Evaluation of Coaching and Coach Supervision Practices, 2018-19

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This brief provides a summary of a year-long developmental evaluation of Child360's coaching and coach supervisory practices. Researchers collected quantitative and qualitative data from supervisors, coaches, directors, and teachers. Results were reported on a quarterly basis throughout the evaluation period, granting supervisors structured opportunities to reflect on and respond to the findings. High-level results and takeaways from this evaluation include the following:

● All coach supervisors conducted their activities in accordance with QSLA Framework guidelines, including approving coaching plans and Quality Improvement Plans, checking and tracking data reported by coaches, and providing feedback and support on a regular basis.
● Although supervisors employed varying strategies for communicating with their teams of coaches and providing support for their professional development, most coaches agreed that their supervisors respected them, were committed to their wellbeing, and communicated effectively.
● Due to changes in the direction of leadership, coaches experienced multiple changes in their scopes of work during the program year. Changes associated with extra hours (e.g., longer commutes and increased data entry) were perceived negatively; changes associated with more flexibility (e.g., reduction of forms and changes to initial visits) were perceived positively.
● The majority of teachers and directors were very satisfied with the coaching services they received and the high levels of collaboration and support they experienced. Most teachers agreed that their coaches helped them improve their practices, set meaningful goals, and gain new skills and abilities. Most directors agreed that specialty coaches, who specialized in leadership development or family engagement, helped them to improve their leadership skills, support teachers, and set meaningful goals.

These and other specific results led to a number of recommendations, which our evaluation team presented to the supervisors, along with findings on a quarterly basis to promote timely consideration and use. We recommended that supervisors jointly define and consistently apply rules for the tracking of coaches' professional development and training hours, and this recommendation was put into practice. The supervisors collaborated by sharing individual practices for tracking coaches' hours, as well as by developing a tracking system to log coaches' completion of professional development and training requirements. Other recommendations proved more challenging to address, and ultimately were not implemented. This was in large part because a number of organizational changes occurred concurrently with the evaluation period, making these recommendations infeasible to enact.

Evaluation Design and Methods

Our evaluation team designed a developmental evaluation with a mixed-methods approach. We collected qualitative data through interviews with supervisors and surveys of coaches, teachers, and directors. Our team analyzed qualitative data for emergent and common themes, and analyzed quantitative survey data descriptively. The evaluation design was developmental in that we prioritized providing program support, through responsive feedback, timely findings, and a focus on use, to coach supervisors and their teams. Through discussions with coach supervisors, we identified changes that had occurred over the previous program year, and generated questions and topics to address in our survey of coaches. Responses to these questions were then shared back with the coach supervisors, in an effort to provide developmental support for the supervisors' processes and Child360's evolving coaching model. We conducted the evaluation process as a series of three-month cycles of data collection, analysis, and reporting. Each cycle culminated in a Rapid Feedback Memo (RFM). The RFMs' purpose was to present preliminary evaluation findings to directors and coach supervisors. RFMs were intended to be used as springboards for discussions, reference documents for the future, and sources of information and guidance when considering potential changes to processes.

After disseminating each RFM, evaluators conducted "sensemaking"[1] discussions with directors and coach supervisors. Sensemaking discussions allowed all participants to reflect on, consider, and use evaluation findings pragmatically within the working environment. The key evaluation questions are presented below and grouped by the areas on which the evaluation focused throughout the year.

Role of Coach Supervisors. How consistent was the support provided by supervisors to Child360's multiple teams of coaches? How well did supervisors' activities align to the expectations presented in the Quality Start Los Angeles Framework (2017)? What was the quality of feedback provided to coaches by supervisors, and did the shadow visit process help coaches improve their coaching?

Professional Development and Training. What professional development activities and trainings were expected for coaches? How were professional development hours tracked? How did existing coaches maintain high levels of quality in their skill sets? How did supervisors support their coaching teams' participation in optional professional development?

Changes to Coach Responsibilities and Processes. How beneficial were changes to scopes of work, and how did the coaches perceive the impact of the changes on their work? What were coaches' and supervisors' perceptions of changes to the coaching model processes? What processes might need to be further refined or developed for use in 2019-20 and beyond?

