



## Head Start University Partnerships: Measurement Development Research Grants 2004-2007

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation • Administration for Children and Families



# FAMILY MAP: AN INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT OF THE PARENTING ENVIRONMENT

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### GRANT PROGRAM

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) awarded eight grants in September 2004 for the Head Start-University Partnerships: Measurement Development projects. These three-year grants supported the development of measures for assessment of Early Head Start and Head Start low-income children and families. Projects focused on a range of important developmental, academic, social-emotional and health and safety domains, and many projects included culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. Each project also developed training procedures to heighten the quality of implementation and function within the Head Start or Early Head Start settings.

### WHAT IS THE FAMILY MAP?

The Early Childhood Family Map is a structured interview developed to assess important aspects of the family and home environment associated with well-being in 3- to 5-year old children. The measure is designed so that it can be used during home visits with Head Start families. Accordingly, it was developed in collaboration with Head Start providers and families. The Family Map systematically identifies areas of concern and strength so that providers can design interventions to reduce risk factors (e.g., food insecurity, physical safety issues, family conflict, harsh parenting practices, parental depression) or enhance factors associated with healthy development (e.g., availability of learning materials in the home, good monitoring and supervision, or home safety). The areas assessed by the Family Map are targeted by Head Start performance standards. The Family Map has been successfully implemented in Head Start agencies and has been adapted for non-Head Start early childcare settings.

### MEASUREMENT DEVELOPMENT

The Family Map was implemented in 20 Head Start centers located in an urban area (53 classrooms, n = 262 families) and in 6 centers (17 classrooms, n = 842 families) serving families living in more rural areas. Rural families were most often Caucasians (48%, 31% Latino) and urban families were most often African American (69%, 16% Latino). Children were 3-4 years of age and about half male (48%). Most parents in each program were working (69% to 74%). Most educators had an Associate degree (58%) with less than 10% at each agency with less than Associate degrees.

Because the goal was to assure that the Family Map be useful to early childcare program staff, and in particular to Head Start programs, it was developed in close collaboration with staff and families from two large Head Start agencies. The development process included an extensive literature review, the identification and evaluation of screening tools/items, and a cyclical process of field testing new items, input from Head Start staff and families, revising, and repeating field testing.

Key constructs were identified from the literature and potential initial items were identified from assessments used in national studies, research measures with published reliability and validity, measures commonly used in classrooms. These were subjected to preliminary psychometric analyses with a goal of reducing the list of items to include a set that provided strong reliability. In early pilot tests of the instrument, an experienced data collector interviewed volunteer Head Start families and modifications were made based on input from the data collector, group meetings with parents, and individual parent evaluation of the visit. Revised versions of pilot instrument was then administered to new families by Head Start educators or research data collectors, along with instruments that had a track-record of validity as measures of particular constructs of interest. Input from Head Start educators was used to modify or remove items. Data from this second round of testing were used to identify key items to be included in the first versions of the Family Map to undergo full field tests. Data from these early pilot tests were also used to help determine cutoff values to be used in the final instrument.

Training sessions for teachers who used the Family Map lasted from 2 to 4 hours depending upon the time allotted by the Head Start agency. The training topics emphasized the role of Head Start in strengthening families, non-judgmental interview techniques, the impact of the home and parenting environment on children's ability to learn, and how to use the potential risks identified to suggest family goals. The training included detail discussion of individual items and video examples of interviews.

Tests-retest reliability was examined by comparing the responses of a subset of parents ( $n = 20$ ) interviewed by both teachers and data collectors. With minor exceptions, agreement was high. Good validity was demonstrated with face validity (as assessed by Head Start staff) and comparisons to national estimates (e.g., FACES) of at-risk behaviors in Head Start families. The comparable rates suggest that the Family Map identifies similar rates of risks as other studies.

#### **HOW CAN THE MEASURE BE USED IN HS/EHS PROGRAMS?**

The interview tool was designed to support both educators and the early childcare programs in several ways. First, the tool provides a structure for the home visit to identify individual family needs and strengths in a systematic way. The format of the tool allows the Head Start educator and parent to immediately identify areas to target as family goals. Second, the results obtained from families can be used to identify areas appropriate for agency-wide intervention. For example, when a large number of parents report not using child safety seats routinely, the topic is a likely candidate for a center parent meeting or special event organized by the early childcare agency. Third, comparing results from fall and spring home visits can provide evaluative support for areas in which the program has made impacts. Finally, the Family Map interview results can be a useful tool in the Head Start self assessment and monitoring process.

To use the Family Map with families, it is important to identify the areas of concern during the visit so that a dialog can begin immediately. Consequently, the Family Map is scored during the

visit and has concrete cut-points for individual items and scales that indicate when a “risk” is present. The cut-points are clearly indicated on the form using a system of shading to alert the interviewer of an area of concern (see Figure).

The Early Childhood Family Map contains nine modules and includes items scored using three different data gathering processes: structured interview, observational, and semi-structured interview. Structured interview was used to obtain the information needed to score most items and where direct observation was not feasible. When it is possible to directly observe key physical feature of the home environment (e.g., safety issues) or significant interactions between parent and child (e.g., responsive parenting) observation by the interviewer is used. For a small number of items, semi-structured interview (involving follow-up probes to obtain more depth or detail) is used.

**FIGURE 1 EXAMPLE QUESTION AND RESPONSE FORMAT FOR THE FAMILY MAP**

The next set of questions is about things that have happened in the **past week**. If your child stayed with someone else for part of the week, answer to the best of your knowledge. If the past week was very unusual (e.g., school out), you may ask family to think about prior week. If no routine for item, mark None.

**This family may need help with establishing routines.**

17. Thinking about the **past week**, how many days did:

	None	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days	6 days	7 days
a) Your child brush their teeth about the same time every day?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) Your family eat dinner at a regular time?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) Your child go to bed within 30 minutes of their regular bedtime?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) You stick to your regularly morning routine?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

*If 2 or more response in gray: Consider Nurturing Family Routines as a Family Goal*

**STAFF/FAMILY FEEDBACK:**

Prior to implementation, the Family Map was received with concern by teachers. Concerns were centered around directly addressing potentially sensitive issues and parents potentially perceiving that they were being judged by the questions. For example, only 50% of educators at one site felt that the Family Map would be a good tool for a home visit. After using Family Map as part of the fall home visit, the majority of teachers (70%) rated the Family Map as useful and about half (51%) indicated that they were comfortable conducting a home visit with the Family Map. After the Spring visit, more teachers (61%) were comfortable with using the measurement tool during the visit. More than half (55%) of teachers reported that the Family Map helped families identify family goals. A subset of parents, who had experienced a previous Head Start home visit, was interviewed for feedback. About 2/3 (66%) reported liking this home visit better than past home visits. Most (83%) reported enjoying this home visit with their teacher ‘very much’ and most (93%) felt that the teacher understood the family’s goals. Almost all parents (90%) reported that they were comfortable with the interview. Both staff and parent feedback were incorporated into additional training materials and measurement development.

**WHERE DO I GO FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?**

Contact Leanne Whiteside-Mansell, Ed.D., ([WhitesideMansellLeanne@uams.edu](mailto:WhitesideMansellLeanne@uams.edu)) for copies of the instrument and for training information. Training materials include a manual and video demonstrating a full home visit conducted with the Family Map. Additional materials, including web based training, are under development ([www.uams.edu/partners/familymap/](http://www.uams.edu/partners/familymap/))

## PAPERS/PRESENTATIONS

- Whiteside-Mansell, L., Bokony, P. A., Conners, N. A., Bradley, R. H., McLemore, D. M., Lee, C. A., (2006, June). The development of the Family Map: An integrated Assessment of the parenting environment in early childhood. Paper symposium presented to the National Evaluation of Early Head Start Consortium, Washington, D.C.
- Whiteside-Mansell, L., Bradley, R. H., Conners, N. A., Bokony, P. A., McLemore, D. M., Lee, C. A., Johnson, D. (2006, June). The Development of a Structured Home-Visit Interview. Poster symposium presented to the National Evaluation of Early Head Start Consortium, Washington, D.C.
- Whiteside-Mansell, L., Bradley, R. H., Conners, N. A., Bokony, P. A., Lee, C. A., (2007, September). Documenting Head Start Impacts with the Family Map. Paper presented to the 2007 Region VI Head Start Association Training Institute, San Antonio, Texas.
- Whiteside-Mansell, L., Bradley, R. H., Conners, N. A., Bokony, P. A., Lee, C. A., (2007, October). The Family Map: Structured Family Interview to Identify Risks and Strengths in Head Start Families. Paper presented to the Arkansas Early Childhood Association, Hot Springs, Arkansas.
- Bokony, P. A., Whiteside-Mansell, L., Bradley, R. H., Conners, N. A. (2007, December). The Family Map: Structured Family Interview to Identify Risks and Strengths in Head Start Families. Paper presented to the National Head Start Association 24th Annual Parent Training Conference, Indianapolis, IN.
- Johnson, D., Whiteside-Mansell, L., Conners-Burrow, N. A., Bradley, R. H., Bokony, P. A., Lee, Carol, McLemore, D., & Sockwell, L. (2008, April). Comparison of Basic Needs Across Three Head Start Cultural Groups. Poster presented to the Society for Research in Human Development Biennial Conference, Little Rock, AR.
- Johnson, D., Whiteside-Mansell, L., Conners-Burrow, N. A., Bradley, R. H., Bokony, P. A., Lee, Carol, McLemore, D., & Sockwell, L. (2008, June). Assessing Risk Patterns in Home & Car Safety Across Three Cultural Groups. Poster presented to the Head Start Research Conference, Washington D.C.
- Whiteside-Mansell, L., Bradley, R. H., Conners-Burrow, N. A., Bokony, P. A., Lee, C. A., McLemore, D. M., Johnson, D., Sockwell, L. (2008, June). *Documenting Head Start Impacts with the Family Map*. Paper symposium (Measurement Development) presented to the Head Start Research Conference, Washington D.C.
- Whiteside-Mansell, L., Bradley, R. H., Bokony, P. A., Conners-Burrow, N. A., McLemore, D. M., Lee, C. A., Johnson, D., Sockwell, L. (2008, June). *Assessments of Risk and Strength in Head Start Home Visits*. Paper symposium (Home visit assessments linked to interventions: EHS and HS) presented to the Head Start Research Conference, Washington D.C.