



Shared Decision Making

Collaborating for Excellence

Federal regulations require shared decision making practices in organizations that host Head Start and Early Head Start programs to ensure the voices of parents are represented in decisions and to improve the quality of programs. This document will explain how shared decision making is the basis for the shared governance practiced at Bauer Family Resources.

Bauer Family Resources
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Introduction

Shared decision making is a basic premise of the Head Start program that dates back to its founding in 1965. The goal of shared decision making is to make sure that parents of the children enrolled in the program can participate in policy making and other decisions that impact the program at the local level. This opportunity is supported by a formal structure of shared governance between the Board of Directors of Bauer Family Resources and the Bauer Head Start Policy Council. This structure is guided in part by Performance Standards established by the Federal government and in part by the decisions made by the two groups at the local level. This document will lay out the building blocks for shared decision making and governance at Bauer Family Resources.

Guidance from the Performance Standards

The Head Start Performance Standards are more than 200 pages of laws and rules regarding the operation of Head Start, Early Head Start and Pregnant Women programs. Authorized by the Federal government, the Performance Standards establish what have been identified as the best practices for ensuring high quality programs and services that meet the needs of the local community.

“Grantee...agencies must establish and maintain a formal structure of shared governance through which parents can participate in policy making and in other decisions about the program.”

Performance Standard 1304.50(a) (1)

There are specific performance standards related to how parent voices are to be encouraged and incorporated into planning, as well as how the community is to have input into the program as well.

Performance standards also guide how the Board of Directors, which has legal responsibility for the entire Bauer Family Resources organization, will work in partnership with the Head Start Policy Council.

The Performance Standards define the required groups that participate in the shared governance structure. This means that each Head Start Program must have these groups actively functioning to be able to ensure compliance with the regulations and the best possible program for the children and families that we serve. Regular participation in these groups is essential to our success.

Parent Committees

Parent Committees are the backbone of the shared governance model outlined in the Head Start Performance Standards. A required group, Parent Committees are created at the center level (Performance Standard 1304.501(a) (1) (iii). For Bauer Family Resources this means there are Parent Committees at all locations where Head Start and/or Early Head Start classrooms are operated. A Parent Committee also has been created for those families served in our home-based programs.

Parent Committees must be made up exclusively of the parents of children currently enrolled at the center. All parents are considered members of the committees automatically, based solely on the fact their child is enrolled in a Head Start Program. The Performance Standards (1304.50(e)(1-3)) identify clear responsibilities for the Parent Committees:

- Advise staff in developing and implementing local program policies, activities and services
 - *This is accomplished by soliciting feedback from parents at meeting, as well as by conducting surveys and interest/needs assessments*
- Plan, conduct and participate in informal as well as formal programs and activities for parents and staff
 - *Bauer hosts monthly parent events based on the interest/needs surveys completed by parents and the areas required by the Head Start Performance Standards*
- Within the guidelines established by the governing body (Board of Directors) and Policy Council participate in the recruitment and screening of Early Head Start and Head Start employees
 - *Parents are invited to participate in interviews as well as to assist with reference checks for potential candidates*

In December 2011 the Head Start Policy Council voted to begin calling Bauer's Parent Committees Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO). Members of the Council believed that the title Parent Committees made parents feel as if they had to be invited or elected to participate in the group. They also discussed that PTO is language that parents will hear in the public school system and may help to link parents to that resource when their child moves into kindergarten.

Policy Council

The Policy Council is made up of two groups of people – parents of children enrolled in the program and members of the community served by the Head Start program. To ensure that the voice of the parents is heard, membership on the Policy Council is required to be 51% parents and only 49% community members. This group works closely with program staff to meet its responsibilities.