Provider Perceptions of Coaching Impact. What were providers' perceptions of their coaching experience during the period of the study? Did providers believe that their coach was engaged and interested in their professional growth? Was the coaching they received educational and supportive?

> **Child360 Coaching Teams**
> The following are the scopes of work associated with each group of Child360 coaches during the 2018-19 program year.
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> **Program Coaches** work with lead teachers at ECE sites. They provide feedback on environmental quality and teacher-child interactions. They help teachers set and achieve goals for their classrooms by observing teachers in action, demonstrating desired techniques, and suggesting trainings and resources.
>
> **Program Leadership Consultants** are Specialty Coaches who work with site directors or supervisors. They support directors in strengthening leadership and program management skills, while helping them to maintain or improve program quality by providing resources and trainings.
>
> **Family Engagement Specialists** are Specialty Coaches who work with site directors or supervisors. They support the home-school connection by suggesting activities and resources for families, and foster connections with parents by helping site directors to address family needs and organize events.

Evaluation Findings

The results of this evaluation are organized by the above research questions and topics.

Coach supervisors supported and guided their coaches in accordance with many of the best practices discussed in the coaching literature. Findings from a multi-case coaching study in early education settings suggested that effective supervision is necessary for quality implementation of coaching activities. Effective supervision was described as a balance of traditional supervision activities (such as structured observation and documentation) and support activities, such as feedback and opportunities for individual and peer reflection (Isner et al., 2011). Coach supervisors provide essential direction, guidance, and management of team members; additionally, the supervisor role is outlined in the QSLA Framework as a crucial component of a successful coaching model. In this evaluation, supervisors were interviewed on their approaches to many activities outlined in the QSLA Framework to assess the alignment between various supervisory activities and QSLA Framework expectations. The findings below describe the activities and expectations that were evaluated.

Supervisors regularly reviewed and approved the quality of coaching plans, Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs), and data entry. As part of the planning process when a Child360 coach begins supporting staff at a given site, the coach and lead teacher (or director) jointly create a plan for coaching activities, as well as a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), which lists yearly goals and milestones for improvement. While there was variation among supervisors, all reported having a system for reviewing QIPs and strategies for providing approval and feedback.

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[1] The term "sensemaking" was initially developed by Karl Weick in 1995, as an approach to understanding the process of organizing, and to provide insight into how meaning is given to events within a group or organization (Helms Mills, Thurlow, & Mills, 2010).

Strategies included checking for development of SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely) and ensuring alignment between goals and action steps. Supervisors developed a form to facilitate the QIP approval process, and most used it to document their feedback to program coaches. The most common method used by supervisors to ensure quality of data entry was to choose sites at random and check their data for accuracy and completeness, with special attention paid to sites with outstanding issues or concerns. Specific areas for review included adherence to deadlines, accurate documentation of time, and the inclusion of full synopses of visits, as well as the use of specific examples, the identification of specific coaching strategies, and the reporting of teachers' reflections.

Supervisors met individually with coaches and often provided feedback and professional guidance. One-on-one meetings between supervisor and coach (known as "check-ins," and occurring approximately every 6-8 weeks) allowed for relationship-building opportunities, debriefs after shadow visits, and performance evaluation discussions. Additional scheduled meetings, informal meetings, and remote check-ins (via phone, text, or video call) also took place, based on coach needs and availability. Supervisors demonstrated the importance they placed on their team's growth and professional development through the use of multiple methods to provide feedback and guidance to their coaches. These methods included giving general feedback on long-term goals and professional growth, as well as giving specific, immediate feedback during debriefs. Supervisors provided support during difficult times or challenges, and used various methods (e.g., dedicated message boards, reflective conversations) in connecting with their team members. Supervisors and coaches also worked together on solutions related to relationship building, facilitating strengths-based conversations, and maintaining objectivity in documentation.

