



EHS NRC

# PROVIDER TIP SHEETS

## EARLY HEAD START FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE PROJECT

# Why Partner?

EARLY HEAD START FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE PROJECT

## Why Is This Important?

Community partnerships are among the most promising practices occurring in the early childhood field today. Both informal and formal, they range from setting up story time at the public library to contracting for services with Early Head Start programs. Such arrangements have emerged as ways to bring communities together to better serve low-income children and families. Everyone benefits: children, families, providers, and the community at large.



### Successful partnerships support:

- 1 High-quality care for all low-income infants and toddlers enrolled in participating family child care (FCC) programs.
- 2 Comprehensive services (including both expanded and additional services) for families.
- 3 Enhanced quality of services and professional development.
- 4 Coordinated service delivery built into the community's infrastructure.

### Tips for Getting Started:

**Do your homework.** Check out why partnerships are so highly praised and why so many of your colleagues are using this strategy.

**Find out who in your community provides the services you need.**

Where would you go to obtain health services for children? For families? Where would you go for assistance with a newly enrolled child with a diagnosed disability? The more information you have, the more you will know if these services are a good fit for your needs.

**Develop a “wish list” of what you hope to get out of your partnership**

**relationships.** You know what you can offer; make sure you know what is possible to receive in return. How would you use additional resources to support the children and families in your program?

**See if your wish list lines up with the four elements of successful partnerships noted above.** Will the additional/expanded services enhance program quality by allowing you to purchase more developmentally appropriate materials and equipment? Will they improve your own skills as a provider and/or give you access to college course credits?

**Introduce yourself to relevant staff members at community organizations.** Talk with them about your plans and ask their advice. Staff members who feel that you value their opinions will be most likely to work with you and for you in the future.

**Get to know your local child care resource and referral agency (CCR&R).** In many locales, the CCR&Rs offer professional development for providers. They also conduct provider recruitment and are a primary resource for referral services for families.



## Tips for Keeping the Partnership Going:

**Focus on your designated goals.** Keep them simple.

**Sit down with representatives of community organizations and together decide on how best to put**

**your plans in place.** Some situations, such as arranging for library services, need only an informal agreement. Others, such as contracting for social services for families, may require a formal written agreement. In these

instances, work together to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that specifies what will be delivered and how the MOU will be managed and monitored.

**Seek out other FCC providers.**

Look for provider organizations, such as local affiliates of the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC). Talking with other FCC providers allows you to learn from others' experiences.

**Approach all collaborations**

**optimistically.** Your efforts will better serve children and families and you will have a more active role in your community.



*The librarian comes to you.*

## Things to Consider:

What's in your neighborhood:  
Museums and art galleries;  
fire and police departments;  
parks and recreation centers  
and nature centers; food  
banks; pediatricians and  
pediatric dentists; faith-based  
organizations; thrift shops

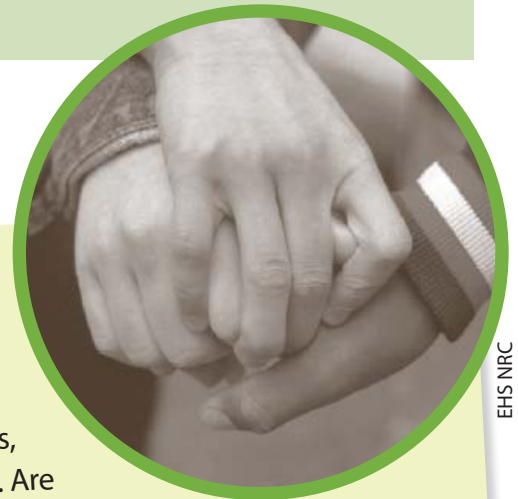
Professional development  
opportunities:  
CCR&Rs; state licensing and  
professional development  
systems; local community  
colleges; community-based early  
care and education programs

## Next Steps:

**Strengthen existing partnerships.**

If you are already involved in partnerships, evaluate how they are working. Are you achieving your stated goals? What obstacles are you facing? Have you been able to resolve issues to everyone's satisfaction? What might you do to improve? Write out an action plan for the future.

**Develop new partnerships.** If you are ready to embark on a collaborative project, have you thought through the tips described above? What else do you need before you are ready to proceed? Develop an action plan and timeline for your program.



