



# 2019-2020

## Self-Assessment

Approved by Board and Policy Council: 6/1/2020

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## Introduction

Annually, Head Start programs must conduct a Self-Assessment of their effectiveness and progress in meeting program goals and objectives and in implementing Federal Regulations. The Self-Assessment must measure the agency’s strengths and areas for growth, allowing for continuous improvement of the program to enhance impact for children, families, and communities.

## Tri-County Head Start

Tri-County Head Start (TCHS) began in 1972, and currently serves 908 children in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties, in Head Start (3-4 years old), GSRP/Head Start Blends (4-years old), and Early Head Start (prenatal-3-years old) programs. TCHS operates both center-based and home-based programing, in 20 centers and 44 classrooms. The organization is a single-purpose, 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Total Enrollment 908 Slots				
Head Start 704 Slots			Early Head Start 204 Slots	
GSRP/HS Blended Classrooms 87 slots	Head Start Center- Based 557 slots	Head Start Home-Based 60 slots	EHS Center-Based 72 slots	EHS Home-Based 132 slots

## Context for Self-Assessment

Tri-County Head Start was in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the 5-year grant cycle, from February 1, 2019 to January 31, 2020 and experienced significant growth during this time period. The Self-Assessment is conducted on the same timeline as the Fiscal Year and the Grant Year. During this time, the organization had an increase in staffing and grant funding to offer extended classroom hours for Head Start children, opened one new Early Head Start center, and established blending relationships with the state-funded Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) in Cass and Van Buren counties.

During the 2019-2020 fiscal year, a Self-Assessment plan was designed with the assistance of Training and Technical Assistance professionals, input from staff, and the input and approval of the governance team. This plan included ongoing implementation and has been approved by the governance team.

During the final stages of gathering data and reporting of the Self-Assessment, the country experienced an unprecedented pandemic, which resulted in the closure of facilities, a transition to providing services virtually, and a Stay at Home order that canceled the event that would have provided the last data collection, the full input of staff on solutions and recommendations. The recommendations provided in this report are from a meeting with smaller group of staff members, the board, policy council, and community members, that took place prior to the implementation of the stay at home order.

## Program and School Readiness 5-year Goals

*February 1, 2015-January 31, 2020*

Every five years, each program decides on broad goals and initial short-term objectives, annually reviewing and revising if necessary. The programs 5-year goals for the 2015-2020 grant cycle were as follows:

- Children will comprehend and use increasingly complex and varied vocabularies in their home language and English.
- Families will form connections with staff about the important role they play as it relates to the school readiness of their children.
- Families will participate in the school readiness of their child by assuring regular daily attendance in the classroom and home based.
- To assure funding is available to maintain qualified staff and to assure continuous maintenance and improvements of current facilities.
- To continue to strengthen partnerships and collaborate with community organizations in order to assure a strong foundation for success of the children and families we serve.

