Early Learning Mentor Coach (ELMC) Study – Coach Telephone Interview Protocol

From the Descriptive Study of Head Start's Early Learning Mentor Coach (ELMC) Initiative; a project of the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation;
Administration for Children and Families

6/11/2011

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Submitted: 6/11/2011

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Suggested Citation
Howard, E. C., Rankin, V. E., Fishman, M., Hawkinson, L. E., McGroder, S. M., Helsel, F. K., et al. (2011). *The Early Learning Mentor Coach (ELMC) Coach Interview Protocol.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation.

Overview-Coach Interview for ELMC

The ELMC study collected data to describe the objectives, activities, approaches, strategies, and other aspects of the Early Learning Mentor Coach (ELMC) initiative from the perspectives of Head Start grantees, coaches, and staff. In October 2010, the funds to support the ELMC initiative were distributed to 130 Head Start grantees in 42 states and the District of Columbia for a seventeen month period. Grantees used the funds to hire coaches to provide on-the-job guidance, training, mentoring and technical assistance to Head Start staff. The grant recipients reflected the diversity of Head Start programs, including Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and American Indian and Alaskan Native Head Start grantees. Data was collected using a mixed-methods design (qualitative and quantitative) and the following data collection instruments: a grantee census survey; a coach census survey; coach telephone interviews; and staff telephone interviews with staff who received coaching.

The Coach Interview was a phone interview given to a selection of Head Start/Early Head Start coaches funded through the ELMC initiative. The interview asks in detail about coaching experiences and practice and coach-staff interactions. Responses were coded at the time of the interview. The interview was estimated to take less than one hour.

In the final report for the ELMC Study, findings are presented across the seven basic aspects of coaching that served as the conceptual framework for the study: grantee context, basic dimensions, structural dimensions, procedural dimensions, outputs, perceived outcomes, and sustainability. The report concludes with a program logic model and recommendations for future research. The final report for the study is at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/early-learning-mentor-coach-study-elmc.

ELMC Coach Interview

Interview Date:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:
ELMC Grantee:

[INTERVIEWERS: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING TO YOUR INTERVIEWEE]

Hello, my name is [insert your name] and I am part of the research team evaluating the federal Office of Head Start's Early Learning Mentor Coaching initiative (known as the ELMC for short). This interview is part of this evaluation. This is an evaluation of the ELMC initiative, and *not* an evaluation of you, your Head Start/Early Head Start grantee or its centers.

The responses you provide will contribute to the development of profiles of mentor-coaching approaches to inform policy, practice, and research. There are no risks to you for participating, you may decline to participate or may stop at any time you wish, and your responses will remain private. Comments or quotes, if selected from your interview, will be reported anonymously to ensure that they cannot be attributed to either you or your grantee.

The interview will take about one hour.

Do you have any questions? If you have additional questions later, after we complete the interview, you may contact either Eboni Howard (202-403-5533; ehoward@air.org) or Fiona Helsel (202-680-0870; fhelsel@air.org). For questions regarding your rights involving participation in this telephone interview, please contact the director of AIR's Institutional Review Board at IRB@air.org or toll free at 1-800-634-0797. [EMAIL COPY OF INFORMED CONSENT PAGE AND CONTACT INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANT]

If you understand this information and agree to participate, please let me know and we'll get started.

I'd like to ask for your permission to record this interview so that I get everything you say. May we have your permission to record this interview? [START RECORDING ONLY IF PERMISSION IS GIVEN, AND VERBAL CONSENT IS GRANTED.]

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is **0970-0399**

I. About Your Work and Experience

First, we would like to learn a little more about your work. You may recall that you already answered a number of questions in the survey, and don't worry, we have those responses recorded. In our time today, we would like to hear more about your thoughts and opinions than we can get on the survey.

1. To start, tell me how long you have worked as a mentor-coach for [INSERT GRANTEE NAME]?
   a. Prior to being hired as a mentor-coach, had you previously worked for this grantee?
      - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] In what capacity did you work for this grantee?
      - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] Was a permanent role at this grantee repurposed for mentor-coaching?
   b. Have you worked as a mentor-coach prior to your current position?
      - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] In what type of programs did you provide mentor-coaching?
        - ➢ ***Optional Probes:*** Was your mentor-coaching for other Head Start/Early Head Starts, or early childhood programs, or elementary schools?

2. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** What are the experiences and skills that you have that are valuable to your work as a mentor-coach?

