

# Training Module 4

**M**odule Four trainings focus on three critical pieces of a Head Start Program's success: communication, the resource and referral process, and home visits. Each training gives the group the opportunity to recognize existing strategies, and also to develop new skills in each of these three areas.



The trainings also provide an opportunity to review and integrate some of the themes and skills introduced in Modules One, Two and Three. But because Module Three is devoted to training teachers, Module Four can be presented to non-teaching staff after they've completed the workshops in Module Two.

The goals of Module Four are:

- **Better Communication:** recognizing the importance of successful communication and identifying ways to improve communication within the program.
- **Developing a Resource and Referral Process:** identifying current and needed resources to support all families effectively.
- **Getting the Most from Home Visits:** recognizing opportunities to engage families during home visits.

The individual or team committed to leading these workshops should understand that they may encounter potential obstacles and/or resistance to these trainings from some participants, as the topics to be discussed can inspire very strong emotions. Each topic is presented in a way that provides guidance for managing such situations to encourage learning, open communication, and safety for participants.

The order of the trainings allows participants to build skills by first understanding key concepts, and then reflecting on what they, as individuals, bring to their program and work.

The ***Introduction to the Modules*** is a resource for Workshop Leaders, offering support in facilitating successful trainings. In addition, each training outlines goals, objectives, methods and content while also providing points of preparation and reflection for the individual or team responsible for leading the training. You will find a Workshop Evaluation at the end of each workshop along with a list of other Family Connections materials that can provide additional support to the workshop's topic and themes.



## The Training Modules

# Better Communication

Good communication is a key component for any successful program, but it's also important to recognize that “communication” is a broad topic that can mean different things to different people. For example, it may refer to the ways a program communicates general information to families (written materials, face-to-face conversations, postings on the wall, etc.). And it may also refer to differing individual or group communication styles. It helps to be aware of these different aspects of communication in our programs as we work toward finding the most effective way to connect with colleagues and families. This workshop focuses on communication at a program level and can serve as a first step for improving communication practices in general.

## Goal

To provide an introduction to the role of communication at a Head Start program by identifying ways information is currently shared, and offering an opportunity to brainstorm ideas for improving communication.

## Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Reflect on the challenges of good communication
- ▶ Learn about strategies used at their site for communication
- ▶ Generate ideas and goals for improved communication

## Method and Content

This workshop has three distinct sections, each designed to build on one another.

- ▶ Exercise One: Sharing a Message
- ▶ Exercise Two: Identifying Existing Strategies for Communication
- ▶ Exercise Three: Ideas for Improving Communication

In Exercise One, participants are asked to share a message from one person to the next, observing the changes from beginning to end. The next exercise helps participants identify current strategies used in program communication. In the final exercise, suggestions for improved communication are reviewed and adapted. While the exercises are related, you will want to give directions and set time limits for each separately.

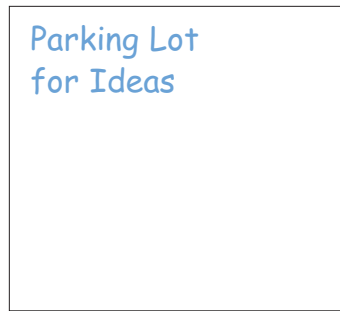
## Getting Started

### What You Need:

- ▶ Time — this training should be about 2 hours, not including Workshop Leader preparation. For more information on **Workshop Time Management**, see the *Introduction to the Modules*.
- ▶ A training space large enough to accommodate all the participants with room to divide participants into three groups. For large groups, you may want to consider including 2 workshop leaders to help manage and respond to participant needs. For more information on considerations about **Group Size**, see the *Introduction to the Modules*.
- ▶ Seating for the training group.
- ▶ Prepare a training packet for each participant with the following materials:
  - Handout 1: “Better Communication and You”
  - A blank piece of paper
  - Workshop Evaluation Form.
- ▶ A pen or pencil for each participant.
- ▶ Three large pieces of paper.
- ▶ Two different colored markers for the Workshop Leader.

### Preparing the Workshop Space:

- ▶ Prepare the space for Exercise One by creating three separate groups of seating.
- ▶ Place a training packet on each chair in the room.
- ▶ Prepare three large pieces of paper. Title one of them “Parking Lot for Ideas.”



- ▶ Prepare the second large piece of paper with title (see below).



- ▶ Reserve the third large piece of paper to record feedback from Exercise One.
- ▶ Display the large pieces of paper so that the whole group will be able to see each and the Workshop Leader can write on them easily.

### Workshop Leader Preparation

Read through all the workshop materials first. Take time to reflect on your own responses to the exercise questions and your own challenges and strengths in communication.

Discuss the theme of the workshop ahead of time with the director and other supervisors. Explain that because this workshop is designed to explore the communication strategies used in the program, it will be far more successful if all staff from the program participate, including the director.

Consider that while the group will experience greater benefits from working together, giving honest feedback with the entire staff present can make some participants feel vulnerable. Indeed, communication is a topic that can generate some strong feelings and reactions. For the purposes of this training, it is important to ensure that the conversation emphasizes reflecting on communication practices within the program, as opposed to evaluating or critiquing an individual's style of communication.

Keep in mind that the intention of this workshop is to discuss communication in the context of a game-like exercise designed to mimic some of the same hurdles of real program communication. Remind staff that Exercise One is a chance to have fun with this topic. It is not a test, or a means of finding fault with any one individual.

Reflect on these themes ahead of time in order to plan your strategies for keeping the group on task, including the composition of your small groups in Exercise One.

## Workshop Leader Strategy: Creating Smaller Groups

Three small groups must be created (regardless of the number of participants) in order to perform Exercise One. Here are some options for creating smaller groups. You can:

- Allow the participants to create their groups by seating themselves. This works well if you feel participants work fairly well together overall and will engage in the activity easily. Keep in mind that for the purposes of Exercise One, at least one person in Group 1 and Group 2 must be able to communicate with each other in a language other than English. If there are not two individuals in each group who can talk with one another in a language other than English, consider reassigning the participants. If there are not two participants who have this skill, read through the Alternative Exercise One.
- Assign participants to groups ahead of time. Before the workshop begins, review your participant list and decide who might work well together. Then you can meet participants at the door and direct them to their assigned groups. This strategy is especially useful for individuals who could benefit from interacting with less familiar colleagues. This option may be used to keep participants on task or to enhance the conversation through new combinations across professional roles.

### Introduction to the Training

Workshop Leaders are encouraged to use their own words to introduce the training. Some key points to consider are:

- ▶ Welcome the group and review logistics – general agenda, time frame, when to expect breaks, materials, sign-in sheet, etc.
- ▶ The topic of the training is “Better Communication.” Offer a description of what this means.

For example, you might say:

**“The term ‘communication’ can mean many different things. For this training, let’s think of communication as all the ways that information is shared in our program. That includes all staff and parent communication, both formal (as in newsletters) and informal (such as greetings).”**

- ▶ Describe the objectives of the training:
  - To reflect on the challenges to good communication
  - To learn about strategies used at this program
  - To generate ideas for improved communication
- ▶ Explain the “Parking Lot for Ideas” sheet as follows: during the training, if a question, suggestion, or concern unrelated to the training exercise, but related to the topic is offered, the Workshop Leader will record it on the “Parking Lot for Ideas” sheet. Refer back to these ideas at the end of the training for further discussion as time permits.
- ▶ Review the *Training Ground Rules*, which are a short list of statements intended to promote a safe, positive environment for all participants. These can be printed on a piece of paper for all to see, but reviewing the rules and asking for group agreement is the most important step before beginning the exercise.

## Training Ground Rules

**There are no right or wrong answers** in any of the activities we will be doing today. Everyone's opinions and feelings are respected here.

**One at a time.** We want to hear what everyone has to say, so it is important to remember that group discussion requires strong listening skills.