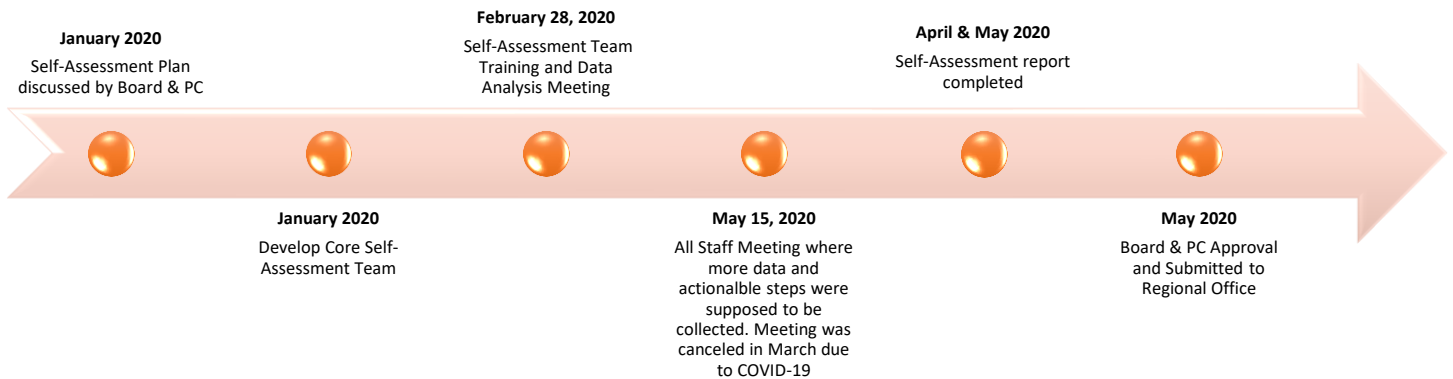
## Methodology

### Self-Assessment Design

The Self-Assessment process included the following steps:

- Pre-Assessment
  - The Directors team on a regular basis reviewed data as it related to the organizations program and school readiness goals, in addition to any other important agency date. In addition, the agency partnered with an evaluation organization, Acorn Evaluation. They conducted a Data Capacity Assessment, which is a two-month, exploratory project that provided an insight into the organizations overall Data Capacity.
- Process Design
  - The Self-Assessment process was designed during the 2018-2019 program year and was approved by the Board and Policy Council to continue its use.
  - Core team members were selected and invited to take part of the process. The team consisted of the CEO/Executive Director, the Directors team, Policy Council members, Board members, Community Partners, and a select team of staff members from each department.
- Engage the Team
  - The team met to learn about the Self-Assessment process and to analyze the data.
- Analyze and Dialogue
  - During a meeting, in groups, the team reviewed the data, and were given the opportunity to ask further questions. They then made comments on the strengths, opportunities, and developed actionable recommendations.
- Recommendations
  - From the broad list of possible actionable recommendations, major themes were developed to narrow the focus and to develop concise recommendations to focus on for the next fiscal year.

## Time Frame



## Tools

Data collection tools used in the Self-Assessment process include the following:

- **Monitoring Chart**
  - This chart was designed during the creation of the Self-Assessment plan and is a document completed on an ongoing basis by the Directors team that reports progress in each goal and department.
- **Parent Survey**
  - The Parent Survey was sent out in a Survey Monkey questionnaire in February and had 183 responses. An increase of 8.9% from the previous year.
- **Staff Survey**
  - The Staff Survey was sent out in a Survey Monkey questionnaire in February and had 203 responses. An increase of 59.8% from the previous year.
- **Acorn Evaluation – Data Capacity Assessment**
  - Beginning in Mid-October 2019 and ending January 2020, Acorn completed an exploratory project to examine TCHS’s overall data capacity.
- **Self-Assessment Team – Data Exploration**
  - During the February Self-Assessment meeting the data from the above tools was combined and analyzed, and recommendations were developed.

## Key Insights

The Self-Assessment process included examining data from key areas of the organization including program goals, the Data Capacity Assessment from Acorn Evaluation, the Staff and Parent and Family Survey, School Readiness goals, and community needs.

## Program Strengths

### Acorn Evaluation – Data Capacity Assessment

The Data Capacity Assessment focused on three main content areas, Leadership and Management Culture, Data Culture, and Infrastructure. These areas were evaluated and explored through interviews, surveys, and data exploration in our Child Plus system. Overall, the assessment revealed that we are on the right path and are in a place where the culture is

right to move forward with next steps. It was found that 96% of staff agreed that they could go to their manager if they felt they had questions about their responsibilities, and that decisions and policies and procedures were made based on input from field staff and other key stakeholders. Also perceptions around data has been shifting, it was found that staff recognize that historically, the program has been compliance-driven and feel there has been a shift in the past year, in which data is perceived and discussed as a more positive topic. These findings put the organization in a place to move into the next stages of our data exploration.

