

COMBINED 2015 AND 2016 VERMONT HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

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Vermont Head Start State
Collaboration Office (VHSSCO)



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Submitted by:
Ben Allen, Ph.D., Director
VHSSCO
Vermont Department for Children and
Families
Child Development Division
www.dcf.vermont.gov/cdd



 **VERMONT**
DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
CHILD DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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2015 and 2016 Vermont Head Start and Early Head Start Needs Assessment Report

Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office

Executive Summary

Under the Head Start Act, the Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office (VHSSCO) is required to conduct and update annually a needs assessment of Head Start grantees in the State of Vermont in the areas of coordination, collaboration and alignment of services, curricula, assessments, and standards used in Head Start grantees, such as aligning the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework* with the *Vermont Early Learning Standards* (VELS). The needs assessment report provides an overview of the VHSSCO; describes Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Vermont; outlines the needs assessment process; and presents the combined findings of 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 VHSSCO needs assessment web-surveys of Head Start and Early Head Start program directors covering six of eleven OHS Priorities for the HSSCOs: School Transitions, Professional Development, Early Childhood Systems, Services for Children with Disabilities, Child Care, and Welfare/Child Welfare. The report concludes by summarizing the findings, indicating that they informed the development of the Fifth-Year (2016-2017) Work Plan of the VHSSCO's Five-Year (2012-2017) Strategic Plan,¹ and describing the VHSSCO's plans to disseminate the report to strength collaboration with its partners.

The survey findings:

- Describe collaboration strengths and collaboration weaknesses,
- Track the progress made by the VHSSCO and its partners to achieve expected outcomes listed in the VHSSCO's Five-Year (2012-2017) Strategic Plan,
- Present the benefits and challenges of Head Start-Local Educational Agency (LEA) partnerships in which prekindergarten education is provided in public school settings (hereafter referred to as Head Start-School-Based Prekindergarten Education partnerships); and
- Depict the facility professional development needs of Head Start programs.

The report presents three sets of findings corresponding to different sets of questions posed in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 web-surveys. In its first set of findings, the VHSSCO found two

¹ On July 1, 2016, the VHSSCO submitted its Fifth-Year Work Plan to the federal Region I – Office of Head Start (OHS). The federal Region I – OHS approved it on August 24, 2016.

overall patterns of strengths and weaknesses regarding the six HSSCO Priorities. For five of six HSSCO Priorities, the VHSSCO found Collaboration Strengths for School Transitions, Services for Children with Disabilities, Early Childhood Systems, Child Care, and Welfare/Child Welfare, and Collaboration Weaknesses were found in one HSSCO Priority, Professional Development. The second set of findings show the progress made by the VHSSCO and its partners toward achieving six Outcomes in the Strategic Plan: School Transitions Expected Outcome 1.1, School Transitions Outcome 1.2, Child Care and Early Childhood Systems (CCECS) Outcomes 3.1 and 3.3, CCECS Expected Outcome 3.4, and Regional Office Priorities (ROP)/Children with Disabilities Expected Outcome 4.1.

Finally, the third set of web-survey findings concerned two HSSCO Priorities for HSSCOs:

- a) **School Transitions:** With regard to the Head Start-School-Based Prekindergarten Partnerships in the 2014-2015 Program Year, Head Start directors described several benefits of school-based prekindergarten education partnerships, including the cost effectiveness, the provision of high quality comprehensive services to Head Start-enrolled and non-Head Start-enrolled children, and easier access for parents with children already enrolled in public schools. On the other hand, Head Start directors presented several challenges for their Head Start programs partnering with LEAs to deliver pre prekindergarten education in public school settings including: implementation of Act 166 and Act 46, differing philosophies of education, teaching styles, and addressing challenging behaviors, and assuring that school districts do not terminate existing Head Start-LEA prekindergarten education partnerships within local elementary schools and supplant them with non-collaborative or siloed Act 166 or federal Preschool Development Expansion Grant programs. Meanwhile, majorities of Head Start directors reported needs to remodel/renovate existing facilities and build new facilities during the 2014-2015 program year.
- b) **Professional Development:** Head Start directors in their 2015-2016 web-survey responses listed their top three professional development needs, and the VHSSCO categorized them into these clusters of professional development training needs: social-emotional development for children, teacher licensure, socio-emotional development for teachers, and data and assessments.

The three sets of findings informed the VHSSCO's Fifth-Year Work Plan development. In addition, the VHSSCO will share the results of this report publicly and with stakeholders. Through this process, the collaboration, coordination, and alignment of services, curricula, standards, and/or assessments between Head Start grantees and their partners will be strengthened for the benefit of young children and their families in Vermont.

Acknowledgements

The combined 2015 and 2016 Vermont Head Start and Early Head Start Needs Assessment Report involved a number of individuals. The Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office thanks the Vermont Head Start Association members for its commitment to the annual needs assessment project and for posting the report online.

We also thank the Head Start program directors and their staff for completing the web survey, the primary data collection tool. A complete list of these programs is included in Appendix A. We also appreciate the support provided by the Child Development Division, Department for Children and Families, Agency of Human Services, State of Vermont.



Overview of Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office

The Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office (VHSSCO) is part of a network of state, territorial, and national offices. Each of the 50 States, District of Columbia and Puerto Rico has a Head Start-State Collaboration Office. The National Collaboration Offices are the Head Start State and National Collaboration Offices (HSSNCO), the American Indian/Alaskan Native Head Start Collaboration Office (AIANHSCO) and the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Collaboration Office (MSHSCO). Each of the State and national offices receive a federal Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO) grant from the Office of Head Start (OHS), Administration for Children in Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For a five-year project period: September 30, 2012-September 29, 2017, OHS committed to the State of Vermont to award an annual HSSCO grant "to facilitate collaboration among Head Start agencies, including Early Head Start agencies, and entities that carry out activities designed to benefit low income children from birth to school entry, and their families,"²

The VHSSCO facilitates collaboration among Head Start agencies and State and local partners by

- Assisting in building early childhood systems;
- Providing access to comprehensive services and support for all low-income children;
- Encouraging widespread collaboration between Head Start and other appropriate programs, services, and initiatives;
- Augmenting Head Start's capacity to be a partner in state initiatives on behalf of children and their families; and
- Facilitating the involvement of Head Start in state policies, plans, processes, and decisions that affect target populations and other low-income families. (Office of Head Start, 2016a, <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/states/collaboration/about.html>)

The VHSSCO works with the OHS in Washington, DC and the Regional OHS in Boston, Massachusetts.

During the 2014-2015 program year, the VHSSCO's work was guided by OHS' 2011 *Head Start State and National Collaboration Offices Framework*. The framework called upon the VHSSCO to address four goal areas in its five-year strategic plan: 1) School Transitions, 2) Professional

² Head Start Act Section 642B(a)(2)(A)

Development, 3) Child Care and Early Childhood Systems, and 4) Regional Office Priorities. The VHSSCO 2014-2015 needs assessment web-survey took into account the four goal areas and the progress made in addressing collaboration since 2012.

During the 2015-2016 program year, the VHSSCO's work was guided by OHS' *Head Start Collaboration Office Priorities 2015* (Office of Head Start, 2015a, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/states/collaboration/hssco-framework.html>). The six priorities include: 1) Partner with State child care systems emphasizing the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Initiatives, 2) Work with State efforts to collect data regarding early childhood programs and child outcomes, 3) Support the expansion and access of high quality, workforce, and career development weaknesses for staff, 4) Collaborate with State Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), 5) Work with State school systems to ensure continuity between Head Start and Kindergarten Entrance Assessment (KEA), and 6) Any additional regional priorities. OHS asked HSSCO directors to revise their five-year HSSCO strategic plans to take into account the new priorities. The VHSSCO's revised five-year (2012-2017) strategic plan retained the four goal areas and embedded content reflecting the six new priorities and retained content

The federal Region I – Office of Head Start (OHS) approved the VHSSCO's revised five-year (2012-2017) strategic plan on August 26, 2016. The VHSSCO 2015-2016 needs assessment web-survey took into account the new priorities and the progress made in addressing collaboration since 2012.

Under the Head Start Act, the Head Start State Collaboration Offices (HSSCOs) are required to update annually, a statewide needs assessment. This combined 2015 and 2016 assessment report covering the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 program years identifies the strengths and weaknesses regarding the ability of Head Start grantees to collaborate, coordinate and align services and programming of State and local entities and to align curricula and assessments used by Head Start grantees with the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, Ages Birth to Five* and the *Birth through Grade 3 Vermont Early Learning Standards* (VELS).³ The needs assessment results informed the development of the Fifth-Year (2016-2017) Work Plan of the VHSSCO Five-Year (2012-2017) Strategic Plan.

³ Head Start Act, Section 642B(a)(3)(C)(i). In June 2015, OHS published the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, Ages Birth to Five* replacing the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework*. On August 18, 2015, the Vermont State Board of Education adopted the *Birth through Grade 3 Vermont Early Learning Standards* replacing the *Vermont Early Learning Standards*.

Head Start and Early Head Start in Vermont

Introduction

The Head Start Program promotes the school readiness of children from low-income families, from three-year olds up to five-year-olds not age-eligible for kindergarten. School readiness supports growth in five domains:

- Language and literacy,
- Cognitive (e.g., math, science, etc.)
- Social and emotional functioning,
- Physical skills, and
- Approaches to learning.

To achieve this goal, Head Start provides a comprehensive range of education, child development, health, nutrition, and family support services to Head Start enrolled children and their families.

The Early Head Start Program provides early, continuous, intensive, and comprehensive child development and family support services to low-income infants and toddlers and their families, and pregnant women and their families. The Early Head Start Program goals are:

- Providing safe and developmentally enriching caregiving which promotes the physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of infants and toddlers, and prepares them for future growth and development;
- Supporting parents, both mothers and fathers, in their role as primary caregivers and teachers of their children, and families in meeting personal goals and achieving self-sufficiency across a wide variety of domains;
- Mobilizing communities to provide the resources and environment necessary to ensure a comprehensive, integrated array of services and support for families;

Ensuring the provision of high quality responsive services to family through the development of trained and caring staff (Office of Head Start, 2016b, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc>).

Launched nationally in 2015, the Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnerships Program is designed to bring together the best of Early Head Start and child care programs by layering Early Head Start, child care, and other funding streams to provide comprehensive and continuous services to low-income infants, toddlers, and their families. The EHS-CC Partnerships program enhances and supports early learning settings to provide full-day, full-year, seamless, and comprehensive services that meet the needs of low-income working families

and those in school; increase access to high-quality, full-day child care (including family child care); support the development of infants and toddlers through strong relationship-based experiences; and prepare them for the transition into Head Start and other preschool settings (Office of Head Start, 2015b, https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/im/2015/resour_ime_003.html).

