



Fairfax County

Head Start/Early Head Start Program

2020 Annual Report



Head Start Mission

The Fairfax County Head Start program promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of culturally inclusive education, health, nutrition, social and other services to eligible children, their families and pregnant women.

Fairfax County

O F C Office for Children

Overview

The Fairfax County Office for Children Head Start and Early Head Start program (HS/EHS) provides early care and education and comprehensive family services to income-eligible families in Early Head Start, which serves infants, toddlers and pregnant women, and Head Start, which serves children ages 3 to 5 years. Head Start services are designed to meet the needs of the children and families within the cultural context of their family, school and community. This cultural context is an important factor in the development of critical life skills vital to children’s readiness for kindergarten, success in school and lifelong well-being.

The federal Head Start and Early Head Start grants are awarded to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. Fairfax County Public Schools and Higher Horizons Day Care Center, Inc. are delegates that manage and operate programs. Services are provided in family homes, family child care provider homes and in classrooms.

Families participating in the program are supported with:

- Early childhood education and disability services.
- Social services.
- Connections to community resources.
- Health services (medical, dental, nutrition, mental health and prenatal care).
- Parenting curriculum.
- Family literacy and resources for English language learners.

Financials FY 2020 Total Funds: \$38.16 million

SOURCE AMOUNT

- U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services
\$9.29 million
- U.S. Dept. of Agriculture/Virginia Dept. of Health
\$1.36 million
- Local County Board
\$8.99 million
- Local School District
\$11.21 million
- Virginia Department of Education
\$7.01 million
- In-Kind
\$.30 million

FY 2020 Budget and Actual Expenditures

| | Budget | Actual |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Delegate | 76.75% | 79.13% |
| Personnel | 11.83% | 10.57% |
| Fringe benefits | 5.74% | 5.33% |
| Contractual | 3.89% | 3.12% |
| Other | .86% | .73% |
| Supplies | .86% | 1.05% |
| Travel | .07% | .07% |
| Equipment | .00% | .00% |
| Facilities/Construction | .00% | .00% |

Fairfax County’s Head Start program braids multiple funding streams (federal, state and local) to comprehensively serve the children. Fairfax county’s financial statements have been audited as required by the Code of Virginia and received an unmodified opinion by the accounting firm of Cherry Bekaert LLP. The Single Audit Report contains the independent auditor’s reports related specifically to the single audit. There were no findings related to the Head Start Programs in the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) of the County of Fairfax, Virginia for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020.

Number of Children Served

The Fairfax County Office for Children Head Start and Early Head Start (HS/EHS) program provides services at Greater Mount Vernon Community Head Start in Alexandria, Higher Horizons Day Care Center, Inc. in Bailey's Crossroads, Fairfax County Public Schools and family child care homes throughout the county.

The program is funded with federal, state and local dollars for **2,336** children in program options that include center based (children are in a classroom setting), home based (services are provided by a home visitor in the family's home), and family child care (children are cared for by a county-permitted and/or state-licensed provider in the provider's home). Children in Fairfax County Public Schools' Head Start program attend a school year program. All other options are year-round.

The composition is as follows:

Greater Mount Vernon Community Head Start and Family Child Care (26 family child care providers)

- 180 Early Head Start (132 family child care, 48 center-based).
- 158 Head Start.

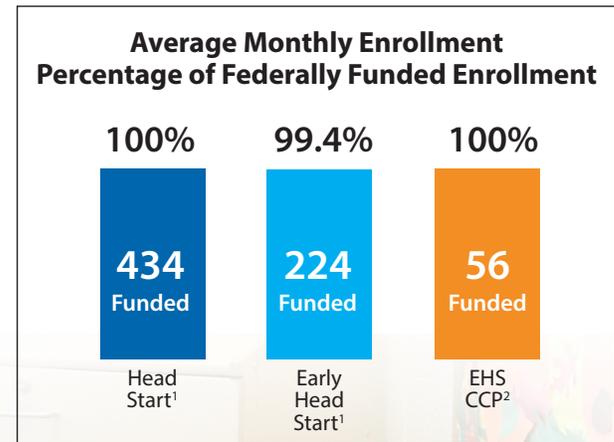
Higher Horizons Day Care Center, Inc.

- 52 Early Head Start (16 center-based, 36 home-based).
- 172 Head Start.

Fairfax County Public Schools

- 48 Early Head Start (center-based).
- 1,726 Head Start/Pre-K.

Federal Enrollment



The program is required to report the average monthly enrollment for federally funded slots.

