

Early Childhood Central Coordination in Ohio: Achieving the Vision October 2014

What is a Central Coordination in Ohio?

Right now, the answer depends on where you are. Across Ohio's 88 counties, there are multi-county central coordination sites and those which are single-county operations. We also have CCs which take referrals for all kinds of Early Childhood programs and those who take referrals only for Help Me Grow.

What is the vision for HMG Central Coordination in Ohio?

What the ODH wants for Central Coordination is one coordinated place for the public to access information and referrals for family support programs prenatal to kindergarten entry. We hope that HMG central coordination will be the catalyst for creating an Early Childhood infrastructure so that referral sources and families it as the single point of entry for access, assessment and referral to early childhood programs in any local area.

We are at the time and place that the ODH cannot continue to maintain 88 central coordination sites for Help Me Grow. We have communicated that we will not, at this time, impose a multi-county regional structure, nor will we require the central coordination sites to include other programs beyond HMG. That being said, by encouraging you to work locally and providing these resources, we hope that you will now be able to begin conversations to determine your own future with central coordination.

This document focuses on the challenges and barriers to implementing a Central Coordination site which accepts referrals for programs including, but not limited to Help Me Grow. Whether you share our vision or you have a different one, if you seek to be a truly central connecting place for pregnant women and families with young children, this document should help you begin the conversations locally so that you can turn your local vision into action and action into reality.

Benefits of a Central Coordination for multiple programs:

- Allows maximum usage of family support program services
- Focuses on a single point of entry for families with all the family support programs
- Assures that families will be linked to the most appropriate services available for them based on the family's needs
- Allows for the possibility of uniformity across the programs
- Creates a streamlined process for recruitment and allows home visitors and service coordinators to focus their efforts on providing direct services to families
- Promotes collaboration and reduces turfism between programs
- Eliminates duplication by creating a single point of entry for families

Cautions of a Central Coordination for multiple programs:

- Because funding can be tied directly to the number of families served by the program, giving up control of one's program referrals is similar to giving up control of one's checkbook. This is not an easy task; therefore, trust is essential
- Relationships can make or break a central coordination; how you feel about one another cannot be disregarded if you hope to succeed
- It takes time to develop the process and to create buy-in from stakeholders. Meetings are needed when first discussing a central coordination for regular communication
- One organization needs to take the lead in convening the stakeholders and to keep the process moving. This can be hard when either too many or not enough organizations want the role
- Getting to one set of common forms or processes is hard to achieve. Organizations may want their own legal counsel to review and there may need to be some modifications based on each organization's legal review. It can be a time consuming process

Overcoming Barriers in Developing a Central Coordination for multiple programs:

The hardest barrier to overcome in developing a multi-program central coordination site is to create trusting and open relationships among program/partners. It is extremely important to show funders that duplication of services is being prevented. If funders do not see the need for family support services, then they will find other programs and services to fund. It must be clear that the central coordination process provides a mechanism to identify the families' needs and match the family to the program that best addresses their needs.

It is crucial to central coordination development and implementation that service representatives:

- Meet regularly
- Remain honest – discuss concerns and problems as they occur
- Be as open minded as possible
- Keep moving forward
- Be able to see the bigger picture of how this system helps the entire community even if some decisions may not benefit your program
- Keep the best interest of the families' needs in mind at all times
- Have the support from all levels (manager, direct service provider) within the participating organizations
- Some organizations have found it beneficial to have partners complete a Memorandum of Understanding or a Declaration of Partnership
- Identify a lead organization to convene stakeholders and be responsible for keeping the momentum moving forward
- Assemble an organizing group (decision makers) to discuss developing a central coordination for multiple programs. The group needs to discuss the challenges and benefits of development and implementation
- The organizing group will need to meet frequently to develop a local plan and to ensure the CC is off to a good start
- Develop an agreement among service provider which defines through a Memorandum of Understanding or a Declaration of Partnership roles and responsibilities

An example of this might include that service providers must agree to:

- Designate a representative to attend planning team/coordinated intake meetings

- Designate representatives to attend referral meetings
- Share responsibility of taking complete/accurate meeting notes and distributing them
- Participate in the referral process
- Remain confidential
- Understand the basis for referrals

The group will need to think through the following questions/topics across the programs it will include in its central coordination site processes:

- Determine which organization has the capacity or the potential of capacity to serve as the central coordination site
- Discuss referral processes and procedures and come to agreement on exchanging information, timeliness parameters and consistent messaging to the public
- Discuss the central coordination process with any local fund contributors to get buy-in
- Can we develop any common forms?
- Can we develop a universal screening tool all service providers can agree upon and understand?
- Typically, a central coordination site would need to have at least normal business hours if not extended hours. They need to have fax, voice mail, and email capacity to receive referrals at any time. Are there additional requirements from programs which will need to be included?
- All programs need to be in agreement regarding which types of families will benefit most from their particular service as well as which service is most appropriate. The best interest of families is to be kept in mind and considered with every referral, rather than what is in the best interest of the program. Be aware as to what research has demonstrated concerning the effectiveness of the program model when dealing with certain populations and striving to achieve certain outcomes. Consider creating a decision tree for referrals
- It will be important to develop marketing pieces for the referral sources to understand the new process and buy into it. Because some referral sources may feel uncomfortable making referrals to someone they don't know, marketing strategies will help inform referral sources of unknown services and ease their caution

Handling situations as they arise

Situations will arise. Nothing that looks easy and coordinated ever started without bumps along the way. The central coordination site needs to agree to route referrals from individual programs through the central coordination. Any variance to this arrangement needs to be clearly outlined in the Agreement (MOU or Declaration of Partnership). Families may have requests as to which services they would like to participate in. All attempts should be made to direct family to best suited service. If they prefer a certain service over another one, allow them to go with the service they prefer. If there is a wait for this service, inform them of wait. If they prefer to wait, inform them of other services available to them.

However, when the service they requested is not the best suited service for the family, then that service should not be an option. Likewise, if a family is not eligible for a certain service due to income guidelines or for other reasons, do not offer this service to them. Keep in mind that the CC's

purpose is to match families with the service “best suited” for them. Although the family’s choice is of importance, the best use of funds takes precedence. It is important to direct the family to the service most appropriate for their needs.

Handling a situation in which it is felt a partner is offering less than high quality services

This situation must be dealt with directly and swiftly or it can derail the entire process. Remember, not all programs are created equally. Typically, it is not the entire program; rather, it is an individual worker within the program. To keep the trust in the partnership, it is important that agencies deal with personnel matters directly. Remain confidential and sensitive to personnel matters. Other members of the partnership may not know (and probably shouldn’t) the details of what the personnel issue is or how the organization is working on resolution. It is vital that group members share their concerns with the organization directly.

ODH Minimum Expectations for Local HMG Central Coordination

Staffing Central Coordination

Ensure that the individuals used for centralized coordination activities have sufficient knowledge and are trained in accordance with rule 3701-8-03 of the Administrative Code, about the HMG program services and referral processes in order to accurately describe available options to those who call [3701-8-04(D)(2)]. Centralized coordination contractors shall ensure the implementation of coordinated child find and outreach activities with both early intervention and home visiting programs for the counties of contracted service.

Specifically, for Staff doing Outreach & Child Find, the ODH expects that he/she:

- Engages individuals, organizations and families within targeted communities
- Develops and maintains positive relationships with community stakeholders
- Is an active presence of local community Early Childhood focused committees, meetings, and initiatives
- Establishes relationships with other community agencies serving target population

In educating people, the ODH expects that the following will be shared:

- Awareness of HMG, including early identification of infants and toddlers with a disability;
- How to make an appropriate referral into HMG;
- Which populations are served in HMG;
- Awareness of the services and supports available to pregnant women, infants and toddlers and their families in HMG;
- HMG telephone helpline and the HMG website; and
- Who is a primary referral source, what their duty is to make referrals which include timely identification of potentially eligible pregnant women, infants and toddlers, including the early identification of infants and toddlers with a disability (7 calendar days after suspicion of a developmental delay or disability).