Coaching teams conducted "shadow visits" and other evaluation activities to provide meaningful guidance and inform program improvement. The supervisors' on-site observations of their team members, known as "shadow visits," were on-site observations supervisors conducted with their coaches as part of the observation, feedback, and evaluation process. A minimum of two shadow visits per coach were conducted throughout the year with the use of a standardized rubric. Supervisors shared their respective coaches' perceptions of the process and rubrics. On the positive side, many supervisors reported that coaches appreciated the process (particularly the debriefing afterwards), and that they believed it was helpful in understanding expectations. Most coaches reported general satisfaction with the tool and the feedback their supervisors provided.

Child360's Coaching and Supervision Process

Initial visit

Coaches
- Establish communication
- Provide coaching process overview
- Review agreements

Supervisors
- Assign caseloads
- Assist in establishing contacts

Data collection

Coaches
- Conduct assessments and observations

Supervisors
- Monitor data for quality, completeness

Goal development

Coaches
- Discuss findings from data collection
- Co-create goals with teachers/ directors

Supervisors
- Review site QIPs and action plans
- Support coaches in reaching own professional development goals

Coaching visits

Coaches
- Determine coaching objectives
- Observe, engage in dialogue, share strategies, build capacity

Supervisors
- Meet one-on-one with coaches to problem-solve and support
- Evaluate coach techniques and provide feedback

Mid-year reflection

Coaches
- Engage in reflective conversation on progress and planning

Supervisors
- Conduct shadow visit near mid-year

End-of-year reflection

Coaches
- Review goals set, identify goals met
- Teacher provides coach with feedback

Supervisors
- Conduct second shadow visit

Overall, 90% of surveyed coaches reported that they had received useful feedback from their supervisors as a result of their shadow visit. On the other hand, coaches did not like the labels of the proficiency levels and believed the rubrics were too long. Supervisors also noted that the large amount of time involved in the process was sometimes a challenge.

In addition to conducting shadow visits, rubrics, and performance evaluations of their coaches, supervisors administered annual surveys to directors and teachers who received coaching services. These surveys served the purpose of gathering feedback on coaching quality and satisfaction with services, in alignment with the QSLA Framework. Supervisors have used these data for a number of years to inform coach performance evaluations and new coaching initiatives.

Coaches reported strong, supportive relationships with their supervisors. The Perceived Quality of the Employee Coaching Relationship (PQECR)[2] scale was administered to all coaches to determine the strength of the relationships between supervisors and members of their coaching teams. The majority of coaches were very positive across all measured dimensions of the relationships with their supervisors. For example, 100% of coaches agreed or strongly agreed that their supervisors felt a sense of commitment to them, and 98% agreed or strongly agreed that their supervisors were effective communicators.[3] Items related to "Facilitating Development" (including professional development and building upon strengths) showed the most variation in responses. Some coaches may have felt unsure, or less positive, about how their supervisors helped them to grow and achieve their potential.

> **100% of coaches** reported that their supervisors felt a sense of commitment to them.
>
> **98% of coaches** felt that their supervisors were effective communicators.

Coaches attended multiple professional development sessions and trainings in order to improve and maintain their skills. In order for coaching and its component features (e.g., observation, modeling, feedback) to generate positive change in teachers' classroom practices, it is vital that the coaches maintain high levels of quality and skill in their own performance. In addition to remaining abreast of current developments in the field, coaches need to be able to work with adult learners, and must learn how to build trusting relationships with providers (Will, 2017). Attention to professional development for coaches will help to strengthen the cycle of continuous quality improvement that forms the foundation of any coaching program's success. This section of findings discusses coaches' responses to a survey about their knowledge about, experiences with, and perceptions of the training and professional development (PD) process, as well as their expectations for ongoing professional development. This section also discusses the results of evaluators' interviews with supervisors, which addressed training and professional development, and solicited information on recent changes to coaching processes and scopes of work.

New coaches were required to participate in extensive onboarding processes. Orientation processes included participation in training sessions, completion of required reading, study of the coaching model and processes, and shadowing of experienced team members in the field. After their first month of training and studying, coaches began to shadow experienced team members on their scheduled site visits, to observe different methods of coaching and to familiarize themselves with the types of situations that might arise during these visits. After new coaches had shadowed several of their team members, and once they were ready to begin individual site visits, their supervisors typically shadowed the new coaches for their first several site visits. This allowed supervisors to observe the new coaches' interactions with teachers and directors, and to provide feedback when needed.