3. Tell me about any initial training or orientation you received from your grantee to start your work as a mentor-coach.

4. What additional training, support, or resources would benefit your role as a mentor-coach?

5. What people or resources that you used for advice and strategies have been the most helpful? Tell me more about how they have been helpful to you.
   - ➢ ***Optional Probes:*** grantee administrative or leadership staff, other mentor-coaches, supervisors, online resources, library, local college, Office of Head Start (ECLKC), National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning.

II. Mentor-Coaching Approach

Now, we have a number of questions about your mentor-coaching approach. We'd like to learn more about your personal approach to mentoring and coaching staff.

1. What types of staff do you mentor-coach?
   - ➢ ***Optional Probe***: Do you mentor-coach classroom teachers, assistant teachers, home visitors, family child care workers, supervisors, others?
   - ✓ [IF HOME VISITORS] Tell me more about your mentor-coach approach with home visitors. Do you go on home visits to observe home visitors at work? Do you use videotaped home visits for discussion and feedback?

2. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** Some grantees may require mentor-coaches to complete a certain number of sessions per month for each staff, while other grantees allow mentor-coaches to pursue their own format, scheduling and structure depending on staff needs. What about you? What is the typical format and structure for your mentor-coaching work?
   - ➢ ***Optional Probes***: For example, how do you describe what you do on a daily basis? Do you work one-to-one advising staff? Do you organize staff group sessions? Do you develop materials, lead or attend meetings, lead peer

discussion groups? How often do you meet with staff? Are you more likely to work with individuals or teams?

3. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** Mentor-coaches play a lot of different roles, ranging from providing emotional support to being a supervisor to providing expert technical advice. What roles would you say you take on in your mentor-coaching work?
    - ➢ ***Optional Probes:*** teacher/instructor, crisis intervention, advocate, technical expert, problem-solver, collaborative partner, supervisor, emotional supporter, logistical supporter, assistant to the staff you are mentor-coaching.
    - ✓ [IF NOT MENTIONED] As a mentor-coach, would you say that you <u>ever</u> tackled the role of crisis intervention?
    - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] Tell me more about this role as crisis interventionist.
        - ➢ ***Optional Probes:*** How frequently do you need to take on this role? Is it a consistent part of your mentor-coach work?
    - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] How do you think this role affects your overall ability to work as a mentor-coach?

4. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** Some mentor-coaches use <u>technology</u> such as texting, social networking, emails, or virtual meetings in their mentor-coaching, while others do not. What about you? What role does technology play in your work as a mentor-coach?
    - ✓ [IF USED, ASK] Tell me about why you use these technologies.
    - ✓ [IF USED, ASK] How often do you use these technologies?
    - ✓ [IF USED, ASK] What technologies are most successful to providing mentor-coaching?
    - ✓ [IF USED, ASK] Tell me about any challenges about using technology to provide mentor-coaching.

5. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** Some mentor-coaches use <u>video recordings</u> of staff in their mentor-coaching work, while others do not use that technique. What about you?
    - ✓ [IF USED, SAY] Tell me more about how you typically use video and how often you use it.
    - ✓ [IF USED, ASK] Overall, what is most successful about using video?
    - ✓ [IF USED, ASK] Tell me about any challenges using video to provide mentor-coaching.

6. On average how many hours per week do you spend doing your mentor-coaching work (including planning time, organizing, scheduling, etc)?
    - ✓ How many of those hours per week are you paid to be a mentor-coach?
        - ➢ ***Optional Probe:*** full time = 40 hours per week.

7. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** Some mentor-coaches are serving centers scattered over large geographical areas, while others are located in a single center. How about you?
    - ➢ ***Probe:*** Are you mentor-coaching staff in more than one center?
    - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] How geographically scattered are the staff that you are mentor-coaching? ***Optional Probes:*** less than 5 miles, 5 to 10 miles, 10-20 miles, 20-30 miles, more than 30 miles.
    - ✓ **[PRIORITY QUESTION]** Tell me about the benefits and challenges to mentor-coaching staff working in different centers.

8. **[☎PRIORITY QUESTION]** Tell me about the supervision you receive in your role as a mentor-coach as a part of the Early Learning Mentor Coach initiative.
    - ➢ ***Probe:*** Who supervises you?
    - ➢ ***Optional Probes****:* Is it an education coordinator, center director, senior mentor, or someone else?
    - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] How often and in what format do you report to your supervisor?
    - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] What is the level of support you get from your supervisor?
    - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] Is your supervisor a resource for your work as a mentor-coach? Do they help you decide on mentor-coaching approaches?

