

Department of Family Services

LOB #124:

HEAD START

Purpose

The Head Start and Early Head Start program provides early care and education and comprehensive family services to income eligible families with children birth to five years of age. Early Head Start also serves expectant parents. Head Start and Early Head Start provide services to children and their families that promote children's school readiness and family well-being. Services are provided to educate children and empower families to become self-sufficient.

Description

Head Start and Early Head Start provide quality early care and education and comprehensive family services to income-eligible families with children birth to five years of age and expectant parents. Head Start services have been provided in Fairfax County for over 25 years and Early Head Start for nearly 20 years. Services are provided to children in a variety of settings including family child care homes, classrooms, and in the child's home. Services are provided by the Office for Children, Fairfax County Public Schools and Higher Horizons Day Care Center.

The Office for Children administers the County's federal Head Start and Early Head Start grants and directly operates a Head Start program at Gum Springs Children's Center and an Early Head Start program at Gum Springs Glen. The Office for Children also partners with family child care providers throughout the County to provide Early Head Start in family child care provider homes.

Higher Horizons Day Care Center provides home- and center-based Early Head Start services and center-based Head Start services. Fairfax County Public Schools provide center-based Early Head Start and Head Start services in public school Pre-K classrooms.

Services are provided for children and families full-day, as well as full-year, with the exception of FCPS, which operates on a school year schedule.

Children receive early care and education, health, mental health, dental, and nutrition services. Head Start and Early Head Start build children's social and education skills through intentional early childhood education programming and family-focused experiences. At least ten percent of Head Start and Early Head Start enrollment is filled by children with disabilities.

Families are supported with social and health services, prenatal care and parent education, including family literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages. Parents receive support in reaching their educational and employment goals.

Parents share in the program decision-making process and are engaged in program activities including providing school readiness experiences at home, volunteering in the classroom and serving on parent committees and the program Policy Council. The parent engagement focus of Head Start and Early Head Start supports parents as advocates for their children.

Bilingual staff is available as needed; all staff has access to the County's simultaneous translation services to assist those who speak a primary language other than English.

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Benefits

The experiences a child has during the first five years of life, when the brain is rapidly developing, are critical to a child's well-being. The learning, interactions and care that children experience before they reach school age influences their ability to live a healthy life, succeed in school and contribute to society. Quality early care and education and comprehensive family services are critical to ensuring young children enter kindergarten ready to meet their full potential.

Head Start and Early Head Start children participate in full-day educational programming in classrooms and family child care homes, as well as in their home setting. Programming supports children to reach their developmental and school readiness milestones. The program implements inclusive practices for children with disabilities.

Head Start relates strongly to the vision element of 'Maintaining Safe and Caring Communities'. The program meets the needs of a diverse population of families with low incomes. In addition to children participating in full time quality early care and education, families receive case management and are linked to health and mental health services, public assistance, housing, transportation, literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages programs.

Head Start relates strongly to the vision element of 'Maintaining Healthy Economies'. In Fairfax County, Head Start and Early Head Start families receive support reaching their employment and educational goals. Full-time early care and education enables families to work or attend training.

Head Start relates to the vision element of 'Exercising Corporate Stewardship'. The Head Start and Early Head Start Program is responsible for administering services as defined by the grant and federal regulations, ensuring accountability in all areas of operations.

Mandates

Federal Head Start mandates for compliance are found in the following:

1. Head Start Act (Title 42 USC 9801 *et. seq.*)
2. Head Start Performance Standards (Title 45 CFR 1301 *et. seq.*)
3. Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for HHS Awards (Title 45 CFR Part 75)

Trends and Challenges

In Fairfax County 8.1 percent of children under the age of five, or approximately 6,200 children, are living in poverty. The numbers of families with low income and the high cost of living in the County have contributed to an ongoing need for Head Start and Early Head Start services. Lack of affordable housing and limited transportation resources are additional factors impacting families.

Families have complex needs for a variety of reasons, including recent immigration to this country, separation from personal and family supports, language barriers, and limited access to resources. Head Start works to meet the individual needs of children and families.

While the County has received a new Early Head Start Child Care Partnership grant to serve additional infants and toddlers, in recent years additional federal funding opportunities for Head Start have not been available.

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Resources

| Category | FY 2014 Actual | FY 2015 Actual | FY 2016 Adopted |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| LOB #124: Head Start | | | |
| FUNDING | | | |
| Expenditures: | | | |
| Compensation | \$1,261,027 | \$1,190,528 | \$1,263,376 |
| Operating Expenses | 5,698,710 | 5,839,596 | 5,838,632 |
| Total Expenditures | \$6,959,737 | \$7,047,919 | \$7,102,008 |
| General Fund Revenue | \$51,938 | \$60,330 | \$44,689 |
| Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund | \$6,907,799 | \$6,987,589 | \$7,057,319 |
| POSITIONS | | | |
| Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) | | | |
| Positions: | | | |
| Regular | 16 / 16 | 16 / 16 | 16 / 16 |
| Total Positions | 16 / 16 | 16 / 16 | 16 / 16 |

Metrics

| Metric Indicator | FY 2013 Actual | FY 2014 Actual | FY 2015 Actual | FY 2016 Estimate | FY 2017 Estimate |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Children served by Head Start | 1,218 | 1,275 | 1,373 | 1,373 | 1,373 |
| Percent of 4 year old children reaching benchmarks in social-emotional skills | 89% | 92% | 85% | 85% | 85% |
| Percent of 4 year old children reaching benchmarks in literacy and language skills | 83% | 90% | 78% | 78% | 78% |
| Percent of 4 year old children reaching benchmarks in math skills | 80% | 88% | 77% | 77% | 77% |

Regarding metric #1, Head Start serves children and families using a combination of local, state and federal funds. This metric does not reflect Early Head Start or Head Start federal funding.

Metrics #2-4, the percent of four year olds reaching benchmarks, displays data in this item which includes all four year olds served in Head Start in all three programs regardless of funding source, who have had both a fall and a spring assessment.

To assess whether children met benchmarks for kindergarten readiness, Office for Children and Higher Horizons use the TS Gold assessment system and FCPS uses the Early Childhood Rubric, an FCPS assessment system.

The variance in outcomes across the past three years reflects the different cohorts of four year old children. Children enter the program each year with varying skill sets and needs. In addition, changes in assessment tools used in FY 2014 and FY 2015 account for some of the variance.

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Grant Support

FY 2016 Total Projected Funding: Funding of \$9,912,963, including \$8,693,177 in Federal revenue and \$1,219,786 in Local Cash Match. Funding supports 68/66.0 FTE grant positions.

Head Start is a national child development program that serves income eligible families with very young children. Families served by Head Start grants receive assistance with child education and development, social and health services, and parent education including family literacy and English-as-a-Second-Language. The overall match requirements for Head Start grants are 20 percent. In addition to Local Cash Match, the agency uses in-kind services to meet the required match. It is anticipated that the County will provide services to an estimated 434 children ages 3 to 5 in Head Start and 300 children ages 0 to 3 in Early Head Start.