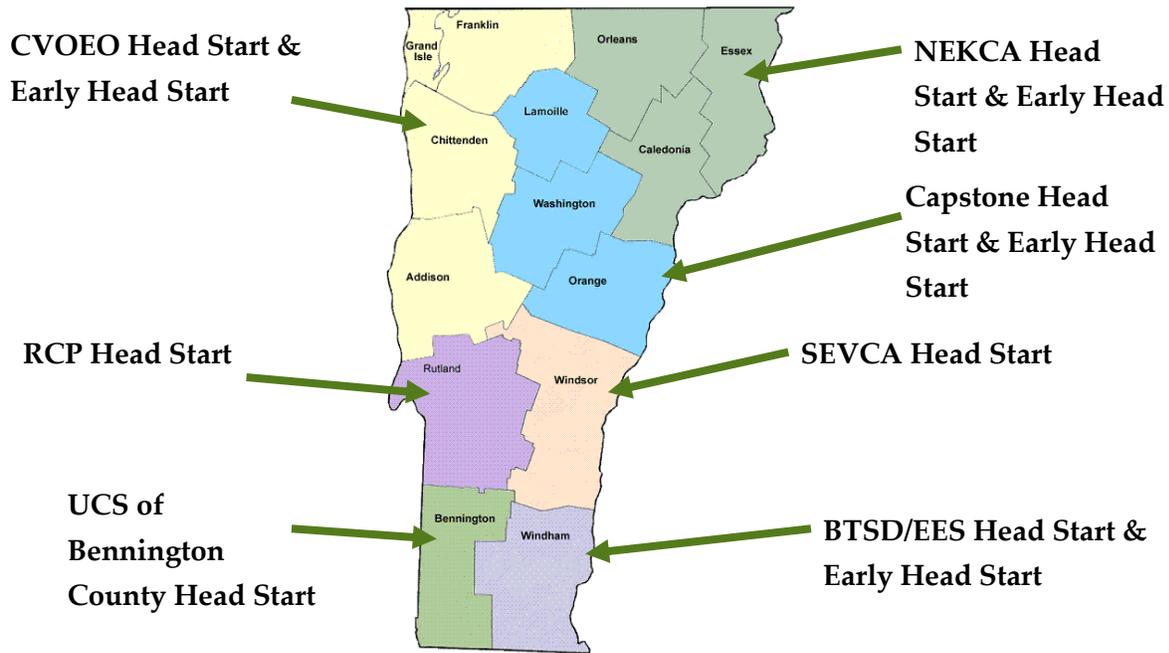
Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees

Head Start and Early Head Start grantees in Vermont are administered by community-based organizations. Seven community-based organizations receive federal grants from OHS to operate seven Head Start programs. Four of seven organizations receive federal grants from OHS to operate the four Early Head Start programs in Vermont. Two of four organizations receive federal grants from OHS to operate two Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership programs (see Figure 1). The types of organizations administering the programs are:

- Community Action Agencies: Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO), Capstone Community Action, and Northeast Kingdom Community Action (NEKCA) provide Head Start and Early Head Start services. CVOEO and Capstone Community Action provide Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership services. Southeast Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) provides Head Start services.
- Mental Health Agencies: Rutland Community Programs, Inc. (RCP) and United Children’s Service (UCS) of Bennington County provide Head Start services.
- School District: Brattleboro Town School District/Early Education Services (BTSD/EES) provides Head Start and Early Head Start services.

Appendix A contains a list of the Head Start/Early Head Start directors and the counties served by Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

Figure 1: Geographic Service Areas for Vermont's Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees



Oversight, Funding, and Enrollment

OHS, located in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, oversees the operations of and provides the bulk of funding directly to Head Start programs. Under the Head Start Act, local public organizations, private non-profit agencies, and for-profit entities are eligible to receive federal grant funds and be a Head Start, Early Head Start, and EHS-CC Partnerships grantee/provider. States are also eligible to apply for and receive federal Early Head Start and EHS-CC Partnership grantees.⁴

A Head Start, Early Head Start, or EHS-CC Partnerships program receives a five-year federal grant for 80 percent of its funding from OHS and must raise a 20 percent match of their total program's funding from non-federal contributions. The federal government allows Head Start/Early Head Start programs to use private, local, municipal, and State funding sources as part of their 20 percent match.

⁴ The States of Alabama, California, Delaware, Georgia, and Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Territories of the District of Columbia and the Northern Mariana Islands are EHS-CC Partnerships grantees (Office of Early Childhood Development, 2016, https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/ehs_ccp_report.pdf). The State of Pennsylvania is an Early Head Start grantee.

Head Start, Early Head Start, and EHS-CC Partnerships programs in many States receive significant State funding from different sources to supplement their federal Head Start and Early Head Start grant funds. These State funding sources include: appropriations to fund state-funded Head Start and Early Head Start; state-funded pre-kindergarten dollars; and child care subsidy dollars.

The Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2016 base grant amounts of Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Vermont was \$16.6 million. The ACF-funded enrollments of the seven Head Start programs, the four Early Head Start programs, and the two Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships programs were 1,014 slots, 365 slots, and 68 slots, respectively, for a total FFY 2016 ACF-funded enrollment of 1,447 slots.⁵

During the 2015-2016 program year, Head Start grantees provided Head Start-enrolled and non-Head Start enrolled children with high quality preschool experiences through the federal Preschool Development Expansion Grant (PDEG) and State-funded prekindergarten education under Act 62 or Act 166. During Year 1 of Preschool Development Expansion Grant (PDEG), the Vermont Agency of Education awarded PDEG sub-grants to three Head Start grantees, and these Head Start grantees provided 106 PDEG-eligible children and their families with high-quality, full school day, full school year preschool programs (Vermont Agency of Education, 2016). On July 1, 2015, the State of Vermont began implementing Act 166, its universal prekindergarten education statute. During the first school year of implementing Act 166, the State gave school districts the option of choosing to implement Act 166, under which all three-, four-, and five-year-olds not already enrolled in kindergarten are entitled to 10 hours per week for 35 weeks of prekindergarten education. In a minority of school districts implementing Act 166, Vermont-approved Head Start prequalified prekindergarten education programs provided many children with prekindergarten education under Act 166 for 10 hours per week for 35 weeks. In a majority of school districts, Head Start grantees partnered under Act 62 with public schools to provide at least six hours per week during the school year with prekindergarten education.

During the 2014-2015 school year, Head Start grantees partnered with public schools to provide Head Start and non-Head Start enrolled children at least six hours per week of prekindergarten education under Act 62. During the 2014-2015 school year, six Head Start grantees and 20 public schools partnered at 30 individual Head Start-LEA pre-kindergarten partnership sites serving

⁵ The federal ACF/OHS Region I Office supplied the VHSSCO with the funding and slots figures on May 12, 2016.

698 children in 44 classrooms during the 2014-2015 school year.⁶ Of 698 children, 518 (74 percent) children were Head Start-enrolled and 180 (26 percent) children were non-Head Start enrolled.

The preliminary results of the VHSSCO's Head Start-Public School Prekindergarten Education Partnership survey for the 2015-2016 school year survey are:

- Seven Head Start grantees and 22 Public Schools partnered at 32 individual sites to serve 781 children in 49 classrooms. The same Head Start grantee may partner with the same Public School at multiple sites. A site may consist of multiple classrooms. Of 32 buildings at these sites, public schools owned 21 and Head Start programs owned 11.
- Of 781 children, 75 percent were Head Start-enrolled and 25 percent were non-Head Start enrolled.
- Public School-based prekindergarten partnership settings provide the highest proportion of classrooms consisting of Head Start-enrolled and non-Head Start-enrolled children: 72 percent compared with 53 percent in both public school and Head Start-based settings and 25 percent for the Head Start-based settings.

Program Options

Based upon their respective community needs assessments and available annual funding, Head Start and Early Head Start grantees choose which program options to provide to meet the individual needs of young children and their families. The program options vary among the Head Start and Early Head Start grantees because individual grantees consider their community needs assessment data and choose program options which are best tailored to meet the needs of young children and families in their service areas (see Figure 1 and Appendix A).

One or more of seven Head Start grantees in Vermont during the 2014-2015 program year, offered the following program options:

- Center-based full day (at least six half hours daily) for five days per week;
- Center-based full-working-day (at least 10 hours daily) for five days per week;
- Center-based full-working-day (at least 10 hours daily) for five days per week for the full-calendar-year;
- Center-based part day (three and a half to six hours daily) for five days per week;

⁶ The 30 sites consist of sites where the Head Start grantee is the licensee and where the public school is the licensee. One of seven Head Start grantees entered into one pre-kindergarten agreement with Rutland Central Supervisory Union for planning purposes only.

- Center-based full day (at least six hours daily) for four days per week;
- Center-based part day (three and a half to six hours daily) for four days per week;
- Home-based with one visit per week in a family's home for at least 32 home visits annually and with a minimum of 16 group socialization activities annually;
- Combination of services provided to children and their families in both a center setting and through intensive work with the child's parents and family in their home;
- Family child care option;
- Family child care full-working-day (at least 10 hours daily); and/or
- Family child care full-working-day (at least 10 hours daily), full-calendar year (Office of Head Start, 2016d).

In contrast with the standard OHS definition of full-year services to be at least 48 weeks annually, OHS lacks a standard definition of "full-year" Head Start services. The number of weeks that Head Start services are provided varies by grantee according to conditions of their grant award.

During the same year, one or more of four Early Head Start grantees in Vermont offered the following program options for at least 48 weeks annually:

- Center-based full day (at least six half hours daily) for five days per week;
- Center-based full-working-day for (at least 10 hours daily) five days per week;
- Center-based full-working-day (at least 10 hours daily) for five days per week for the full-calendar year; and/or
- Home-based with one visit per week in a family's home for at least 32 home visits annually and with a minimum of 16 group socialization activities annually (Office of Head Start, 2016c).

A full-day means that services must accommodate the needs of full-time working families, which generally means availability of services for a 10-hour day. Programs must operate for the full-year that child care programs are typically open. The full-year is inclusive of time needed for staff professional development activities.

In 2015, one or more of two Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships grantees in Vermont began offering the following program options:

- Center-based full-working-day for (at least 10 hours daily) five days per week for the full-year and/or
- Family child care home full-working-day for (at least 10 hours daily) five days per week for the full-year.

After the application, eligibility and enrollment processes are completed, families choose to enroll their children in available Head Start, Early Head Start, and EHS-CC Partnerships program options.



Needs Assessment Process

Introduction

The needs assessment process consisted of drafting the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 web surveys of Head Start grantees in consultation with the Head Start program directors, fielding the survey, and determining a methodology to analyze and describe the survey findings. This section of the report describes survey questionnaire's timing and topical content; types of survey questions; and methodology selected to analyze and patterns of collaboration from the survey findings. The needs assessment report drew upon two web-survey datasets collected from Head Start grantees during the:

- 2014-2015 program year from June 3-18, 2015 and
- 2015-2016 program year from March 10-April 25, 2016.

Timing and Topical Content of the Needs Assessment Survey

Using SurveyMonkey® software, the VHSSCO emailed the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 needs assessment web surveys on June 3, 2015 and March 10, 2016, respectively to the seven Head Start grantees to learn about their *Extent of Involvement* with State and local organizations and their *Degree of Difficulty* engaging in a variety of activities in six of the 11 OHS Priorities for HSSCOs (see Figure 5). The VHSSCO asked agencies that administered both Early Head Start and Head Start programs to complete one survey per program year. All seven grantees completed the 2014-2015 web survey by June 18, 2015 and six of seven grantees completed the 2015-2016 web survey by April 25, 2016.

Consistent with 2011 *OHS Head Start State and National Collaboration Offices Framework* (Office of Head Start, 2011) and OHS' *Head Start Collaboration Office Priorities 2015*, the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 surveys addressed the four VHSSCO Five-Year (2012-2017) Strategic Plan Goals: School Transitions; Professional Development; Child Care and Early Childhood Systems; and Regional Office Priorities. Figure 5 shows that the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 needs assessment surveys combined addressed six of 11 OHS Priorities for HSSCOs, and the 2011-2012 needs assessment survey covered all 11 Priorities. Figure 5 depicts how the four Five-Year VHSSO Strategic Plan Goal Areas (in parentheses) align with each Priority.