9. **[☎PRIORITY QUESTION]** Tell me about any formal supervisory responsibilities you have with the staff you mentor-coach.
    a. Do you report any information to the supervisor of the staff you mentor-coach regarding their progress?
    - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] How do you think having supervisory responsibilities affects the way you mentor-coach?
    - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] How do you think having supervisory responsibilities affects the way staff respond to mentor-coaching?

III. MENTOR-COACHING GOALS AND CONTENT

Now we would like to learn about your grantee's goals for the Early Learning Mentor Coaching.

1. **[☎PRIORITY QUESTION]** In your opinion, does your Head Start/Early Head start grantee have clear overarching goals for their Early Learning Mentor coach initiative?
    - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] What are the grantee's main goals for the Early Learning mentor-coaches?
    - ✓ [IF YES, SAY] Some grantees set center-level goals, others focus on individual level goals, and others have a combination. What about your grantee?

2. **[☎PRIORITY QUESTION]** There are a number of ways that goals, topics, and activities could be chosen for the staff you mentor-coach. Describe for me how you choose what to work on with your staff.
    - ➢ ***Probe:*** Do you decide or does the staff decide? Please describe who contributes to the choice of activities.
    - ➢ ***Optional Probe***: Does anyone else influence what you work on, like the staff person, administrators, or supervisors?

    a. Tell me about any observational or direct <u>assessment tools</u> you use to inform the selection of mentor-coaching goals, topics, or activities?

IV. TYPICAL MENTOR-COACHING

Before we ask about your mentor-coaching with a specific staff person, we would like to know about your typical mentor-coaching across the staff that you mentor-coach. Please think generally about your mentor-coaching. We'd like to get a general sense of the types of work that you pursued with the staff that you mentor-coached.

1. Do you offer feedback to the staff that you mentor-coach?
    - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] Tell me more, how do you do that?
        - ➢ ***Optional Probes:*** What is the feedback based on? Do you engage in observation and provide verbal or written feedback?
    - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] Tell me more, how does that approach work for you?

- ***Optional Probe:*** Do staff seem able to use this feedback?

2. Do you try and get the staff that you mentor-coach to change their practice or learn new skills?
   - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] Tell me more, how do you do that?
     - ***Optional Probes:*** How do you help them understand what they should change? How do you help them apply those changes to their work? Do you do things such as reflecting on skills *or* presenting handouts *or* modeling a skill or strategy *or* offering an opportunity to practice a skill or strategy?

3. Some mentor-coaching sessions vary a lot across different staff they mentor-coach, and others tend to be the same. What about you? Tell me a little more about how your sessions vary across staff.
   - ***Optional Probe:*** How you individualize your mentor-coaching sessions?

V. MENTOR-COACHING WITH [STAFF PERSON A]

We are now going to ask you about two staff you mentor-coach that we randomly selected to talk to you about. We would like to know your experiences working with each of them, to help us gain a more detailed understanding of the processes of mentor-coaching. First, let's talk about [staff person A].

1. What is [staff person A's] position at this center?
   - ***Probe:*** Is he/she a classroom teacher, assistant teacher, home visitor, family child care staff, administrator, or supervisor?

2. How long have you been working with [staff person A]?

3. Approximately how many times have you met with [staff person A] for mentor-coaching? How often do you currently meet with [staff person A]?

4. In what language(s) was mentor-coaching conducted for [staff person A]?

5. Thinking back to when you first started working with [staff person A], what was his/her <u>initial</u> attitude towards mentor-coaching?
   - ***Optional Probe:*** Some staff may be reluctant or concerned when starting mentor-coaching, while others maybe enthusiastic. What about [staff person A]?
   - ***Optional Probe:*** Would you describe him/her as more or less accepting, engaged or open to your mentor-coaching?

6. Thinking of [staff person A], how would you describe his/her <u>current level of openness and engagement?</u>
   - ***Optional Probes:*** For example, is s/he willing to examine her/his own work and look for areas for improvement? On a scale of one to 10, with 1 being not open or engaged and 10 being very open and engaged, where would [staff person A] rate? Tell me more about that.

7. **[☎PRIORITY QUESTION]** Tell me about [staff person A] training needs or professional development goals.