**Learning takes time.** We will not rush one another when trying to understand and participate.

**Maintain Confidentiality.** While sharing our experiences we do not need to use names of children, parents or staff.

## Exercise One: Sharing a Message

This exercise is a good opportunity to begin a conversation about communication. It is meant to be fun and to give people a chance to start thinking about how communication can be challenging at times.

- ▶ Explain that a task will be assigned to each group regarding a message about a child.
- ▶ Announce the tasks for each group:
  - Group 1 will be told a message; they'll condense that message, and then translate it into another language. (Note: If no pair of bilingual staff are present in the training, see *Alternative Exercise One* at the end of Exercise One)
  - Group 2 will receive the message and translate it back into English.
  - Group 3 will receive the message from Group 2, decide how to share it with a parent, and report back to the Workshop Leader.

**Let the groups know that they will be encouraged to do these tasks quickly.** This is done playfully to mimic the fast pace of work in a Head Start. Emphasize that this exercise is like a game show in which the group is navigating a kind of "communication obstacle course." In order to receive the best results, the groups must remain quiet while the other group tries to accomplish its task.

### Begin Exercise One by approaching Group 1

#### Group 1:

Tell participants in this group the following message (and remember that it's important that *only* Group 1 hears the original message).

Jamari had been following Derek around the classroom all morning. Derek had told Jamari "stop" several times, but Jamari continued to follow him and was grabbing toys out of Derek's hand. When the teacher was reading a book to the whole group during Circle Time, Derek bit Jamari on the arm. Both kids began crying hysterically. Derek got pulled out of the group for a discussion. Jamari's skin was not broken, but there will probably be a mark. The teacher put a cold pack on Jamari's arm.

*The message needs to get to Jamari's mom at pick-up.*

- Ask the group to shorten and rewrite the message in one or two sentences.
- Ask the group to identify participants who speak a language other than English.
- Choose one person to translate the message from English to the second language.
- Ask that person to deliver the message to the designated participant in Group 2 who can speak the same language.

**Group 2:**

- Ask the designated person to translate the message back into English and then whisper the message to a person in their group.
- Ask that individual to whisper the message to the participant to their right (similar to the child's game "Telephone"). All participants should continue this pattern until it reaches the last person in the group.
- Ask the last person to deliver the message to Group 3.

**Group 3:**

- Agree on a way to write the message as a note to the child's parent.
- Deliver the message back to the Workshop Leader.

### **Workshop Leader Strategy: Alternative Exercise One**

If no pair of bilingual staff are present in the training, explain to the participants that:

**Group 1** will be told a message that they must condense as a group into two or three sentences. Next, Group 1 must designate someone who will whisper the message to a designated person from Group 2.

**Group 2:** The individual who received the message from Group 1 then whispers the message to a person in their group. Each individual will then whisper the message to the participant to their right (similar to the child's game "Telephone"). All participants should continue this pattern until it reaches the last person in the group.

Ask the last person to deliver the message to Group 3.

▶ When the Workshop Leader receives the message from Group 3 it should be read aloud. Then, read the original message to compare if/how the message changed.

▶ Next, pose the following questions to the group:

- Did the message change? If so, how?
- What made this exercise challenging?
- What made this exercise useful?

▶ Encourage participants to give examples when answering these questions and record the answers on the fourth large piece of paper. The Workshop Leader can help facilitate this conversation by asking participants, "Did your role influence how you answered this question?" or "How did it feel to do this exercise?"

**Examples of participant responses and themes for discussion to be encouraged by the Workshop Leader are presented in Table 1.**

**Table 1. Sample responses for Exercise One**

Response Categories	Examples of potential responses	Themes for workshop leader to develop in the discussion
<b>How did the message change?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The name of the child bitten was wrong</li> <li>• The context of the bite got lost</li> <li>• The first-aid efforts were missing</li> </ul>	Whenever information is passed, details and context can get changed or lost along the way.
<b>What made the exercise challenging?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The instructions were confusing</li> <li>• We didn't have enough time</li> <li>• It's hard to translate quickly</li> <li>• I didn't hear the other person well</li> <li>• We didn't want the parent to be angry, but they needed to know what happened</li> <li>• We were nervous about how the parents might react</li> <li>• It was a lot of information to summarize</li> </ul>	<p>These tasks were designed with real challenges in mind.</p> <p>Obstacles such as a short time frame, differences in first language, and the audience who will receive the information can all be challenges.</p>
<b>What made this exercise useful?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It showed how it can be tricky to pass along information accurately</li> <li>• It made us think about the task in groups</li> <li>• It made us think about real situations that have arisen in the program</li> </ul>	Sometimes we assume that effective communication will happen automatically. Instead, it's important to practice and imagine real life challenges in communication and how we might improve them.

**Transition to Exercise Two**

The last exercise was meant to be both fun and instructive. In a light-hearted way, it highlights some of the challenges that programs face when sharing information. Summarize the purpose and discoveries of Exercise One and explain to the participants that in Exercise Two they will look at the strategies for communication already in place in the program. This will encourage participants to link Exercise One with Exercise Two.

*For example, you might say,*

*“Why did we just do that? This exercise was a chance to have fun with a real challenge. As we discovered together, getting communication right all the time is difficult. You can see how easily messages passed from one person to another can change or be misunderstood, and why effective communication is so important. In order to think more about how information is shared in this program, let’s talk about the strategies we already use to communicate.*

## Exercise Two: Identifying Existing Strategies for Communication

The intent of this exercise is to help participants see the many forms that communication takes. The goal is to list all of the program's communication strategies that are already in place without judging or evaluating them.

► Ask the participants to list the ways in which information is shared in their program. Both informal and formal strategies should be considered. Encourage them to think about all the ways they communicate, no matter how small. Remind them to consider communication that happens between everyone in the program — staff to staff, supervisor to staff, staff to families, families to staff, staff to outside consultants, etc. You may need to give a few examples to get the group started, e.g. newsletters, monthly phone calls, team meetings, morning greetings, etc.

Record responses on the sheet of paper titled “Strategies for Communication”

### Workshop Leader Strategy:

The Workshop Leader may find that participants get off topic and begin talking about which kinds of communication work better than others. Or, the topic may lead to a conversation regarding how the participants feel about a certain kind of communication. The Workshop Leader can help get the conversation back on track by reminding participants that the task in this exercise is to list all types of communication, regardless of effectiveness, frequency, formality, etc.

Sometimes it is important to remind people to “Take off their filters,” not to judge or censor contributions, but to generate as big a list as possible.

If suggestions are not volunteered, another approach that might be useful is to point out the variety of strategies that are currently operating in the training itself or in bringing participants to the training (i.e., the memo inviting them to come to the training, greetings upon arrival, verbal directions to the exercises, etc.).

The Workshop Leader can extend the exercise by asking the group:

*What happens when teachers need to communicate with each other? In the classroom and between the classrooms?*

*How do case managers communicate to teachers when there is an issue with the family?*

*Did you remember to include methods of formal and informal communication?*

**Examples of participant responses and themes for discussion to be encouraged by the Workshop Leader are presented in Table 2.**



**Table 2. Sample responses for Exercise Two**

Response Category	Examples of potential responses	Themes for Workshop Leader to develop in the discussion
Strategies for Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff meetings</li> <li>• Email</li> <li>• Parent newsletter</li> <li>• Phone calls</li> <li>• Phone messages, supervision</li> <li>• Home visits</li> <li>• Notices/memos</li> <li>• Team Meetings</li> <li>• Parent meetings</li> <li>• Conversations in classroom</li> <li>• Conversations in hallway</li> </ul>	<p>There are many different types of communication already happening in our program.</p> <p>We are communicating with each other and families constantly — by what we say, do and write.</p>

**Transition to Exercise Three**

Once the group has compiled a list of strategies for communication used in the program, ask them to look at the list together. Acknowledge how much they are already doing, both formally and informally. Emphasize that as demonstrated in the group exercise, good communication relies on each individual's participation.