Figure 2: Crosswalk of Survey Content by Program Year, OHS Priorities for HSSCOs, and VHSSCO Five-Year Strategic Plan Goals

Reported Survey Content (Relevant VHSSCO goal(s) are in parentheses, and checkmark indicates inclusion in survey.)	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
OHS National Priorities for HSSCOs					
1. School Transitions – School Readiness, Pre-k Partnerships, Alignment (VHSSCO School Transitions Goal)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Professional Development (VHSSCO Professional Development Goal)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. Early Childhood System (VHSSCO Child Care and Early Childhood Systems Goal)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
OHS Regional Office Priorities					
4. Services for Children Experiencing Homelessness (Two VHSSCO Goals: Regional Office Priorities and School Transitions)	✓	✓	✓		
5. Services for Children with Disabilities (Two VHSSCO Goals: Regional Office Priorities and School Transitions)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. Health Services (VHSSCO Regional Office Priorities Goal)	✓				
7. Child Welfare (VHSSCO Regional Office Priorities Goal)	✓				✓
8. Family Literacy Services (VHSSCO Regional Office Priorities Goal)	✓				
9. Child Care Subsidy and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) (Two VHSSCO Goals: Child Care and Early Childhood Systems and Regional Office Priorities) ⁷	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10. Community Services (VHSSCO Regional Office Priorities Goal)	✓				
11. Services for Military Families (Two VHSSCO Goals: Regional Office Priorities and Child Care and Early Childhood Systems)	✓	✓	✓		

⁷ Questions about Child Care have been included in every year of the survey with the exception of the 2015-2016 program year, whereas TANF-related questions were posed in the surveys for the 2011-2012 and 2015-2016 program years.

Several factors influenced the VHSSCO's decision to survey Head Start directors in differing topical areas year to year, particularly for the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 surveys:

- Questions were included to track progress in achieving outcomes in the VHSSCO Five-Year Strategic Plan. For example, the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 surveys contained questions about Expected Outcome 3.4 to ascertain their perceptions of the level of consistency in the referral process to ensure children gain access to CIS and/or Head Start/Early Head Start services that meet their needs and the needs of their families.
- Conversely, the 2014-2015 and 2014-2016 surveys did not contain questions about health and family literacy services because the VHSSCO Five-Year Strategic Plan's content made posing questions in these areas unnecessary.
- Questions were included in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 surveys pertaining to the areas experiencing high levels of interaction between Head Start and Early Head Start programs and their State partners, such as the engagement among Head Start programs, Agency of Education, Agency of Human Services, and school districts with regarding Act 166 and the federal Preschool Development Expansion Grant. The 2014-2015 web survey contained questions about facilities because the VHSSCO identified a need for additional quality facilities based on its engagement with state and local partners in the implementation of Act 166, federal PDEG, and EHS-CC Partnership grant.
- Head Start directors provided input regarding the content of the surveys. Their input influenced the inclusion of questions pertaining to professional development in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016.

Both the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 web surveys addressed the four goals of the VHSSCO Five-Year Strategic Plan. Both web surveys consisted of close-ended and open-ended questions addressing

- School Transitions:
 - Head Start – Prekindergarten Partnership Development and
 - Partnerships with Local Educational Agencies
- Services for Children with Disabilities
- Professional Development
- Early Childhood Systems
- Child Welfare/Welfare

The 2014-2015 web survey also contained close-ended and open-ended questions pertaining to

- Child Care
- School Transitions: Facilities

The 2015-2016 web survey also posed closed-ended and open-ended questions regarding child welfare/welfare. The VHSSCO posed questions in this priority area to support the improvement its collaboration between Head Start grantees and the Economic Services Division regarding coordination of Reach Up services.

Most closed-ended questions contained one of two scales to gauge the extent of collaboration between Head Start grantees and their partners. The two scales were:

- Five-point *Extent of Involvement* scale (Frey, Lohmeier, Lee and Tollefson, 2006, http://signetwork.org/content_page_assets/content_page_68/MeasuringCollaborationAmongGrantPartnersArticle.pdf) and
- Four-point *Degree of Difficulty* scale used in prior VHSSCO needs assessment surveys.

Head Start directors were asked to rate their programs' *Extent of Involvement* with each partner as either:

- Networking - Aware of organization, loosely defined roles, little communication, all decisions are made independently,
- Cooperation- Provide information to each other, somewhat defined roles, formal communication, all decisions are made independently,
- Coordination - Share information and resources, defined roles, frequent communication, some shared decision making,
- Coalition – Share ideas, share resources, frequent and prioritized communication, all members have a vote in decision making, or
- Collaboration – Members belong to one system; frequent communication is characterized by mutual trust, and consensus is reached on all decisions.

Head Start directors were asked to rate their programs' *Degree of Difficulty* in engaging in a variety of activities with partners as either

- Extremely Difficult,
- Difficult,
- Somewhat Difficult, or
- Not at All Difficult.

Head Start directors were asked open-ended questions to provide them with an opportunity to make comments and suggestions for improving collaborations and partnerships in the topical areas covered by the survey.

Methodology to Determine Collaboration Strengths and Collaboration Weaknesses

For the first set of findings in the report concerning the six OHS Priorities for the HSSCOs, the narrative was drafted and the survey responses were tallied and presented in the figures to highlight two patterns of collaboration:

- **Collaboration Strengths:** Patterns emerge when Head Start program directors have reported a high *Extent of Involvement* with service providers/organizations and/or a relatively low *Degree of Difficulty* in engaging in activities with partners.
 - High *Extent of Involvement* means at least four ($\leq 57\%$) of seven respondents selected Coordination, Coalition and/or Collaboration in the 2014-2015 program year survey OR high *Extent of Involvement* means at least four ($\leq 67\%$) of six respondents selected Coordination, Coalition and/or Collaboration in the 2015-2016 program year survey.
 - Low *Degree of Difficulty* means four or more of possible seven responses selected were Somewhat Difficult and/or Not At All Difficult in the 2014-2015 program year survey OR low *Degree of Difficulty* means four or more of possible six responses selected were Somewhat Difficult and/or Not At All Difficult in the 2015-2016 program year survey.

- **Collaboration Weaknesses:** Patterns in which Head Start program directors have reported a relatively low *Extent of Involvement* with service providers/organizations and/or a relatively high *Degree of Difficulty* in engaging in activities with partners.
 - Low *Extent of Involvement* means four or more ($\leq 57\%$) of the seven respondents selected Networking, Cooperation, and/or Not Applicable in the 2014-2015 program year survey or low *Extent of Involvement* means three or more ($\leq 50\%$) of the six respondents selected Networking, Cooperation, and/or Not Applicable in the 2015-2016 program year survey.
 - High *Degree of Difficulty* means four or more of the possible seven responses selected were Difficult, Extremely Difficult, and/or Not Applicable in the 2014-2015 program year survey or high *Degree of Difficulty* means four or more of the possible six responses selected were Difficult, Extremely Difficult, and/or Not Applicable in the 2015-2016 program year survey.

In boxes of the Figures, Collaboration Strengths were highlighted in light green, and the Collaboration Weaknesses were highlighted in yellow.

Determining the Relative Amounts of Collaboration Strengths and Weaknesses for Each OHS Priority for HSSCOs

For each HSSCO Priority covered by this report, the VHSSCO tabulated the numbers of Collaboration Strengths and Collaboration Needs from the *Extent of Involvement* and *Degree of Difficulty* questions and calculated corresponding percentages of Collaboration Weaknesses and Collaboration Strengths. This process enabled the VHSSCO to determine the relative amounts of Collaboration Strengths and Collaboration Weaknesses for each HSSCO Priority. Using the data collected for the Child Care and Professional Development Priorities as examples here, the VHSSCO calculated that there were seven Collaborations Strengths and five Collaboration Weaknesses for the Child Care Priority (see Figures 14 and 15) with corresponding percentages of 58.3 percent and 41.6 percent, respectively. By subtracting 58.3 percent from 41.6 percent, VHSSCO determined that the Professional Development Priority has 16.7 percent (17 percent when rounded up to the next full percentage points) more Collaboration Strengths than Collaboration Weaknesses. Applying this process to the Professional Development Priority, the VHSSCO calculated that the Professional Development Priority has four percent fewer Collaboration Strengths than Collaboration Weaknesses.

Needs Assessment Survey Findings

Organization and Content of Findings

The combined 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 findings of the Head Start grantees are organized into three sets of findings corresponding to three sets of questions posed in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 web-surveys. The first set of findings pertain to the set of questions in which the VHSSCO asked Head Start directors to rate the *Extent of Involvement* of their Head Start/Early Head Start programs with service providers/organizations in the six HSSCO Priorities for HSSCOs and to rate the *Degree of Difficulty* of their Head Start/Early Head Start programs in engaging in activities of the six HSSCO Priorities for HSSCOs:

- 1) School Transitions:
 - Head Start – Prekindergarten Partnership Development and
 - Partnerships with Local Educational Agencies
- 2) Professional Development
- 3) Early Childhood Systems
- 4) Services for Children with Disabilities
- 5) Child Care
- 6) Welfare/Child Welfare

The second set of findings correspond with the set of questions posed by the VHSSCO in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 web-surveys to track the process of the VHSSCO and its partners in achieving several Expected Outcomes/Outcomes in the VHSSCO Five-Year Strategic Plan:

- School Transitions Outcome 1.1: A school transition checklist will be used regionally.
- Child Care and Early Childhood Systems (CCECS) Outcome 3.1: The Head Start/Early Head Start and CIS partnerships integrate services where appropriate.
- CCECS Expected Outcome 3.3: Head Start/CIS have seamless and complimentary services for children and families.
- CCECS Expected Outcome 3.4: There is a consistent referral process to ensure children gain access to CIS and/or HS/EHS services that meet their needs and the needs of their families.
- Regional Office Priorities (ROP)/Children with Disabilities Expected Outcome 4.1: There is greater understanding about services, systems and standards across partners.

The third set of questions asked by the VHSSCO in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 web-surveys were close- and open-ended questions on timely collaboration issues facing the VHSSCO, Head

Start grantees, and their partners in two HSSCO Priorities for HSSCOs:

- 1) School Transitions:
 - Benefits and challenges of Head Start-LEA School-Based Prekindergarten Partnerships and
 - Facilities; and
- 2) Professional Development: Top Three Professional Development Needs.

First Set of Findings

The first set of findings pertain to the set of questions in which the VHSSCO asked Head Start directors to rate the *Extent of Involvement* of their Head Start/Early Head Start programs with service providers/organizations in the six HSSCO Priorities for HSSCOs and to rate the *Degree of Difficulty* of their Head Start/Early Head Start programs in engaging in activities of the six HSSCO Priorities for HSSCOs.

School Transitions: Prekindergarten Partnership Development

The Head Start programs view as a priority strong prekindergarten education partnerships with school districts. In these partnerships, prekindergarten education services are delivered in Head Start settings where Head Start is the licensee and school-based settings where the public school is the licensee. The Head Start Act requires each Head Start grantee to have one or more Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with the appropriate local entities, such as a school, school district, Supervisory District, or Supervisory Union, responsible for managing publicly funded preschool programs in the Head Start service area. The MOU must provide for a review of each of 10 activities and plans to coordinate these activities, as appropriate, as described in 642(e)(5)(A)(i-ii)(I-X) of the Head Start Act. Figures 4 and 5 list the 10 activities plus an 11th activity about agreeing to shared school readiness goals and strategies based on the Vermont Head Start Association School Readiness Agreement. The survey data revealed that there were 91 percent more strengths than weaknesses associated with partnerships or MOUs between Head Start grantees and LEAs to provide prekindergarten (see Figures 3-5).

