

**2016-  
2017**

**Program Self-Assessment**

Head Start Program  
Northern Tier Community Action  
Corporation  
2016-2017

## **RESULTS OF NTCAC HEAD START SELF-ASSESSMENT & IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

**INTRODUCTION** - The annual Head Start Self-Assessment process involves the collection of information from a variety of sources to determine if systems and services currently in place are working effectively. The results of the Self-Assessment serve as a driving force in determining needs for program improvement in accordance with paragraphs 45 CFR 1304.51(i) and 1304.50(d)(1)(viii) of the Head Start Performance Standards.

**OVERVIEW** - The Office of Head Start *Guide to Self-Assessment*, questionnaires and surveys based on the guide content were used to complete this self-assessment. The targeted questions are indicative of basic program requirements, whereby collected responses assure that the area is being properly serviced or reflects that the area is deficient and requires improvement. Northern Tier Community Action Agency Head Start's goals are to not only meet, but exceed Program Performance Standards, moving toward continuous quality improvement aimed at program excellence in serving the children and families in our four-county area.

### **DATA COLLECTION TOOLS USED BY SELF - ASSESSMENT TEAM:**

- ❖ Self - Assessment Guide
- ❖ Interview Questions
- ❖ Data Collection Booklets
- ❖ Surveys

### **SOURCE DOCUMENTS:**

- ❖ Center files/Records
- ❖ Community Partnership Agreements
- ❖ USDA Records/Reports/Menus
- ❖ ChildPlus Reports
- ❖ Personnel Records
- ❖ Health Services Records
- ❖ Program Information Report
- ❖ Contracts
- ❖ Disabilities Records
- ❖ Policies & Procedures
- ❖ Fiscal Records & Audit
- ❖ Publications
- ❖ Meeting(s) Minutes
- ❖ Transition Plans
- ❖ Program Improvement Plan
- ❖ Service Area Plans
- ❖ Child Outcome Data

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT TEAM MEMBERS**

- ❖ Executive Director
- ❖ Program Consultants
- ❖ Board of Directors
- ❖ Parents
- ❖ Policy Council Members
- ❖ Staff
- ❖ Policy Council / Board Liaison
- ❖ Fiscal Manager & Fiscal Bookkeeper
- ❖ Policy Council Chairperson
- ❖ Management Team
- ❖ Policy Council Representative
- ❖ Director

**EXPECTED RESULTS** - Expected results include:

- ❖ Obtaining reliable information about our program planning, services, and systems
- ❖ Promoting an atmosphere of shared understanding of Head Start goals and objectives with governing bodies, program stakeholders, and community partners
- ❖ Effective Program Quality Improvement Plans based on a thorough analysis of program data
- ❖ Help in developing a meaningful Training and Technical Assistance Plan

**PREPARING OUR SELF-ASSESSMENT**

NTCAC uses the self -assessment process as an opportunity to provide cross-service area training to Head Start Management Team members. Head Start Management Team members provide leadership to each team. Methodologies such as interview, observation, and review guides, surveys, and checklists in a standardized process linked to compliance areas were used; raw data was collected by team leaders and organized. Head Start Management Team members analyzed the data; a final report is compiled from this information, which includes a summary of the results and makes determinations regarding opportunities for program quality improvement.

**SELF-ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES**

The objective of the Self-Assessment is for us to determine areas that require improvement and to enable us to better achieve our goal of providing the best possible service to children and families. Each service area is carefully examined and the outcome is analyzed. These findings, with any areas that need improvement, are incorporated into the T/TA Plan and Strategic Plan. A Quality Improvement Plan is developed to improve the areas identified. Although we continually seek ways to improve program service delivery and program design and management, the accountability of the self-assessment process allows for an unbiased view of program operations. In general, the findings were positive with several areas identified that could be improved. The following areas of strength and those recommended for improvement are as follows:

## **PROGRAM GOVERNANCE**

### **STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ Several Governing Board members have expertise in accounting, government, management, and well as business administration; six members are publicly elected officials or their designees, six are representatives of our client population, and six represent the private sector. There are no vacancies. A legal consultant and ECE consultant are included in the group's representation.
- ❖ The Board of Directors and the Policy Council are involved in all aspects of program planning, implementation, and oversight.
- ❖ A Policy Council / Board of Director's liaison has been assigned to act as a conduit between the governing bodies.
- ❖ Meeting minutes, governance training, and technical assistance is ongoing.
- ❖ Monthly financial statements, including credit card expenditures, attendance reports, CACFP reports, and programmatic information are provided monthly to the Board and Policy Council.
- ❖ Funding applications and amendments are reviewed and approved by the governing bodies.
- ❖ Board members are aware of the established procedures and criteria for recruiting, selecting, and enrolling children as verified in reports and meeting minutes.
- ❖ Governing bodies review and approve all major policies, major financial expenditures, annual operating budget, and monitors the agency's actions to correct any findings.