*For example, you might say:*

*"We've come up with a long list of communication strategies already used in our program. Let's look at the list and make sure everyone feels it is complete. It seems like we are communicating almost all the time, in one way or another. As we discovered in the first exercise today, each member of the staff plays an important role in overall program communication. Let's talk about some practical ways we can improve the communication in this program as a group and as individuals."*

**Exercise Three: Ideas fo Improving Communication**

Now that the group has created a list of existing strategies, you can look together at the handout that lists suggestions for improved communication in any program. It will help participants feel valued if you highlight any suggestions they have already put on paper.

- ▶ Refer participants to Handout 1 in their packets. Read the first section aloud to the group and then ask for suggested additions.
- ▶ Read the second section aloud and then ask for suggested additions.

# Handout 1

## Better Communication and You

### 1. Ideas for encouraging better communication throughout the program:

- ▶ Make sure each staff member understands the purpose of each meeting by:
  - Creating a chart describing each regular meeting, participants, and purpose
  - Providing a group review session
  - Establishing an agenda at the beginning of each meeting
  
- ▶ Maintain clear expectations for each staff member regarding his/her role in better communication through:
  - Job descriptions
  - Discussion in supervision
  - Reflection in Team Meetings
  
- ▶ Work on promoting an expressive environment by:
  - Encouraging each member of the program (staff, parents, children) to share views, opinions, and concerns
  - Providing different ways for individuals to express themselves (i.e. formal, informal, anonymous, written, spoken)

**What are your additions?**

### 2. Ideas for how you can contribute to better communication:

- ▶ Follow all guidelines in the program's policy regarding confidentiality
- ▶ Come to meetings prepared to participate
- ▶ Be respectful and positive in all interactions
- ▶ Ask for assistance when a message is unclear or when the next step in communication unknown

**What are your additions?**

Pulling things together at the end of the training is an important step for everyone. As a workshop gets close to the end and people are feeling tired, it can be tempting to skip this part. Let people know that you will get them out of the workshop on time but want to take a few more minutes to wrap up the time you've spent together.

**1. Review Key Concepts:**

- Communication is a key component to a program's overall success
- Each individual plays an important role in a program's communication system
- Supporting each other is a way to maintain effective communication at the site

**2. End on a positive note.** Congratulate the group on all the ways that communication is already happening and encourage them to continue thinking about the role that communication plays at their site. Ask participants what they would like to see happen with the goals that have been generated. Share intentions from the Handout with team or teaching partner or supervisor.

**3.** If time permits, **review some or all of the comments written on the "Parking Lot for Ideas"** sheet posted on the wall. Consider responding to one comment, then asking participants which of the others they would like discussed in the time remaining. These comments should also be considered in preparation for the next training.

**4. Express your appreciation.** Let the group know how much you appreciate their time and hard work. Thank them for sharing their ideas with you and being willing to think about change together.

**5. Make yourself available.** The Workshop Leader should be available immediately after the training and on an ongoing basis to answer questions and hear concerns. If the workshop leader is not available, an on-site staff member should be designated and announced to participants at the end of the training.

**6. Collect Attendance and Evaluation Forms.** Ask participants to sign an attendance sheet and complete an evaluation form. Remind participants that these forms are anonymous and collected for the purpose of improving future trainings. During this time, you might also want to title and date any large group work so that you can save it for future reference.

## Extending Learning and Supporting New Skills

In order to extend the workshop's content and continue to help build professional skills, the Workshop Leader and administrators should consider these followup activities:

**Provide supportive Supervision for Individuals and Teams.** Teachers and case managers need consistent opportunities to discuss real challenges and successes with a knowledgeable mentor. Ask individuals and teams about their reactions to the training and their worksheet responses. Use this to contribute to the Action Plan activities discussed below.

**Implement classroom Observation and Social Service Support.** Skill support is more effective when informed by first-hand knowledge of the children and families being served. Supervisors should spend time observing how communication takes place within teams in order to support the efforts to improve communication.

**Create Action Plans.** Brainstorming with staff members about how they can achieve a desired goal, or enhance skills can provide valuable information about what ongoing resources and support are needed for success. Use staff meetings to facilitate a discussion-building consensus about the program's goals for improving communication.

## Workshop Leader Reflection

The Workshop Leader should take some time to review the training experience once it is over, read through and tally the evaluation forms, and review the results. Some additional questions to consider are:

**Was I prepared?** Did I have all the materials I needed? Was the room adequate? Did I feel confident with the topic?

**Did the training go as I imagined it would?** Did the group respond the way I thought they would? Were there any surprises? Were there any elements of the training that went especially well?

**Were the participants engaged?** Did the group size seem appropriate? Who seemed comfortable enough to share their thoughts with the group? Who did not seem comfortable? Do I know why? Did I get the feeling that the participants understood the exercise and materials? Who was present and who was missing today? Is there anyone I have to follow up with immediately?

**What were some of the themes that people talked about in this training?** Was there a group of issues that the responses and discussion had in common? Are any of those issues a surprise? How can I use those issues in future trainings to make the exercises more effective?

**What would have made this training better?** In hindsight, what could I have done differently? Why? How can I use that information to make the next training even more successful?

**Did I gain new knowledge from this training?** What did I learn? In addition to new information on the training topic, did I gain any new knowledge about the training group or individuals in the training group? Did I learn something new about myself as a Workshop Leader?

# Workshop Evaluation

Title of the Workshop: Better Communication

Location \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate how well the training met the objectives below:

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Not Good
Objective 1: Participants will reflect on the challenges to good communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Objective 2: Participants will learn about strategies used at their site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Objective 3: Participants will create a set of ideas and goals for better communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Overall rating of this workshop:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Usefulness of information presented:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Usefulness of workshop activities:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creativity of workshop activities:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trainer's knowledge of subject:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trainer's presentation style:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Is there anything you would like to learn that was not presented in this workshop?

Would you like more trainings that expand on this topic? Yes No (Please circle one)  
I would like more training on:

Additional Comments:

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## Additional Resources

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**For more support on this topic please see the following Family Connections materials:**

**Short Papers for Staff**

*Encouraging an Expressive Environment: Supportive communication from the inside out*

*Better Parent Communication: What do I say when a parent tells me something difficult?*

*Supportive Supervision: Promoting staff and family growth through positive relationships*

# Developing a Resource and Referral Process

While locating appropriate resources should be considered a process focused on the need of the individual or individual family, this workshop is an opportunity to think about the needs of *all* families served in order to review the resource and referral process. The exercises in this workshop help staff consider the families they work with and reflect on what they offer to support those families' mental health needs. Through this process, the participants can identify families in need of additional support while also educating themselves about the available resources and identifying the gaps in the program's resource network.

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**Goal** To reflect on families' needs and the current services provided by the program. These responses will be used to review the program's resource and referral process and set goals for improvement.

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**Objectives** Participants will:

- ▶ Reflect on the mental health needs of the families currently served by the program
- ▶ Reflect on the services provided by the program
- ▶ Develop their understanding of the program's current resource and referral process
- ▶ Set goals for an improved resource and referral process

## Method and Content

This workshop has two distinct sections designed to build on each other.

- ▶ [Exercise One](#): Program Strategies for Mental Health Support
- ▶ [Exercise Two](#): The Pyramid — How do we best support specific families?

In Exercise One, participants are asked to consider which mental health support services are offered at different levels within the program. Following that, the group will match these services to the families in the program with the goal of identifying who is getting adequate support and who is in need of further help.

## Getting Started

**What You Need:**

- ▶ Time — this training should be 2 hours, not including Workshop Leader preparation. For more information on **Workshop Time Management**, see the *Introduction to the Modules*.
- ▶ A training space large enough to accommodate the members of the training to participate in large and small group discussions. For large groups, you may want to consider including 2 workshop leaders to help manage and respond to participant needs. For more information on considerations about **Group Size**, see the *Introduction to the Modules*.