Strengths

When Head Start programs have partnership agreements with Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to provide prekindergarten education, Head Start directors generally view their prekindergarten partnerships with LEAs as a strength. The Figure 3 shows a high *Extent of Involvement* between Head Start grantees and their LEA partners for the 2015-2016 program year. In the 2014-2015 program year survey, two of seven Head Start directors selected Other as their response and explained their selection. Because of this, the *Extent of Involvement* between Head Start grantees and their LEA partners for the 2014-2015 program year was neither rated as

high nor low (see Figure 3). For the MOU coordinating activities 1-8, 10-11 during the 2015-2016 program year (see Figure 4) and the MOU coordinating activities 1-11 during the 2014-2015 program year (see Figure 5), most Head Start directors rated their programs as having a low *Degree of Difficulty* engaging with their partners.

Figure 3: Extent of Involvement between Head Start Grantees and LEAs to Provide Prekindergarten during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 Program Years

Answer Choices	Program Years			
	2014-2015		2015-2016	
	Response Percent	Response Count	Response Percent	Response Count
Network (awareness)	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Cooperation (somewhat defined roles, formal communication)	28.6%	2	28.6%	2
Coordination (shared resources, frequent communication, some shared decision making)	28.6%	2	42.9%	3
Coalition (shared ideas, frequent/prioritized communication, all members vote on decisions)	14.3%	1	14.3%	1
Collaboration (belong to one system, mutual trust in communication, consensus on decisions)	0.0%	0	14.3%	2
We do not have a MOU for publicly funded pre-k under Act 62.	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	0.0%	2	0.0%	0

For the 2014-2015 program year, two Head Start directors explained their Other responses as:

- We belong to a school district where we do not currently have any partnership agreement, nor receive Act 62 or 166 Funds. We do receive Act 62 funds from a neighboring school district and have a "cooperative" relationship.
- We work with 15 school districts and the extent of the involvement varies from Networking to Collaboration

Figure 4: Degree of Difficulty for Head Start Grantees to Engage with LEAs in Coordinating MOU Activities during 2015-2016 Program Year

Answer Choices	Extremely Difficult	Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Not at All Difficult	Not Applicable
1. Educational activities, curricular objectives and instruction	0	1	2	3	1
2. Public Information dissemination and access to programs for families contacting Head Start or another preschool program	0	1	1	4	1
3. Selection priorities for eligible children to be served by programs	2	0	1	3	1
4. Service areas	1	0	1	4	1
5. Staff training, including opportunities for joint staff training on topics such as academic content standards, instructional methods, curricula, and social and emotional development	0	0	3	3	1
6. Joint/shared program technical assistance (e.g., on mutual needs, or to develop partnership agreements)	0	0	2	3	2
7. Provision of services to meet needs of working parents, as applicable	1	0	2	3	1
8. Communications and parent outreach for smooth transitions to kindergarten	0	0	1	5	1
9. Provision and use of facilities, transportation, etc.	1	1	2	1	2
10. Other elements mutually agreed to by the parties to the MOU	0	0	3	3	1
11. Agreeing to shared school readiness goals and strategies based on the Vermont Head Start Association School Readiness Agreement (e.g. physical development and health, approaches to learning, cognitive development, activity, social-emotional development, and literacy/language development)	0	0	0	5	2

Figure 5: Degree of Difficulty for Head Start Grantees to Engage with LEAs in Coordinating MOU Activities during the 2014-2015 Program Year

Answer Choices	Extremely Difficult	Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Not at All Difficult	Not Applicable
1. Educational activities, curricular objectives and instruction	0	0	3	4	0
2. Public Information dissemination and access to programs for families contacting Head Start or another preschool program	0	0	3	4	0
3. Selection priorities for eligible children to be served by programs	0	0	3	4	0
4. Service areas	0	0	3	4	1
5. Staff training, including opportunities for joint staff training on topics such as academic content standards, instructional methods, curricula, and social and emotional development	0	1	3	3	0
6. Joint/shared program technical assistance (e.g., on mutual needs, or to develop partnership agreements)	0	1	3	3	0
7. Provision of services to meet needs of working parents, as applicable	0	0	4	3	0
8. Communications and parent outreach for smooth transitions to kindergarten	0	1	2	4	0
9. Provision and use of facilities, transportation, etc.	0	1	2	4	0
10. Other elements mutually agreed to by the parties to the MOU	0	0	3	3	1
11. Agreeing to shared school readiness goals and strategies based on the Vermont Head Start Association School Readiness Agreement (e.g. physical development and health, approaches to learning, cognitive development, activity, social-emotional development, and literacy/language development)	0	0	4	2	1
Other (please specify)					

Weaknesses

During 2015-2016 program year, a plurality of Head Start directors rated their programs as having high *Degree of Difficulty* engaging with their LEA partners regarding Activity 9: the provision and use of facilities, transportation, etc... (see Figure 4).

School Transitions: Partnerships with Local Educational Agencies

Strong collaborations between Head Start grantees and LEAs are essential to make seamless transitions for children and their families as the children graduate from Head Start and enter kindergarten. Transitions are individualized and ultimately each child will continue to develop and gain ground at their own pace. Their families are included in the process and supported as well. All parents and their children get their needs met and access community resources, services and programs. The survey findings indicated that there were 88 percent more Strengths than Weaknesses regarding partnerships between Head Start grantees and LEAs regarding the transitions of children from Head Start to kindergarten.

Strengths

The *Extent of Involvement* with LEAs improved regarding the transitions of children from Head Start to kindergarten from the 2014-2015 program year to the 2015-2016 program year. During the 2014-2015 program year, four of seven Head Start directors rated as low their programs' *Extent of Involvement* with LEAs regarding the transitions of children from Head Start to kindergarten, but five of six Head Start directors rated as high their programs' *Extent of Involvement* with LEAs (see Figure 6). Head Start directors were asked to rate the *Degree of Difficulty* of their programs to engage with LEAS on 16 school transitions activities in the 2014-2015 program year and 15 school transitions activities in the 2015-2016 program year. A majority of Head Start directors rated their *Degree of Difficulty* as low for 30 of 31 activities (see Figures 7 and 8). The exception was their coordination of transportation with LEAs during the 2015-2016 program year.

Figure 6: Extent of Involvement between Head Start Grantees and LEAs regarding the Transitions of Children from Head Start to Kindergarten during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 Program Years

	Program Years			
	2014-2015		2015-2016	
	Response Percent	Response Count	Response Percent	Response Count
Answer Choices				
Network (awareness)	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Cooperation (somewhat defined roles, formal communication)	57.1%	4	16.7%	1
Coordination (shared resources, frequent communication, some shared decision making)	42.9%	3	50.0%	3
Coalition (shared ideas, frequent/prioritized communication, all members vote on decisions)	0.0%	0	16.7%	1
Collaboration (belong to one system, mutual trust in communication, consensus on decisions)	0.0%	0	16.7%	1

Figure 7: Degree of Difficulty for Head Start Grantees to Engage in School Transitions Activities during the 2015-2016 Program Year

Answer Options	Extremely Difficult	Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Not at All Difficult
A. Coordinating with LEAs to implement systematic procedures for transferring Head Start program records to school	0	1	1	4
B. Ongoing communication with LEAs to facilitate coordination of programs (including teachers, social workers, McKinney-Vento liaisons, etc.)	1	1	3	1
C. Establishing and implementing comprehensive transition policies and procedures with LEAs	0	0	3	3
D. Linking LEA and Head Start services relating to language, numeracy and literacy	1	0	1	4
E. Aligning Head Start curricula and assessments with the new <i>Birth through Grade Three Vermont Early Learning Standards</i>	0	0	0	6
F. Partnering with LEAs and parents to assist individual children/families to transition to school, including review of portfolio/records	0	2	1	3
G. Coordinating transportation with LEAs	2	1	0	3
H. Coordinating shared use of facilities with LEAs	1	0	2	3
I. Coordinating with LEAs regarding other support services for children and families	0	0	5	1
J. Conducting joint outreach to parents and LEA to discuss needs of children entering kindergarten	0	0	3	3
K. Establishing policies and procedures that support children's transition to school that includes engagement with LEA	0	0	3	3
L. Helping parents of limited English proficient children understand instructional and other information and services provided by the receiving school.	1	1	1	3
M. Exchanging information with LEAs on roles, resources and regulations	1	1	3	1
N. Aligning curricula and assessment practices with LEAs	0	1	1	4
O. Organizing and participating in joint training, including transition-related training for school staff and Head Start staff	0	2	3	1

Figure 8: Degree of Difficulty for Head Start Grantees to Engage in School Transitions Activities during the 2014-2015 Program Year

Answer Options	Extremely Difficult	Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Not at All Difficult
A. Coordinating with LEAs to implement systematic procedures for transferring Head Start program records to school	0	1	1	6
B. Ongoing communication with LEAs to facilitate coordination of programs (including teachers, social workers, McKinney-Vento liaisons, etc.)	0	0	7	0
C. Establishing and implementing comprehensive transition policies and procedures with LEAs	0	2	5	0
D. Linking LEA and Head Start services relating to language, numeracy and literacy	0	0	4	3
E. Aligning Head Start curricula and assessments with the <i>Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework</i>	0	0	1	6
F. Aligning Head Start curricula with the <i>Vermont Early Learning Standards</i>	0	0	2	5
G. Partnering with LEAs and parents to assist individual children/families to transition to school, including review of portfolio/records	0	1	4	2
H. Coordinating transportation with LEAs	0	3	3	1
I. Coordinating shared use of facilities with LEAs	0	2	2	3
J. Coordinating with LEAs regarding other support services for children and families	1	0	3	3
K. Conducting joint outreach to parents and LEA to discuss needs of children entering kindergarten	0	1	4	2
L. Establishing policies and procedures that support children's transition to school that includes engagement with LEA	0	1	3	3
M. Helping parents of limited English proficient children understand instructional and other information and services provided by the receiving school.	0	1	4	2
N. Exchanging information with LEAs on roles, resources and regulations	0	0	5	2
O. Aligning curricula and assessment practices with LEAs	0	1	2	4
P. Organizing and participating in joint training, including transition-related training for school staff and Head Start staff	1	1	2	3

Weaknesses

An opportunity exists for Head Start grantees to improve the coordination of transportation with public schools coordinating transportation with LEAs because three of six directors rated as high their programs' *Degree of Difficulty* on this activity in the 2015-2016 survey (see Figure 7).

Professional Development

Professional Development is important to ensure that teachers and staff employed by Head Start programs and their partners have the needed degrees, credentials, and training to deliver high-quality services. Head Start and Early Head Start grantees have access to national, regional and state professional development systems. There were four percent fewer Strengths than Weaknesses for the Professional Development Priority.

Strengths

For the 2014-2015 program year, Head Start program directors rated as high their *Extent of Involvement* with the child care resource and referral network, state-based Head Start T/TA Network, other T/TA (regional, State) networks, Early Head Start National Resource Center, Local Children's Integrated Services (CIS), and the Vermont Agency of Education (see Figure 9). Meanwhile, Head Start programs directors rated as low their programs' *Degree of Difficulty* engaging in all professional development activities (see Figure 10).