#### Staff Survey

Results from the Staff Survey were examined and compared to the previous year. Most questions remained the same to allow for comparability. It was observed that more staff members participated in the survey, even when taking into account the increase in staff members over the last year. Staff reported being satisfied with the direction of the agency, that there was a positive atmosphere, and they understand their impact on the community.

#### Parent and Family Survey

The results from the Parent and Family survey were also examined and compared to the previous year, as most questions remained the same to allow for comparability. Again, it was observed that more families completed the survey, also more families indicated that they enjoyed the Home-Based program over the previous year. It was also observed that most families feel that TCHS is preparing their children for Kindergarten, and more families were satisfied with bus staff than the previous year.

#### Closures and Cancellations

Staff attendance and program reliability are a focus for the program and part of the new 5-year goals. Now that changes have been made to paid time off policies that allow staff to take time off for illness or emergency without the fear of termination or retaliation, as a program we need staff and procedures in place to support staff who need time off while ensuring programming is not interrupted. This year was the first full year to have substitutes in place which did help and there were many classrooms that did not have any closures. Also having new buses, even with the unforeseen issues of their reliability, helped in ensuring bus routes were not canceled due to bus maintenance issues.

#### School Readiness

Tri-County Head Start is charged with creating Program and School Readiness Goals and evaluating those goals and the results to ensure that the children exiting the program are prepared to successfully enter a Kindergarten classroom. It was observed that our CLASS scores are consistently at or higher than the national average and we now have an Education Coach to assist and support those classrooms with lower scores. CLASS is an assessment system that the Office of Head Start uses to evaluate the interactions between teachers and children in every Head Start program. Head Start programs that have CLASS scores that fall below the national average could be required to compete for their next 5-year grant.

#### Community Needs

There were several observations from the community that TCHS is prepared and potentially able to assist with, including the COVID-19 crisis, and the discontinuation of the Maternal Infant Health Program (MIHP) in all three counties in the service area.

#### Areas for Improvement

During the assessment, the following areas were determined to be areas of improvement.

### Acorn Evaluation – Data Capacity Assessment

Following the Acorn Evaluation, it was determined that as an organization we needed to develop historical register to capture our Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) story. This will assist us in our CQI efforts and with upcoming Federal Monitoring processes. Now that Child Plus has been successfully implemented and a process developed for workflow, workflow plans and instruction manuals need to be developed, to ease and improve data training for staff.

### Staff Survey

To continuously improve and meet the organizations goals, we need to ensure that staff are of the highest quality, through training and education. In addition, TCHS needs to continue to look for ways to improve the wage scale and correct past inconsistencies, along with build a solid base of support staff, substitute classroom and bus staff to ensure continuity of services, especially considering the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Parent and Family Survey

To continue to gain trust and support in the community our services need to be of the highest quality and consistency. Finding highly qualified classroom and bus staff continue to be a hurdle to providing consistent services in all areas. However, once staff are recruited and hired, staff retention is very high.

### Closures and Cancelations

Because of the COVID-19 crisis, this will need to be a major focus in the upcoming year, due to the possibility of additional staff members who may need to be absent for an extended amount of time for illness. Strategies and procedures will be redefined and developed to address these anticipated absences to ensure reliability and continuity of care for all Head Start children and families.

### School Readiness

During the analysis it was observed that Classroom Organization is one of the Class domains that consistently is lower than the other domains, this is an area where we will increase training and support. It was also observed that we are lacking enough data to accurately compare Head Start alumni with non-Head Start children. The new Kindergarten Readiness Assessment should help to fill some of those gaps and give insight into what other small steps we can make towards higher-quality services.

### Community Needs

The Maternal Infant Health Program (MIHP) will no longer be available in all three counties. Previously our agency served four pregnant mothers per year but can serve more. Additionally, in all three counties there are few places that provide prenatal care and the percentage women receiving less than adequate prenatal care continues to be higher than the state average in all three counties.

