



## **Head Start Family Advocate**

### **Job Summary:**

The Family Advocate will work as a member of a team whose primary role is to engage all families to partner with us to promote children's healthy development and school readiness. The Family Advocate uses knowledge of the principles of family engagement to support families in their roles as their child's primary educator, encourages parent/child interactions that promote children's school readiness and healthy development, and enhances family well-being. In this role, the Family Advocate will provide more intensive and targeted support to vulnerable families and families of children with chronic health conditions and special needs in order to ensure that our engagement strategies meet their specialized needs.

The Family Advocate will work as part of the program's broader team to expand family engagement strategies that will create a sense of belonging and shared community among families, with the goal of enhancing the relationships and support that families provide to one another in their shared aspirations for their children and themselves. The position may involve reassignment of caseload and/or center location as deemed necessary for program operations.

### **JOB RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The Family Advocate's responsibilities primarily fall within the following core functions, although s/he may perform other tasks based upon program needs:

- Promote Family Environments that Enhance Children's Development
- Support Families to Meet Self-Identified Goals and Needs
- Engage Families to Support One Another
- Enhance Program Collaboration
- Execute ERSEA process
- Maintain Accurate and Timely Record Keeping and Reporting

### **Promote Family Environments that Enhance Children's Development**

*Engage families as partners in their children's healthy development and school readiness.*

- Participate in outreach, recruitment and attendance follow up activities to engage families in our program and to motivate their active participation.
- Engage families in the Family Engagement Contract process in order to build relationships and shared accountability for promoting children's development.
- Individualize family engagement and relationship-building to be appropriate to families' cultural context, as well as respectful of family circumstances.
- Engage families in individualized, in-home and group experiences to enhance parent/child interactions that research shows fosters school readiness through consistent family routines, positive guidance and discipline, experience rich home environments and literacy activities.
- Utilize in-classroom time and home visits to build deeper understanding of the relationship between children's development and their home environments; as well as to model and coach families in a positive parent/child interaction.
- Implement a research-based Family Curriculum, (Shine On, Families) that extends our classroom curriculum into the family's home, modeling high quality adult- child interactions teachers use in their classrooms for families. Focus on coordination and collaboration with education.

### **Support Families to Meet Self-Identified Goals and Needs**

*Engage in a process of collaborative partnership building with families of children receiving center-based (Early) Head Start services.*

- Family Partnership Process: Utilize family self-assessment information to assist families with self-identified goals to enhance self-sufficiency in areas such as education, employment, housing, and access to community resources.
- Provide more intensive weekly face to face or phone contact with vulnerable families on caseload as identified through their self-assessment or family interactions/communication.
- Assure that families receive immediate support during times of crisis, and assist with referrals to community-based resources to meet counseling, treatment, entitlement or other needs.
- Identify and access services and resources responsive to family interests and goals and follow-up with parents to ensure that services met their expectations and needs.
- Analyze self-sufficiency data and utilize data/results to plan and coordinate a variety of parent cohort groups that allow families to support one another to achieve self-sufficiency goals.
- Coordinate or refer families to opportunities for continuing education, employment training and other employment services through formal or informal networking in the community.

### **Engage Families to Support One Another**

*Foster a sense of community and sense of belonging among families in order to strengthen social capital*

- Conduct group and center-based workshops and activities designed to build social capital and create a welcoming program community committed to family engagement in children’s learning and development.
- Cultivate family leadership and support their advocacy efforts through participation in program governance bodies such as Policy Council, as well as neighborhood and community based advisory groups.
- Work in conjunction with center staff and families to plan and conduct a wide variety of family engagement activities that provide opportunities for families to support one another, including, but not limited to the following:
  - Conduct activities, and campaigns that promote children’s school readiness.
  - Self-Sufficiency Sector Groups.
  - Monthly Family Engagement Network Meetings (parent meetings).

**Enhance Program Collaboration**

*Build relationships that will enhance communication and collaboration among internal and external stakeholders*

- Work side by side with health, early learning and disabilities and other members of the family engagement team to support families to be fully engaged in all aspects of our program
- Inform Health and Nutrition Coordinators, MHD, Early Learning and Family Engagement Coordinators regarding children with allergies, chronic health conditions, or special needs to ensure that medical documentation is received and case conferences occur prior to entry.
- Establish regular coordination and communication with Health, Nutrition and Disabilities team members in order to provide more intensive support to families of children with chronic health conditions and special needs, including targeted goal setting, and assistance with building family advocacy skills to navigate community systems of care for their children
- Work in coordination with Health and Nutrition team members to ensure that a determination of a medical and dental home and insurance is made within 30 days of a child entering the program and a determination of the child’s EPSDT status is made within 90 days of a child entering a program.
- Develop strategies with parents to ensure that all children on caseload are up to date on EPSDT requirements, including receiving timely evaluation and treatment for identified concerns.
- Develop effective communication and collaborative strategies with teaching teams to encourage family engagement in home learning activities, including individualizing activities based upon family interests and children’s developmental status.
- Establish and maintain working relationships with community partners to strengthen access to resources and training identified as priority goal areas by families.

