

Self-Assessment 2024

Head Start



Northwest Community Action 

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Northeast Community Action Head Start Self-Assessment 2024

Introduction

Northwest Community Action (NWCA) Head Start 0-5 programs provide essential support to families with children aged 0-5 in four counties: Kittson, Lake of the Woods, Marshall, and Roseau. Our program serves families with children aged 0-3 through Home Visitors. Across seven communities, NWCA operates ten centers located in Baudette, Badger, Viking, Warroad, Roseau, Grygla, and Greenbush.

Documentation: Staff engagement and values survey, Parent Survey

Objectives:

1. To engage with community partners by sharing data, information, and details about the Head Start program. Many of our community partners needed to familiarize themselves with this process, and we aimed to enhance their understanding and awareness of Head Start.
2. To seek input from our community on effective strategies for promoting Head Start for recruitment of staff and children enrollment purposes.
3. To explore opportunities for collaboration with community partners to strengthen the Head Start program's impact and reach.
4. To gain best practices and ideas from our community partners

We are pleased to report that we successfully achieved our objectives. Our community partners better understood the Head Start program, its mission, and its impact on families and communities. The feedback received will be instrumental in refining our recruitment strategies and fostering stronger collaborations with community partners.

Method:

NWCA conducted a self-assessment involving community partners from our 4-county service area. The participants represented various sectors: education, health, workforce, staff, families, mental health. Input and feedback were also received during Policy Council and staff meetings.

Each Head Start department contributed to the assessment by creating questions, dashboards, and posters. The information demonstrates our data collection methods and the metrics we use to measure our success, progress and needs in our program.

Community Event:

1. **Focus Groups:** During this session, our team engaged with community partners to gather specific questions related to their areas of expertise. We encouraged in-depth discussions and insights tailored to each sector's perspective. The focus groups were on the workforce, education, family, and health.
2. **Mixed Group Discussion:** The second session involved a broader discussion with all participants. We generated general questions to facilitate dialogue and collaboration across different sectors.

Through this self-assessment process, we enhanced understanding, collaboration, and alignment among our community partners. The insights and feedback gathered are instrumental in refining our program strategies, improving our services, and strengthening our partnerships to support the families and children better.

Workforce

Documentation: Head Start Community Assessment, Staff Survey

Transportation

Access to a driver's license and a vehicle is pivotal for attending school or work. Challenges in transportation encompass delays in obtaining a driver's license, economic barriers to vehicle ownership, and social isolation due to limited mobility. Additional issues include scarce school bussing for older students, difficulties sharing a single vehicle, lack of public transportation in remote areas, and weather-related transportation problems. These issues can lead to unemployment, decreased school attendance, and limited access to support networks and vehicle repair programs.

Recruitment

Recruiting and retaining a consistent workforce is challenging due to various factors. Costly and limited childcare options make it difficult for parents to maintain work hours. Addressing the barriers requires a comprehensive approach, considering personal choices, attitudes, resource accessibility, healthcare, job market dynamics, and financial education to foster a reliable workforce. Incentives were viewed as limited success, rather investing in staff wages and benefits were recommended.

Professional Development

Effective professional development is crucial for maintaining a consistent and skilled workforce, but there are challenges to address. Employees often leave for higher pay, and there's a lack of compensation incentives for those pursuing further education—training tailored to employees' specific roles to enhance job performance and retention. Implementing mentoring programs can offer guidance to new employees. Sharing resources and adopting a "bite-sized" training approach, like lunch and learn sessions, can enhance engagement and retention compared to all-day training. Documenting and tracking training and curtailing it to staff needs was a frequent recommendation.

Recommendations for Improvement

Develop a structured professional development program that offers clear pathways for career advancement and increased compensation for additional education and skills.

Implement role-specific training programs that address each position's unique challenges and responsibilities.

Establish mentoring programs to support new employees and facilitate knowledge sharing among staff.

To enhance engagement and retention, consider altering the training format to include more frequent and focused sessions, such as lunch and learn programs.

New Families

Connecting with individuals and families relocating to the area is crucial for community growth and filling employment opportunities. Collaborating with local cultural organizations and community groups can help address the unique needs of newcomers. Promote the benefits of rural living by offering information about the regional climate. Developing partnerships with churches, schools, and community organizations can address population and employment challenges.

Community events, welcome programs, and providing newcomers with resources about housing options and local amenities are effective engagement and outreach. Utilizing social media and online platforms for digital outreach, language and cultural support, and community workshops can further aid in connecting newcomers with local resources and services. Focus on welcome atmosphere and meeting the needs of diverse community members indicates a high level of engagement.