Following the onboarding, Child360 provided trainings to keep coaches' skills updated and support professional development. Child360 delivered most of the trainings, and experts in the field provided others. Each year, the coach supervisors and directors identified the training topics, which varied by coaches' specializations; certain trainings were part of the Summer Training series, and all coaches were encouraged to attend.

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[2] The PQECR is a validated tool developed to assess relationships and provide meaningful information to supervisors about their relationships with coaches (Gregory & Levy, 2011).
[3] For full details of the PQECR findings, please see the full Combined Coaching Evaluation report, Appendix A, Table A1, which presents each dimension of the scale, the corresponding items, and the frequency of participant responses.

In addition, coaches were expected to take specific trainings (such as CPR training) to meet child care licensing requirements and maintain certifications. Coaches were required to maintain reliability certifications on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), a tool used to rate and improve how teachers support and interact with children.

Coaches, with the guidance of their supervisors, were expected to set yearly goals for their individual professional development activities. Professional development (PD) was expected to be connected to the general scope of knowledge required for a coach, but coaches were free to select their own specific goals and the ways in which they intended to pursue these goals. Supervisors suggested training and PD opportunities, when relevant. Coaches were encouraged to seek out their own opportunities, including conferences, webinars, and other learning occasions, and to take advantage of the stipend provided by Child360. Coaches set goals for individual professional development as part of their annual performance evaluations.

Through our evaluation of coaching training requirements and policies, the tracking of professional development activities emerged as an area that could benefit from greater structure and consistency. As a direct result of our findings and recommendations, several coach supervisors shared their specific practices with one another, which in turn led to the development of action steps to revise and refine practices for tracking PD. The instrumental use of evaluation findings and the cross-team collaboration initiated outside of the formal research process were both beneficial outcomes of the evaluation, and coaching teams were able to build their capacity to incorporate evaluation as a valued component of their regular practice.

Changes to the coaches' responsibilities and scopes of work received mixed feedback from coaches, but led to several process improvements. During the 2018-2019 program year, Child360 made some changes to coaches' scopes of work and coaching processes. These changes applied to the coaches' roles and responsibilities. Similarly, changes for the 2018-19 year have been made to the delivery of coaching services to sites. As a result of these modifications, changes in processes, roles, and responsibilities across teams and coaches have taken place. This evaluation topic explored these changes, the needs or theories that these changes were based on, and the effects of these changes. Findings include supervisors' descriptions of the changes, and detail both the supervisors' and coaches' perceptions of the effects of these changes.

Reduction of the requirements around the Initial Coach Visit was perceived positively. This change included increased flexibility in scheduling of initial visits, reducing the number of forms to be completed, making required forms shorter, and eliminating the requirement to develop a specific number of goals. The flexibility in scheduling initial visits, in some cases, allowed coaches to start the coaching process sooner in the program year. Most coaches perceived the changes to the forms as positive. The shift from a specified number of goals to a provider-directed number of goals led to more buy-in and motivation on the part of providers.

Specialty coaches' professional development support for directors was perceived positively, but coaches would have liked to have more training to deliver this new level of support. The specialty coaches, who focused on leadership development, increased their level of support to directors and teaching staff around professional development and career advancement. Specialty coaches believed this new level of support had a positive effect on their own work as they were able to address questions and provide immediate responses and resources to sites. When asked how well prepared coaches felt for the new responsibility, more than a third (38%) did not feel they were well prepared to provide this type of support. About 25% felt only "somewhat" prepared. Specialty coaches could have benefited from ongoing training or consultation in this area.

Increased caseloads for specialty coaches had the expected negative impacts, but resulted in a new focus on provider capacity. Due to the increase in specialty coaching caseloads, the specialty coaches noticed increases in drive times, had more sites to visit in a limited time, and faced more challenges in scheduling visits. This affected their workflow strategies and resulted in a greater need for time management, organization, and planning ahead. Because specialty coaches no longer had as much time to perform typical coaching tasks like modeling of actions or creation of activities and resources, the specialty coaches' focus shifted to building providers' capacity. The coaches encouraged providers to plan and build systems that would allow them to complete many site tasks themselves, rather than relying on coaching support.