- ▶ Seating for the training group.
- ▶ Prepare a training packet for each participant with the following materials:
  - Handout 1: Developing a Resource and Referral Process
  - Handout 2: The Pyramid of Resources
  - Workshop Evaluation form
- ▶ A pen or pencil for each participant.
- ▶ Two large pieces of paper.
- ▶ Two different colored markers for the Workshop Leader.

### Workshop Leader Preparation

First, read through all the workshop materials. Take time to reflect on your own responses to the exercise questions.

Think about what you know about this program's resource and referral process. If there are gaps in your knowledge, try talking with staff and administration for a more complete understanding of their procedures. Ask them if they have a sense of whether the resources currently available to families in the program are adequate and appropriate. Because some staff members might interpret these questions as a sort of test or judgment about their knowledge or the program's quality, be careful how you frame your questions. Let staff know that you are gathering constructive feedback to inform your understanding of the program's process.

#### Preparing the workshop space:

- ▶ Prepare the training space by positioning chairs so that the participants can begin as a large group, but then move easily into smaller groups.
- ▶ Place a training packet on each chair in the room.
- ▶ Prepare two large pieces of paper, titling one "Parking Lot for Ideas."

Parking Lot  
for Ideas

- ▶ Prepare the second piece of paper with the headings from Handout 1.

Classroom and  
Program-Wide  
Level

One-on-one Level

Resource and  
Referral Level



Display the large pieces of paper so that the entire workshop group can see both and so that the Workshop Leader can easily write on them.

## Introduction to the Training

Workshop Leaders are encouraged to use their own words to introduce the training. Some key points to consider are:

- ▶ Welcome the group and review logistics — general agenda, time-frame, when to expect breaks, materials, sign in sheet, etc.
- ▶ The topic of the training is “Developing a Resource and Referral Process.” This workshop is an opportunity to reflect on the families we serve and how their mental health needs are being addressed.

*For example, you might say:*

**“It is our responsibility to try and refer families to resources that meet their needs if we do not have those services available in our program. Today we are going to consider what we currently do to encourage mental health, how these efforts match with the needs of our families, and what resources we require in our network to get the extra help some families need.”**

- ▶ Describe the objectives of the workshop. Let participants know that the training will give them an opportunity to:
  - Reflect on the mental health needs of the families currently served by the program
  - Reflect on the services provided by the program
  - Use this information to develop their understanding of the program’s resource and referral process
  - Think together about how to improve services for families
- ▶ Explain the “Parking Lot for Ideas” sheet as follows: during the training, if a question, suggestion, or concern unrelated to the training exercise, but related to the topic is offered, the Workshop Leader will record it on the “Parking Lot for Ideas” sheet. Refer back to these ideas at the end of the training for further discussion as time permits.
- ▶ Review the *Training Ground Rules*, which is a short list of statements intended to promote a safe, positive environment for all participants. These can be printed on a piece of paper for all to see, but reviewing the rules and asking for group agreement is the most important step before beginning the exercise.

### Training Ground Rules

**There are no right or wrong answers** in any of the activities we will be doing today. Everyone's opinions and feelings are respected here.

**One at a time.** We want to hear what everyone has to say, so it is important to remember that group discussion requires strong listening skills.

**Learning takes time.** We will not rush one another when trying to understand and participate.

**Maintain Confidentiality.** While sharing our experiences we do not need to use names of children, parents or staff.

## Exercise One: Program Strategies for Mental Health Support

This exercise is an opportunity for the group to think about the program's current strategies for promoting mental health and responding to the needs of the families served.

▶ Ask participants to look at Handout 1. Read the headings and questions aloud:

### Classroom and Program-Wide Level

How do you promote mental health for all families? What mental health services do you offer to all children/families you come in contact with in this program?

### One-on-One Level

What mental health services do you offer as extra support to those children/families who are in need?

### Resource and Referral Level

What other mental health services are provided, available outside of the program, or needed for the children/families served by this program?

▶ Ask the participants to take a few minutes to think individually about the questions and write responses on their own sheet.

▶ Break the group into teams to discuss these questions. Each team should include the teachers from an individual classroom and the social service workers who support the families in that classroom. If the social service worker supports families in more than one classroom he/she should divide his/her time between groups.

▶ After the teams have had 10 minutes to discuss their answers, ask for some examples of responses and record them on a large piece of paper.

Examples of participant responses and themes for discussion are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Sample of Responses for Exercise One**

Response Categories	Examples of potential responses	Themes for Workshop Leader to develop in the discussion
<b>Classroom/Program-Wide</b> How do you promote mental health in all families?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By promoting social and emotional growth in the children</li> <li>• By asking all families what resources they need as part of orientation</li> <li>• By being available to parents and children if they need to talk</li> <li>• We do assessments on each child</li> <li>• Have team meetings to review how each family seems to be doing</li> <li>• Get training on mental health issues</li> </ul>	Think of the ways in which we support the mental and emotional well-being of the children and parents in this program.  We may share these services as individuals or as teams, so please consider both.

continued

**Table 1. Sample of Responses for Exercise One** *continued*

Response Category	Examples of potential responses	Themes for Workshop Leader to develop in the discussion
<p><b>One-on-one</b>            What mental health services do you offer as extra support to those children/families who are in need?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By reaching out and talking to parents when we think there might be a concern</li> <li>• Offering the mental health consultant to see the child individually</li> <li>• Offering parent support groups about stress and depression</li> <li>• Spend more time with the child who needs extra help getting along in the classroom or who is going through a tough time</li> </ul>	<p>Some children and parents may respond to our general efforts, but others need something more. What do we do to respond to those individuals? What can we do as professionals and what services can we offer from within this program?</p>
<p><b>Resource and Referral</b>            What other mental health services are provided, available outside of the program, or needed for the children/families served by this program?</p>	<p>We Have: names of some local clinics, assessment services, church groups</p> <p>We Don't Have: Information about services in the languages spoken by some of the families, information about substance abuse treatment in the area</p>	<p>We may know about some resources available in this community. Let's make note of those and also the gaps in resources you may have noticed.</p> <p>Consider type of service as well as other important aspects such as the languages in which these services are offered.</p>

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# Handout 1

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## Developing a Resource and Referral Process

### **Classroom and Program-Wide Level**

How do you promote mental health in all families? What mental health services do you offer to all children/families in this program?

### **One-on-One Level**

What mental health services do you offer as extra support to those children/families who are in need?

### **Resource and Referral Level**

What other mental health services are provided, available outside of the program, or needed for the children/families served by this program?

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### Transition to Exercise 2

Participants have now had the chance to identify which supports are available to families on different levels of the program. It is important to help the group feel good about what they are already doing while still acknowledging that more can always be done. This exercise may inspire powerful feelings such as pride, inadequacy, surprise, etc. Remind the group that this can be difficult, but rewarding work. In the next exercise, the group will think about the appropriate level of mental health services for particular families.

*For example you might say:*

**"I know all of you work hard to give your families what they need. It can feel frustrating when someone is struggling and we don't know what to do. We've identified some important elements already in place to support families in our program. Now, let's look at how those supports match with the families in our care."**

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## Exercise Two: The Pyramid: How can we best support families?