Figure 9: Extent of Involvement of Head Start Grantees with Professional Development Organizations/Service Providers during the 2014-2015 Program Year

Answer Options	Network	Cooperation	Coordination	Coalition	Collaboration	Not Applicable (My organization is not an Early Head Start Grant Awardee)
Institutions of Higher Education (4-year)	2	2	2	1	0	0
Institutions of Higher Education (less than 4-year) (e.g., community colleges)	1	3	2	0	1	0
Online courses/programs	1	2	2	1	0	1
Child Care Resource and Referral Network	0	2	3	2	0	0

Answer Options	Network	Cooperation	Coordination	Coalition	Collaboration	Not Applicable (My organization is not an Early Head Start Grant Awardee)
Head Start State-Based Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) Network	0	0	2	0	4	1
Other T/TA networks (regional, state)	2	0	2	0	2	1
Service providers/organizations offering relevant training/TA cross-training opportunities	1	2	2	1	0	1
National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning	4	0	2	0	1	0
Early Head Start National Resource Center	1	0	2	1	0	3
National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations	3	0	2	1	0	1
Local Children's Integrated Services (CIS)	0	1	2	1	3	0
State-level CIS	1	3	1	1	1	0
Regional Reach-Up	0	4	1	0	2	0
AOE	0	3	3	0	1	0
Northern Lights Career Development Center which holds training and workshops and provides information about career pathways, workshops, trainings, and other professional development resources	2	2	1	1	1	0
CDD which administers the Bright Futures Information	1	3	1	1	1	0

Answer Options	Network	Cooperation	Coordination	Coalition	Collaboration	Not Applicable (My organization is not an Early Head Start Grant Awardee)
System (e.g. training calendar) and funds professional development grant resources and individual professional recognition bonuses						
Building Bright Futures State Advisory Council Professional Preparation and Development Committee	2	2	2	0	1	0
National Center on Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships	1	1	0	1	0	4
Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council's Child Care Apprenticeship Program	0	5	0	1	1	0
Vermont's T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarship Program	2	2	0	1	1	1

Figure 10: Degree of Difficulty for Head Start Grantees to Engage in Professional Development Activities during the 2014-2015 Program Year

Answer Options	Extremely Difficult	Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Not at All Difficult
Transferring credits between public institutions of learning	0	1	3	3
Accessing early childhood education degree programs in the community	2	0	3	2
Accessing Training & Technical Assistance opportunities in the community (including cross-training)	0	0	3	4
Accessing scholarships and other financial support for professional development programs/activities	2	0	2	3
Staff release time to attend professional development activities	0	0	5	2
Accessing online professional development opportunities (e.g., availability of equipment, internet connection, etc.)	0	0	5	2
Exchanging information on roles and resources with other providers/organizations regarding professional development	0	1	4	2

Weaknesses

Opportunities exist to improve the *Extent of Involvement* of Head Start programs with 14 of 20 professional development organizations (see organizations highlighted in yellow in Figure 9).

Early Childhood Systems

The Head Start programs participate in varying degrees with State, regional and local organizations and service providers on early childhood systems activities in Vermont. The VHSSCO works to integrate Head Start programs into the State’s early childhood system. Overall findings from the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 web-surveys indicated that there were 64 percent more strengths than weaknesses in Early Childhood Systems Priority for HSSCOs.

Strengths

During the 2014-2015 program year, at least four of seven Head Start directors rated as high their programs’ *Extent of Involvement* with four of eight Early Childhood Systems organizations/service providers and in the subsequent program year, at least four of six Head Start directors rated as high their programs’ *Extent of Involvement* with four of five Early

Childhood Systems organizations/service providers (see Figure 11). Majorities of Head Start directors rated as low their programs' *Degree of Difficulty* with all 16 activities (see Figure 12).

Figure 11: Extent of Involvement between Head Start Grantees with Early Childhood System Organizations/Service Providers during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 Program Years

Answer Options	Network	Cooperation	Coordination	Coalition	Collaboration	Do Not know
A. BBF State Advisory Council						0
2015-2016	4	0	1	0	1	0
2014-2015	3	1	1	0	2	0
B. BBF Regional Council(s)						
2015-2016	0	0	1	2	3	0
2014-2015	0	1	1	2	3	0
C. State Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) -- STARS						
2015-2016	0	1	2	1	2	0
2014-2015	0	4	2	1	0	0
D. State efforts to unify early childhood data systems (e.g., child/family/ program assessment data)						
2015-2016	1	0	3	2	0	0
2014-2015	3	1	1	1	1	0
E. CIS - Referral and Intake Team						
2014-2015	1	2	2	0	2	
F. CIS - Individual Child/Family Team for children dually enrolled in Head Start or Early Head Start						
2014-2015	0	0	3	0	4	0
G. CIS - Consultation Team						
2014-2015	2	1	1	0	2	1
H. CIS - Administrative Team						
2014-2015	1	0	1	0	4	1

Figure 12: Degree of Difficulty for Head Start Grantees to Engage in Early Childhood System Activities during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 Program Years

Answer Options	Extremely Difficult	Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Not at All Difficult	Do Not know
Exchanging information from and providing input to the BBF State Advisory Council					
2015-2016	0	0	1	3	2
2014-2015	0	1	0	4	2
Exchanging information from and providing input to BBF Regional Council(s)					
2015-2016	0	0	0	6	0
2014-2015	0	0	0	7	0
Participating in STARS, the state QRIS					
2015-2016	0	0	1	5	0
2014-2015	0	0	1	6	0
Participating in state efforts to unify early childhood data systems (e.g., Early Childhood Data Reporting System)					
2015-2016	1	0	0	5	0
2014-2015	0	0	1	5	1
Communicating with the CIS Intake Coordinator when a child is identified as enrolled in Head Start or Early Head Start					
2014-2015	0	0	2	5	0
Referring a child and family to CIS					
2015-2016	0	0	0	6	0
2014-2015	0	0	0	7	0
Receiving a referral from CIS for a child and family					
2015-2016	0	0	1	5	0
2014-2015	0	0	3	4	0
Attending an individual child/family CIS team meeting to coordinate services					
2015-2016	0	0	0	6	0
2014-2015	0	0	3	4	0
Participating in the CIS Referral and Intake Team Meeting					
2014-2015	1	0	3	2	1

Weaknesses

During the 2014-2015 program year, at least four of seven Head Start directors rated as low their programs' *Extent of Involvement* with four of eight Early Childhood Systems organizations/service providers and during the 2015-2016 program year, at least four of six Head Start directors rated as low their programs' *Extent of Involvement* with one of four Early Childhood Systems organizations/service providers (see organizations highlighted in yellow in Figure 11).

Head Start directors offered additional comments in this area of collaboration during the 2014-2015 survey:

- Getting Early Childhood Family Mental Health services for children is challenging. Sometimes the service that we are requesting for mental health is not the service that the family gets. There is confusion about the mental health services that CIS is actually providing.
- We cannot participate because they do not include families in CIS team meetings.

Services for Children from Birth to Age Three with Disabilities under Part C of IDEA

During the 2014-2015 program year, 20 percent (93 of 466) of infants and toddlers served by Early Head Start programs were children with disabilities (Office of Head Start, 2016c). Children with developmental delays receive early intervention services that Head Start/Early Head Start provides or arranges through referrals to its State and community partners. In Vermont, CIS determines whether a child from birth up to age three is eligible for Part C Early Intervention (EI) services under IDEA. Early Head Start may refer an infant or toddler to the regional CIS program or the child may already be receiving EI services upon entering Early Head Start program. There are 12 CIS regional programs, which conduct an evaluation to determine a child's eligibility for Part C EI services. After eligibility is determined by a team, which includes Head Start staff and the family, an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)/One Plan for the child and their family is developed and implemented. It is the responsibility of the CIS/EI program in the region to notify the school whether there is a child receiving EI services and is potentially eligible for Part B, Section 619 special education services under IDEA before the child turns three (Joint 2012 memo from the CDD, Vermont Department for Children and Families, Vermont Department of Education, Vermont Head Start Association, CIS, and Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office regarding the Clarification of Federal Head Start and Early Head Start Requirements Regarding Documentation for Young Children with Disabilities).

Part C, Early Intervention is one of the five services coordinated through regional CIS programs. Children eligible for Part C services are under 3-years old. Although there are four Early Head Start programs that serve this age group, all Head Start grantees may collaborate with a Part C/EI provider during a child’s transition into Head Start.

Strengths

The VHSSCO asked Head Start directors in the 2015-2016 web-survey to rate the extent of their Head Start programs’ *Extent of Involvement* with CIS. All six Head Start directors who completed the survey rated as high their *Extent of Involvement* by the Head Start programs with CIS (see Figure 13). There were 100 percent more Strengths than Weaknesses.

Figure 13: Extent of Involvement between Head Start Grantees and CIS during the 2015-2016 Program Year

Answer Options	Network	Cooperation	Coordination	Coalition	Collaboration	Do Not Know
CIS Staff	0	0	4	0	2	0

Weaknesses

There were no weaknesses.



Child Care

Head Start programs want to have strong partnerships with child care organizations. Head Start programs provide full-day, full-year services to many young children by layering their federal part-day Head Start funding with the child care subsidy reimbursements payments from the Child Development Division (CDD)'s Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP). CCFAP-eligible families pay for child care by subsidizing the cost of child care. Parents of CCFAP-eligible children enrolled in Head Start programs pay low child care co-payments because these programs are four or five star programs in Vermont's Step Ahead Recognition System. In addition, Head Start programs partners with center-based child care, family child care home, and child care home providers. For the Child Care Priority, there were 23 percent more strengths than weaknesses during the 2014-2015 program year.

Strengths

Although majorities of Head Start directors ranked as low their programs' *Extent of Involvement* with child care organizations during the 2014-2015 program year (see the yellow highlighted boxes in Figure 14), majorities of Head Start directors indicated that their programs' had a low *Degree of Difficulty* engaging with their partners in all child care-related activities listed (see the green highlighted boxes in Figure 15).

Figure 14: Extent of Involvement between Head Start Grantees and Child Care Organizations/Service Providers during 2014-2015 Program Year

Answer Options	Network	Cooperation	Coordination	Coalition	Collaboration
State Agency for Child Care: Child Development Division (e.g., Financial Assistance/Child Care Program/Child Care Subsidy, Child Care Licensing, STARS/QRIS)	0	4	3	0	0
Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (e.g., Community Child Care Support Agencies)	0	4	3	0	0
Local child care programs to support access to full-day, full-year services	0	4	2	0	1
State or regional policy/planning committees that address child care issues (e.g., BBF State Advisory Council or BBF Regional Councils)	1	3	0	1	2

Higher education programs/services/resources related to child care (e.g., lab schools, student interns, cross-training)	3	3	1	0	0
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Figure 15: Degree of Difficulty for Head Start Grantees to Engage in Child Care Activities during the 2014-2015 Program Year

Answer Options	Extremely Difficult	Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Not at All Difficult
Establishing linkages/partnerships with child care providers	0	1	4	2
Assisting families to access full-day, full-year services	0	1	3	3
Capacity to blend or braid, HS or EHS and child care funds to provide full-day, full-year services	0	1	4	2
Aligning policies and practices with other service providers	0	1	5	1
Sharing data/information on children that are jointly served (assessments, outcomes, etc.)	0	0	5	2
Exchanging information on roles and resources with other providers/organizations regarding child care and community needs assessment	0	0	2	5
Coordinating child care subsidy certificates based on service need (e.g. employment, seeking employment, training/education, Reach Up, self-employment, special health needs of parent)	0	2	2	3
Getting involved with state level planning and policy development for Child Care Development Block Grant (e.g. CCFAP, licensing child care, specialized child care, child care referral, training, professional development incentives, program incentives, etc.)	0	0	2	5

Weaknesses

Because majorities Head Start grantees rated as low their *Extent of Involvement* with CDD, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, local child care programs to support access to full day, full-year services, state or regional policy/planning committee that addresses child care issues,

and higher education programs/services/resources related to child care (see Figure 14), the VHSSCO will work with Head Start grantees to improve their involvement with these partners.