### **AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ A continuing need for increased parental involvement in Policy Council meetings and PCC (Policy Council Committee) meetings was noted.
- ❖ Board committee involvement could be better defined / integrated into the regular board meeting.

## **PLANNING**

### **STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ Enrollment procedures are in place; the program is fully enrolled; a waiting list is established.

- ❖ All (100%) of the centers have ‘male’ involvement activities.
- ❖ Staff has an opportunity once a week to meet as a learning team; management team meets twice weekly to review and plan.

#### **AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ Socialization activities may benefit from increased parental involvement and center/class integration.
- ❖ Parent trainings could be scheduled on a consistent basis at all centers.

### **COMMUNICATION**

#### **STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ Increased use of online communication, Facebook, and conference calling ease the burden of the vast geographic areas our program encompasses.
- ❖ A texting or email communication system was initiated to increase contact with staff and parents.
- ❖ Small, cluster trainings provide a more ‘intimate’ presentation to staff.
- ❖ Use of social media has increased by 27% during this past program year.

#### **AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ The texting/email communication system will be more fully integrated.
- ❖ Newsletters to parents could be more informational.

### **RECORD-KEEPING AND REPORTING**

#### **STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ GOLD and CHILDPLUS provide clear documentation and aggregate reports on various monitoring topics.
- ❖ Weekly management team meetings provide feedback for dealing with time-sensitive issues as well as increasing programmatic communication. Policy and operational changes in the program are addressed by the Director and Management Team. If changes are made, supervisors inform respective staff.

**AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ Reminders must be given to staff to enter data into the electronic databases on a timely basis.
- ❖ Staff calendars could be updated to include reminders for all service area requirements/deadlines.

**ONGOING MONITORING**

**STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ ChildPlus provides time-sensitive information that promotes monitoring of program activities.
- ❖ Weekly management meetings, staffing, and monthly center-based reports help to provide a strong foundation for ongoing monitoring.
- ❖ A comprehensive orientation for new staff is in place; exit interviews also monitor staff retention.

**AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ Data must be entered in a timely fashion by field staff.
- ❖ In-Kind data will be scrutinized for discrepancies monthly and reviewed by the fiscal bookkeeper.

**FISCAL MANAGEMENT**

**STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ Procedures are in place that are systemic to ensure integrity of agency credit cards, signing of checks, paying bills, monthly budget reviews and appropriate record keeping, as well as board approvals; there is sufficient evidence of systematic reporting.
- ❖ Records indicate the agency maintains appropriate insurance coverages.
- ❖ There is sufficient evidence and documentation of procurement policies and procedures.
- ❖ Contractual agreements of goods, services and payments are documented.
- ❖ There is sufficient evidence and documentation that compensation regulations are followed thoroughly, and the program follows wage comparable guidelines.
- ❖ There is sufficient evidence the program meets and has exceeded Non-federal share requirements.
- ❖ There is sufficient evidence and documentation that systems are in place to monitor direct and indirect costs, allowable and allocable costs.

- ❖ Appropriate inventory of equipment and materials is documented.

### **AREA OF IMPROVEMENT**

- ❖ Cross-training in the fiscal and HR areas would be beneficial to the agency.
- ❖ Soft-Time, absence tracking system, should be evaluated for exactitude and appropriateness.

## **PREVENTION & EARLY INTERVENTION**

### **STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ Nutritional services strive to meet the needs of the children.
- ❖ USDA guidelines are followed and menus are reviewed by a registered dietitian.
- ❖ Parents are educated in ways to maintain family health and safety, by attending trainings and workshops, and through educational materials distributed through the management office.
- ❖ The mobile dentist program has expanded substantially to meet the needs of the four counties.
- ❖ Collaborative efforts with IU9 continue to be an ongoing source of support.

### **AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ Data entry by field staff needs to be done on a timely basis.
- ❖ The time-frame to receive TSS services is lengthy.

## **TRACKING & FOLLOW-UP**

### **STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ Child Plus database system is used; an independent audit is completed for the Child Outcomes.
- ❖ Staff working as a team to help the families is a definite strength.
- ❖ A registered nurse reviews all health records and meets on a regular basis with the Director and Health and Nutrition Specialist to review policies, procedures, child health records, and miscellaneous areas of concern in a constant attempt to improve performance in this area.
- ❖ The GOLD system allows the Education Specialist the ability to generate individual classroom and program child outcome reports on a regular basis.

### **AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ Monitoring and reporting processes should gradually move to ‘paperless’ by utilizing scanners and the ChildPlus database.
- ❖ Staff trainings to update and develop a process for timely data implementation could be initiated.
- ❖ Time frame for receiving services when there are challenging behaviors or developmental delays is slow.