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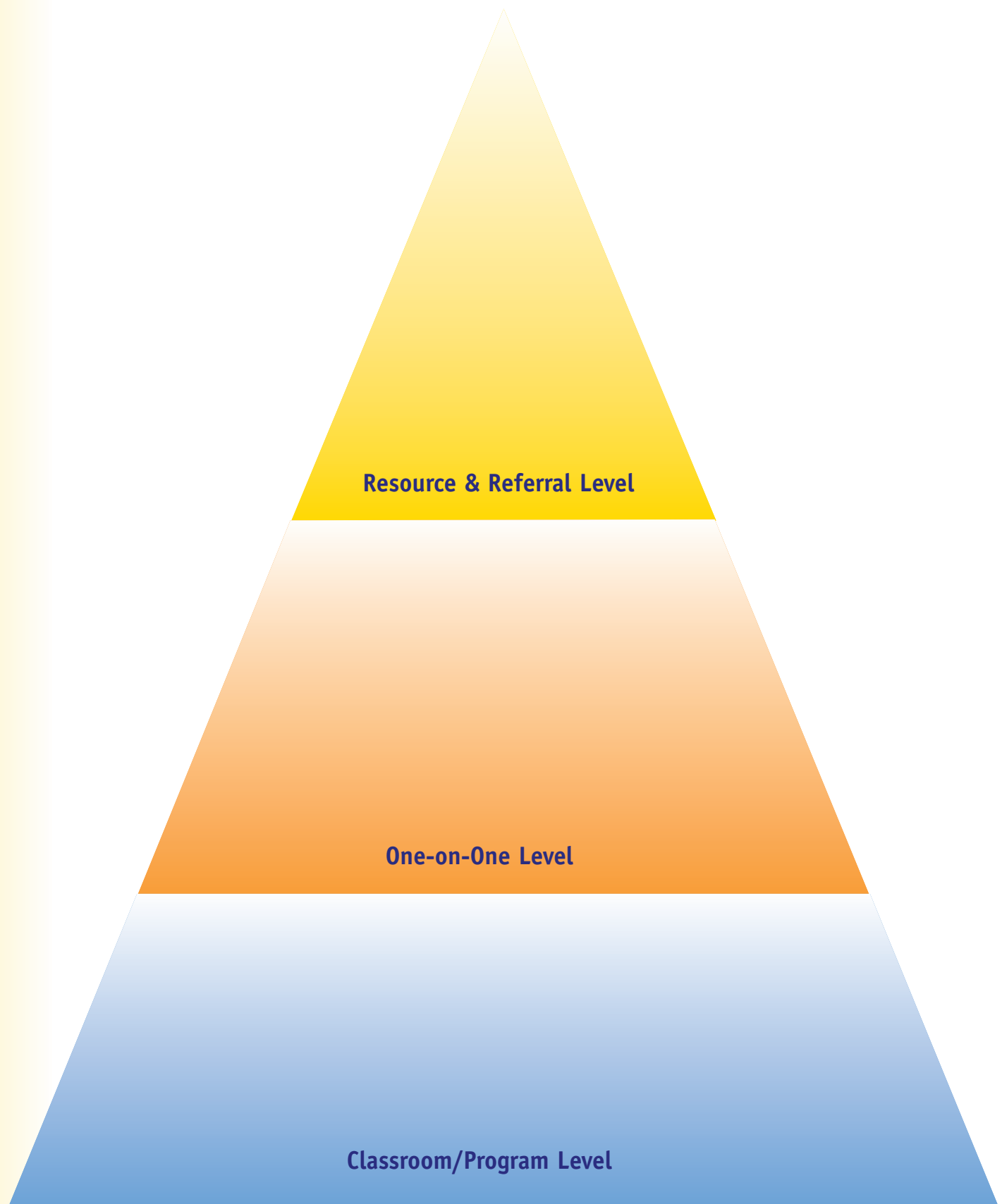
This is an opportunity to identify which families in the program are getting adequate support and which families may need more. This exercise builds on the work done in Exercise One.

*Note: Identifying actual individuals by name is important in the objective of the exercise, but in the interest of confidentiality participants should be instructed to take care to store the worksheet discreetly after the training.*

- ▶ Direct the attention of the teams to Handout 2: The Pyramid of Resources.
  
- ▶ Looking at the pyramid form, ask participants to consider the children and parents they serve who seem to need minimal support from the program-wide mental health services noted in Exercise One. Instruct participants to write the names of these children and parents at the base of the pyramid diagram.
  
- ▶ Ask participants to consider the families who need extra one-on-one mental health support as discussed in Exercise One. Ask participants to write these children's' and parents' names at the center space of pyramid.
  
- ▶ Ask participants to consider the children and families who need support beyond what the program currently offers. Ask participants to add those children's' and parents' names to the top of pyramid.

# Handout 2

## The Pyramid of Resources



► When worksheets are complete, ask participants to spend a few minutes reviewing the information on the pyramid and to consider the following:

*Are there any surprises here?*

*Do a lot of families need additional support or are there only a few?*

*Do we have the right resources for the families who need referral for help outside the program? If the answer is no, where are the gaps?*

## Wrapping Up

Pulling things together at the end of the training is an important step for everyone. As a workshop gets close to the end and people are feeling tired, it can be tempting to skip this part. Let people know that you will get them out of the workshop on time but want to take a few more minutes to wrap up the time you've spent together.

### 1. Review Key Concepts

Each of us is able to contribute to the mental health of the families we serve.

Reflecting on our efforts helps us understand the additional resources we may truly need to support mental health.

Focused team discussion on each family's needs helps us share information responsibly and effectively.

**2. End on a positive note.** Encourage teams to use the information collected in these exercises to continue discussions of the families in need of support. Ideas for followup activities can be found in *Extended Learning and Supporting New Skills*.

**3.** If time permits, **review some or all of the comments written on the "Parking Lot for Ideas" sheet** posted on the wall. Consider responding to one comment, then asking participants which of the others they would like discussed in the time remaining. These comments should also be considered in preparation for the next training.

**4. Express your appreciation.** Let the group know how much you appreciate their time and hard work. Thank them for sharing their ideas with you and being willing to think about change together.

**5. Make yourself available.** The Workshop Leader should be available immediately after the training and on an ongoing basis to answer questions and hear concerns. If the workshop leader is not available, an on-site staff member should be designated and announced to participants at the end of the training.

**6. Collect Attendance and Evaluation Forms.** Ask participants to sign an attendance sheet and complete an evaluation form. Remind participants that these forms are anonymous and collected for the purpose of improving future trainings. During this time, you might also want to title and date any large group work so you can save it for future reference.

## Extending Learning and Supporting New Skills

In order to extend the workshop's content to changes in professional skill and behavior, the Workshop Leader and administrators should consider these followup activities:

**Provide Supportive Supervision for Individuals and Teams.** Ask individuals and teams whether they were able to identify the families in need of mental health support through the workshop exercises. Consider how these staff members might benefit from receiving more information and professional development and the ways in which such professional development might be offered (i.e. written materials, staff meetings, modeling, mentoring, structured time with a mental health consultant).

**Implement Classroom Observation & Social Service Support.** Take time to observe staff interactions with children or parents that seem to have mental health needs. Consider your own observations and reflect on them with the staff, individually and in teams, during supervision time.

**Create Action Plans.** Use this workshop as a jumping off point to consider the overall process of resource and referral in the program. Develop goals regarding the location and advocacy for appropriate resources for the families served by the program.

# Workshop Evaluation

## Title of the Workshop: Developing a Resource and Referral Process

Location \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate how well the training met the objectives below:

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Not Good
Objective 1: Participants reflect on the mental health needs of the families currently served by the program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Objective 2: Participants reflect on the services provided by the program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Objective 3: Participants use this information to develop their understanding of the program's resource and referral process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Overall rating of this workshop:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Usefulness of information presented:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Usefulness of workshop activities:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creativity of workshop activities:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trainer's knowledge of subject:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trainer's presentation style:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Is there anything you would like to learn that was not presented in this workshop?

Would you like more trainings that expand on this topic? Yes No (Please circle one)  
I would like more training on:

Additional Comments:



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## Additional Resources

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**For more support on this topic please see the following Family Connections materials:**

### **Short Papers for Staff**

*The Challenges and Benefits of Making Parent Connections*

*Parenting, Depression and Hope: Reaching out to families facing adversity*

*Fostering Resilience in Families Coping with Depression: Practical ways Head Start staff can help families build on their power to cope*

# Getting the Most from Home Visits

Home visits are an essential element of the Head Start approach to family engagement. They provide a unique opportunity to reach out to families and can be a valuable tool in building relationships. While staff are expected to do home visits regularly, many staff are uncomfortable with the process and do not have the opportunity to reflect on this professional experience. This workshop is designed to help participants consider the importance and value of home visits as well as the challenges that can arise. Participants will also have the opportunity to develop and share their own strategies for meeting those challenges and create new strategies by collaborating with coworkers.