The Head Start Performance Standards (1304.50(d) (1, 2)) provide clear direction on the responsibility of the Policy Council as the link between the Parent Committees (described above) and the Board of Directors of Bauer Family Resources. The Performance Standards outline these duties:

- Serve as link to the Parents Committees, the Bauer Board of Directors, public and private organizations and the communities they serve
- Assist Parent Committees in communicating with parents enrolled in all program options to ensure they understand their
 - Rights
 - Responsibilities
 - Opportunities
- Encourage the participation of parents in the program

- Assist Parent Committees in planning, coordinating and organizing program activities for parents with the assistance of staff
 - Ensure funds are set aside from the program budgets to support parent activities
- Assist in recruiting volunteer services from parents, community residents and community organizations
- Assist in the mobilization of community resources to meet identified needs of the program

In addition to these activities that support parent and community engagement in the program, the Policy Council also is an important link to the Board of Directors of Bauer Family Resources. The Head Start Act of 2007 requires the Policy Council to approve and submit to the Board of Directors decisions about each of the following activities:

- Activities to support the active involvement of parents in supporting program operations
 - Including policies to ensure that Bauer Family Resources is responsive to community and parent needs
- Program recruitment, selection and enrollment priorities
- Applications for funding and amendments to applications for funding for programs
 - Approval must be prior to the application being submitted
- Budget planning for program expenditures
 - Including policies for reimbursement and participation in Policy Council activities
- Bylaws for the operation of the Policy Council
- Program personnel policies and decisions regarding the employment of program staff
- Standards of conduct for program staff, contractors and volunteers
- Criteria for the employment and dismissal of program staff
- Developing procedures for how members of the Policy Council will be elected

Head Start Act 2007

In 2007 the Head Start Act was amended by the government, making several significant changes to the rules surrounding Head Start and Early Head Start programs. These changes include regulations regarding the qualifications of teachers and the staff who supervise them; the requirement to align Head Start's educational goals with the kindergarten readiness goals of local school systems; and moving to a competitive funding process for all programs.

The Act of 2007 also clarified and further defined expectations regarding shared governance and decision making. The Act specifically lists the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Directors and the Policy Council. It also identifies where the two groups are to work collaboratively to establish a system of governance that ensures program excellence; that voices of parents are heard; and compliance with the Performance Standards

Board of Directors

While the Policy Council is responsible for the programs that are operated as part of the Head Start grant, the Board of Directors has legal responsibility for the entire Bauer Family Resources organization. The Board of Directors is made up of community members with expertise that contribute to Bauer achieving its mission of “creating brighter tomorrows by strengthening children and families today.”

Head Start Performance Standards and the Head Start Act of 2007 also provide guidance regarding the responsibilities of the Board of Directors. These responsibilities include:

- Legal and financial responsibility for administering and overseeing the Head Start programs, including safeguarding of Federal funds
- Adopting practices that assure active, independent and informed governance of Bauer Family Resources
- Participate in the development, planning and evaluation of the Head Start programs
- Ensure compliance with Federal laws and applicable state and local laws

The Head Start Act of 2007 and the Performance Standards also outline some very specific responsibilities of the Board of Directors related to the Head Start program and the Policy Council. These responsibilities are:

- Establishing procedures and criteria for recruitment, selection and enrollment of children
- Reviewing all applications and amendments for funding for the Head Start program
- Establishing processes to make sure required information is shared with the Board of Directors and the Policy Council (see below for more details)
- Reviewing and approving all major policies of the agency – these include:
 - The annual self-assessment and corrective action plans
 - The financial audit
 - Personnel policies of the agency regarding the hiring, evaluation, termination and compensation of employees
- Developing procedures for how members of the Policy Council are selected
- Approving financial management, accounting and reporting policies
 - Approval of all major financial expenditures of the agency
 - Annual approval of the agency’s operating budget
 - Selection of an auditor (Board has an independent Audit Committee)
 - Monitoring of the agency’s actions to correct any audit findings
- Reviewing results of an Federal monitoring, including follow up activities
- Approving personnel policies and procedures
 - Including policies/procedures regarding the hiring, evaluation, pay and termination of the CEO, Early Care and Education Director, CFO, Human Resources Manager
- Establishing and amending written standards of conduct
- Establish advisory committees to oversee key responsibilities related to program governance and improvement of the Head Start Program

How do we do it?

A number of activities support Bauer's efforts towards shared decision making. The Board of Directors and Policy Council have created a **Governance Advisory Committee**. The responsibility of the Governance Advisory Committee is to work collaboratively to facilitate the shared governance model. The duties will include acting as a liaison between the Board of Directors and the Head Start Policy Council and drafting policies and procedures as required by the Performance Standards and Head Start Act for consideration by the Board and Council.