Specialty coaches successfully increased their focus on building providers' capacity. The specialty coaches focused on building capacity and systems to help providers perform necessary site activities on their own. They created 18 digital one-pagers covering various topics, including implementation and theoretical frameworks. This change was seen as a positive step by the specialty coaches, and also had a positive effect on providers. Providers gained a better understanding of the role of the coaches. One supervisor reported that team members became more confident in their own roles, because they were "intentional in planning for this shift and making it happen," leading to increased feelings of investment and success.

Optional support meetings for certain specialty coaches resulted in increased levels of communication. One of the specialty coach supervisors held weekly optional support meetings, including herself and the coaches she supervised, to encourage the coaching team to discuss topics or issues they were working on or struggling with. These meetings were started as a way to provide frequent work-related support and feedback, and to build connections between team members, with the goal of ensuring that coaches received regular opportunities to ask questions or request help. The meetings were conducted either in person, or virtually via video chat. The team met more frequently than they had in the past, both in person and via online video conferencing. The support meetings reportedly increased levels of communication, and the team knew that if a problem arose, a meeting where they could discuss that problem would always be coming up within the next week. The coaches generally reported that these meetings had a positive effect on their work.

Specialty coaches reported spending more time on data entry due to changes in data entry requirements and data use. The need for regular data entry increased as a result of the specialty coaches' more frequent use of Humanity for report generation and time tracking. Specialty coaches were required to enter the coaching activities they completed during each week, and the time spent on each type of coaching activity (e.g., site visits, phone calls, or gathering resources). One specialty coach supervisor reported using data more frequently in the 2018-19 year, both to generate quarterly reports and to review with specialty coaches during check-ins; the majority of the specialty coaches on this team spent three or more hours a week on data entry. Only 25% of this group of specialty coaches reported negative reactions to the increase in data use. These frequent updates led to better tracking of data and better awareness of how the coaches were spending their time. The supervisor reported that increased use of Humanity data for time tracking and creation of reports was useful, and was leading to positive effects on the coaches' work, but did not specify exactly how the data or reports were useful or what made them effective.

Overall, teachers and directors were satisfied with the coaching services they received and appreciated the support provided by their coaches. Responses from Child360's Annual Provider Survey addressed coaching effectiveness and satisfaction with the coaching experience, as perceived by teachers and directors from a random sample of sites, during this program year. A previous study of preschool classroom interventions found that when intervention techniques and coaching were perceived to be of higher quality, teachers demonstrated more responsiveness to the intervention and were more likely to improve their teaching practice (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2016). This finding suggests that teachers' satisfaction with the coaching they receive may partially determine the ultimate effectiveness of the coaching. Survey results demonstrated that, in general, teachers and directors were satisfied with their respective coaching experiences, and that teachers perceived their coaching experiences to be effective, as shown by high levels of agreement on selected survey items.

Surveyed teachers and directors reported satisfaction with coaching, collaboration, and communication. About 99% of both groups reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with levels of coach collaboration and support. While the pattern was similar for satisfaction with the coaching timeline, slightly more directors were "very" satisfied, as compared to teachers. Teachers were also satisfied with the forms involved at the beginning of the year. Finally, teachers (98%) and directors (96%) reported that communication with coaches beyond regularly scheduled visits was conducted "well" or "very well," which was consistent with the findings of support and collaboration.

99% of both teachers and directors reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their program coach's collaboration and support.

98% of directors were satisfied with the specialty coaching support they received.

The majority of surveyed teachers agreed on the positive outcomes of their coaching experience. These outcomes included gaining new abilities and skills (78%), using coach feedback to improve their practice (83%), and setting meaningful quality improvement goals (84%). Fewer teachers (73%) agreed that they had sufficient time to debrief with their coach after visits. This was consistent with previous results of coach surveys, which often found that time was a challenge for coaches in working with teachers.