Family

Documentation: In-kind, Current Enrollment, Attendance, Family Outcomes, Attendance

Chronic Absenteeism

Addressing chronic attendance issues requires a collaborative effort among educators, families, and community resources to improve educational outcomes and well-being. Effective strategies include educating staff and families on the importance of sleep and establishing healthy routines.

It's valuable to engage with families to identify and address attendance barriers like transportation or health issues and to foster strong communication between parents and teachers early in the school year. Providing teachers with family service training to understand family dynamics and potential attendance obstacles helps build relationships and demonstrates the relation between attendance, engagement and healthy routines.

Promoting parent/child engagement

Parent/Child engagement is essential for a child's academic success and overall well-being. Effective strategies include emphasizing parents' critical role in their child's education and development. It is crucial to encourage parents to form strong bonds with their children from an early age. Modeling positive interactions between parents and children and inviting parents to participate in classroom activities, events, and conferences fosters a welcoming environment for collaboration between parents and educators.

Resources, workshops, and training sessions on child development and effective parenting practices can enhance parents' skills and confidence. Building trust through open and respectful communication and encouraging meaningful parent-child activities strengthens

the relationship and bond. Recognizing and celebrating parents' efforts and contributions to their child's education promotes ongoing engagement.

Drug Abuse/Prevention

Addressing drug abuse and prevention challenges requires a proactive and supportive strategy. Key measures include educating families about the risks of drug abuse through workshops and materials and cultivating a supportive, non-judgmental environment. Providing information about available resources, collaborating with local organizations and treatment centers, and emphasizing safety and trust are crucial.

Enhance prevention efforts with workshops on resilience, coping skills, and healthy decision-making, and connect families to counseling services and support groups. Implementing stress relief programs and creating engaging, interactive programs promoting positive behaviors and life skills can establish a strong foundation for a drug-free lifestyle.

Visibility of Head Start

Use a comprehensive communication strategy to boost the visibility of NWCA's Head Start programs, including word-of-mouth recommendations, leveraging social media to share success stories and events, and actively advertising through flyers, information sessions, and local collaborations. Open communication with local school districts targeted outreach at community events, and partnerships with healthcare providers during well-child check appointments are effective outreach methods.

Additionally, introducing digital marketing campaigns, hosting community workshops, and collaborating with local businesses and non-profits can further promote the program. Recruiting and training parent ambassadors and sharing success stories can enhance credibility.

Family Outcomes

This feedback will provide outreach strategies and better connect with families for goal setting. It is essential to provide training on goal-setting and support strategies to EHS staff and Family Advocates. Implementing a goal progress tracking system and regular reviews can gauge the effectiveness of these strategies. Feedback from families about the goal-setting process will guide ongoing improvements.

Education

Documentation: Child Observation Record 2022-2023, Individual Family Service plans, Individual Education Plans, Teaching Strategies Gold report 2021-2023 for three and 4-year-old

Dual Language Learners

Several strategies can be employed to boost the understanding and appreciation of family language and culture. Collaborating with professional translators ensures accurate translations for school communications, fostering effective communication with families. Involving community members familiar with the program's diverse cultures in workshops and events can educate staff and families about various traditions, enhancing inclusivity. Encouraging staff to use language-learning apps can improve communication with non-English-speaking families.

Translating critical communications into multiple languages and offering the Teaching Strategies Gold assessment in Spanish supports Spanish-speaking families. Ongoing cultural competency training and language learning opportunities for staff further increase their awareness and communication abilities.

A child's forever teacher.

To empower families as lifelong educators for their children by implementing various strategies. Acknowledging parents' past school experiences builds trust, ensuring the program's commitment to a positive educational environment. Creating opportunities for shared positive experiences through workshops and events encourages parents to engage in their child's learning. Providing families with take-home activity kits, establishing a family library, and educating parents on school practices and special education services helps them navigate the educational system.

Offering parent education workshops on child development, early literacy, and effective parenting equips parents to support their child's learning. Encouraging parent involvement in the classroom through volunteering, conferences, and regular communication strengthens the parent-teacher relationship and fosters a supportive educational environment.

Transitions

Collaborating with local elementary schools and attending events like Busy Buddies familiarizes children and families with the school environment, easing the transition and fostering continuity. Aligning the curriculum and developmental expectations across Early Head Start, Head Start, and kindergarten supports children's readiness for the next educational level.

Adjusting age group placements and learning environments, providing additional support for children needing extra assistance, and implementing transition practices like busing assistance and one-on-one sessions with staff ease the adjustment to the next educational level. Offering staff professional development on child development and transition strategies is essential.

Providing adult education for parents to support their child's learning at home, offering resources and workshops to prepare children for kindergarten, and establishing a peer mentorship program where outgoing Head Start children share their experiences with incoming children to help ease the transition can be beneficial. Additionally, creating

informational material for parents and children about the next educational level can be beneficial.

Home School Collaboration

Creating opportunities for collaborative learning and engagement between homeschool families and the Early Head Start and Head Start programs, such as hosting joint activities and events, fosters a supportive educational community. Maintaining regular communication and support for homeschool families by providing ongoing guidance and resources assists them in supporting their child's learning at home.

Health

Documentation: Family status of insurance coverage, physicals, dental exams, immunizations, vision and hearing referrals

Dental Access

NWCA can implement several strategies to address dental access challenges in the community. Collaborating with mobile dental services can offer on-site dental care at community locations, reducing the need for families to travel long distances. Promoting these services and scheduling regular visits can boost their utilization among families.

Establishing partnerships with local dental providers can enhance access to dental care for Medicaid patients. NWCA can seek grants and funding to incentivize dentists to work with Medicaid patients, making dental care more affordable and accessible. Additionally, promoting dental access programs in nearby areas like Bemidji/Bagley and facilitating referrals and care coordination is crucial.

Increasing community awareness about oral health through workshops, seminars, and educational materials can encourage families to prioritize dental care. Implementing tele-dentistry services can offer virtual dental consultations and screenings, which is especially beneficial for families facing barriers to traditional in-person dental services.

Regular community outreach and engagement activities can help identify families' dental care needs and provide information and support to access dental services. Collaborate with community organizations and local agencies to raise awareness and facilitate access to dental care is essential.

Nutrition

NWCA can implement several strategies to increase awareness and access to food support resources for families. Community outreach and promotion efforts raise awareness of available food support resources through various platforms like community events, local organizations, schools, and social media. Emphasize and promote food support programs such as Ruby's Pantry, food shelves, WIC (Women, Infants, and Children), backpack programs, and free lunches for families.

Integrating information about food support resources into the screening and enrollment processes connects families with the necessary food support programs and services.

Regularly updating the NWCA website with comprehensive information, resources, and links to food support programs can provide families with clear and detailed information about the various food support services, eligibility criteria, application processes, and contact information. Creating and distributing informational brochures, flyers, and materials about food support programs and services to families, schools, community centers, local organizations, and agencies within the community can help raise awareness and connect families with the necessary resources and support.

Collaborating and partnering with local organizations, community agencies, schools, and stakeholders is essential to promote food support resources, share information, and coordinate efforts to increase awareness, access, and utilization of food assistance programs and services among families in the area. Implement effective strategies, initiatives, and campaigns can address food insecurity and support families in accessing and utilizing food support resources and services.

Providing personalized assistance, guidance, and support to families in navigating and accessing food support programs and services is essential. Offering individualized assistance in completing applications, understanding eligibility criteria, and connecting with the necessary resources and services ensures that families receive the support and help they need to meet their food and nutritional needs, improve their overall well-being and food security, and foster a healthy and thriving community for all community members.

Well Child Check

To address the barriers hindering families from completing well-child checks and emphasize the importance of this essential care, NWCA can implement several strategies. One significant barrier is the ongoing effects of COVID-19, which has shifted families' priorities, causing them to postpone or neglect regular health check-ups. To combat this, NWCA should increase awareness and education about the significance of well-child checks and the benefits of regular pediatric care through targeted outreach, education, and communication with families. Emphasizing the critical role of these check-ups in monitoring child development, detecting potential health issues early, providing preventive care, and supporting children's overall health and well-being is crucial.

Another barrier is the lack of awareness and promotion of well-child checks, which may contribute to families not prioritizing these appointments. NWCA should collaborate with healthcare providers, clinics, and public health departments to promote and prioritize well-child checks, streamline appointment scheduling, and address staffing issues to ensure families can access timely and convenient appointments for their children's health screenings and check-ups. Partnering with public health departments and local organizations to conduct outreach and catch-up campaigns can encourage families to schedule and attend well-child checks, provide information and resources on the

importance of regular pediatric care, and support families in scheduling and attending appointments to ensure children receive the necessary care and screenings.