Members of the Governance Committee include two members of the Policy Council and two members of the Board of Directors. The Committee is supported by the Program Director and CEO.

Other steps that are taken to improve communication between the two groups includes, when possible, having a Board or Policy Council member serve as a liaison between the two groups. This allows for sharing of information between the two groups. Members of each group are able to attend either meeting at any time.

To make sure there is open communication between the two groups the minutes of the meetings are shared with one another. This allows members of each group to be aware of the work going on.

At least twice a year joint meetings are held between the Board of Directors and the Head Start Policy Council. These joint meetings are designed to provide the two groups with the opportunity to meet together and discuss their overlapping areas of responsibility.

Problem Resolution

As can be expected, shared governance responsibilities present the opportunity for disagreements and conflict between the two groups. Because not all issues are black and white in the law and Performance Standards, Bauer's Board of Directors and the Policy Council have adopted an Impasse Resolution Process that outlines the exact steps that will be taken to resolve conflicts between the two groups. This process is reviewed annually, usually at a joint meeting, to ensure that it is current and still the process the group wishes to use. The most recent Conflict Resolution Policy follows.

Impasse Policy

It is the goal and practice of the Bauer Family Resources' Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council and the Board of Directors to work together in the spirit of cooperation. In the event that there's an issue that cannot be resolved, the Impasse Policy will go into effect. Issues that would not be subject to the Impasse Policy because of their nature as program regulations or as a matter of law are:

Meetings of the Board of Directors are generally held at 4:30 p.m. on the 4th Thursday of every month at Bauer Community Center. These meetings are open to all who want to attend.

- In any employment related issue that would place the corporation in potential violation of any federal, state, or local law
- In any case in which the corporation, under the advice of legal counsel, would be subject to litigation based upon the ramifications of the decision rendered by the committee
- In any case that would place the corporation in violation of its non-profit status, charter, by-laws, or other such governmental document
- In any case in which the Head Start/Early Head Start Performance Standards or program guidelines may be violated by the decision.

If the Policy Council and the Board of Directors cannot reach a mutual agreement on an issue, one or both parties shall request, in writing, a final meeting of both groups to reach resolution. The issue(s) shall be clearly stated in the letter, and the meeting is to be held within ten working days from the receipt of the letter. The meeting will be facilitated by a person from outside the agency who has been selected for that purpose by the Executive Director. He/she will be apprised of the situation, will set the agenda, will facilitate the meeting(s), and will prepare a final report for the Board and Council.

A joint meeting of the Policy Council and the Board of Directors will convene to discuss and resolve the issue(s). If an agreement is reached with the consent of the majority of each group, the conclusion shall be specified in writing and be signed by those attending the meeting. The resolution will be read and filed as a part of the next scheduled business meetings of the Policy Council and the Board of Directors.

If resolution of the issue(s) cannot be reached, there is an impasse, and mediation shall be used. Mediation is a process by which a neutral person guides disagreeing parties to a mutual solution. It is the responsibility of the Board of Directors to select a mediator, with Policy Council approval, and to notify the Head Start Region V Office of the impasse. If applicable, fees of the mediator will be paid equally by both groups.

The mediator will work with a special committee consisting of three Policy Council and three Board members – each appointed by their group. The mediator shall work with the six-member committee and will review the issue(s), review the options of the disagreeing parties, assist in identifying possible solutions and develop a resolution. If a resolution is agreed upon by all committee members, they will sign the resolution and take it to their group's regular monthly meeting. If a resolution cannot be reached, the mediator will select an arbitrator who will consider all venues and reach a final decision. The Community and Family Resource Center Board of Directors and the Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council must abide by the final decision of the arbitrator.

Concerning fiscal procedures, the Policy Council agrees to follow the fiscal procedures adopted by the Board of Directors. The Policy Council is involved in the development of the continuation grants and budget, is given regular fiscal reports, and is aware of the operations of the program according to the

grants. The Board of Directors is legally and financially responsible for the successful execution of the Head Start/ Early Head Start grants.

Additional Resources

For additional information regarding shared decision making and shared governance, visit the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center on line at www.eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov.