Mid-America Head Start
2017–2018 Self-Assessment Report Summary

Guiding Principles:
MAHS, its delegates and partners, agreed to focus on strengths and broad systems rather than isolated issues, use data to inform planning, have meaningful discussions and consider innovative solutions. In addition, we agreed to use this time to plan for transition to our new structure.

Timeline:
Self-Assessment was conducted during the third quarter of the program year (February – April). Each agency was assigned a specific timeframe to complete its assessment and report findings.

Participants:
MARC and all of delegates and partner agencies were involved in this process. Each agency engaged its own assessment and MARC used this information to assess the grantee as a whole. Grantee staff provided leadership and technical assistance and participated in every assessment. Initial assessments included: Grantee, delegate and partnership directors, management and frontline staff. Policy Council parent and community representatives, and advisory committee members provided feedback on findings, trends and plans for program improvement.

The Process:
Participants reflected on the status of the program by asking important questions such as: What is working well and what are the challenges? How effective are the program’s systems and services? Have objectives been met? What kind of strategies will improve our outcomes? Teams used the detailed scope of work for their contract in the new structure as a guide to determine plans or strategies to put in place in order to prepare for the transition to the new structure in the coming year. A big focus was given to policies and procedures to ensure that programs had time to thoughtfully prepare for the new program year.

Partnership reviews
MAHS partnership directors and staff for all prospective Tier 1 and 2 programs (with the exception of the three new programs that include Emmanuel, Front Porch Alliance and Excelsior Springs School District) met with grantee staff to review data and develop action plans / reports.

Delegate reviews:
Delegate agencies lead their own process for self-assessment. They identified teams that focused on content areas or systems including: Education, Mental Health and Disabilities, Health and
Nutrition, Family and Community Engagement, Enrollment / Recruitment / Selection / Eligibility / Attendance, Program Governance, Human Resources / Professional Development, Fiscal and other management systems.

Individual teams for each delegate agency collected and reviewed data. Teams used the data to assess the delegate agency’s progress and accomplishments over time. Data sources included ChildPlus reports, classroom observations, document review, and individual and group interviews with staff, parents and community members. Tools used to collect or review data were consistent with tools used by each agency during ongoing monitoring.

Individual delegate team leaders met to review data with members in a variety of ways either individually or in groups. When their assessment was complete each team identified the delegate agency’s accomplishments and progress, areas of risk, areas of noncompliance and strategies, corrective actions and timelines for improvement.

Team information was compiled into one “group” report /action plan for each delegate agency. These reports were organized around content areas and systems and included action plans and strategies for program improvement and transition to the new structure.

Grantee review
Grantee self-assessment teams followed the same process, using data from each agency’s self-assessment action plan / report to assess the overall progress as well as challenges for the grantee as a whole and actions planned for transition. Grantee wide trends and common areas of strength were identified as were areas of risk and noncompliance. The individual team reports were compiled into a grantee wide self-assessment report. The following outline is a summary of the grantee-wide assessment.
MAHS Self-Assessment Results 2017-2018

Professional Development

Accomplishments/Progress in Meeting Goals and Objectives

- All programs have introduced systems for coaching of teaching staff and have begun to implement them to various degrees, with the goal of full implementation in the fall of 2019. All coaches participated in strengths based coaching training.
- All programs have developed systems for tracking professional development through the use of the Missouri database in conjunction with ChildPlus.
- All programs have developed policies and procedures for new hires to ensure that all additional background checks are in place as required per state of Missouri by fall 2019.
- All programs have systems in place to support staff who do not meet the minimum qualification requirements for their positions, and also for monitoring their progress.
- Family Advocates and Supervisors participated in Communities of Practice for professional development. Family Advocates who did not meet degree requirements also participated and completed the Family Development Credential Course.

Challenges

- In general, community-based agencies continue to struggle with maintaining consistent staffing, which also has an impact on the number of qualified and trained staff due to turnover.

Program Improvement Strategies

- MARC’s new structure will include a contract with The Family Conservancy to oversee Professional Development planning and provide ongoing training for new hires such as Head Start Orientation and Head Start 101 for front line and leadership staff.
- All agencies are in the process of reviewing / revising their policies and procedures to ensure they clearly identify roles and responsibilities and are in alignment with MARC’s new structure.
- MARC Head Start Director has scheduled a meeting with the Blue Springs School District’s Superintendent in May to discuss personnel challenges and review HR policies to determine corrective strategies to reduce staff turnover.
- One of MARC’s Head Start goals for the new grant is focused on workforce development and includes a joint effort with MARC’s Metropolitan Council on Early Learning in developing stronger career pathways and pipelines from secondary and higher education systems that will help to grow the early learning workforce.
Program Environment

Accomplishments/Progress in Meeting Goals and Objectives
- All programs have systems in place to ensure they provide safe and healthy environments.
- Each agency has developed its own system for child supervision which includes annual training for staff to review these procedures.

Program Improvement Strategies
- MARC’s contract with The Family Conservancy will include a system of ongoing training opportunities for new staff which will incorporate environmental safety training.

Child Development and Learning

Accomplishments/Progress in Meeting Goals and Objectives
- Support staff from MAHS and each delegate have been certified and re-certified as CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) observers. Education support staff conducted observations in pairs at programs other than their own in order to strengthen observation skills as well as gather CLASS data.
- Teaching staff completed child assessment and aggregated data to inform curriculum planning at all locations.
- MARC Education Specialist became a certified Project Approach trainer and provided Project Approach experiential training to staff throughout the program year.
- In collaboration with Lee’s Summit, MARC provided Project Approach training with Dr. Judy Harris Helm to teaching staff and directors.
- MARC received a grant from the REACH Foundation to support contracts for three Community Health Workers, who provided individualized support for families with identified health challenges.
- MARC’s community collaborations and agreements with health care providers and state data base systems have provided increased access to resources for families and increased access to data for staff and programs.