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# Seamless Service Delivery: The Key to Helping Young Children Thrive

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Claudia Lopez, a single mom of Marta (5) and Anna (2) is new to town. She has so much to do! Anna will be starting kindergarten and Claudia has to go to the Kindergarten Orientation in August. Since she is working full-time, she will also need before-and-after school care for Marta. And, of course, she'll need child care for Anna too. She wishes she knew where to go in this area to get referrals for child care. In her old community, she was eligible for child care development subsidy funds and hopes that she is eligible in this state as well. She realizes that both girls will need physicals and she'll have to make sure their immunizations are up-to-date and she doesn't yet have a pediatrician in the area. She wonders if there is a health department in this community as there was in her old hometown. And where is the WIC office? In her old hometown, she was enrolled in an excellent class that was helping her improve her English and she would like to find a similar class here. "So much to do; so little time," she thinks.

## Why Is This Important?

Everyone wants young children to thrive. In order for this to occur, three basic needs must be met: (1) good health, (2) strong families, and (3) positive early learning experiences.<sup>1</sup> Good health means that children grow and develop optimally. Strong families engage in effective parenting and are involved in children's care and learning. Positive learning experiences provide nurturing care and enriching experiences in the context of caring environments that are safe and promote the development of strong relationships. As a family child care (FCC) provider, you are involved in all three aspects.

How, you may wonder, can you be sure that children's needs for good health, strong families, and positive learning experiences are met? Our best answer is through joining forces with agencies in your community that have a stake in supporting young children and

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## Tips for Getting Started:

### **Potential collaborators are everywhere in your community.**

They come in many forms and places—government, private sector, and nonprofit.

**Learn the “players” in your community.** Talk with other providers. Confer with the EHS child care specialists.

**Find out who does what in your neighborhood.** Where would you go for information on subsidies? To refer

children for dental work or speech therapy?

**Know the variety of funding sources and their eligibility requirements,** so when families approach you for care, you can refer them to the agency that administers subsidy funds in your area, and/or to EHS, help them determine whether they are eligible for WIC and refer them to the WIC office, and assist them in completing the Application for Free and Reduced Price Meals for the

Child and Adult Care Food Program.

**Team up with colleagues.** Ask for their advice in locating potential collaborators. Which programs have a reputation for being helpful?

**Obtain or compile a resource directory.** Once you have located collaborators, keep a master listing. When a family you serve needs a service, you will have appropriate resources on file.



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families. By so doing, you can provide a variety of services that are coordinated and fine-tuned to cater to each child's and each family's needs. This is what is known as a seamless service delivery system. It is created through identifying and connecting with available services,

linking to financing from multiple sources, and coordinating services. Sometimes you reach out to others; sometimes you work with others who have reached out to you.

Creating a seamless service delivery system is almost always challenging and takes time. You have to deal with the bureaucracies of different

organizations as well as with the individual perspectives of these stakeholders. Yet, with planning, dedication, and the belief that these changes will truly make a difference, an effective system of seamless service delivery can be set in place.

## What Does Seamless Service Delivery Look Like in Action?

Here are two scenarios that illustrate how seamless service delivery works.

(1) FCC provider Davinda Rutt is interviewing a prospective client, Claudia Lopez, a single mother of 2-year-old Anna. Davinda was referred to Claudia by Claudia's neighbor, whose child was in Davinda's FCC home for 5 years. After touring the home and talking to Davinda, Claudia is very excited about the prospect of having her daughter cared for in Davinda's FCC home. She is particularly impressed that Davinda follows each baby's schedule, not a preset one. She also likes the idea that there is a curriculum in place and that parents are always welcome.

Davinda talks to Claudia about her possible eligibility for Early Head Start (EHS) and for a Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) subsidy. She learns that Claudia is working full time and verifies that her income falls under the CCDF eligibility criteria. She tells Claudia that the local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency is responsible for child



care subsidies in their county. She calls the CCR&R, talks to the eligibility worker, and makes an appointment for Claudia with a Spanish-speaking eligibility worker who will explain the CCDF eligibility regulations and help her complete the required paperwork. Davinda then talks to her EHS specialist and learns that there is an EHS opening, and she verifies that Claudia meets EHS income guidelines. Having set the money issues in motion, Davinda informs Claudia that Anna will need a physical and up-to-date immunizations before she can enroll in her program. Davinda gives Claudia the phone number and address

of the Health Department where Anna can get these. Before Claudia leaves, Davinda provides her with enrollment materials and information about parent education workshops. She sets up a time for Claudia to meet with the EHS family service worker. Finally, she checks with Claudia to see if she has any further questions or concerns. Davinda tells Claudia that it is her goal to be a "one-stop-shopping" resource for the families in her program.