Additionally, missed appointments and the need to catch up on visits, as well as accessibility issues at public health departments, may contribute to delays in completing well-child checks. NWCA should support public health departments in remodeling and enhancing accessibility to services, improve scheduling systems and availability of appointments, and collaborate with healthcare providers to expand access to well-child checks and essential health services for families in the community. Providing personalized assistance, guidance, and support to families in scheduling and attending well-child checks, addressing concerns, and providing information and resources to help families understand the importance of regular pediatric care and the benefits of well-child checks for children's health and development is essential.

Lastly, community engagement and education are vital to raising awareness of the importance of well-child checks. NWCA should engage with the community, schools, childcare providers, and local organizations to raise awareness of the importance of well-child checks, provide education on child health and development, and promote the benefits of regular pediatric care to support families in prioritizing and accessing essential health services for their children.

Vaccines

The increasing trend of families refusing immunizations poses several concerns for children preparing for school. This refusal can lead to challenges in school enrollment due to non-compliance with immunization requirements and heightens the risk of vaccine-preventable diseases, potentially endangering the broader community and vulnerable populations. Additionally, children may miss out on essential immunizations and preventive care, affecting their health, well-being, and educational opportunities.

Formal Assessments

Families' barriers to further diagnostic testing, follow-up, and treatment are multifaceted. They can include transportation issues, travel requirements, financial constraints, logistical challenges, and limited awareness of available services. These barriers can prevent families from attending medical appointments and receiving necessary care. To address these challenges, NWCA should implement transportation assistance programs, offer financial support to cover medical and travel expenses, improve communication and coordination among healthcare providers, and increase awareness and education about available diagnostic and treatment options.

Health Insurance

Obtaining health insurance can be challenging due to barriers like a paperwork-intensive process, limited access to assistance, and the complexity of the enrollment process. These obstacles can deter individuals and families from accessing essential healthcare services. By

collaborating with healthcare providers, community organizations, and stakeholders and providing targeted assistance and resources.

Safety

Ensuring safety in the classroom and homes is vital for the well-being of children and families. Strategies to strengthen safety include enhancing access to safety items like first aid kits and detectors, promoting safe firearm storage through gun lock programs, advocating for bicycle safety with helmets and education, conducting regular safety drills, developing comprehensive safety policies, and increasing safety awareness through education programs.

Parenting

Supporting and empowering parents is crucial for the well-being and development of children and families. Strategies to assist parents include enhancing parenting skills through education and workshops, promoting financial stability with employment and financial literacy resources, providing access to essential services like healthcare and childcare, offering flexible programs such as home visiting and parent support groups, building supportive networks among parents, caregivers, and community members, encouraging community engagement and involvement, and recognizing and appreciating parents' efforts.

Sleep Hygiene

Promoting good sleep hygiene is vital for children's optimal growth, development, and well-being. Strategies to enhance sleep quality and routines include educating parents on the importance of sleep through daily or weekly tips, establishing consistent and calming bedtime routines, reducing electronic device usage before sleep, ensuring a comfortable sleep environment with clean bedding and white noise, maintaining a regular sleep schedule, addressing older siblings' activities that may disturb younger children's sleep, and providing resources and schedules to guide families in establishing healthy sleep habits. Implementing these solutions can help families support healthy sleep hygiene for their children, benefiting their overall health and well-being.

Mixed Groups

Areas to improve

Improving agency performance is a continuous process involving reflection, feedback, and proactive measures to enhance service delivery, communication, and support for families and communities. Critical areas for improvement include strengthening collaboration with public health to share resources and support, improving communication with community partners to promote awareness of services and facilitate referrals, providing resources and support for new families to ensure a smooth transition into the community, supporting staff satisfaction and professional development to enhance morale and retention, implementing effective survey and feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement, improving

communication with families to understand and address their needs, offering flexible screening times to accommodate families' schedules, increasing Spanish-speaking staff and resources to support Spanish-speaking families, expanding language options to cater to diverse families, developing family education and support programs during child education times, increasing referrals to outside agencies to meet diverse needs, and strengthening communication and collaboration with Northwest Coop Adult Education to support families and adults in the community.