## **ERSEA**

### *Recruitment*

- Ensure timely follow up on program inquiries and maintain an updated tracking system of potential enrollees.
- Assist Family Engagement and /or ERSEA leadership and participate in scheduling, planning and coordinating recruitment activities through the year.

### *Eligibility, Selection and Enrollment*

Ensure the eligibility, selection, and enrollment processes adheres to Head Start Performance Standards and program/Shine Early Learning ISP/PP .

- Per interview with family, determine the eligibility of children/families, ensuring that all family documentation is accurate and complete.
- Review application and eligibility documents received and work directly with families to ensure that all necessary enrollment/intake forms are completed and obtained in a timely manner for all children/families assigned to their center(s).
- Work with the Family Engagement Coordinator/ERSEA Lead to maintain an up to date and accurate wait list and enroll children/ families based on selection criteria to fill vacancies as they occur.
- If applicable; determine family eligibility for extended day services and assist families with completing child care subsidy applications.

### *Attendance*

- Monitor and follow up of children on caseload with daily calls to children that are absent from the program.
- Per program: provide clerical support in attendance entry.
- Develop attendance goals with families whose child is experiencing chronic absenteeism.
- Assist Family Engagement Coordinator and/or ERSEA Leads to support strategies when center's ADA falls below 85%, and to maintain Attendance Action Plans.

## **Maintain Accurate and Timely Record Keeping and Reporting**

### *Effectively manage workload and ensure accurate record-keeping and documentation*

- Maintain accurate electronic and hard copy records and case notes to support positive child and family outcomes. Ensure that all ERSEA (Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance) information is accurately captured and documented in electronic and hard copy records.
- Document efforts to assist families to identify their strengths, needs and self-sufficiency goals through completion of Family Self-Assessment, Family Partnership Agreement, and case notes.
- Record, monitor and follow up on referrals for support services for reporting requirements.
- Submit reports as needed and requested, such as monthly summary tracking reports, etc.
- Ensure that all PIR data is up to date in data system per caseload

*Non-Essential Duties:*

- Performs any and all other duties as assigned. ( *Please note; Family Advocates that have been assigned smaller caseloads may have additional responsibilities that will include, but not limited to, ERSEA and Health* )

**Job Specifications:**

To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to carry out each essential duty in a satisfactory manner. The job specifications listed below are representative of the education and experience as well as the knowledge, skill and/or ability (KSAs) required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.\_

*Requirements:*

- Associate or Bachelor's Degree in Social Work, Human Services, Family Services/Engagement, Counseling or a related field preferred, OR AA or BA in another field with a commitment to complete Family Services/Certificate/Credential within 18 months of hire. We will also consider candidates with a High School Diploma with 3 years' experience working in the community with families and a completed Family Development Certificate or Credential
- Experience, training, and skills with assisting the parents of young children to advocate for their families
- Experience working in low-income diverse communities preferred
- Physical exam and background checks are required for this position.
- Must have reliable personal transportation as travel from site to site is required.
- Travel required locally or long-distance up to 10% of the time for work-related meetings and functions.
- Must have a valid driver's license and reliable transportation.

*Knowledge, Skills, & Abilities:*

- A passion for achieving positive child and family outcomes through high-quality family engagement
- Ability to interact effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.
- Ability to communicate effectively, verbally and in writing.
- Demonstrated computer literacy skills, using MS Office applications and other basic data systems including internet navigation.
- Must be honest, dependable and able to meet deadlines.
- Self-motivated and able to work independently.

*Physical Requirements:*

- Ability to sit most of the time with some bending and reaching.
- Ability to stand, walk, and bend periodically.
- Ability to engage in repetitive movement of wrists, hands, and fingers – typing and/or writing.

- Ability to work frequently at close visual range (i.e. preparing and analyzing data and figures, transcription, computer terminal, extensive reading).
- Ability to receive and respond to oral communication.
- Ability to exert up to 10 pounds of force to lift, carry, push, pull, or otherwise move objects.

*Work Environment:*

- Work is generally performed in an office environment.
- Noise level in the work environment is moderate to occasionally loud (examples: business office with computers and printers, light to moderate traffic, human voices).
- Standard office equipment generally used includes:
  - Telephone
  - Personal Computer (monitor, keyboard, and mouse) or Tablet
  - Printer/Photocopy Machine
  - Calculator
  - Fax Machine

*Easterseals policy is to provide equal employment opportunity to all qualified applicants and employees regardless of their race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, genetic information, veteran status, status as a special disabled veteran, or any other protected criteria as established by federal, state, or local laws. This policy applies to recruitment and hiring, training, promotion, compensation, benefits, transfer, layoff, termination and all other terms and conditions of employment. Employment decisions at Easterseals are based solely upon relevant criteria, including an individual's capabilities, qualifications, training, experience and suitability.*

*Easterseals requires all employees to follow its COVID policies and requirements.*