(2) Soon after Anna Lopez enrolls in Davinda Rutt's program, the EHS specialist, Lorena Sanchez, visits Davinda's FCC home to help

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her complete the developmental screening for Anna within the required 45-day period. Though Anna has adjusted well to the program and its routines, the screening finds several areas that indicate possible developmental delays, confirming Davinda's concerns that have arisen from her daily observations. Davinda immediately sets up a time for her and Lorena to meet with Claudia to go over the screening results. During their meeting, Claudia expresses her fears that Anna might have some delays; she has been worried that Anna isn't saying more words. Davinda and Lorena talk about the importance of finding any possible delays early and tell Claudia that Early Intervention can do a more thorough evaluation. If any delays are identified, Davinda and Lorena will be part of the Early Intervention team that will work with Claudia to develop an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) for Anna. Davinda and Lorena help Claudia to set up an appointment with Early Intervention for the following week and encourage her to ask them any questions that come up before the appointment. After Claudia leaves, Lorena reminds Davinda about the last time she had a child with a disability in her care: the physical therapist came to her FCC home and all of the children loved the games she played.

## Tips on Providing Seamless Services:

**Look for organizations and programs that will provide children with needed health services,** such as screening and assessment, medical and dental services, food subsidies, and services for children with disabilities. Local health departments, child welfare offices, WIC offices, community health clinics, HMOs, and pediatricians and pediatric dentists are all likely contacts.

**Find partners committed to empowering families.** Some local agencies you might contact in this regard are those focusing on immigrant/refugee assistance, adult education, family literacy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and substance abuse services. Civic organizations, religious institutions, libraries, and community colleges are all potential collaborators as well.

**Locate programs that will augment the responsive care and educational services you offer.** The EHS office, your local CCR&R, and the county department of education will all have something to offer. So too will the public schools, local libraries, initiatives such as Reading Is Fundamental, and nearby colleges and universities.

## Next Steps:

### **Become an advocate for children and families.**

Your community is rich with resources that will improve the lives of children and families—everything from Child Find to WIC to Section 8 housing to ESOL classes. For many families, tracking down these services strains their abilities and requires more time and perseverance than they have. For those who succeed in locating these services, bureaucratic obstacles and intimidating paperwork can often cause families to give up on getting what they need. By being knowledgeable about where services are located and assisting families in understanding requirements and

completing paperwork, you can ensure that they will get the services they need to prosper.

**The more you know about who does what in the community, the more you can help families access seamless services.** Keep current with community happenings and update your resource file. Work with your colleagues to make the process efficient and effective. Consider joining a provider association so that you can have a voice on behalf of children and families. Think of seamless service delivery not as an ideal, but as a reality you can attain.



# Making Program Regulations Work for You

EARLY HEAD START FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE PROJECT

## Why Is This Important?

As a family child care (FCC) provider partnering with Early Head Start (EHS) and caring for children who receive subsidy funds, you represent two programs that have joined forces to better serve low-income infants, toddlers, and families. When combined, these funds can help improve the quality of care for children and help families work and seek education.

However, this means that there are two sets of laws that apply to your one program. EHS grantees at the local level are subject to federal rules and regulations. Child care programs that receive funding through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) are also guided by

federal regulations. However, the federal legislation permits states a lot of flexibility in establishing its CCDF program rules within the broad federal regulations. It can be helpful for you to know when there might be some leeway for change and the possibility of doing things differently because a specific practice is not required by law. If you have the correct information, you can help make changes both for your program and for others in the state. You can find out more about your state's use of CCDF quality funds by searching the state CCDF website(s), contacting your child care resource and referral agency network, or reading the current state CCDF plan.



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*You can make use of EHS and child care dollars to support your professional development.*

Finding out which rules and regulations at both the federal and state levels apply to you is a giant first step. With this knowledge, you can make creative use of funding to benefit your program and better serve children and families.

## Tips for Making the Federal and State Rules and Regulations Work for You

**Tap both funding sources to help you meet your quality improvement goals.** EHS grantees can use their professional development funds to support quality. In addition, states may use a portion of the child care dollars they receive to enhance the quality of all child care in their state. It is likely that your state is already funding an array of services for which you are eligible that could help you meet your goals and EHS requirements. States may also choose to target quality dollars to partnering programs or pay higher

subsidy rates to providers meeting standards that exceed state licensing requirements, such as those required in EHS family child care.