### Goal and Objective Progress

This was the final year of the previous five-year goals that included 2015-2020.

**Program Goal: To ensure funding is available to maintain qualified staff and to assure continuous maintenance and improvements of current facilities.**

- **Short Term Objectives:**
  - Explore opportunities for additional funding such as other grant opportunities. Child Care Partnerships and GSRP funding.
    - Outcome:

- Has secured a Blend with GSRP classrooms in Cass County, and Van Buren counties that will continue into the 2020-2021 program year.
- Full Implementation of a revised employee handbook.
  - Outcome:
    - Completed in August 2018, revised annually based on newly implemented policies and procedures.
- Utilize a trainer to train policy council and board
  - Outcome:
    - Conducted in October 2018. Has continued to conduct governance group training with Board and Policy Council August, and monthly as new members are voted into office. This training will continue each August.

**Program Goal: Continue to strengthen partnerships and collaborations with community organizations in order to assure a strong foundation for success of the children and families we serve.**

• **Short Term Objectives:**

- Explore training opportunities for staff on being Trauma informed and the Opioid Crisis
  - Outcome:
    - Due to the Quality Improvement grant, TCHS will hire 4 full-time trauma-informed teachers who will be assigned to classrooms that need additional support.
- Partner with other community organizations for training opportunities
  - Outcome:
    - Continuing to partner with SMC to offer Associate level classes to staff

**School Readiness Goal: Children will comprehend and use increasingly complex and varied vocabularies in their home language and English**

• **Short Term Objectives:**

- Implement Learning Genie Family Engagement App.
  - Outcome:
    - Implemented but it was not a successful implementation

**School Readiness Goal: Families form connections with staff about the important role they play as it relates to the school readiness of their children**

• **Short Term Objectives:**

- Revise PLAY and Freddy Nights to better suit the needs of families
  - Outcome:
    - Revised the implementation of PLAY and Freddy Nights and more than doubled attendance from previous years
- Explore ways to increase participation at Parent Committee Meetings. Provide training to Policy Council members about hosting/promoting a Parent Committee Meeting
  - Outcome:
    - PC members have been trained on how to run a Parent Committee Meeting and meetings were happening in all centers.



**School Readiness Goal: Families participate in the school readiness of their child by assuring regular daily attendance in the classroom and homebased.**

- **Short Term Objectives:**
  - Implement a new attendance plan which will focus families on goals and reducing chronic absenteeism
    - Outcome:
      - A new, more intensive attendance plan was implemented. ADA was at 85.11% YTD, over LY of 82.91% at time of analysis.
  - Implement bus maintenance schedule to keep buses in good working order throughout the year.
    - Outcome:
      - Tracking bus maintenance, two new buses were purchased.
  - Implement new strategies in Home Visiting, including number of visits with multiple children and re-branding socialization
    - Outcome:
      - The GJK Socialization Curriculum has been implemented to help connect the Home Visitor to the group time.

## Recommendations and Improvement Plan

The following recommendations were developed once the analysis of the data was concluded. It was determined that these content areas and topics would make the most significant impact on TCHS.

1. Closures and Cancelations – with the Covid-19 crisis and the need to plan for potential extended staff absences due to quarantine situations, backup plans will be developed for each center, classroom, and home visitor on how to continue to deliver quality services and keep classrooms open if safe and possible.
2. School Readiness – with the uncertainty of lengths and delivery of school years, plans of small changes will be made and implemented to ensure the biggest impact can be made in a variety of service delivery methods.
3. Community Need – due to the elimination of the Maternal Infant Health Program, we will increase the number of prenatal moms that are served in our program by ensuring that Early Head Start Home Visitors are adequately trained in the prenatal curriculum.
4. Data Capacity – We will follow the recommendations from our Data Capacity Assessment and build our Continuous Quality Improvement Story and develop data workflow plans and manuals to aid in staff training.