

Guidance for Developing Memorandums of Understanding for the EHS-CC Partnerships

Prior to entering any kind of partnership agreement, both parties should conduct a thorough review of the opportunities and risks involved. In the context of the EHS-CC Partnerships in addition to mutually beneficial outcomes, there are also risks involved for each partner. Prior to entering any formal partnership, the grantee and the child care providers must assess whether or not the benefits will outweigh the risks.

The grantee in this partnership is held responsible for ensuring that the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) are fully met. This requires a level of confidence in each child care provider that they will have the capacity and commitment to fully implement the standards within 18 months of the grant award, as well as throughout the term of the partnership. The child care provider also assumes considerable risk, because in most states, rising to HSPPS means a reduction in group size and staff to child ratio requirements. These reductions, in addition to other HSPPS requirements, can represent a significant loss of revenue and an increase in costs for child care providers. Implementing HSPPS requires a different business and program model than is customary for most child care providers. Willingness to engage in this partnership requires significant changes in organizational culture, which can have initial ripple effects that can create stress on the program, staff, and families.

While each partnership model will have different approaches to ensuring that roles and responsibilities are met by each partner, there are some common elements that require attention. *Grantees must* ensure that the child care provider has a clear understanding of the HSPPS, and is willing to participate in a system of monitoring that includes developing and implementing compliance plans. *The child care provider must* determine if the loss of revenue and additional program costs will be balanced out by the reimbursement for services offered by the grantee, the increase in the quality of their program, and the benefits to the families served. Therefore, it is essential that partnership agreements acknowledge the risks involved for both parties, and *clearly state a consensual approach for ameliorating those risks*. Articulating the roles and responsibilities for each party, and ensuring there is a process for both parties to address conflicts or challenges in rising to those roles and responsibilities within a memorandum of understanding (MOU) is paramount for a successful partnership.

The attached MOU provides a framework for developing formal EHS-CC partnerships. Each grantee will need to determine the level of detail needed in their MOU. Grantees may also choose to use a separate contract for the reimbursement of services from the child care provider, and use the MOU only for the description of how the partnership will be implemented. That is best determined by seeking legal counsel with advisors who have an understanding of the contract laws in a given state.

This MOU template has been written to reflect the requirements of the EHS-CC Partnership funding opportunity, and can be modified based on your partnership's specific needs and circumstances. Grantees and child care partners may decide to provide attachments to the MOU that provide greater detail for how certain systems and processes will be implemented, such as:

- Schedule for financial and administrative reporting
- Description of the ERSEA processes
- Schedule for ensuring developmental screenings are completed in the required time frames
- Calendar of days of service
- Professional development calendar
- Description of the agreed upon curriculum
- Description of the planned parent engagement strategies
- Monitoring schedule and a sample of the monitoring tool
- The individual partnership budget
- Copy of the initial partnership assessment that identifies any needed changes in facilities and the agreed timeline and funding for those changes

Lastly, if the MOU is included in the Appendices, the document can be single-spaced. If it's included in the Application Narrative file, it must be double-spaced.