¹ Grant 03CH010411 – Head Start and Early Head Start

² Grant 03HP0003 – Early Head Start Child Care Partnership and Expansion

Our Children Our Families

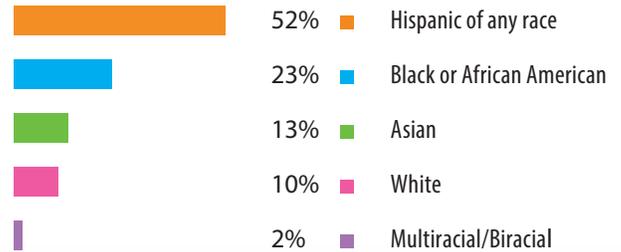
During program year 2019-20, **2,561** children and 15 pregnant women from 2,384 families were served. Some families have more than one child in the program. Children from one parent families comprise 38% of the enrollment.

Of the children served in Head Start and Early Head Start, 97% of children were eligible because their families met the income guidelines, and 3% were categorically eligible (children in foster care, or families experiencing homelessness).

Enrollment Statistics

| Highest Level of Education by Family | Percent |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Advanced/Bachelors | 19% |
| Associate/Vocational/Some College | 25% |
| High School Graduate/GED | 28% |
| Less than High School Graduate | 25% |
| Did not answer | 3% |

Race / Ethnicity of Participants

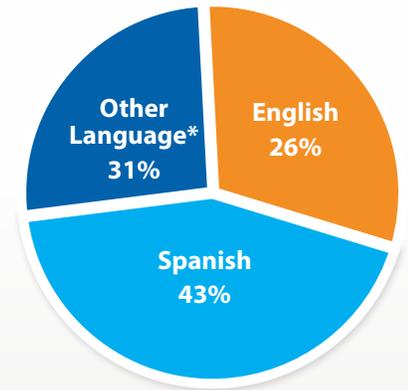


Ages of Children and Pregnant Women Served in Head Start / Early Head Start

| | |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 76% | 4 years old |
| 12% | 3 years old |
| 6% | 2 years old |
| 4% | 1 year old |
| 2% | less than 1 year old |
| <1% | Pregnant Women |

Languages Spoken by Head Start Families

There are 39 different languages spoken by Head Start families.*The most common languages in the Other category include: Arabic, Amharic, Urdu, Vietnamese, Twi-Akan-Ashanti, Farsi, Pashto and Somali.



Preparing Children for Kindergarten

SCHOOL READINESS means preparing all children for kindergarten by supporting birth to age-five programming, including early intervention services. Our focus includes key classroom practices such as the use of high-quality curriculum and assessment, teacher-child interactions and individualized professional development as well as strengthening family engagement. Additionally, teacher credentials and experience are important factors impacting the quality of pre-kindergarten programs.

| Teacher Level of Education | Percent |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Master's Degree | 56% |
| Bachelor's Degree | 34% |
| Associate's Degree | 6% |
| Child Development Associate | 4% |

Classroom Assessment Scoring System

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is a nationally recognized standardized assessment tool that measures teacher/child interactions and the emotional and instructional climate of the classroom. Preschoolers in classrooms with higher-quality interactions showed greater learning gains across school readiness domains, including executive functioning and early literacy (Vitiello, Bassock, Hamre, Player, & Williford, 2018).

Results from the Pre-K CLASS administered in Fairfax in 2019-20 were used to support professional development plans for staff including training opportunities and resources for strengthening teacher/child interactions.

By the end of PY 2019-20, 116 preschool classrooms were observed across the program. Assessments show scores higher than the national average in all three domains. In addition, 37 Toddler CLASS and three Infant CLASS assessments were completed across the program.



Family Engagement

Engaging parents and families in their child's educational experience is central to Head Start's mission as well as an important element of school readiness. Parents identify their own strengths, needs and interests in the Family Partnership Agreements. Head Start provides support through parent meetings and referrals to relevant resources; as well as opportunities to serve on various councils and committees throughout the county to enhance leadership skills and stay involved in their child's education.

Throughout the year, staff had weekly contacts with families to determine needs and provide resources including food assistance and follow-up on health requirements.



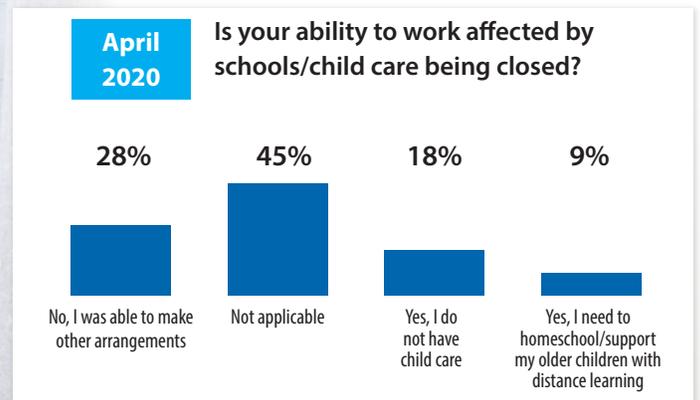
Pandemic Response

The onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic required programs to alter plans for the remaining part of PY 2020 into PY 2021. In March, all schools and centers closed and began to provide remote services.