### **INDIVIDUALIZATION**

#### **STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ Teaching Strategies GOLD allows teachers to individualize their lesson plans and activities.
- ❖ Health files are reviewed and follow- up is completed by the nurse and health/nutrition specialist.
- ❖ Parents observe improved speech and communication after their child attends Head Start.
- ❖ Ongoing communication between teachers and families helps to develop goals.
- ❖ Using screening information as a form of assessment and goal planning is valuable.
- ❖ Excellent collaboration with outside agencies is an asset.
- ❖ Lesson plans and curriculum guides provide activities based on ability level.

### **AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ More support for children with challenging behaviors, especially if the child does not qualify for early intervention or a TSS; additional training in effectively dealing with challenging behaviors should be integrated.

### **DISABILITIES SERVICES**

#### **STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ The program consistently serves over 10% of children with diagnosed disabilities.
- ❖ Services are provided through a close working collaboration with the Seneca Highland Intermediate Unit #9. Head Start and the IU collaborate on issues dealing with children’s challenging behaviors and social-emotional delays.



- ❖ The I.U. considers our staff's input valuable, and the Guidance Center has been more cooperative and communicative.

**AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ Monitoring and reporting need to occur on a regular and consistent basis.
- ❖ IEP's could be scanned to Child Plus so they are input on a timely basis to share with staff.
- ❖ Regular follow-up on all referrals to determine status needs to occur monthly.

**CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT**

**STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ The *Handwriting without Tears*, *Creative Curriculum & Teaching Strategies GOLD* are fully integrated and utilized to plan developmentally appropriate activities.
- ❖ Our curriculum resources individualize.
- ❖ The literary component has drastically improved; i.e. charts, environmental print, labels, lending library, and using books to extend activities.
- ❖ Technology is present in every classroom.
- ❖ Parent involvement is strong when developing children's goals.

**AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ Provide staff training on GOLD Plus to utilize the system more effectively.
- ❖ Having quick access to translation services when we have an ESL child would be helpful.
- ❖ Individualized homework or supportive activity packets should be integrated across the board.

**FAMILY PARTNERSHIP BUILDING**

**STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports) was fully implemented this program year.
- ❖ Parents stated that they are included as 'part of the day'; they were impressed with the social skills that their child is learning, and they appreciate the 'open door' policy.

- ❖ All files viewed contained evidence of family goals from a strength-based perspective.
- ❖ Timetables and strategies for achieving family goals were noted as a positive point.
- ❖ Volunteer training program is successful and well received.

**AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ Continue to work closely and collaborate with community and resource providers.
- ❖ Parent meetings should be scheduled more consistently and develop purposeful meeting(s).
- ❖ Decrease size of the classroom for more individualized opportunities.
- ❖ Use of ‘remind’/text system for parents to know about events.

**PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

**STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports) was fully implemented this program year.
- ❖ One hundred percent (100%) the center-based sites promoted male involvement activities.

**AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ Parental involvement could increase at the centers, socializations, and at Policy Council meetings.
- ❖ Increasing parent trainings at the center level may encourage additional involvement opportunities.

**COMMUNITY AND CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIPS**

**STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ Management Team/staff participates on many collaborative and early learning teams.
- ❖ There is evidence this program has on-going, collaborative, relationships with health care providers, mental health providers, nutritional service providers, providers of services to children with disabilities, child protective services, local elementary schools, and organizations and businesses that provide support and resources to mothers, fathers, and families and provide referrals to our program, and provide resource guides for parents.
- ❖ There are procedures in place to facilitate transitions from Head Start to elementary school.

- ❖ The local elementary schools have positive relationships with our Head Start program and work together to support children with disabilities.
- ❖ Transition advisory committees are established and maintained to help the program respond to family and community needs. Strong transition practices are in place with the local school districts.
- ❖ Families have the opportunity to serve on various committees in conjunction with Policy Council *and within the program in general.*

**AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ Consistently work to strengthen relationships with all community resource providers, as well as to act as a conduit for referrals.
- ❖ Other community agencies could be invited to social service meetings for information networking.

**ELIGIBILITY, RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE**

**STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ Parents commented on the ease of the application process.
- ❖ Referrals from other agencies continue to increase.
- ❖ Reports can be run on a regular basis to check attendance using Child Plus.

**AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ Advertising and PR should increase through various usage and channels.
- ❖ Field trips and usage of community resources could be better incorporated into the curriculum.

**FACILITIES, MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT & TRANSPORTATION**

**STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ Quotes are in progress for general maintenance needs.
- ❖ ATA is an excellent transportation resource.
- ❖ New busses have been added by transportation service.
- ❖ Detailed clearances and background checks are done on the drivers, and bus drivers and monitors receive annual training.

