFSP plans
- Coordination of joint meetings with families

- Provision of translation services for families
- Holding joint professional development efforts
- And different options for service delivery
- Provision of services by early intervention or LEA within the Head Start setting. (e.g., doing a home visit together if child enrolled in homebased; early intervention provider comes to Early Head Start classroom)
- Agencies supporting one another's planning/oversight (e.g., ways to support child/family recruitment)

The [Disabilities Services Coordinator Orientation Guide](#) has some great guidance for creating successful partnerships, including a whole section [on building an MOU!](#)

What's Next?



In this webinar, we explored some essential steps to building and maintaining partnerships that are critical to supporting disabilities services in Head Start programs.

Take a moment to reflect on your relationships with IDEA partners and the status of your partnership agreement. What did you learn in this webinar? What questions do you still have? What support do you need in your role facilitating effective disabilities services?

Reflect: Did you learn anything new about building relationships with IDEA partners during the webinar or from the resources shared?

Reflect: What questions do you have?

Reflect: What support do you need to facilitate effective inclusive service?

Helpful Resources

Online Resources

Collaborative Partnerships

Building Partnerships

- [Building Collaborative Relationships](#)
- [Disability Services Coordinator Orientation Guide: Building Partnerships](#)
- [Fostering Partnerships in Head Start and Early Head Start](#)

Teaming and Collaboration

- [Building Effective Teams](#)
- [Elements of Team Functioning](#)
- [Enhancing Team Functioning](#)

Communication and Problem Solving

- [Strategies for Effective Meetings, Decision-Making, and Conflict Resolution](#)

Partnership Agreements

- [Disability Services Coordinator Orientation Guide: Building an Interagency Memorandum of Understanding](#)
- [Developing Partnership Agreements](#)
- [Negotiating a Partnership Agreement: Wisdom from the Field](#)
- [Checklist for Developing a Partnership Agreement or Contract](#)

Online Communities

MyPeers: Head Start Disabilities-Inclusion Network

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/article/mypeers-collaborative-platform-early-care-education-community>

NEW FEDERAL COLLABORATION GUIDANCE

OSEP & OHS Guidance: Encouraging IDEA Collaboration Between State Agencies, Local Agencies, and Head Start Programs

- [Dear Colleague Letter on IDEA Services in Head Start](#)
- [Guidance on Creating an Effective Memorandum of Understanding to Support High-Quality Inclusive Early Childhood Systems](#)