**Goal** To discuss current home visitation practices and create an action plan for improved home visits.

**Objectives** Participants will:

- ▶ Recognize the unique opportunities that home visits offer for better communication with families
- ▶ Learn strategies to support Home Visits
- ▶ Create an action plan based on shared information and strategies

## Method and Content

This workshop has four distinct sections, designed to build on one another.

- ▶ Exercise One: Teachers and Home Visits
- ▶ Exercise Two: What We Know About Home Visits
- ▶ Exercise Three: Making Home Visits Even Better
- ▶ Exercise Four: Home Visits Action Plan

In Exercise One, we encourage participants to explore their own feelings about home visits. This gives the Workshop Leader a chance to learn about how each participant in the workshop feels about connecting with families, while encouraging the group to reflect on their own relationship to the subject. The next step, “What We Know About Home Visits,” is designed for an honest discussion about the challenges and importance of this integral part of the preschool program. In exercise Three, “Making Home Visits Even Better,” participants will reflect both individually and as a group on successes and challenges in past home visits. Together, the group will create a list of strategies they have found helpful. Keeping the generated list in mind, participants will have the opportunity to set goals and consider next steps by developing an Action Plan in Exercise Four.

## Getting Started

Time — this training should be 2 hours, not including Workshop Leader preparation. For more information on **Workshop Time Management**, see the *Introduction to the Modules*.

A training space large enough to accommodate the members of the training to participate in large and small group discussions. For large groups, you may want to consider including 2 workshop leaders to help manage and respond to participant needs. For more information on considerations about **Group Size**, see the *Introduction to the Modules*.

- ▶ Seating for the training group.
- ▶ A training packet for each participant that includes a copy of:
  - A blank piece of paper
  - Handout 1: Tips for a Better Home Visit
  - Handout 2: Questionnaire
  - Handout 3: Home Visit Action Plan
  - Workshop Evaluation form
- ▶ A pen or pencil for each participant
- ▶ Four large pieces of paper
- ▶ Two different colored markers for the Workshop Leader

### Workshop Leader Preparation

Read through all the workshop materials first. Take time to reflect on your own responses to the exercise questions, recalling your own experiences with home visitation. If you have not participated in a Head Start home visit it will be important to familiarize yourself with the program's procedures and required paperwork.

Before the workshop begins, ask several staff members about their experiences with home visits as this may give you an idea of general attitudes toward this element of the work. Keep in mind that home visits are mandatory in Head Start and therefore staff may have a certain level of resignation about doing them. If the program serves families living in dangerous communities, the staff may fear or even resent home visits. Others may feel prepared and regard home visitations as something at which they are especially skilled.

### Preparing the Workshop Space

- ▶ Prepare the training space by positioning chairs so that the participants can begin as a large group, and then move easily into smaller groups.
- ▶ Place a training packet on each chair in the room.
- ▶ Prepare three large pieces of paper with titles listed below. These will be used in Exercise Two (What We Know About Home Visits)

<p style="color: #4F81BD;">Home Visits are When We...</p>	<p style="color: #4F81BD;">Home Visits Are Important Because...</p>	<p style="color: #4F81BD;">Home Visits are hard when....</p>
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- ▶ Display the large pieces of paper so that the whole group will be able to see each and the Workshop Leader can write easily on them.

## Introduction to the Training

Workshop Leaders are encouraged to use their own words to introduce the training. Some key points to consider are:

- ▶ Welcome the group and review logistics — general agenda, time frame, when to expect breaks, materials, sign-in sheet, etc.

- ▶ The topic of the training is “Getting the Most From Home Visits.”

*For example, you might say:*

*“Home visitation is one of the essential services we offer to our families as part of our work with Head Start. These visits give us a window into the lives of families that we don’t have otherwise, and can reveal new and personal information. While some home visits feel like an easy way to build your relationship with families, others can feel challenging. This training is an opportunity for us to talk about some of our successes and challenges, to learn from one another, and to make a plan about how to improve our home visitation strategies for the future.”*

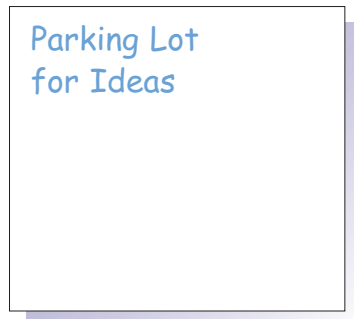
- ▶ Describe the objectives of this training. Let participants know that the training will give them an opportunity to:

Discuss and reflect on successful strategies and challenges in home visitation

Learn what their coworkers are experiencing in their home visits

Use this information to create an action plan focused on improving home visitation

- ▶ Title one large piece of paper “Parking Lot for Ideas.”



- ▶ Explain the “Parking Lot for Ideas” sheet as follows: during the training, if a question, suggestion, or concern unrelated to the training exercise, but related to the topic is offered, the Workshop Leader will record it on the “Parking Lot for Ideas” sheet. Refer back to these ideas at the end of the training for further discussion as time permits.

- ▶ Review the *Training Ground Rules*, which are a short list of statements intended to promote a safe, positive environment for all participants. These can be printed on a piece of paper for all to see, but reviewing the rules and asking for group agreement is the most important step before beginning the exercise.

## Training Ground Rules

**There are no right or wrong answers** in any of the activities we will be doing today. Everyone's opinions and feelings are respected here.

**One at a time.** We want to hear what everyone has to say, so it is important to remember that group discussion requires strong listening skills.

**Learning takes time.** We will not rush one another when trying to understand and participate.

**Maintain Confidentiality.** While sharing our experiences we do not need to use names of children, parents or staff.

## Exercise One: Teachers and Home Visits

This exercise will give your participants a chance to informally share how they feel about visiting families in their homes. While every Head Start teacher is required to conduct home visits, each may have very different feelings about connecting with families, both professionally and personally. You may have some participants who love talking with parents, and learning about another culture, for example, while other teachers may be uncomfortable meeting with parents who speak another language. As the Workshop Leader, you can set the tone by saying that all responses are welcome and will not be judged as good or bad. It is important that participants are assured that they should start "where they are" in terms of their feelings about parent engagement.

*In the larger group, facilitate a discussion about home visits. You might begin, "Before we think about how home visits can support engaging families, let's think about how our own feelings about home visits may affect our work."*

▶ Ask participants to give a show of hands for the following questions:

Who enjoys meeting new people?

Who feels shy when meeting new people?

Who enjoys going to other peoples' homes?

▶ Ask participants to think for a moment about the following questions:

What do you wish you knew about the families of the children in your classrooms?

What do you enjoy learning about the children in your classroom?

What do you think it feels like for parents to host you in their home?

The Workshop Leader may ask for volunteers to share their responses to the last three questions. It is important that everyone feels valued no matter what their response may be.

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## Exercise Two: What We Know About Home Visits

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The goal of this section is to give participants the chance to discuss how they really feel about home visits. Again, this may vary from person to person. You will get positive and negative feedback. Be aware that there are some challenges that you cannot address in this particular workshop. Still, getting everyone to share ideas will allow the group to discover and clarify what makes home visits a powerful opportunity to connect with families.

This is a good time to re-emphasize that while home visits are an important opportunity to learn about the family, they can sometimes present challenges. Staff members are walking into a family's personal space and while some families will feel comfortable with this arrangement, others may not. There are many goals for each home visit, and they may vary from family to family. In the next exercise, participants have the chance to think about both their successes and challenges during past home visits.

For example, you might say:

“Home visiting is a powerful entry into a family's life. With each visit, there are bound to be both successes and challenges. We may recall a visit and feel proud or happy with how we handled something, or we may remember a visit as especially challenging, leaving us feeling disappointed or frustrated. Luckily, our skills and strategies can be enhanced so that we feel more confident in the future. This exercise is intended to give the group a chance to recollect these instances individually and together in order to reflect on what might be learned from them.”