- ❖ Increased outdoor gross motor areas have been added during this program year.
- ❖ Bus drivers (ATA) and bus monitors receive training annually.

**AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ Transportation area is limited and cost of bussing fluctuates.
- ❖ Some landlords are difficult to work with when completing projects.
- ❖ It is necessary to constantly be aware of central facilities and locations that would best meet the needs of the children and families we serve.

**USING CHILD OUTCOMES IN PROGRAM SELF-ASSESSMENT**

**STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ A system for consistent tracking and monitoring of outcomes is in place.
- ❖ Reports on GOLD to review data as well as setting for goals for children is a strength of the program.

**AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ Communicating outcome data to our teaching staff in a clear way so that they understand the importance of outcomes and how they can use it to assess their own teaching skills.

**MENTAL HEALTH**

**STRENGTHS:**

- ❖ A Mental Health Consultant is available at all centers to observe, consult with parents/staff, and to assist parents in connecting to services.
- ❖ The I.U. 9 is a collaborative partner in supporting children and families.
- ❖ Implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Solutions in the classroom and through Parent Training Modules instills social skills such as caring, sharing, gentle touches, kind words, calm bodies, taking turns, being responsible etc.

**AREA OF IMPROVEMENT:**

- ❖ Staff needs information/training on Mental Health services.
- ❖ Finding ways to better utilize mental health consultant in a more timely fashion.

## CHALLENGES

Transportation costs and access to health, dental, and medical providers due to the rural locations of our Head Start Centers will continue to be problematic. The absolute need to be centrally located is a priority. Staff retention due to larger class sizes, wages, and excessive work load pushes us to strive continuously to seek innovative ways to streamline processes and retain staff on overly stressed budgets. Although we have always maintained full enrollment, we face challenges due to location and competition with local school system Pre-K programs.

**PREVIOUS CQI GOALS** - There are several *Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)* Goals that were not totally completed during 2017-2018 and will remain integrated into the time frame include:

- ❖ **Program CQI Goal:** Further develop opportunities for increasing parent involvement
- ❖ **Program CQI Goal:** Continually implement a strong professional development program for staff
- ❖ **Program CQI Goal:** Institute a paperless system whereby documents are scanned in 'real' time
- ❖ **Program CQI Goal:** Search for facilities/locations that best meet the needs of those we serve

## **PROGRAM STRENGTHS/ASSETS**

- ❖ Staff dedication to exceed mandated Head Start and state requirements
- ❖ Individual and strong, personal relationships with each family are integral to our program
- ❖ Collaboration with the Intermediate Unit is an asset to our program
- ❖ Management's commitment to support the Head Start Program

**OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

<b>Recommendations / GOALS to support Program Improvement</b>	<b>Corrective Action Plan</b>	<b>Person(s) Responsible</b>	<b>Completion Target Date</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>MONITORING</b> Increase use of technology to monitor health events in 'real' time	Health documentation will be entered and monitored on a regular basis	Management Team, Nurse Consultant, FSW's, HV's, teaching staff	Begin integration September 2017	
<b>HUMAN RESOURCES</b> Obtain professional development for staff in noted areas and evaluate currently used HR systems	Schedule staff trainings in GOLD	Management Team, Staff, Trainer	August-October 2017	
	Evaluate employee absence time tracking system for accurateness, reliability, and cost effectiveness	Fiscal Manager, Director, Management Team	Summer of 2017	
<b>PARENT INVOLVEMENT &amp; INDIVIDUALIZATION</b> Increase involvement and individualization in all aspects of the program	Integrate socialization with the center-based classroom & to implement the socialization model	Teaching Staff, Management Team, Parents, Home Visitors	September 2017	
	Increase the number of families that participate in individualized home/family activities.	Teaching Staff, Management Team, Parents, Home Visitors, FSW's	September 2017	
<b>FISCAL</b> Provide professional development opportunities to streamline and equalize fiscal responsibilities	Cross train fiscal / HR staff	Fiscal Staff	Jan-17	
	Update fiscal staff with professional development opportunities to help streamline processes, especially In-Kind monitoring	Management Team, Bookkeeper, Field Staff	Begin implementation in April 2017	
<b>COMMUNICATION</b> Ensure clear, respectful, appropriate and timely communication within the Head Start program and the larger community.	Link the webpage to a 'Pre-Application/Interest Form' for expediency and tracking purposes	Management Team & IT	May-June 2017	
	Encourage increased PR, collaboration and referrals/networking	Staff, management, and community partners	August 2017	
	Encourage increased usage of electronic media, texting/email system with staff and parents	Management Team, Teaching Staff, Parents, FSW's	Fall 2017	