

A Guide for the New Early Head Start and Head Start Director



**Gail Elleby, Management Specialist,
Robin Gadsden-Dupree, Family/Community Partnerships Specialist,
Michael Gramling, Human Development Specialist,
and Colleen B. Mendel, Executive Director, T/TAS
with
Dennis Angle, Resource Specialist**

A Publication of
Training & Technical Assistance Services
Western Kentucky University Research Foundation

Table of Contents

What is the Purpose of “A Guide for the New Early Head Start and Head Start Director?”	5
On Becoming a New Head Start/Early Head Start Director.....	7
Head Start Director - Your Relationships	7
Taking Care of YOU!	12
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ’s)	13
Your Professional Development Plan	14
Leading in the Program	15
Planning, Assessment and Evaluation	17
Managing the Program	19
Human Resources within the Program	21
Staff Development	23
Shared Decision Making	25
Partnering	27
Individual Professional Development Goals	28
Some Tips	31
Learning Opportunities	31
Positive Approaches to Supervision	32
Supervision: The Limits of Power	32
Dealing with the Marginal Employee	44
Providing Effective Feedback	50
Management	52
Questions You Need to Ask	55
Leadership	57
What is Leadership?	57
What Are the Qualities of Effective Leaders?	58
Leadership Myths	59
The Basic Habit Patterns of a Leader	60
Ten Commitments of Leadership	61
Resources	62
A Head Start Dictionary	65
References	76

What is the Purpose of “A Guide for the New Early Head Start and Head Start Director?”

Head Start and Early Head Start Directors today have many of the same responsibilities as the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Chief Operating Officers (COOs) of major corporations, businesses, and educational institutions. But Head Start and Early Head Start Directors also have fewer resources that directly relate to their unique roles as leaders, supervisors and managers.

A Guide for the New Early Head Start and Head Start Director was developed at Training & Technical Assistance Services by experts with extensive experience in Head Start and Early Head Start management. The guide was developed with you, the Director, in mind. One key to success in your position is to develop good, working relationships early in your tenure. If not, valuable time may be spent backtracking and re-evaluating “what went wrong.”

The authors have also included a section on resource materials, and two sections end with *Frequently Asked Questions* or *Questions That You Need to Ask* that are based on collective interactions with Head Start and Early Head Start Directors over many years.

On Becoming a New Head Start/Early Head Start Director

Head Start Director - Your Relationships

One of the key ingredients to being a successful director is the development of good, working relationships. As the sage once said, “Every success you have will be directly attributed to a relationship you have or had with someone.” When we hear that statement, it sounds very simplistic; however, reflection may convince you that this statement really is true! The ability to form positive, on-going relationships always has been an important basis for success.

The bigger question is how do we have a successful relationship with people we have to lead when they don’t want to be led? How do we have a successful relationship with people we may not really like, or with people we hardly know? As you might imagine, this guide is not therapeutic in nature, but is a tool that we hope you will use as you begin your journey into the world of a Head Start and/or Early Head Start Director. This journey will be filled with challenges and triumphs as you develop more and deeper relationships with your staff and colleagues.

A. The Governing Body

Let’s start thinking like a Director. First, you should explore your relationship with the Governing Body, the group which has legal and fiscal responsibility for the organization and the body that agreed to administer the Head Start/Early Head Start grant. Governing Bodies vary in size, composition, and level of program involvement. The Governing Body may be the group you communicate with monthly, or annually, or even weekly, depending on its structure. The Governing Body can be a Community Action Agency board of directors; school board; board of regents of a college or university; board of directors of a civic or community organization; board of trustees of a faith-based organization, city council, or county commission; or tribal council.



In many settings, your role will be overall responsibility of the Head Start/ Early Head Start Program, and your superior will report directly to the Governing Body. In cases like this, your involvement with the Governing Body might be filtered through someone else, and you generally have indirect access to the Governing Body. In other cases, you may be required to present pertinent issues directly to the Governing Body relative to the Head Start/ Early Head Start Program and interface personally with that group’s members.

Whatever role you play, realize that you want a positive, professional working relationship with the Governing Body. One of your important roles is to help the Governing Body understand that they DO have a role in the governance of the Head Start/Early Head Start Program. The Governing Body engages in shared decision-making along with the Policy Council; therefore, you want them to be well-informed. According to 1304. 50(b)(1) of the Head Start Program Performance Standards,

the Governing Body proposes the size of policy groups and the procedures for election/selection of parents and community representatives. The proposals must be approved by the Policy Council to ensure agreement of both groups.

If there is an opportunity for you to address the Governing Body directly, take it! You should feel comfortable working and talking with the Governing Body, because they have legal and fiscal responsibility for the program. Some required items that the Governing Body should have in place are:

- ✓ Written policies and procedures that define their roles and responsibilities, and that inform them of the management procedures and functions necessary to implement a high quality program. (Head Start Performance Standards 1304.50(g)(1).
- ✓ Appropriate internal controls to safeguard Federal funds (Head Start Performance Standards 1304.50(g)(2).
- ✓ Internal dispute resolution procedures must be developed jointly with the Policy Council (Head Start Performance Standards 1304.50(h).
- ✓ Procedures for resolving community complaints about the program developed by the Policy Council and Governing Body (Head Start Performance Standards 1304.50(d)(2)(v).

B. The Policy Council/Committee

The work you do with the policy-making groups, and the relationship you develop with them, will prove to be the single most important task in your role as Director. This relationship is essential to your job, and can enrich your vision and direction for the program for years to come. The relationship with the policy-making group should be trusting, respectful, open, and with clear lines of authority and communication. The policy-making group should never supervise staff. Likewise, the Director should never dominate or allow other staff to take over the policy-making group meetings.

The program governance policy-making groups often have been the most misunderstood component in shared decision-making. Since its inception in 1965 as part of the Lyndon Johnson administration's "War on Poverty", Head Start has always included both parents and the community in decision-making (Head Start: The Inside Story of America's Most Successful Education Experiment, Edward F. Zigler and Susan Muenchow, 1994). A basic Head Start belief is that parents, community members and program staff all have important roles in shaping the program services. The best way to develop a positive professional relationship with the policy-making group is to read about Head Start, and to learn as much as possible about its "culture." You can observe, ask questions, read Head Start histories and engage in discussions with Head Start/Early Head Start staff and families. The Head Start culture dictates that we start wherever people are, and that we celebrate strengths in all families. You should begin by asking yourself this question: "Is the Head Start/Early Head Start culture consistent with my professional and personal values and beliefs?" To do this work well, you must believe in it!