Family service staff and family child care specialists gathered information on the impact of COVID-19 on families.

- **30% of HS families reported needing assistance with food resources in April.**
- **19% of HS families reported being concerned about their housing security.**
- **61% of HS families reported that their jobs have been cut or reduced.**

Teachers and family service workers continued to contact families and children directly in order to provide services by dropping off materials to doorsteps; and using FaceTime and Zoom to keep in touch. Family child care programs continued to operate with enhanced cleaning protocols. In July, Greater Mt. Vernon opened for a modified summer in-person program.



Child Outcomes

Head Start programs prepare children to succeed in school and life. In program year 2019-20, **1,867** children transitioned from Head Start/Pre-K to kindergarten. Teachers observed, documented and evaluated each child's progress on an ongoing basis and entered developmental level scores at specified checkpoints during the year. Teachers used the assessment information to develop lesson plans and individualize each child's learning. There are two curricula and assessment tools used in the Pre-K Head Start program. The Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment system is used with The Creative Curriculum for Preschool at Greater Mt. Vernon Community Head Start and Higher Horizons Day Care Center, Inc. The Early Childhood Rubric assessment system is used with the Pre-K Program of Studies at FCPS.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in mid-March 2020 interrupted the year's schedule of data collection resulting in teachers being unable to collect assessment data as usual. However, they reached out to families who were able to assist their children in distance learning in order to continue adapted instruction as much as possible to the end of the program year. This flexibility helped children maintain interactions with teachers and peers and to receive additional instruction for the four-year olds transitioning to kindergarten.

Services for Children with Special Needs

Head Start programs must ensure that at least ten percent of funded enrollment is filled by children eligible for disabilities services. In PY 2019-20, children with disabilities made up ten percent of federally funded Head Start and Early Head Start enrollment in the Birth to Five Grant (82/831), ten percent of EHS-CCP (8/78), and ten percent of all programs (268/2561). The program screens all children for overall development of sensory, auditory, behavioral, motor, language, social, cognitive, perceptual and emotional skills within 45 days of enrollment. The program has an Interagency agreement with the Fairfax County Public Schools' Early Childhood Special Education program and a Service Agreement with Infant & Toddler Connection. These agreements help ensure timely referrals and full implementation of special education and intervention services.

Greater Mount Vernon Head Start Summer Program

After being closed since March due to the pandemic, Gum Springs Children's Center Head Start and Gum Springs Glen Early Head Start programs opened for a four-week summer program from July 20 to August 14. To prepare for the program, staff collaborated with the Fairfax County Health Department and Neighborhood and Community Services to develop health and safety procedures. Each morning, parents and children were greeted outside the buildings for their child's temperature check and a health screening questionnaire. Staff then escorted children to their classrooms where teachers were prepared to ensure social distancing in the classrooms to provide individual learning materials to each child. Teachers were able to follow typical HS or EHS daily schedules with minor changes to follow CDC recommendations. The planning and effort were well worth it when staff saw the smiling faces of the children and parents arriving each day for the program. The children enjoyed being outside riding bikes, playing on the playground, painting and interacting with friends they hadn't seen for a long time. The summer program was a resounding success for the children and families who participated!



COVID-19 Impacts

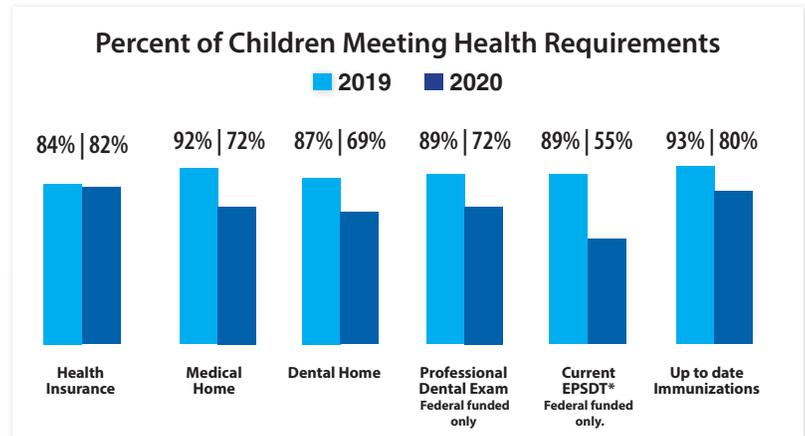
During the beginning of the pandemic, dental offices were closed for routine services and medical offices had changed their clinic flow in guidance with COVID-19 precautions. American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommended that it was important for children to continue receiving routine age-appropriate vaccinations and preventative care. Head Start continued to provide families and partners with information and guidelines as recommended by the AAP, CDC and ACIP on preventative care and immunizations. Health and family service staff encouraged families to make appointments with medical providers for children to receive age-appropriate care.



