Early Learning Mentor Coach (ELMC) Study – Staff/ Teacher 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 Staff/Teacher Interview Protocol.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation.

Overview- Staff/Teacher 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 60-minute Staff/Teacher Interview was a phone interview given to a selection of Head Start/Early Head Start teachers who were coached by ELMC funded coaches. The interview asks in detail about the teachers' perceptions and experiences with their coaches. During the ELMC Study, coding was done at the time of the interview.

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 Staff/Teacher Interview

Interview Date:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:

[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 Professional Development

I'd like to start with a few questions about your work at this center and professional development activities.

1. Just to confirm, have you been working with [NAME OF MENTOR-COACH] as your mentor-coach? [IF NO, ASK] Who have you been working with?

2. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTIONS]** What is your position at this center?
   a. What is your job title? [IF UNCLEAR, ASK] Are you a classroom teacher, assistant teacher, home visitor, family child care staff, administrator, or supervisor?
   b. How long have you worked in this position?
   c. How long have you worked at this Head Start/Early Head Start grantee?
   d. How many children do you work with directly?
   e. What ages of children do you work with?

3. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTIONS]** How long have you worked in the early childhood education and care field?
   a. When you think ahead three years, do you picture yourself still working in the early childhood education field?

4. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** About how often do you participate in required technical assistance or training activities provided by your grantee?
   - ***Optional Probes:*** About weekly; a couple of times a month; monthly; every few months; once a year or less.

5. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTIONS]** Are you <u>interested in pursuing</u> additional classes or trainings beyond these requirements?
   a. In the last year or so, have you <u>taken</u> any additional classes or trainings?
      - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] What have they been about?
      - ✓ [IF NO, ASK] Do you know if any additional trainings or classes are available locally?

6. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** Does your program offer any support that you know of for taking additional classes or trainings?
   - ***Optional Probes:*** Such as encouraging you to take the classes? Or paying for the classes, materials or paying for a substitute?

II. Early Learning Mentor Coaching and Mentor-Coach Approach

Now I have a number of general questions about the Early Learning Mentor Coaching that you have been participating in.

1. Prior to being contacted for this interview, did you know that the mentor-coaching you received was funded by an Early Learning Mentor Coach grant from the Office of Head Start?

2. How long have you received mentor-coaching from [NAME OF MENTOR-COACH]?

3. How were you selected to receive mentor-coaching?
   - ***Optional Probes:*** Were assessments used to select staff for mentor-coaching? Did you volunteer or express an interest?

4. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTIONS]** Since September 2010, approximately how many different mentor-coaches have you had?
   [IF MORE THAN ONE, ASK] How was the transition to a new mentor-coach?
   - ***Optional Probe:*** What helped with the transition to a new mentor-coach?

5. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTIONS]** On average, how often do you have face-to-face contact with your mentor-coach?
   a. How long does each face-to-face contact tend to be?
   b. Is this time formally scheduled?
   c. Are there other less formal contacts used as a part of the mentor-coaching you receive, such as phone calls, texting, or emails?
   d. Is scheduling a time for mentor-coaching easy or challenging?

6. Would you say the amount of contact with your mentor-coach over <u>the last year</u> has been too much, just about right, or too little?
   - ✓ [IF NOT 'just about right', ASK] How could it have been improved? Please explain.

7. Think back to when you started being mentor-coached. What, if any, initial expectations did you have about the mentor-coaching process?
   a. What were your initial expectations? What did you hope mentor-coaching would do for you?
      - ***Optional Probe:*** For example, did you expect the mentor coach would help you to grow as a professional?
   b. Did you have any concerns about mentor-coaching?
      - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] What were those concerns?
   c. Before you started meeting with your mentor-coach, were you <u>looking forward</u> to receiving mentor-coaching? Please explain why.
      - ***Optional Probe:*** Did you think they would help you a great deal or hardly at all?

8. Sometimes professionals feel they need to improve their work skills and others feel their skill level is quite high. What about you? How do you feel about your level of expertise?
   - ***Optional Probe:*** Would you say you have room for improvement or is work going just fine for you?

III. MENTOR-COACHING GOALS AND CONTENT

The next set of questions is about the content of your mentor-coaching sessions, including how goals and topics were chosen for your mentor-coaching sessions and what those goals and topics were.