**Use both EHS and CCDF funding to serve individual children.** As a hybrid program, you have access to both EHS and CCDF subsidy funds to pay for children's care. This applies as long as a child is eligible according to the rules of both programs and you don't use both funding sources to pay for the same service. This means, for example, that child care funds can support a child for part- or full-day

services (depending on state rules), and EHS money can be layered on top to pay for requirements of that program, such as comprehensive services.

**Make use of both EHS and child care funding to ensure continuity of care.** EHS funds may be used to fill in the gaps when child care funding is not available. For example, EHS funds can be used to pay for the child of a teen parent during the summer months when she is not in school or working and thus is ineligible for

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a child care subsidy. It can also help when parents lose their jobs and cannot meet state CCDF eligibility requirements temporarily.

**Make use of EHS and child care dollars to support your professional development.** If you do not have a degree or a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, EHS gives FCC providers two years to earn their CDA. EHS grantees may use a portion of their professional

development budget to help you earn this credential and may also draw on the EHS federally funded training and technical assistance system. States may additionally target CCDF quality dollars to provide scholarships, mentoring, and other supports.

**Learn where there is flexibility in the laws.** For example, CCDF law may lead you to believe that using CCDF funding requires parents to pay a fee for services delivered in partnership,

and, like many providers, you may be reluctant to have to collect a copayment. However, this requirement is in direct contradiction with EHS rules that state that services are free, and CCDF regulations actually permit states to waive copays for families under the federal poverty level. As such, the children of poor families who are enrolled in your program would be made exempt from copays.

## Next Steps:

**Become an advocate for partnerships between EHS and FCC.** Share your experiences navigating both sets of rules with your EHS partners and county or state CCDF administrator. Let them know what's worked well for you and what hasn't.

**Become a voice at the state level for FCC providers who offer care to EHS infants and toddlers.** Knowing which regulations are cast in stone and which are open to interpretation can help you be a more effective advocate for improved policies that support children and families in FCC.

**Talk to your child care specialist for help in identifying other CCDF-funded quality initiatives in your state.** Find out what these other programs are doing. Share with them your strategies for using subsidies to benefit your program, and ask them about other strategies they may know of.

**Look for FCC networks in your community.** Consider starting one. FCC networks may often lighten the paperwork burden on providers by centralizing administrative functions. They may be able to contract with your state to administer and distribute CCDF and Child and Adult Care Food Program funds. They often offer professional development. And networking with other FCC providers can help you support one another as you learn to navigate the intricacies of funding policy and have a stronger voice as an advocate for quality family child care.

## To Find Out More

The following resources can help clarify child care and EHS regulations and guidance and provide more information about the issues discussed in this Tip Sheet.

Bromer, J., Van Haitsma, M., Daley, K., & Modigliani, K., (2008). *Staffed support networks and quality in family child care: Findings from the Family Child Care Network Impact Study*. Chicago, IL: Erikson Institute, <http://www.erikson.edu/hrc/hrcprojects/fccnis.aspx>

Hoffman, E., & Ewen, D. (2011). *What state leaders need to know about EHS*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), <http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/What-State-Leaders-Should-Know-About-EHS.pdf>

Matthews, H. (2010). *CCDBG: What's in the law?* Washington, DC: CLASP, <http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/ccdbginlawrev.pdf>



# Looking to the Future:

## Considerations for Becoming an Early Head Start in Family Child Care Provider

### EARLY HEAD START FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE PROJECT

## Why Is This Important?

As more and more providers are finding out, Early Head Start (EHS) and family child care are a natural combination. Infants and toddlers thrive in the warm, nourishing environment of family child care. The low ratios of children to caregivers ensure that children get the one-on-one time that is so crucial to their development. Moreover, this close atmosphere promotes bonding and the development of relationships. And as we know, it is in the context of relationships that young children learn and grow.

Partnering with the EHS system is beneficial for you as well, whether you serve as a contractor or become employed by the EHS grantee. All of the quality-building measures that are an integral part of EHS are also extended to you. Moreover, being part of a system affords you benefits you could not obtain on your own. These range from the possibility of a higher income to opportunities for professional development to the strength of a shared voice. In this Tip Sheet we present some important considerations you should examine in deciding whether being an EHS provider is for you.