8. Please think back to your last mentor-coaching session with [staff person A]. Please briefly describe what happened during the mentor-coaching session. [ASK QUESTIONS A THROUGH F AS NEEDED TO GET AT DETAILS]
   a. Where and when did this mentor-coaching take place?
   b. In this last mentor-coaching session, who was present?
   c. What kind of things did you do?
      - ***Optional Probes:*** Did you conduct observations of the staff person you were mentor-coaching? Did you review videotapes with staff? Did you provide opportunities to practice new skills? Did you model a recommended approach? Did you explain a new concept?
   d. Did you use videotape?
   e. In this last mentor-coaching session, what major issues or topics did you focus on?
   f. To what extent does this last mentor-coaching session represent a typical session for you and staff person [A]?

9. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** Overall, over the course of your entire time working with [staff person A] how effective was your mentor-coaching at addressing the goals and priorities that you identified for [staff person A]?
   a. How do you know this?

VI. MENTOR-COACHING WITH [STAFF PERSON B]

Now let's talk about [staff person B].

1. What is [staff person B's] position at this center?
   - ***Probe:*** Is he/she a classroom teacher, assistant teacher, home visitor, family child care staff, administrator, or supervisor?

2. How long have you been working with [staff person B]?

3. Approximately how many times have you met with [staff person B] for mentor-coaching? How often do you currently meet with [staff person B]?

4. In what language(s) was mentor-coaching conducted for [staff person B]?

5. Thinking back to when you first started working with [staff person B], what was his/her initial attitude towards mentor-coaching?
   - ***Optional Probe:*** Some staff may be reluctant or concerned when starting mentor-coaching, while others maybe enthusiastic. What about [staff person B]?
   - ***Optional Probe:*** Would you describe him/her as more or less accepting, engaged or open to your mentor-coaching?

6. Thinking of [staff person B], how would you describe his/her current level of openness and engagement?
   - ***Optional Probes:*** For example, is s/he willing to examine her/his own work and look for areas for improvement? On a scale of one to 10, with 1 being not open or engaged and 10 being very open and engaged, where would [staff person A] rate? Tell me more about that.

7. **[☎PRIORITY QUESTION]** Tell me about [staff person B] training needs or professional development goals.

8. Earlier in this interview you described for me a recent mentor-coaching session with [staff person A]. Think back to your most recent session with [staff person B]. Did it vary much from the session you described with [staff person A]?
   - ✓ [IF YES, SAY] Please describe some of those differences.

   a. To what extent does this recent mentor-coaching session represent a typical session for you and staff person [B]?

9. **[☎PRIORITY QUESTION]** Overall, over the course of your entire time working with [staff person B] how effective was your mentor-coaching at addressing the goals and priorities that you identified for [staff person B]?
   a. How do you know this?

VII. REFLECTIONS ABOUT MENTOR-COACHING

I'd like to get your reflections about the mentor-coaching initiative.

1. **[☎PRIORITY QUESTION]** What are the characteristics of successful mentor-coaching?
   a. Do you find that relationship factors between you and the staff you mentor-coach are important to mentor-coaching?
      - ✓ [IF YES, SAY] Please describe what factors are necessary to effective mentor-coaching relationships.

2. **[☎PRIORITY QUESTIONS]** Was the program environment supportive of developing and improving new skills?
   a. Were administrators supportive?
   b. Was other staff supportive?
   c. Has the level of support changed since the Early Learning Mentor Coach initiative first started at your grantee?
   d. Would you say, in your center(s), that the staff felt safe openly discussing their work problems with their peers and supervisors?

3. **[☎PRIORITY QUESTION]** What were the challenges to the success of your mentor-coaching at your grantee?
   a. Were there any challenges that really undermined your work with individuals or with the center?
      - ➢ ***Optional Probe:*** What was frustrating to you as a mentor-coach***?***
      - ➢ ***Optional Probe:*** Were there…any staff problems? …any administrative challenges? …any other resource issues?

4. **[☎PRIORITY QUESTION]** Thinking across all your work as an Early Learning Mentor Coach, what were the areas where you feel that your mentor-coaching directly made the biggest improvements in staff?

5. If you could target your mentor-coaching efforts to specific types of staff members, who do you think would benefit the most from mentor-coaching?
   - ➢ ***Optional Probes:*** Where is the greatest potential for mentor-coaching: new teachers/home visitors *or* experienced teachers/home visitors *or* teaching assistants *or* education coordinators *or* other staff?

6. Do you have any other comments that you would like to make?

Thank you very much for participating in this interview!