Health Services

As physical well-being contributes to a child's readiness for school, Head Start places a strong emphasis on the overall health and well-being of the children served. Head Start and Early Head Start provide developmental and health screenings for children during enrollment, and health and family services staff follow up with families to ensure medical and dental treatments are received.

The chart below shows that the percentage of children meeting specific health requirements by the end of the year was significantly lower than the previous year.



* EPSDT is the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment Program geared to the early assessment of children's health care needs through periodic screenings. The goal of EPSDT is to ensure that health problems are diagnosed and treated as early as possible. www.dmas.virginia.gov

Mental Health Services

Head Start has always recognized that ensuring the healthy development of children includes attention to their mental health. As with physical health, Head Start's primary strategy is to prevent problems by reducing risks and encouraging healthy habits. Each child receives a social-emotional screening when they enter the program to identify any possible need for services, such as skill-building, behavior support or counseling services. In the 2019-20 program year, 137 children (almost six percent) were provided with evaluations and counseling services through a partnership with the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board and private consultants. Seventy-four of these children were referred for more intensive services within the community.

Our Community

Partners and Volunteers

Head Start collaborates and coordinates with public and private organizations and agencies to improve the availability and quality of service to children and families in the program. Established partnerships have enhanced services to ensure that the program is responding to the needs of the families and community. Partnerships in Fairfax provide families with coats and shoes, food for the holidays, free dental services, books and toys, and recreation classes to enrolled families.



Higher Horizons Head Start Hosts Event Formalizing Cooperation Between Head Start and Schools

Nationally, about 320,000 children move from Head Start to kindergarten each year. A smooth transition between the two is vital to maintaining the gains made during their time in Head Start. Dr. Deborah Bergeron, Office of Head Start director, has long prioritized building partnerships between schools and Head Start centers to aid that transition. In December 2019, she took concrete steps toward formalizing these partnerships by signing memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). The signing event was hosted by Higher Horizons Head Start program. Higher Horizons director Mary Ann Cornish opened the event, followed by former Fairfax County Board of Supervisor Catherine Hudgins, who provided welcome remarks. Following the signing, attendees had the opportunity to tour Higher Horizons and visit with children.

Food Distribution

While Gum Springs Children's Center and Gum Springs Glen were closed due to the pandemic, Head Start staff have continued to work to meet the basic needs of families, specifically food security. Head Start identified a need for food for families on the weekends, and Early Head Start family child care staff and GSCC and GSG staff worked together to address this. The Gum Springs Head Start Nutritionist worked with Jeffrey's Catering to provide a Friday night meal and weekend snacks for any interested HS/EHS family. On average, 110 families picked up meals and snacks every Friday evening between April 24 and July 10 at the Gum Springs Children's Center or the Pennino Building. Every week parents expressed their appreciation for this much-needed resource.





October 2019 – Head Start Awareness

October Proclaimed as Head Start Awareness Month in Fairfax County; Head Start Policy Council Celebrates with Reception, Open Houses

On October 15, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors designated October as Head Start Awareness Month at its meeting at the Fairfax County Government Center.

Following the proclamation, Chairman of the Board Sharon Bulova invited Chairperson of the Fairfax County Head Start Policy Council, Abdeltif Bensouda, to say a few words. Mr. Bensouda, who is also Fairfax County Public School's Head Start Parent Committee Chair, is father to three children who have participated in Head Start. He has served various capacities in the program since 2010 and is the recipient of this year's Nancy Elmore Scholarship from the Virginia Head Start Association.

Mr. Bensouda highlighted the importance of Head Start's support for both children and their families and expressed gratitude for its role in helping him to pursue a degree in Business Management at George Mason University.

The Fairfax County Head Start Policy Council hosted a reception preceding the proclamation. In attendance were Mr. Bensouda; Glendy Bowman, Policy Council Chair; Jennifer Branch, Director of Fairfax County Head Start and Early Head Start; Bryan Hill, County Executive; and Board of Supervisors members Catherine Hudgins, Daniel Storck and John Cook.