Welfare/Child Welfare

The VHSSCO Five-Year Strategic Plan contains Regional Office Priorities (ROP)/Welfare/Child Welfare Expected Outcome 2A.1 Families receive coordinated services based on their goals and Expected Outcome 2A.2 HS/EHS, Reach Up, and Foster Care teams collaborate on outreach and referrals. To track the VHSSCO's progress with its partners to toward achieving Expected Outcomes 2A.1 and 2A.2, the VHSSCO asked Head Start directors in the 2015-2016 web-survey to rate the extent of their Head Start programs' *Extent of Involvement* with welfare/child welfare service providers/organizations at this point in their Head Start/Early Head Start grantee service areas (see Figure 16). Then, the VHSSCO asked the Head Start directors to rate the *Degree of Difficulty* of their Head Start programs to engage in welfare/child welfare service activities with the Economic Service Division (ESD)'s Reach Up Program and the Family Service Division (FSD)'s Child Protective Services Program (see Figure 17). Overall, Head Start directors viewed the Welfare/Child Welfare Priority as a Collaboration Strength because there were 33 percent more strengths than weaknesses during the 2015-2016 program year.

Strengths

All six responding Head Start directors ranked as high their programs' *Extent of Involvement* with CIS staff during the 2015-2016 program year (see the green highlighted boxes in Figure 16). Large majorities of Head Start directors rated as low the *Degree of Difficulty* of their Head Start programs to engage in the following activities with the Economic Service Division (ESD)'s Reach Up Program and the Family Service Division (FSD)'s Child Protective Services Program during the 2015-2016 Program Year (see Figure 17):

- Coordination with ESD's Reach Up staff of Reach Up Program services for families based upon the family's goals,
- Collaboration on outreach and referrals with ESD's Reach Up Program staff,
- Coordination with FSD's Child Protective Services staff of Foster Care services for families based upon the family's goals, and
- Collaboration on outreach and referrals with FSD's Child Protective Services Foster Care staff.

Figure 16: Extent of Involvement between Head Start Grantees and Economic Services Division and Family Services Division during the 2015-2016 Program Year

Answer Options	Network	Cooperation	Coordination	Coalition	Collaboration	Do Not Know
Economic Services Division (ESD)'s Reach Up Program staff	0	3	2	0	1	0
Family Services Division (FSD)'s Child Protective Services Foster Care staff	0	3	2	0	1	0

Weaknesses

Because equal numbers of Head Start directors rated as high or low their Head Start programs' *Extent of Involvement* with Economic Services Division Reach Up Program staff and Family Services Division Child Protective Services Foster Care staff, the VHSSCO considers Head Start programs as having a low *Extent of Involvement* with the staff of the two organizations during the 2015-2016 program year (see Figure 16).

Figure 17: Degree of Difficulty for Head Start Grantees to Engage in Activities with the Economic Service Division (ESD)'s Reach Up Program and the Family Service Division (FSD)'s Child Protective Services Program during the 2015-2016 Program Year

Answer Options	Extremely Difficult	Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Not at All Difficult	Do Not Know
Coordination with ESD's Reach Up staff of Reach Up Program services for families based upon the family's goals	0	0	2	4	0
Collaboration on outreach and referrals with ESD's Reach Up Program staff	0	0	3	3	0
Coordination with FSD's Child Protective Services staff of Foster Care services for families based upon the family's goals	0	0	4	2	0
Collaboration on outreach and referrals with FSD's Child Protective Services Foster Care staff	0	1	2	3	0

Head Start program directors offered additional comments in these areas of collaboration during the 2015-2016 program year:

- Our Head Start program is working with three different ESD and FSD regional offices; the working relationship is different at all sites.

- Rutland County Head Start recently held its first meeting/Lunch & Learn with Family Services staff to discuss how to work more effectively together, and learn more about processes and ideas from each other.
- Many times our Head Start program is not even made aware that a family is involved with FSD until they are closing.

Second Set of Findings

The second set of questions posed by the VHSSCO in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 web-surveys concerned close-ended questions to track the process of the VHSSCO and its partners in achieving several Expected Outcomes/Outcomes in the VHSSCO Five-Year Strategic Plan:

- School Transitions Outcome 1.1: A school transition checklist will be used regionally.
- School Transitions Outcome 1.2: Parents, LEA leaders, and staff value Head Start and School Transitions efforts.
- Child Care and Early Childhood Systems (CCECS) Outcome 3.1: The Head Start/Early Head Start and CIS partnerships integrate services where appropriate.
- CCECS Expected Outcome 3.3: Head Start/CIS have seamless and complimentary services for children and families.
- CCECS Expected Outcome 3.4: There is a consistent referral process to ensure children gain access to CIS and/or HS/EHS services that meet their needs and the needs of their families.
- Regional Office Priorities (ROP)/Children with Disabilities Expected Outcome 4.1: There is greater understanding about services, systems and standards across partners.

School Transitions

In its 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 web survey questions pertaining to the School Transitions Priority for HSSCOs, the VHSSCO asked Head Start directors questions to track the VHSSCO's progress in achieving outcomes in its five-year strategic plan. These Expected Outcomes/Outcomes are:

- Transitions Outcome 1.1: A school transition checklist will be used regionally.
- School Transitions Outcome 1.2: Parents, LEA leaders, and staff value Head Start and School Transitions efforts.

School Transitions Activities Most Frequently Put into Practice during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 Program Years

The VHSSCO Five-Year Strategic Plan contains School Transitions Outcome 1.1: A school transition checklist will be used regionally. To track the VHSSCO’s progress to achieve Outcome 1.1, the VHSSCO asked Head Start directors in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 web-surveys to read a list of school transitions activities and indicate which ones they put into practice to support successful transitions for Head Start children entering kindergarten. During both 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 program years, four or more of the Head Start grantees indicated that they put into practice most often five of 16 activities (activities 1, 4-6, 10) to support successful transitions for Head Start children entering kindergarten (see the activities highlighted in light blue in Figure 18). The VHSSCO will use this data to work with the Vermont Head Start Association to produce a school transitions checklist that can be used regionally by the Head Start grantees and their LEA partners.

Figure 18: School Transition Activities Most Often Put into Practice by Head Start Grantees to Support Successful Transitions for Head Start Children Entering Kindergarten during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 Program Years

Answer Options	Program Years			
	2014-2015		2015-2016	
	Response Percent	Response Count	Response Percent	Response Count
1. Kindergarten teacher visiting preschool	71.4%	5	83.3%	5
2. Kindergarten teacher participating in home visit	14.3%	1	0.0%	0
3. Kindergarten camps	42.9%	3	33.3%	2
4. Community event bringing kindergarten and preschool teachers together	57.1%	4	66.7%	4
5. Pre-k children visiting their kindergarten classroom	85.7%	6	100.0%	6
6. Pre-k teachers (Head Start and other providers) visiting a kindergarten classroom	57.1%	4	66.7%	4
7. Holding an elementary school-wide activity with pre-k children	28.6%	2	100.0%	6
8. Having a spring orientation about kindergarten for parents of preschool children	57.1%	4	33.3%	2
9. Having an individual meeting between a teacher and a parent of the preschool child	71.4%	5	33.3%	2
10. Sharing written records	85.7%	6	83.3%	5
11. Families meet with a kindergarten teacher	71.4%	5	50.0%	3
12. Families meet the principal	28.6%	2	50.0%	3
13. Families take a tour of the school	57.1%	4	50.0%	3

14. Families talk to parents of child's new classmates	14.3%	1	16.7%	1
15. Families attend a workshop for parents	28.6%	2	50.0%	3
16. Community partner hosts event for entering kindergarteners	14.3%	1	50.0%	3
17. None of these	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		0		0

Perceptions of the Value of School Transitions Activities during the 2015-2016 Program Year

The VHSSCO Five-Year Strategic Plan contains School Transitions Outcome 1.2: Parents, LEA leaders, and staff value Head Start and School Transitions efforts. To track their progress toward completing Outcome 1.2, the VHSSCO asked Head Start directors, based upon their observations and experience, in the 2015-2016 web-survey to rate how valuable three groups: parents, elementary public school principals, and elementary public school kindergarten teachers found their Head Start programs' school transitions activities to support children and their families as they transition from Head Start to kindergarten. All Head Start directors reported that all three groups found the activities valuable, somewhat valuable, or extremely valuable (see the boxes highlighted in light blue in Figure 19).

Figure 19: Perceptions of Head Start Directors regarding How Valuable Parents, Elementary Public School Principals, and Elementary Public School Kindergarten Teachers Found Their School Transitions Activities during the 2015-2016 Program Year

Answer Options	Extremely Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Valuable	Not at All Valuable
Parents	4	0	3	0
Elementary Public School Principals	2	3	2	0
Elementary Public School Kindergarten Teachers	2	4	1	0

Early Childhood Systems

In its 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 web survey questions pertaining to the Early Childhood Systems Priority for HSSCOs, the VHSSCO asked Head Start directors questions to track the VHSSCO's progress in achieving outcomes in its five-year strategic plan. These Expected Outcomes/Outcomes are:

- Child Care and Early Childhood Systems (CCECS) Outcome 3.1: The Head Start/Early Head Start and CIS partnerships integrate services where appropriate;
- Outcome 3.3, the VHSSCO asked Head Start directors in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 web-surveys to read the following statement: "CIS and Head Start and Early Head Start

programs in Vermont provide seamless and complimentary services for children and families; and

- CCECS Expected Outcome 3.4: There is a consistent referral process to ensure children gain access to CIS and/or HS/EHS services that meet their needs and the needs of their families.

Perceptions on Whether CIS and Head Start and Early Head Start Programs Were Integrating Services through Partnerships during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 Program Years

The VHSSCO Five-Year Strategic Plan contains CCECS Outcome 3.1: The Head Start/Early Head Start and CIS partnerships integrate services where appropriate. To track the VHSSCO’s progress to achieve Outcome 3.1, the VHSSCO asked Head Start directors in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 web-surveys to read this statement: “CIS and Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Vermont through partnerships are integrating services.” Then, the VHSSCO asked the Head Start directors to indicate whether the statement is True or False for each of the following categories of services: Part C services for children with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), home visiting services, and mental health services. Majorities of Head Start directors indicated that CIS and Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Vermont through partnerships are integrating services for all three categories during both program years (see the boxes highlighted in light blue in Figure 20).