1. Thinking over the mentor-coaching you have received, what are the goals and topics of your mentor-coaching work? Please list as many as you can think of that you have tackled in mentor-coaching.
   - ***Optional Probes:*** Any others? Such as…improving instructional practices, strategies, and skills (e.g., literacy practices, behavior management); increasing or improving use of assessment or technology (e.g., improving scores on the CLASS); personal development (e.g., enrollment in college coursework, improving staff interactions with colleagues, stress reduction).
   a. [IF GOAL(S) IDENTIFIED, SELECT ONE AND SAY] Please give me an example of how your mentor-coach worked with you on [INSERT SELECTED TOPIC].
   b. Have you had the same goals throughout your mentor-coaching?

2. Has your mentor-coach provided materials for you or your [classroom, center, or for families that you home visit]? [IF YES, SAY] Please describe.
   a. How useful were those materials?

3. Has your mentor-coach ever given you 'homework'?
   - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] How often?
   - ✓ [IF YES, SAY] Please provide an example.
   - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] Was the homework helpful?
   - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] In what way?

4. Does your mentor-coach provide feedback to you? [IF YES, ASK FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS]
   a. **[☎PRIORITY QUESTION]** Can you give me an example of feedback provided by your mentor-coach?
      - ➢ ***Optional Probes:*** By feedback, we mean does your mentor-coach offer you comments or suggestions about your work, such as identifying your strengths and weakness?
   b. How often do you receive feedback from your mentor-coach?
      - ➢ ***Optional Probes:*** Would you say you receive feedback every session, most sessions, occasional sessions, or seldom?
   c. Is the feedback based on live observations of your work, videotape, or both? Is it written or verbal feedback, in person or by email?
   d. **[☎PRIORITY QUESTION**] [IF FEEDBACK RECEIVED] How helpful do you find the feedback in improving your work? Please explain.

IV. TYPICAL MENTOR-COACHING SESSION

We would like to know about a typical mentor-coaching session for you. Please think back to the last mentor-coaching session that you participated in.

1. Please briefly describe what happened during the mentor-coaching session. [ASK QUESTIONS A THROUGH F AS NEEDED TO GET AT DETAILS]
   a. **[☎PRIORITY QUESTION]** Where and when did this mentor-coaching take place?
   b. **[☎PRIORITY QUESTION]** In this last mentor-coaching session, who was present?
   c. **[☎PRIORITY QUESTION]** What kind of things did you do?
      - ➢ ***Optional Probes:*** Did your mentor-coach conduct observations of you? Did your mentor-coach review videotapes with you? Did your mentor-coach provide opportunities to practice new skills? Did your mentor-coach model a recommended approach? Did your mentor-coach explain a new concept?
   d. Did your mentor-coach 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]?

      - ✓ Is there anything else you want to add to your description of this recent session?

   [ASK QUESTION G WHEN DESCRIPTION OF 'TYPICAL SESSION' IS DONE]
   g. Do your mentor-coaching sessions vary a lot, or do they tend to be the same in terms of timing and who is there?
      - ✓ [IF THEY VARY, SAY] Please describe how they vary.

V. PERCEPTIONS OF MENTOR-COACH

I now have a few questions about your perceptions of your mentor-coach.

1. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** How would you describe your relationship with your mentor-coach?
   - ➢ ***Optional Probe***: Would you say your working relationship with your mentor-coach is comfortable and easy or sometimes challenging? Please explain what it is like to work with him/her.

   a. What feedback would you give your mentor-coach about his/her strengths and weaknesses?
   b. What should s/he be working on?
   c. What are her/his strengths?

2. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** Are you fully comfortable discussing your work mistakes with this mentor-coach, to receive feedback and support?

3. Mentor-coaches can take on a number of roles, depending on their personalities, skills and the topic being worked on. What roles would you say your mentor-coach takes on?
   - ➢ ***Optional Probes:*** For example, most mentor-coaches work in the role of a teacher for staff, but they might also be an advocate, an emotional supporter or a personal assistant…what different roles does your mentor coach take on?
   - ✓ [IF NOT MENTIONED, ASK] Has your mentor-coach ever been an advocate for you?
     - ➢ ***Optional Probe:*** With your coworkers or administrators?
   - ✓ [IF NOT MENTIONED, ASK] Has your mentor-coach ever acted as an assistant to you in your work (like an assistant teacher)?
   - ✓ [IF NOT MENTIONED, ASK] Does your mentor-coach ever provide you with emotional support? [IF YES, ASK] How does your mentor-coach provide emotional support?
   - ✓ [IF NOT MENTIONED, ASK] What about crisis intervention; would you say your mentor-coach ever provides crisis intervention?

4. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** Overall, is your mentor-coach <u>skilled and knowledgeable</u> in areas helpful to you?
   - ✓ [IF YES, SAY] Please provide an example.
   - ✓ [IF NO, ASK] What areas would you like to learn more about?

5. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** Does your mentor-coach provide supervision for you or report to your supervisors?
   - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] Did you find that the mentor-coach being involved in supervision <u>interfered</u> with the effectiveness of the mentor-coaching, or did it <u>facilitate</u> the effectiveness of the mentor-coaching? Please explain.

VI. EFFECTIVENESS OF MENTOR-COACHING

I'd like to ask just a few more questions to get your sense of how effective you think the Early Learning Mentor Coaching has been.

1. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** Overall, on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being low and 10 being high, how would you rate the quality of the mentor-coaching you receive from your program? Briefly tell me why you rated the quality of mentor-coaching this way.

2. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** Some staff have told us their work has changed a lot as a result of mentor-coaching, while other staff said there has been little change as are result of mentor-coaching. What about you? Has your work changed as a direct result of mentor-coaching?
   - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] Tell me more. Please provide an example.
   - ✓ [IF YES ASK] What did your mentor-coach do to cause those changes?
   - ✓ [IF NOT MENTIONED, ASK]: Have you increased your use of assessments in your work as a direct result of mentor-coaching?

   - ✓ **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** What about your work as it relates to the ways you work with children, family and other staff? Some staff have told us this type of work has changed as a result of mentor-coaching, while other staff have said there has been little change in how they work with children, family and other staff. How about you?
   - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] Please provide an example.
   - ✓ [IF YES, ASK] What did your mentor-coach do to cause those changes?
   - ✓ [IF NOT MENTIONED, ASK]: Have your instructional practices changed as a result of mentor-coaching? Have your strategies or interactions with parents changed as a result of mentor coaching? Has your ability to manage children's behavior changed as a result of mentor-coaching?

3. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTION]** Since September 2010, have you pursued college coursework, a degree, certification or a credential?
   - ✓ [IF YES, AND NOT MENTIONED IN RESPONSE TO Q2, ASK] Did the mentor-coaching you experienced provide direct encouragement to pursue college coursework or a degree, certificate, or credential? Please explain.

4. **[☏PRIORITY QUESTIONS]** Given the opportunity, would you like to continue your work with your mentor-coach?
   a. What will you miss about the mentor-coaching?

VII. REFLECTIONS ABOUT MENTOR-COACHING

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

1. What was the best thing about the experience of having a mentor-coach?

2. What was the most challenging thing about the experience of having a mentor-coach?

VIII. ABOUT YOU

I'd like to end with a few questions about you. We are asking a few basic demographic questions, so we can describe who received mentoring-coaching under this initiative.

1. What is the highest level of education you have completed? [CODE RESPONDENT'S ANSWER USING THE RESPONSE OPTIONS BELOW. DO NOT READ RESPONSE OPTIONS TO RESPONDENT; PROMPT IF NECESSARY]:

Up to 8th grade	☐
9th to 11th grade	☐
12th grade but no diploma	☐
High school diploma/GED/or equivalent	☐
Voc/Tech diploma after high school	☐

Some college, but no degree	☐
Associate's Degree (AA)	☐
Bachelor's degree (BA or BS)	☐
Graduate or professional coursework, but no degree	☐
Master's Degree (MA or MS)	☐
Doctorate degree (Ph.D. or Ed.D.)	☐
Professional degree after bachelor's degree (MD, DDS, MBA, JD, LLB)	☐

2. What certificates or licenses do you have? [CODE RESPONDENT'S ANSWER USING THE RESPONSE OPTIONS BELOW. DO NOT READ RESPONSE OPTIONS TO RESPONDENT; PROMPT IF NECESSARY]:

Mentor-coach certification	☐
State-awarded teaching certificate	☐
State-awarded early childhood or preschool certificate	☐
Child Development Associate (CDA) credential	☐
Special education teacher degree	☐
Social work, psychology, or counseling license	☐
Teaching certificate or license	☐
Other (please specify):	☐
None of the above	☐

3. Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic or Latino *or* do you consider yourself to be non-Hispanic or non-Latino?

Hispanic or Latino	☐
Non-Hispanic or non-Latino	☐

4. What is your race? [CODE RESPONDENT'S ANSWER USING THE RESPONSE OPTIONS BELOW. DO NOT READ RESPONSE OPTIONS TO RESPONDENT; PROMPT IF NECESSARY]

American Indian or Alaska Native	☐
Black or African American	☐
Asian	☐
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	☐
White	☐

5. Do you have any other comments that you would like to make? [text box; 100 character limit]

Thank you very much for participating in this interview!