The celebration continued throughout October with a series of open houses at Head Start classrooms and centers.

Shared Governance

The Head Start Policy Council and Fairfax County Board of Supervisors share decision-making responsibility regarding program goals and plans, setting program policies and procedures, budget allocations and personnel functions. The Board of Supervisors and Policy Council approve the bylaws, the annual self-assessment and shared governance policies; and they review all major program reports and policies including personnel policies, financial policies, major program policies, grant applications, the financial audit, the Program Information Report and the Community Assessment. They are active in program planning and monitoring. The Policy Council is a formal structure of Head Start program governance that provides parents and other community representatives with the responsibility and opportunity to participate in shared decision-making.

2020 Board of Supervisors



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2020 Head Start Policy Council

Parents of children in Head Start and Early Head Start make up more than half of the membership of the Policy Council. These members are elected by their peers. The remaining members are community representatives. During monthly meetings and trainings, parents and community representatives learn more about changes and opportunities in Fairfax County Head Start and offer their own insights into the future of the program.

New members for 2020

Photo (January 2020) from left to right: David Aratuo, Munkhjargal (Mogi) Jamsran, Heather Thomas, Abdisalam Aden, Romana Akbar, Fatiha Abderraziq, Meg Marcus. (Not in picture: Omar Mohammed, Keisha Scott, Sheku Bangura, Tracita Douglas, Anthea Guzman).



Head Start Helps Prepare Children and Families for Success in School Through:

Education

- Supporting social and emotional development.
- Developing language and literacy skills.

Disability Services

- Screening for developmental delays.
- Accessing educational and behavioral services for children with special needs.

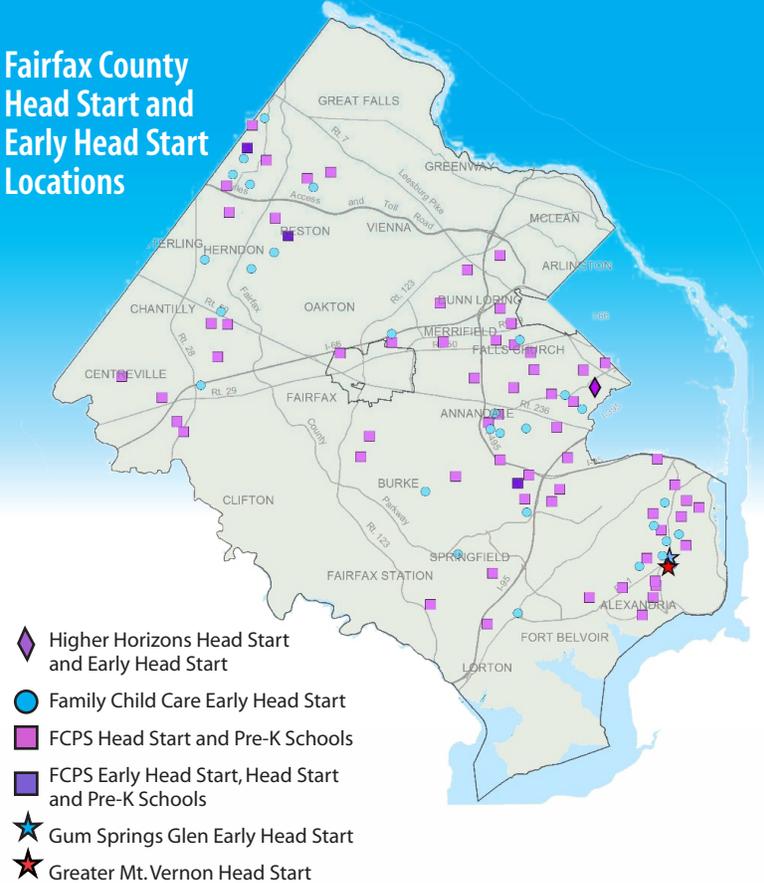
Wellness

- Accessing healthy meals and snacks.
- Locating prenatal care for pregnant women.
- Connecting families to health care services, including dental and mental health services.

Family Services

- Parenting Workshops.
- Becoming a Parent Volunteer.
- Job Training, transportation assistance and other community support.

Fairfax County Head Start and Early Head Start Locations



Fairfax County

O F C Office for Children

Neighborhood and Community Services
12011 Government Center Parkway, Suite 920
Fairfax, VA 22035

703-324-8000 • Fairfaxcounty.gov/OFC



Where a TTY number is not indicated, use 711/Virginia Relay. Reasonable accommodations made upon request; call 703-324-8290.



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