▶ Direct the group's attention to the three statement prompts on the large pieces of paper, reading them aloud.

1. Home Visits are When We...
2. Home Visits Are Important Because...
3. Home Visits are hard when....

▶ Ask participants to move around the room and write responses to each prompt directly onto the large piece of paper.

▶ Stress to the group that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to the prompts. This is a chance to discuss the real experience of home visits—so their honesty is essential.

Examples of potential participant responses are recorded in Table 1.

**Table 1. Sample of Responses for Exercise Two**

Initial Statement Prompt	Examples of potential responses	Themes for Workshop Leader to develop in the discussion
<b>Home Visits are When We...</b>	Learn about the child’s home, neighborhood, environment, routine. Learn about the parents’ needs. See how the child interacts with her/his family.	Remind participants that home visits are an opportunity to establish a connection with the parent and child, which will make working together easier going forward.
<b>Home Visits Are Important Because...</b>	My job requires me to do it. I feel like I understand the children in my classroom better. The visits remind me that parents are doing the best that they can for their children.	Although home visits are required for Head Start staff, they are also a rich opportunity to get to know families better. Conveying the message that HS is available and values families will be an important part of the home visit.
<b>Home Visits are hard when...</b>	The parent doesn’t open the door. The family speaks a different language than I do. The child is hyper and makes it difficult to talk with the parent. I feel unsafe.	Acknowledge that visiting families in their home environment can be challenging, while stressing that the benefits reap many rewards.

- ▶ Once participants have had the chance to record their responses, reassemble the group in their seats for a discussion of responses.
- ▶ Read responses aloud, identifying themes and developing themes for discussion (examples of themes are provided in Table 1)
- ▶ Encourage participants to record notes on their own and others’ responses on Handout 1: Tips for A Better Home Visit
- ▶ Listen for themes that might lead you into the next exercise where the focus is setting the stage for even better home visits.

# Handout 1

## Tips for A Better Home Visit

### Consider the following tips when doing home visits:

#### **Prepare:**

In addition to collecting the necessary forms and addresses, inform the family about the expectation and purpose of the home visit during orientation and when the visit is scheduled. Invite the family to think about anything they may want to share about their child — goals, concerns, questions, the child's special likes and dislikes, talents, etc. Assure the family members that the Head Start Program wants to partner with them to offer support and a safe, positive experience for the whole family.

#### **Plan for Safety:**

Work in pairs; company is important when doing outreach work. Attending home visits in pairs provides greater safety and a partner with whom to reflect on the needs of the family. If your coworker is unable to join you on a scheduled home visit, do not hesitate to reschedule.

#### **Communicate with your Program:**

Make sure your supervisor and/or director knows where you are going and when to expect you back. Bring a cell phone with you if you can, or make note of the location of a reliable pay phone in the area and come prepared with the required change to use it.

#### **Focus on Communication:**

Begin positively. Begin the home visit by sharing its purpose and assuring the family that this is a chance to get to know one another, not to be judged. If a parent is shy or unresponsive or if you are having difficulty starting the conversation positively, focus on the child and find a positive aspect of his/her behavior, appearance, or experience that could lead to a conversation.

#### **Listen:**

Listen carefully to what the parents are saying. If there's any confusion, you may want to repeat back what you think was said to ensure that you understood. Take your time. Be aware of your voice & nonverbal messages. Think about the tone and volume of your voice. Be aware of the nonverbal messages you give through posture, expression, and other physical cues. Consider whether these elements of communication had an effect, positive or negative, on the family.

#### **Reflect:**

Schedule time with a supervisor to discuss how the visit went and to decide what followup is required. Document this meeting and share any concerns with the appropriate staff members.

#### **Please add your own tips:**



### Transition to Exercise Three

The group has now had a chance to think about home visiting in several different ways. They've looked at their own personal experiences, thinking about what worked and what could be improved. They have also had the benefit of listening to one another, perhaps hearing some new ideas. Lastly, the group reviewed the provided handout and had a chance to add their own ideas. Take this opportunity to recognize how much they've already learned from one another. In the next exercise, participants will have the chance to share remaining ideas and questions about home visiting.

*For example, you might say:*

**"You've created a list that represents the challenges of home visiting and some of the important aspects of this work. You've learned from one another and identified some important strategies to use in your work moving forward. Now we're going to review a questionnaire to prepare families for your visit."**

## Exercise Three: Making Home Visits Even Better

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This exercise provides the opportunity to share and discuss strategies for improving home visits prior to going to the home by developing a questionnaire.

- ▶ Direct the group's attention to Handout 2. Introduce it as a resource for preparing families for your home visit.
- ▶ Ask participants to consider each one of the suggestions and open the group to a discussion about how the suggestions apply to their experiences.
- ▶ Encourage participants to share any additional strategies they have found useful.
- ▶ Using the large piece of blank paper, record additional suggestions.

# Handout 2

## A Better Home Visit

**Prior to visiting a family in their home, you may want to mail this questionnaire so that parents have time to consider their responses.**

### **Fun Questions to Ask of Parents on a Home Visit<sup>1</sup>**

What family information would help me understand your child this year?

What are your hopes, dreams, and goals for your child now and in the future?

What does your child need to help him/her succeed this school year?

All children have gifts. What are your child's gifts?

Is there anything you can tell me about your child that you feel may help me be a better teacher for him/her?

How does your child learn best: when you show him, when you tell her, or when he tries to do it on his own?

What kinds of things does your child like to play with? What are her/his interests?

Does your child enjoy story books? Being read to? Looking at books on her or his own?

<sup>1</sup>Found online at [www.proteacher.org/a/40155\\_pre-school\\_home\\_visits.html](http://www.proteacher.org/a/40155_pre-school_home_visits.html)

## Transition to Exercise Four

Now that the group has discussed creative questions to use during a home visit, shift the focus to making some plans for next steps. Encourage the group to begin thinking about how today's discussions apply to the work in their classrooms.

*For instance, you might say:*

"There are many goals for what we will accomplish in home visits. Our goals might vary depending on the family's needs, how well we know them, and how open they are to having us in their home. Home visits are a great opportunity to learn more about what each family wants or needs from the Head Start Program. Home visits are both a challenge and an opportunity in our work with families. It's time to start plugging these ideas into the work of conducting home visits. This last exercise is going to be about making an Action Plan in order to plan our next steps for improving home visits."

## Exercise Four: Home Visit Action Plan

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In this final exercise, participants will combine their own reflections with the strategies discussed in order to devise Home Visit Action Plans. You will need to first divide the participants into small groups for this exercise. Allowing them to work with other members of their teams is strongly encouraged, if possible.

- ▶ Direct participants to Handout 3.
- ▶ Ask them to consider today's reflections on what makes home visits successful, what information must be obtained, and the strategies that have been discussed in previous exercises.
- ▶ Direct participants to consider past home visits, and, through small group discussion:
  - Agree on a **focus of improvement** for home visits. Ask them to think about what the overall end result to this improvement effort would be? What would you like to be able to accomplish in the end?
  - Describe the necessary **goals** for achieving this improvement. Ask them to consider what steps they will need to take in order to improve in this way.
  - Set some **strategies**. What are some of the steps needed in order to reach these goals?
- ▶ Keep in mind that the participants may be new to the process of creating an Action Plan. Be sure to move among the small groups in order to offer support and make sure participants are on task.