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### Tips to help you decide if you should partner with EHS:

**Determine if you will be better compensated by being a partner with an EHS program.** When an EHS grantee decides to offer Early Head Start in family child care, it has several options: It can offer family child care using only EHS funds or tap both EHS and child care subsidy funds. It may employ providers as EHS staff or contract with them as independent business operators. Learn what each possibility offers so you can advocate for the arrangement you prefer. Because providers working with EHS may receive both EHS and child care subsidy funds, you may earn more income than you would without the support of these two programs. Moreover, when the EHS grantee uses

a dual funding system, there can be a “fail-safe” option for families and for you. Here’s how it can work: Suppose you have a child care slot filled by a child with a teenage mother who receives subsidy funds to support the care of her child. What happens in the summer when she’s not in school and doesn’t have a job? If you are partnering with EHS, rather than having to deny care you can use EHS funds to cover the period when the family would be ineligible for a child care subsidy. Some EHS programs also set a standard rate that can compensate for state rates that change based on the age of the child. This layering of funding can happen seamlessly so that the change in funding sources

doesn’t affect the family and the child care arrangement remains stable. This way the child, the parent, and you all benefit.

**Consider your needs for higher education and professional development.** Do you want or need to get a CDA? Is it important to you to attend professional conferences and get trained in new methods of nurturing development of infants and toddlers? Do you feel you do your job better when you are current with what is happening in the field? If you answered “yes” to these questions, look into partnering with EHS. Many EHS programs collaborate with other community agencies such as child care

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resource and referral agencies (CCR&Rs) to provide ongoing professional development, and some work with local community colleges to support CDA training attached to college credit.

**Find out if the EHS program has a lending library of furnishings, materials, and books.** Having appropriate furnishings, materials, and books to read with children can be expensive. If you feel that you could benefit from an enhanced inventory but can't afford to purchase these items, consider partnering with EHS. Many EHS grantees have a lending program that makes materials, equipment, and books available to family child care providers. Some grantees also have funds for providers to purchase equipment for their homes.

**Consider the advantages of having a child development specialist to consult with on a regular basis.** In EHS in FCC programs, a child development specialist comes to your home at least every two weeks. The coaching and mentoring you receive from a trained support person can help you provide even better quality care to children. This may be especially helpful for times when you find yourself caring for a child with a disability, a child who is homeless, or a child with a chronic illness and you have questions about how best to address the child's needs. Reflect on how much you may learn, for example, about offering comprehensive services or doing ongoing screening and child assessment, which will benefit not only the EHS child and family in your home but all children in your care.

**Explore how you could benefit from being in a network of fellow providers.**

Many providers choose this occupation because it affords them the opportunity to work on their own; providers relish being responsible for their own work. Even if you enjoy being independent, however, when you work at home alone with children for long hours every day, a network of colleagues can be a lifeline. A network offers support from colleagues and opportunities to hear others' opinions about children's challenging behaviors as well as to see how other providers handle field trips or parent education programs, for example. Providers in networks also share resources and support each other as they work to earn a CDA credential or to achieve accreditation or higher ratings in a state QRIS.

Provider networks also serve members in ways you may not realize. Networks afford members a chance to have a unified voice in advocating for children. Many voices are stronger than one; as a collective, networks can broker deals to purchase needed materials and supplies or even obtain insurance. Banding with other providers makes you stronger together than any provider can be working alone.

## Next Steps:

**Find an Early Head Start program in your area that offers EHS in family child care.** Talk to the staff members about what steps you should take to become an EHS partner. Ask about qualifications and whether they employ or contract with providers. Become familiar with the Head Start Program Performance Standards so you have an idea of what's involved in offering EHS in your family child care home.

**Consider the children and families already enrolled in your family child care home and those on your waiting list.** Could they qualify for both CCDF and EHS? Are they earning less than the federal poverty level and working or in school? Do some of the children have special needs? Are any of them in foster care? How could the children and families in your community benefit if you were an EHS in FCC provider?

**Find out if there is a provider network in your area.** In addition to EHS, local CCR&Rs or National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) affiliates often sponsor provider networks. State child care subsidy agencies, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program sponsors may also host networks. If your local EHS program is not offering EHS in family child care, a network can become an advocate with the EHS grantee for starting one.

## To Find Out More

Review the other the other tip sheets in this series. They can all be found at the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) site, <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc>. Tip Sheet 1 was on partnering, Tip Sheet 2 focused on creating systems for seamless service delivery, and Tip Sheet 3 dealt with making regulations work for you. Even if you've read them previously, you may find new insights by rereading them and by reading them all together.

Locate and look at the Head Start Program Performance Standards. These will give you an overview of what's entailed in partnering with Early Head Start.