Figure 20: The Extent to Which CIS and Head Start and Early Head Start Programs through Partnerships Are Integrating Services during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 Program Years

Answer Options	True	False
Part C services for children with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)		
2015-2016	6	0
2014-2015	5	2
Home visiting services		
2015-2016	6	0
2014-2015	4	3
Mental health services		
2015-2016	5	1
2014-2015	6	1

Perceptions on Whether CIS and Head Start and Early Head Start Programs Provided Seamless and Complimentary Services for Children and Families during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 Program Years

The VHSSCO Five-Year Strategic Plan contains CCECS Expected Outcome 3.3: Head Start/CIS have seamless and complimentary services for children and families. To track the VHSSCO’s progress to achieve Outcome 3.3, the VHSSCO asked Head Start directors in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 web-surveys to read the following statement: “CIS and Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Vermont provide seamless and complimentary services for children and families.” Then, the VHSSCO asked the Head Start directors to indicate whether the statement is True or False. From the 2014-2015 program year to the 2015-2016 program year, the VHSSCO and its partners improved the extent to which CIS and Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Vermont provided seamless and complimentary services for children and families. During the 2014-2015 program year, a minority of Head Start directors indicted the statement was true (see the boxes highlighted in light orange in Figure 21), and a program year later, all responding Head Start directors considered the statement as true (see the boxes highlighted in light blue in Figure 21).

Figure 21: The Extent to Which CIS and Head Start and Early Head Start Programs Provided Seamless and Complimentary Services for Children and Families in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 Program Years

Answer Options	True	False
CIS and Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Vermont provide seamless and complimentary services for children and families		
2015-2016	6	0
2014-2015	3	4

Perceptions on the Consistency of Referral Processes between Head Start/Early Head Start Programs and CIS to Ensure Children Gain Access to CIS and/or Head Start/Early Head Start Services during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 Program Years

The VHSSCO Five-Year Strategic Plan contains CCECS Expected Outcome 3.4: There is a consistent referral process to ensure children gain access to CIS and/or HS/EHS services that meet their needs and the needs of their families. To track the VHSSCO’s progress to achieve Expected Outcome 3.4, the VHSSCO asked Head Start directors in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 web-surveys to consider the status of referral processes between their Head Start/Early Head Start program and CIS in their Head Start/Early Head Start program's service area and to rate overall how consistent the referral processes are between their Head Start/Early Head Start

program and CIS in their Head Start/Early Head Start program's service area to ensure children gain access to CIS and/or Head Start/Early Head Start services to meet the needs of the children and their families. During both program years, majorities of Head Start program directors reported that consistency of referral processes are either consistent or very consistent (see the boxes highlighted in light blue in Figure 22).

Figure 22: Level of Consistency of Referral Processes between Head Start/Early Head Start programs and CIS to Ensure Children Gain Access to CIS and/or Head Start/Early Head Start Services to Meet the Needs of the Children and Families during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 Program Years

Answer Options	Program Years	
	2014-2015	2015-2016
Very consistent	1	2
Consistent	4	2
Inconsistent	2	2
Very inconsistent	0	0

Services for Children with Disabilities under Parts B and C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) during the 2015-2016 Program Year

During the 2014-2015 program year, 23 percent (290 of 1,254) of preschool-aged children served by Head Start programs were children with disabilities (Office of Head Start, 2016d). Within 45 days of a child’s enrollment in Head Start and in collaboration with the child’s parent, Head Start grantees must conduct a developmental screening of the child to identify concerns regarding a child’s development. If the Head Start program identifies a possible developmental concern for the child, the child is referred to a LEA that administers Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services. ECSE services are early childhood special education services and supports for eligible children provided in accordance with Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The LEA has the responsibility to evaluate a child who may have a developmental delay or medical conditions that may result in a delay. The local school district’s Evaluation Planning Team (EPT) determines whether a preschool-age child is eligible to receive Part B special education services, and the EPT bases its decision on the evaluation results and Vermont’s Special Education Rules criteria for children ages 3 up to 6. If a Head Start child is determined to be eligible for special education services, then a team, which should include a Head Start representative creates and develops an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (CDD, Vermont Department for Children and Families, Vermont Department of Education, Vermont Head Start Association, CIS, and Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office, 2012).

Level of Understanding about Services, Systems, and Standards across Partners Serving Preschool-Aged Children with Disabilities under Part B of IDEA

The VHSSCO Five-Year Strategic Plan contains Regional Office Priorities (ROP)/Children with Disabilities Expected Outcome 4.1: There is greater understanding about services, systems and standards across partners. To track their progress toward completing Expected Outcome 4.1, the VHSSCO asked Head Start directors in the 2014-2015 web-survey to consider the level of service coordination for children ages three through five with disabilities and their families among four sets of partners in the State: Head Start programs, Parent Child Centers, CIS, and providers of Essential Early Education for early childhood special education services and to rate the level of understanding across these partners about services, systems, and standards for the children ages three through five with disabilities and their families since September 30, 2012. A majority of Head Start directors reported that the level of understanding about services, systems, and standards across partners for preschool-aged children with disabilities under Part B of IDEA stayed the same or increased during the 2014-2015 program year (see the boxes highlighted in light blue in Figure 23).

Figure 23: Level of Understanding about Services, Systems, and Standards across Partners Serving Preschool-Aged Children with Disabilities under Part B of IDEA during the 2014-2015 Program Year

Answer Options	Response Count
Decreased	0
Stayed the Same	4
Increased	3

Level of Understanding about Services, Systems, and Standards across Partners Serving Children from Birth to Age Three with Disabilities under Part C of IDEA

The VHSSCO Five-Year Strategic Plan contains Regional Office Priorities (ROP)/Children with Disabilities Expected Outcome 4.1: There is greater understanding about services, systems and standards across partners. To track their progress toward completing Expected Outcome 4.1, the VHSSCO asked Head Start directors in the 2014-2015 web-survey to consider the level of service coordination for children birth to age three with disabilities and their families among three sets of partners in the State: Early Head Start programs, Parent Child Centers, and CIS and to rate the level of understanding across these partners about services, systems, and standards for the children birth to age three with disabilities and their families since September 30, 2012. A majority of Head Start directors reported that the level of understanding about services, systems, and standards across partners serving children with disabilities from birth to age 3 under Part C of IDEA stayed the same or increased during the 2014-2015 program year (see the boxes highlighted in light blue in Figure 24).

Figure 24: Level of Understanding about Services, Systems, and Standards across Partners Serving Children with Disabilities from Birth to Age 3 under Part C of IDEA during the 2014-2015 Program Year

Answer Options	Response Count
Decreased	0
Stayed the Same	2
Increased	3
Not Applicable (I do not have an Early Head Start program.)	2

Third Set of Findings

The third set of questions asked by the VHSSCO in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 web-surveys were close- and open-ended questions on timely collaboration issues facing the VHSSCO, Head Start grantees, and their partners in two HSSCO Priorities for HSSCOs:

- 1) School Transitions:
 - i) Benefits and challenges of Head Start-LEA School-Based Prekindergarten Education Partnerships and
 - ii) Facilities; and
- 2) Professional Development: The VHSSCO asked Head Start directors in its 2015-2016 web-survey to list their top three professional development needs.

Head Start-School-Based Prekindergarten Education Partnerships during the 2015-2016 Program Year

Head Start-School-based Prekindergarten Education partnerships are those in which the public school is the licensee and the Head Start program partners to provide additional hours of service beyond what was provided under Act 62 prior to July 1, 2016 and was provided under Act 166 in about one-third of the school districts during the 2015-2016 program year; enhance systems and services consistent with federal Head Start quality standards; and/or provide wrap-around, comprehensive child and family development services. When parents choose to send their children to prekindergarten education programs provided in tandem with Head Start in school-based settings, the public schools and Head Start leverage and optimize federal, state and local resources to assure equity, access and benefits for young, vulnerable children from low-income families. Leveraging and optimizing funding streams enables programs to expand services to unserved children, provide prekindergarten education in a socioeconomically diverse setting, add additional hours of service, enhance systems and services consistent with federal Head Start quality standards, and/or provide wrap-around, comprehensive child and family development services.

Benefits

In completing the 2015-2016 survey, Head Start grantees described benefits of Head Start-LEA partnerships delivering prekindergarten education in a school-based setting:

- Head Start-eligible families have the supports and resources necessary to ensure their child's school success and Head Start children have access to high quality, individualized and comprehensive early education services.
- First, ensuring health and safety. Second, monitoring and oversight. Third, link for parents to public school. Fourth, cost effective. Fifth, Easier for parents with children already in school. Sixth, Increased presence of Head Start in communities. Seventh, comprehensive services for families at these partnership locations. Eighth, the entire classroom (Head Start and non-Head Start enrolled children) receives benefits from Head Start contracted mental health observations and consultations.
- In one of our service areas, the school district provides transportation to all four year olds.
- The benefits of our collaborative partnerships enable Head Start eligible families to enroll their children in Essential Early Education (EEE) integrated classrooms. Children receive comprehensive services that support their development.
- First, knowing kindergarten teachers & expectations. Second, Kindergarten transition activities-camps, visits. Third, this year bridging meetings with Early Ed, kindergarten teachers, school principals, partnership programs, parents to try to set up common activities across the school district. Fourth, Partnership meetings about specific topics, ie...challenging behaviors, sharing of resources.
- It is great that we can come together and share forms and information about how we accomplish different mandates, as we are all a great resource for one another.
- We haven't begun yet. This year we are finally on their radar screen. (Act 62 was in place in Windham Northeast Supervisory Union in previous years, which yielded about \$3,000 revenue used for teacher salaries).

Challenges

Meanwhile, Head Start directors offered presented the challenges of their Head Start grantees partnering with a LEA to deliver prekindergarten education in a public school-based setting:

- Implementation of Act 166 and Act 46
- First, assuring that key stakeholders (superintendents, other school administrators, school boards and others) understand and value Head Start services for low-income children and families. Second, assuring that school districts do not terminate existing Head Start programs within local elementary schools and supplant them with Act 166 or PDEG programs (thereby reverting to a non-collaborative, silo approach). Third, ensuring that school sites can provide space for Head Start programming. Fourth,

ensuring the required number of running hours are met. Fifth, finding substitutes coverage for our Head Start staff. Sixth, in some locations, communication is a challenge, but in three out of four counties, there are no issues with communication.

- The challenges of Head Start-School-Based Prekindergarten Education partnerships are differences between Head Starts and public schools regarding their philosophies of education, teaching styles and approaches to working with children exhibiting challenging behaviors. It is often difficult to maintain consistent communication with public schools due to schedules and workload. Another obstacle is the assurance of quality services and compliance with Head Start Program Performance Standards.
- First, different schools have different activities. Second, schools do not ask for input for convenient meeting times for us. Third, parents must complete two enrollment packets requesting lengthy and often duplicative information: Head Start enrollment forms and the LEA enrollment forms. Parents do not want to provide this information twice. Fourth, proof of residency documents--our parents do not keep copies of leases and do not have good relationships with landlords and are not comfortable approaching them.
- One challenge is that not all Pre-K Coordinators are equal in their professionalism and understanding the intricacies of working with a Head Start program. Not staying updated with current information about how things should be happening can be frustrating as well. For the most part, we have very good, strong, trusting relationships with our Pre-K /LEA partners.
- In one school district, the superintendent felt that the burden for these funds fell to taxpayers and there was no need for a funding increase because Head Start is already receives federal monies. In another school district (our own grantee), the Chief Financial Officer removed a longstanding \$50,000 annual dedicated contribution (coming to our Head Start program as a line item in the school budget) from taxpayers to our agency in lieu of the expectation that we will now receive public pre-k funds. The rationale for this action was in order to keep the tax rate down. The elimination of these funds set us back toward reaching the goal of matching public school teacher salaries.