Specifically, for Staff doing Central Coordination, the ODH expects that he/she:

- Obtains system referrals and processes program referrals
- Is familiar with the program options in the community of contracted service
 - Can speak well on the phone
 - Is knowledgeable about referral processes
 - If applicable in county of contracted service, screens for eligibility and assigns EI referrals for pre-eligibility screening or to service coordination contractor
- Makes program referrals appropriate to needs, choice & location
- Provides excellent customer service to all individuals
- Ensures incoming referrals are expedited within standards/rule
- Works to present communication in the primary language of the parent
- Implements effective problem-solving strategies
- Connects children and families to community resources and services, when applicable
- Answers phones, faxes, voicemail, and e-mails timely
- Enters data into Early Track timely
 - Has a contingency plan in place for sickness, or other reasons for absence

Central Coordination Contractors (CCC) must assure that Help Me Grow personnel, whether employed or sub-contracted, **meet minimum requirements for hire, training and credential**, in accordance with OAC 3701-8-03.

- The rule (implementing on 1-15-2015) requires that central coordination staff have a high school diploma or GED to be hired; then that they take the HMG Training Institute and Early Track training within six calendar months of being hired; and are provided a minimum of one hour per month of direct, group, or peer-to-peer supervision during their employment.

CCC must also designate one individual as the **Contract Manager** who is responsible for oversight and monitoring of the required activities of the grant, contract or agreement. [3701-8-04(G)]. In overseeing a coordinated intake system which provides a single point of entry for access, assessment, and referral to early intervention and home visiting services, the contract manager provides oversight/supervision, proactive monitoring, and problem solving.

Specifically, for Contract Managers of Central Coordination, the ODH expects that he/she:

- Ensures that the CC staff and any subcontractors adhere to contract requirements, program rule, and compliance with state regulations
- Prepares and supports preparation of required reports to ODH
- Conducts reviews to ensure timeliness, accuracy, availability and security of information
- Provides supervision to CC staff at the minimum of one hour per month
- Develops Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) or inter-agency agreements, when deemed appropriate and necessary for the smooth operation of Central Coordination, with other local community programs in the areas of contracted service

Within 45 days after the Contract Beginning Date, **CONTRACTOR** will submit the name of at least one (1), but no more than four (4), Early Track system administrators for the centralized coordination contractor with the signed Contract. Submit this information to etds@odh.ohio.gov

Operating Hours of Central Coordination

CC contractors must maintain and disseminate a local telephone number with voice mail capabilities, a fax number, and an email for the public to use to make a referral.

Instead of specifying exact hours of operation, the ODH expects that CC staff will answer the local phone number during business hours every day except for state holidays and weekend days.

During times when CC staff will not be available to answer phones, each CC contractor must make sure their phones provide voicemail instructions for leaving a message to connect with Help Me Grow. Phone messages shall be returned no later than the next business day.

Required Activities of Central Coordination

All activities of central coordination are provided in Ohio Administrative Code 3701-8-04. The rule is available here: <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/~media/ODH/ASSETS/Files/rules/final/3701-1%20to%203701-9/3701-8/3701-8-04n.ashx>

As a summary, activities of central coordination contractors include:

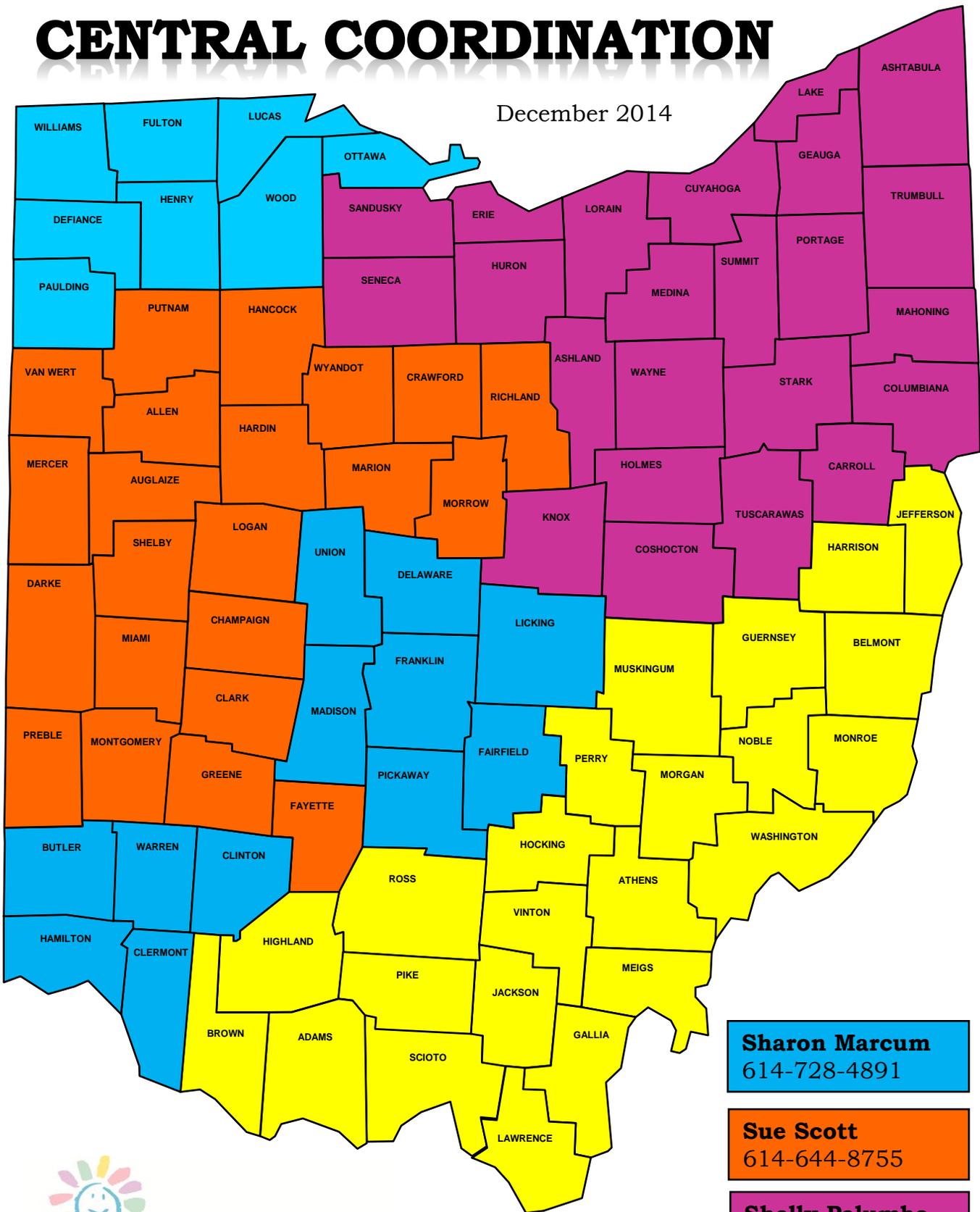
- Implement coordinated public awareness activities with HMG early intervention and home visiting;
- Implement coordinated child find and outreach activities with HMG early intervention and home visiting;
- Complete HMG referral processes;
- Enter data into Early Track;
- Maintain the confidentiality and privacy of anyone who contacts or is contacted by CC;
- Provide information to the public, as well as professional referral sources; and
- Maintain a central directory, which must be made available to the public upon request (must be available electronically, but can provide to the public in any format/method you prefer), for the areas of contracted service.

Help with Questions

If you have questions about your Central Coordination contract or the rules governing the contract, please reach out to your Technical Assistance Consultant at the Ohio Department of Health.

CENTRAL COORDINATION

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