# Handout 3

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A Better Home Visit

## Home Visit Action Plan

Date:

Classroom:

Focus of Improvement:

Goals:

Strategies:

**Table 2 presents examples of responses to Home Visit Action Plan**

Focus of Improvement	Strategy	Examples of Potential Responses	Workshop Leader Guidance in Developing the Action Plan
safety	Can we have an official ID card and/or a business card?	It will help the parents to learn our names and feel safer with us.	Whenever possible, go in pairs. Be aware of your surroundings. Tell supervisor before you go, and leave the address and phone number.
Activity for children during visit	Can we bring something to the house like crayons and paper?	It will make it easier for adults to talk if the child is entertained and the child will feel like it's a special reminder from the teacher's visit.	Bringing simple activities (like a crayon and paper) can make a big difference in a home visit both by showing you care about the child and in making it easier to talk with parents.
Safety	Could cell phones be available to carry on home visits?	I don't have a cell phone and I feel nervous not being able to call someone for help if I need it.	Ask family to walk you outside if you don't feel safe. Keep in mind when it will get dark. Try to go early in the day. Have identification from the center, e.g. a Head Start ID
Costs	Can travel expenses be reimbursed, (e.g. gas) or could there be a transit pass available for use during home visits?	I have to use my own money to conduct home visits.	Set aside money in budgets for home visits.
Gathering information on child	About the child's home, neighborhood, environment, routine About parents' needs About the child's health/allergies, any fears or special circumstances	I want to know if a child has an allergy I want to know if a child has fears I want to know what the parent expects of me as the teacher of her child	Get information from file before you visit, fill out as much as possible, and then make sure it is correct when you are at the house. Take a breath in and out at the door, letting go of any outside worries so you can be focused on the task at hand.

**Table 2 presents examples of responses to Home Visit Action Plan** *continued*

Focus of Improvement	Strategy	Examples of Potential Responses	Workshop Leader Guidance in Developing the Action Plan
Relationships	Establish a bond with the parents and establish a bond with the child.	<p>No one’s home or will not open the door.</p> <p>Parents fear how you will see them.</p> <p>Wrong address and phone number.</p> <p>Speak different languages/cultures and cannot understand each other.</p> <p>Might be hard to understand or there may be prejudice or racism directed toward you.</p> <p>Values and ideas about parenting that are different from your own.</p> <p>Depressed parent is withdrawn or irritable or tired.</p>	<p>Introduce yourself. Perhaps tell the parents something about yourself, for instance, why you enjoy working for Head Start.</p> <p>Establish that you are there to work together to help and that you want to listen to parents’ ideas and concerns.</p> <p>Try to imagine why a parent might do something. Is he or she depressed? Afraid? Try to put yourself in his or her shoes — what would it be like for you to have someone visit you at various times in your life?</p> <p>Reflect back to the “perspective” module.</p>
Team Work	Educating children is a team effort between the parent, child, and school.	Sometimes it seems like parents think I’m just there to judge them.	Let parents know Head Start is available, values the parents, and wants to work with the parents together as a team to help child and family have best year possible.
Information Sharing	Resources at Head Start and in community. Information about classroom size/rules, safety, learning environment, food and cleanliness, visiting, expectations, names of staff at your program. Information about getting their child off to the best start.	Parents hide information, perhaps because of domestic violence or fear of losing resources or being judged.	Remember that every challenge is an opportunity to learn about a family’s situation, to identify needs and share resources. Establish confidentiality and stress that you will not share information with everyone, but only with people, like the case manager, who can help.
Paperwork	To best help families, create a document that shares all of the important information collected with other appropriate Head Start staff. Complete and hand in document as soon as possible.	It is difficult to keep all of this in mind and finish the paperwork.	To get the paperwork done, write as you talk with parents. Tell your educational coordinator you need time to finish the paperwork.

Pulling things together at the end of the training is an important step for everyone. As a workshop gets close to the end and people are feeling tired, it can be tempting to skip this part. Let people know that you will get them out of the workshop on time, but want to take a few more minutes to wrap up the time you've spent together.

### 1. Review Key Concepts

- Home visitation is an important opportunity for parent engagement
- Developing a strong home visitation process can make visits more productive and help staff feel more confident
- Reflecting on the challenges of productive home visits gives us the chance to develop strategies and new professional skills.

**2. End on a positive note.** Encourage teams to use the information collected in these exercises to continue discussions of the families in need of support. Ideas for follow-up activities can be found in *Extended Learning and Supporting New Skills*.

3. If time permits, **review some or all of the comments written on the “Parking Lot for Ideas” sheet** posted on the wall. Consider responding to one comment, then asking participants which of the others they would like discussed in the time remaining. These comments should also be considered in preparation for the next training.

**4. Express your appreciation.** Let the group know how much you appreciate their time and hard work. Thank them for sharing their ideas with you and being willing to think about change together.

**5. Make yourself available.** The Workshop Leader should be available immediately after the training and on an ongoing basis to answer questions and hear concerns. If the workshop leader is not available, an on-site staff member should be designated and announced to participants at the end of the training.

**6. Collect Attendance and Evaluation Forms.** Ask participants to sign an attendance sheet and complete an evaluation form. Remind participants that these forms are anonymous and collected for the purpose of improving future trainings. During this time, you might also want to title and date any large group work so you can save it for future reference.

## Extending Learning and Supporting New Skills

In order to extend the workshop's content to changes in professional skill and behavior, the Workshop Leader and administrators should consider these followup activities:

**Provide Supportive Supervision for Individuals and Teams.** Consider planning supervision sessions or devoting staff meeting times in the fall and spring that are devoted to reflecting on recent home visits.

**Implement Classroom Observation & Social Service Support.** The director and administrators should consider participating in several home visits a year in order to better support the strategies presented in the workshop.

**Create Action Plans.** Use the handout created through this workshop and the Ideas/Questions responses from Exercise Three as a starting point for further discussion and development of some long-term goals. Consider including this as a part of regular staff meetings, or create a task force of staff members to focus on this area of program improvement.

## Workshop Leader Reflection

The Workshop Leader should take some time to review the training experience once it is over, read through and tally the evaluation forms, and review the results. Some additional questions to consider are:

**Was I prepared?** Did I have all the materials I needed? Was the room adequate? Did I feel confident with the topic?

**Did the training go as I imagined it would?** Did the group respond the way I thought they would? Were there any surprises? Were there any elements of the training that went especially well?

**Were the participants engaged?** Who seemed comfortable enough to share their thoughts with the group? Who did not seem comfortable? Do I know why? Did I get the feeling that the participants understood the exercise and materials? Did the group size seem appropriate? Who was present and who was missing today? Is there anyone I need to follow up with immediately?

**What were some of the themes that people talked about in this training?** Was there a group of issues that the responses and discussion had in common? Are any of those issues a surprise? How can I use those issues in future trainings to make the exercises more effective?

**What would have made this training better?** In hindsight, what could I have done differently? Why? How can I use that information to make the next training even more successful?

**Did I gain new knowledge from this training?** What did I learn? In addition to new information on the training topic, did I gain any new knowledge about the training group or individuals in the training group? Did I learn something new about myself as a Workshop Leader?



# Workshop Evaluation

## Title of the Workshop: Getting the Most from Home Visits

Location \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate how well the training met the objectives below:

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Not Good
Objective 1: Participants will recognize the unique opportunities that home visits offer for better communication with families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Objective 2: Participants will learn strategies to support Home Visits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Objective 3: Participants will create an action plan based on shared information and strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Overall rating of this workshop:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Usefulness of information presented:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Usefulness of workshop activities:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creativity of workshop activities:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trainer's knowledge of subject:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trainer's presentation style:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Is there anything you would like to learn that was not presented in this workshop?

Would you like more trainings that expand on this topic? Yes No (Please circle one)

I would like more training on:

Additional Comments:

**For more support on this topic please see the following Family Connections materials:**

### Short Papers for Staff

*The Challenges and Benefits of Making Parent Connections*

*Parenting, Depression and Hope: Reaching out to families facing adversity*

*Fostering Resilience in Families Coping with Depression: Practical ways Head Start staff can help families build on their power to cope*

*Supportive Supervision: Promoting staff and family growth through positive relationships*

*Self-Reflection and Shared Reflection as Professional Tools*

### Short Papers for Parents

*Parenting through Tough Times: Coping with depression*

*The Ability to Cope: Building resilience in yourself and your child*

*Self-Reflection in Parenting: Help for getting through stressful times*

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