Comments

Head Start grantees offered additional comments about Head Start-School-Based partnerships:

- Assuring that school districts do not to terminate existing Head Start programs within local elementary schools and supplant them with Act 166 or PDEG programs is an absolutely critical issue. Terminating Head Start school-based programs (which typically have a socio-economically mixed group of children) forces Head Start to develop its own, non-collaborative programs comprised of almost exclusively low-income children.

- Now that Early Education Programs have their own classroom, it seems that they are not referring children to us like they used to. Public schools no longer invite to be part of the child find/ early education screenings.

Facilities Needs Identified during the 2014-2015 Program Year

Three events highlighted the need for facilities for Head Start and Early Head Start programs to serve additional numbers of children under age six:

- In May 2014, Vermont lawmakers enacted Act 166 entitling all three-, four-, and five-year-olds not already enrolled in kindergarten to state-funded prekindergarten education for 10 hours per week for 35 weeks annually;
- On December 12, 2014, the U.S. Department of Education awarded a \$33 million four-year federal Preschool Development Expansion Grant (PDEG) to the State of Vermont, and by the end of this grant, Vermont will be serving statewide about 1,818 four-year olds (70 percent) from families with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level guidelines with full school-day, full school year high quality preschool services (Office of the Governor 2014) <http://governor.vermont.gov/press-release/vermont-awarded-33-million-federal-preschool-expansion-grant>; and
- In early 2015, the U.S. Department of Human Services awarded Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) grants to Capstone Community Action and Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity.

To gauge the scope of facility needs in the 2014-2015 web survey, the VHSSCO asked Head Start directors about their Head Start and Early Head Start facility needs. All seven Head Start directors reported the need to remodel/renovate existing facilities, and four of seven directors indicated the need to build new facilities. One Head Start program director reported a need to build new facilities, while one director reported neither a need to build or rent new facilities nor a need to remodel/renovate existing facilities (see Figure 25).

Figure 25: Head Start and Early Head Start Facility Needs during the 2014-2015 Program Year

Answer Options	Response Count
Need to Build New Facilities	4
Need to Rent New Facilities	1
Need to Remodel/Renovate Existing Facilities	7
No Need to Build or Rent New Facilities and No Need to Remodel/Renovate Existing Facilities	1
Other (please specify): We are still trying desperately to locate a space for our Windsor center, but this is not easy as it has to meet certain requirements such as a place for the outside playground, adequate parking and enough space for a classroom.	1

Top Three Professional Development Needs Identified in the 2015-2016 Program Year

The VHSSCO asked Head Start directors in its 2015-2016 web-survey to list their top three professional development needs. Six Head Start program directors provided their top three professional development needs, and the VHSSCO categorized their 18 responses into these clusters of professional development needs: Social-emotional development for children, teacher licensure, Social-Emotional Development for Teachers, Data and Assessments, and Other.

Social-Emotional Development for Children (4 responses)

- Systemic approach to support children's social-emotional development
- Social / Emotional Development
- mental health for preschoolers
- Providing support to children exposed to substance abuse

Teacher Licensure (3 responses)

- licensed teachers- local opportunities for licensure
- Ability to obtain teacher licensure for Bachelor degreed teaching staff.
- Teachers obtaining licensure

Social-Emotional Development for Teachers (3 responses)

- resiliency for teachers--handling stress
- Availability of training for challenging behaviors for teaching staff
- Working with Challenging Behaviors

Data and Assessments (3 responses)

- Data Management
- Expansive utilization of Teaching Strategies Gold data
- CLASS: Instructional support teaching strategies

Other (5 responses)

- Program wide training in Early Multi-tiered Systems of Support
- Increasing Parent Involvement
- Communication skills
- Quality trainings available for autism.
- Time Management

One Head Start program director added that Infant/Toddler certification for partner staff is a professional development need.

Conclusion

Three Sets of Findings

The VHSSCO's analyses of the three sets of findings from the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 need assessment web-surveys showed that Head Start grantees have:

- Had collaboration strengths and weaknesses with their federal, state, community, and partners,
- Achieved or made progress toward achieving outcomes in the VHSSCO Five-Year Strategic Plan,
- Shared their perspectives on the benefits and challenges of Head Start-School-Based prekindergarten education partnerships;
- Identified their facility needs and the top three professional development needs of their Head Start programs; and
- Informed the VHSSCO's Five-Year Strategic Plan's implementation and its Fifth-Year Work Plan's development.

Strengths and Weaknesses

From analyzing the first set of data from the web surveys, the VHSSCO identified that four of six HSSCO Priorities covered in this report had higher proportions of strengths than weaknesses:

- School Transitions in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 program years
 - Head Start – Prekindergarten Partnership Development: 91 percent higher in,
 - Head Start Partnerships with LEAs: 88 percent higher in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 program years;
- Services for Children with Disabilities in the 2015-2016 program year: 100 percent higher;
- Early Childhood Systems in 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 program years: 64 percent higher;
- Child Care in the 2014-2015 program year: 23 percent higher; and
- Welfare/Child Welfare in the 2015-2016 program year: 33 percent higher;

One of six HSSCO Priorities had lower proportions of strengths than weaknesses:

- Professional Development in the 2014-2015 program year: four percent lower.

Progress toward Achieving Outcomes in the VHSCO Five-Year Strategic Plan

The second set of findings revealed that Head Start grantees and their federal, state, community, and partners:

- Achieved:
 - School Transitions Outcome 1.2: Parents, LEA leaders, and staff value Head Start and School Transitions efforts;
 - Child Care and Early Childhood Systems (CCECS) Outcome 3.1: Head Start/Early Head Start and CIS partnerships integrate services where appropriate; and
 - CCECS Outcome 3.3: Head Start/CIS have seamless and complimentary services for children and families;
- Made progress toward achieving:
 - School Transitions Expected Outcome 1.1: A school transition checklist will be used regionally;
 - CCECS Expected Outcome 3.4: There is a consistent referral process to ensure children gain access to CIS and/or Head Start/Early Head Start services that meet their needs and the needs of their families;
 - Regional Office Priorities (ROP)/Children with Disabilities Expected Outcome 4.1: There is greater understanding about services, systems and standards across partners.

The VHSSCO will work with Head Start and Early Head Start programs and its State and local partners to achieve these three expected outcomes by September 29, 2017, the end date of Vermont's federal five-year HSSCO grant project period.

Benefits and Challenges of Head Start-School-Based Prekindergarten Partnerships in the 2014-2015 Program Year

The third set of findings revealed that Head Start directors reported in their 2014-2015 web-survey responses benefits and challenges with respect to Head Start-School-Based Prekindergarten Partnerships. Head Start directors described several benefits of public school-based prekindergarten education partnerships, including the cost effectiveness, the provision of high quality comprehensive services to Head Start-enrolled and non-Head Start-enrolled children, and easier access for parents with children already enrolled in public schools. On the other hand, Head Start directors shared challenges in forming or maintaining partnerships with LEAs to deliver pre prekindergarten education in public school settings including: implementation of Act 166 and Act 46, differing philosophies of education, teaching styles, and addressing challenging behaviors, and assuring that school districts do not terminate existing Head Start-LEA prekindergarten education partnerships within local elementary schools and supplant them with non-collaborative or siloed Act 166 or federal Preschool

Development Expansion Grant programs. The VHSSCO will continue to work with CDD/DCF, AOE, school districts, and Head Start grantees to highlight the benefits and address the challenges of Head Start-School-Based Prekindergarten Partnerships.

Facility and Professional Development Needs of Head Start Grantees

The third set of findings also described facility and professional development needs of Head Start grantees. In their 2014-2015 program year web-survey responses, majorities of Head Start directors reported that their existing facilities that need to be remodeled/renovated and that they need to build new facilities. To the extent possible, the VHSSCO will work to identify funds to address these facility needs.

The VHSSCO asked Head Start directors in its 2015-2016 web-survey to list their top three professional development needs and categorized their responses into these clusters of professional development trainings needing to be addressed: social-emotional development for children, teacher licensure, socio-emotional development for teachers, and data and assessments. The VHSSCO director will continue to participate in the RTT-ELC grant supported PreK Teacher Capacity Work Group and the Higher Education Early Childhood Collaborative Committee to address the teacher licensure professional development needs. The VHSSCO director will work with CDD and AOE professional development staff and the OHS Region I T/TA system staff to ensure that the State and Federal professional development systems offer trainings and courses regarding how best to address child social-emotional development and teacher socio-emotional development needs. In addition, the VHSSCO director will work with OHS Region I T/TA system staff, the appropriate Office of Child Care and OHS-funded national T/TA center, and BBF SAC's Vermont Insights staff to support the professional development data and assessments needs of Head Start, Early Head Start, and other early childhood practitioners.

VHSSCO's Fifth Year Work Plan

The VHSSCO used the strengths and weaknesses identified from the analyses of the data gathered from the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 needs assessment surveys to draft its Fifth Year (September 30, 2016 – September 29, 2017) Work Plan of the VHSSCO (2012-2017) Five-Year Strategic Plan. In drafting its work plan, the VHSSCO also considered external factors including:

- Full statewide implementation of Act 166 effective July 1, 2016 making available universal pre-kindergarten education to all three-, four-, and non-kindergarten ready five-year-olds in Vermont and the State's decision to allow Head Start grantees that are approved prequalified prekindergarten education programs under Act 166 to receive the

statewide annual tuition rate of \$3,092 from school districts to provide Vermont approved prekindergarten education; and

- Input from the Vermont Head Start Association.

Dissemination of Report to Strengthen Collaboration

The VHSSCO will share the results of this report publicly particularly with stakeholders, including Vermont Head Start Association; CDD, DCF, AHS; AOE; and the BBF State Advisory Council, Inc. Through this process, the collaboration, coordination, and alignment of services, curricula, standards, and/or assessments between Head Start grantees and their partners will be strengthened for the benefit of young children and their families in Vermont.

Appendix A

Head Start and Early Head Start Programs

Paul Behrman, Director

Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO) Head Start and Early Head Start
431 Pine Street
Burlington, VT 05401
802-651-4180

Counties Served: Addison, Chittenden, Franklin, Grand Isle

Lori Canfield, Director

Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) Head Start
107 Park Street, Suite 1
Springfield, VT 05156
802-885-6669

County Served: Windsor

Debra Gass, Executive Director

Brattleboro Town School District-Early Education Services (BTSD-EES) Head Start and Early
Head Start
130 Birge St.
Brattleboro, VT 05301
802-254-3742

County Served: Windham

Joanne Mattsson, Director

Rutland Community Programs, Inc. (Rutland County Head Start)
78 Meadow Street, P.O. Box 222
Rutland, VT 05702
802-665-2620

County Served: Rutland

Linda Michniewicz, Director

Northeast Kingdom Community Action, Inc. (NEKCA) Head Start and Early Head Start
191 High Street
Barton, VT 05822
802-525-3362

Counties Served: Essex, Orleans, Caledonia

Marianne Miller, Director
Capstone Community Action Head Start and Early Head Start
20 Gable Place
Barre, VT 05641
802-479-1053
Counties Served: Lamoille, Orange, Washington

Betsy Rathbun-Gunn, Director
United Children's Service of Bennington County Head Start
P.O. Box 588
Bennington, VT 05201
802-442-3686
County Served: Bennington

Appendix B

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