Directors reported positive aspects and outcomes of their experiences with specialty coaches. Many surveyed directors also received coaching from specialty coaches (who specialized in professional leadership or family engagement) at least once a month. The majority of directors agreed or strongly agreed on positive aspects and outcomes of their specialty coach experiences, such as the coach's respect for the director's time and productive use of visits (90%) and the coach's encouragement of directors setting meaningful goals (85%).

Most directors with specialty coaches "strongly agreed" that their coaches had helped them improve their leadership skills (85%) and had shared valuable knowledge about ECE leadership and management (92%). Finally, 77% of directors were in agreement on their coaches' help with providing feedback and support to teachers, although most of these directors worked with program leadership specialty coaches as opposed to family engagement specialty coaches. Overall, 98% of directors were satisfied with their specialty coaching experience. Before being assigned a specialty coach, directors and site staff completed a survey that identified what type of specialty coach would be most beneficial for their site, and directors indicated the type of support they would prefer their site to receive. It appeared that this specialty coach selection process worked well for directors and site staff, as all respondents reported satisfaction with the process.

Recommendations

Throughout the evaluation process, multiple recommendations were developed and shared with the coach teams, through both Rapid Feedback Memos and Sense-Making Discussions. This developmental evaluation strategy helped supervisors reflect on and respond to the findings in a manner that was both timely and manageable. The evaluators made recommendations to the coach supervisors within five of the areas evaluated in this study: the role of coach supervisors, professional development and training, changes to coaching responsibilities and manuals, the shadow visit process and rubrics, and provider perceptions of coaching impact. These recommendations are summarized below:

Supervisors should develop a plan for systematic tracking of coaches' professional development. The evaluators suggested that supervisors consider collaborating to develop a systematic, consistent way to track coaches' completion of required and optional trainings and professional development sessions. This system could be made accessible by supervisors and coaches, to lower the burden of data entry on the supervisors and increase consistency in reporting.

Supervisors should attempt to create a system for communicating PD expectations, requirements, and recommendations for coaches. The research team believed that supervisors might find it useful to reiterate professional development requirements and recommendations to their teams, and to make sure that team members who joined Child360 at different times were working from the same understanding of requirements. Ideally, all coaches would be aware of the expectations for attendance at required internal trainings, and the recommendations around pursuing external professional development. A secondary recommendation was for supervisors to review requirements for ongoing trainings and "refresher" courses**.**

Across teams, coaches and supervisors should keep lines of communication open, and should continue to discuss the usefulness of coaching forms. In many cases, it may not be clear whether a form or procedure is useful until it has undergone a "trial period," to allow for troubleshooting and coach adjustment. Supervisors were encouraged to continue to ask for feedback about the forms and procedures that are most and least useful for coaches, and might also consider whether all forms should be used with all providers.

All coaches should continue to work with directors and teachers to carve out time for debriefing after site visits. As demonstrated by the survey responses documented in this evaluation, many Program Coaches and the teachers they worked with still lacked debriefing opportunities during the 2018-19 program year. Debriefing and reflection on practice is a key part of the Child360 coaching model, and whenever possible, directors should be encouraged to prioritize this time for their teachers.

All coaches should establish ways to improve communication with providers between scheduled visits, and to have consistent procedures for site visit frequency. While directors were, overall, very satisfied with coach communication, a small group of directors (4%) indicated that their Program Coach communicated "poorly" or "very poorly" between visits. This indicated an opportunity to improve communication with directors on a case-by-case basis. Teachers and directors reported some variation in site visits with specialty coaches. Specialty coaches should adhere to their teams' processes and to the Child360 coaching model, and attempt to visit sites at least once per month.

The evaluation team presented the above recommendations to the coaching supervisors on a rolling quarterly basis, as results were gathered, to promote timely consideration and implementation of changes. The coaching supervisors implemented one of these recommendations, which was the suggestion that supervisors should consistently apply rules for tracking of professional development and training. In order to implement this recommendation, the coaching supervisors shared their individual processes with one another, and ultimately developed a shared tracking system to log coaches' hours. This was the only recommendation on which the supervisors took direct action and of which the evaluation team was made aware. The limited uptake of recommendations in response to this evaluation was due in large part to the many changes occurring at the level of the organization, as well as to the coaching model itself, at the time when this evaluation was conducted.

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