Community

NWCA is significantly impacting the community by supporting families in achieving their goals and enhancing their well-being and resilience. The agency excels in communication through weekly emails, fostering transparency, engagement, and strong relationships with families, staff, and community partners. Positive public relations and word of mouth have improved, showcasing the agency's valuable services and support to families and communities. The agency actively promotes family engagement, involvement, and participation and supports families in need by providing essential resources and assistance. Continuous improvement is prioritized through data analysis and strategic planning to identify trends and areas for enhancement. The agency values and supports its employees, creating a positive, inclusive, collaborative work environment. Flexibility in scheduling, a focus on building solid relationships, and increasing accessibility to services further contribute to the agency's positive impact. Empowering families and children is at the core of the agency's mission, promoting growth, development, independence, and resilience. Building upon these strengths and areas of success will further enhance the agency's effectiveness and the support and services provided to families, children, and communities.

Engaging new families is vital for growth and success. To effectively reach and engage families, consider the following strategies: Utilize various advertising channels to promote your services and encourage positive word of mouth and referrals from satisfied families and community partners. Strengthen collaborations with community organizations, agencies, and businesses to enhance the visibility and accessibility of your services. Create and distribute attractive and informative marketing materials in strategic locations frequented by young and new families. Implement community outreach and education initiatives to connect and build trust with these families. Organize engaging events and workshops to showcase your services and foster community connections. Utilize social media platforms to share your agency's success stories, services, and events and connect with young and new families. Engaging with families at community events, fairs, markets, and festivals will also help promote services and build relationships and trust.

Communication

Effective communication with the families your agency serves is vital for its success and impact. To enhance communication and engagement with these families, consider using phone calls to provide direct support, information, and updates and build personal connections. Host open houses, information sessions, and events to engage with families, showcase your services, and foster relationships. Implement an alert system to send timely

updates and information. Utilize social media platforms like Facebook to share information, updates, and success stories and enhance visibility and engagement. Build and nurture relationships with families to foster trust and encourage open communication and active engagement. Create and distribute informative marketing materials in strategic locations frequented by families. Implement community outreach and education initiatives to connect and build trust with families. Collaborate with local businesses and employers to distribute your agency's information and enhance visibility. Use texting and mobile communication to send updates and reminders and facilitate communication and engagement. Develop and utilize apps and digital tools to enhance communication, accessibility, and engagement. Promote positive and constructive communication practices to effectively engage and support families and address concerns. Provide training and support for parents and staff to enhance communication skills and foster effective and supportive relationships. Maintain an informative and engaging website to provide resources, support, and updates and to improve visibility and connection. Use tools like Learning Genie and reminder tools to provide information, updates, and support and enhance collaboration and participation.

Adult Education

To effectively engage parents and adults, addressing topics that align with their interests and needs is crucial. Some key areas of interest include financial planning and education, encompassing topics like paying for college, financial literacy, and retirement planning. Parents are also keen to learn about effective parenting strategies, child development, and how to engage with their families as they grow. Enhancing language and communication skills is another area of interest, along with personal development, health and wellness, technology and digital skills, educational opportunities, and community networking.

Dual Language Learners

Various strategies support Dual Language Learners (DLL)/English Language Learners (ELL) and their families. Cultural and linguistic support can be enhanced through programs, workshops, and ESL training for parents and children, utilizing bilingual and multilingual curriculum resources, and employing translators and interpreters for effective communication. Communication and engagement can be improved by using real-time translation services on digital platforms like Zoom, translating newsletters using tools like Google Translate, and offering multilingual forms and documents. Educational support includes providing language and literacy development programs and promoting cultural awareness through inclusive educational materials and activities. Community and network support involve collaborating with community organizations and establishing networking groups for DLL/ELL families. Technology and digital literacy training can enhance access to online resources and communication tools. Lastly, providing parent education and support groups can empower DLL/ELL parents to actively engage in their children's learning and advocate for their needs.

Strengths and Needs for Collaboration

Strengths: Collaborative engagement unites agencies and community members towards common goals, allowing for sharing resources and raising awareness of services.

Challenges: Effective communication, aligned goals, and equitable resource distribution are challenges that require coordinated planning and transparent collaboration to ensure their success and impact.

Agencies Working Together:

Strengths: A unified strategy encourages cohesive efforts, while shared responsibility and resources combine to provide increased support and opportunities, bolstering the collaboration's effectiveness and reach.

Challenges: Creating aligned goals, effective communication, and equitable resource utilization are essential for the collaboration's success, demanding coordinated efforts and transparent communication.

Marketing Events:

Strengths: Enhanced visibility and collaborative branding boost the collaboration's reputation and effectively engage the community, utilizing combined resources and expertise for impactful outreach.

Challenges: Need effective strategies for outreach and innovative communication connect with and engage the community effectively.