Challenges
- Building relationships and establishing systems to integrate Community Health Workers into the front-line work done by programs took more time than anticipated, which delayed the timeframe they had available to work directly with families.
- Data entry of health information has continued to be inconsistently completed when done by program staff and has an impact on the accuracy of overall health data.
Program Improvement Strategies

- All MARC programs will implement policies and procedures to ensure continuity of care, particularly in Early Head Start. Planning for this process will include family advocate and education staff and will also be reflected in the program's individualized procedures for child selection.
- MARC will implement a new system of support for health services in its new structure, which includes the addition of Health Coordinators to provide staff support for Tier 1 and 2 Direct Service Providers. MARC will also incorporate Community Health Workers in the new structure, and will target specific support for EHS programs, locations serving teen parents and areas with more limited resources.
- In its new structure, MARC will provide staff support for data entry of all health information, which will improve consistency of data entry and allow more time for program staff to work directly with families.

Family Engagement

Accomplishments/Progress in Meeting Goals and Objectives

Program Improvement Strategies

- All programs engaged families in the process of selecting parenting curriculum choices.
- Health literacy strategies have been identified through a series of focus groups conducted by Community Health Workers who gathered ideas from parents. These ideas will be incorporated into a health literacy guide/leaflet that will be provided to parents at enrollment.
- Family Advocate caseloads have been restricted to no more than 45 families per advocate in the new grantee structure.

Community Engagement

Accomplishments/Progress in Meeting Goals and Objectives

- Mid-America Head Start along with its delegates and its partners have a wide variety of partnerships providing support to staff and families. These partnerships support health services and shared data resources as well as recruitment and referral resources that help identify eligible families and provide support for families enrolled in the programs. Educational partnerships with community organizations support children's progress toward school readiness and strong community collaborations with mental health agencies support children and families with behavioral health needs.

Challenges

- There is a lack of resources for private services for children with developmental concerns and delays. Local school districts' evaluation processes are sometimes slow
and create challenges in identifying and providing services for children with developmental concerns.

Program Improvement Strategies
- MAHS will focus on the development of partnerships with agencies that provide mental health services for very young children and agencies that provide services to young children with developmental delays.
- MARC will capitalize on the increased accountability being placed on school district’s by DESE to establish MOUs with Head Start programs and will use this as an opportunity to strengthen existing agreements with local school districts.

Program Leadership

Accomplishments/Progress in Meeting Goals and Objectives
- All programs have reviewed current policies and procedures and are in the process of updating them to align with the new grantee structure.
- Enrollment of vulnerable populations increased as did collaborative agreements and referrals from agencies serving these same groups.
- Policy Council was provided with clear and concise training and a supportive open environment. Quorum and attendance was met for 12 of 12 months. Past parents and community members provide perspectives that support the big picture and there is regular participation by community representatives.
- In May, MARC was awarded a competitive grant from the State of Missouri to continue to provide EHS services for 103 EHS children / pregnant women.
- MARC and its Head Start stakeholders engaged in a year long process of studying its program delivery structure. MARC has outlined a revised delivery structure in which it will serve as the operations hub for a network of 1) high quality, comprehensive early education service providers, and 2) community organizations contracted to provide support for staff and families. MARC’s primary functions will be to ensure coordination, continuity and quality of services while providing a central connection to and for community resources.
- MARC piloted the centralized enrollment process at two school district partnership programs in the fall of 2017 and expanded to five school district partners in the spring of 2018.

Challenges
- Although some progress was made, consistent challenges with attaining funded enrollment remained throughout the year for Center School District’s Head Start program.
- All programs struggle to find and retain qualified teaching staff.
Program Improvement Strategies
  o Center School District’s funded enrollment will be reduced in the new program year; funded enrollment slots have been redistributed to other programs to better meet the needs of all communities.
  o In July of 2018, MARC will implement the system of central enrollment in all Tier 1 and Tier 2 programs. By January of 2019, all MARC programs will be part of the central enrollment system which is intended to support improved access for families through the use of a shared waitlist, and consistently implemented procedures for eligibility determination.
  o One of the MARC Head Start program goals for its new grant structure is focused on workforce development. MARC Head Start staff will work in collaboration with the larger early learning community to develop a stronger early learning workforce pipeline.

Continuous Program Improvement

Accomplishments/Progress in Meeting Goals and Objectives
  o Recordkeeping and reporting / data entry has improved consistently over the past few years and staff reported that technical assistance and the ChildPlus manual provided by the grantee has been very helpful in this process. All programs have systems in place to track and monitor staff training and teacher credentials.
  o Direct data entry of applications in ChildPlus and the use of customized reports have provided more efficient and accurate processes for recordkeeping and ongoing monitoring.
  o In January of 2018 MARC added a data specialist position to the grantee staff. This position has supported data entry of HR and health data for a portion of MARC’s school district partnerships.
  o All classrooms were observed by education staff and monitoring tools included more indicators of curriculum fidelity.

Program Improvement Strategies
  o Procedures for monitoring and recordkeeping systems will be adjusted to align with the new grantee structure.
  o A quality assurance specialist and an additional data specialist position will be added in the new structure to provide staff support for all Tier 1 and 2 programs.