

# Community Action's Early Head Start & Head Start 2015 Annual Report

Program Year: August 2014- August 2015



# About Us

Community Action's Head Start programs provide comprehensive child development and family engagement services to low-income children and their families. Both Early Head Start, serving pregnant women and children ages birth to 3, and Head Start, serving children ages 3 to 5, ensure that enrolled children receive adequate nutrition, medical and dental care, social/emotional interventions appropriate to their age, and a developmentally appropriate education.

The programs place substantial emphasis on the involvement of parents in the lives of their children through home visits, parent leadership councils, and social events. Head Start programs ensure that our community's neediest children receive the care and education necessary to meet their developmental milestones, are ready to enter school, and are prepared for a lifetime of productive learning. Comprehensive development services include but are not limited to:

- **Early Learning** - Teachers facilitate individualized learning experiences to promote children's readiness for school and beyond. Through planned and spontaneous instruction, relationships with adults, and play, children grow in language and literacy, early math and science concepts, and social and emotional development.
- **Health** - Children receive health and development screenings, nutritious meals, oral health and mental health support. Programs connect families with medical, dental, and mental health services, and ensure that children receive the services they need.
- **Family well-being** - Programs support and strengthen parent-child relationships and engage families around children's learning and development. Parents and families are supported in achieving their own goals, such as housing stability, continued education, and financial security.

## What is school readiness?

The Office of Head Start (OHS) defines school readiness as children being ready for school, families ready to support their children's learning, and schools ready for the children who enter their doors. Children's school readiness is measured by the skills set out in the five domains of the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework:

Language and Literacy  
Cognition and General Knowledge  
Approaches to Learning  
Physical Development and Health  
Social and Emotional Development

Families are engaged in their children's learning and development and are poised to support the lifelong success of their child. Head Start recognizes that parents are their children's primary teachers and advocates. Schools become ready for children when Head Start programs, parents, and schools work together to promote school readiness and engage families as their children make the transition to kindergarten.

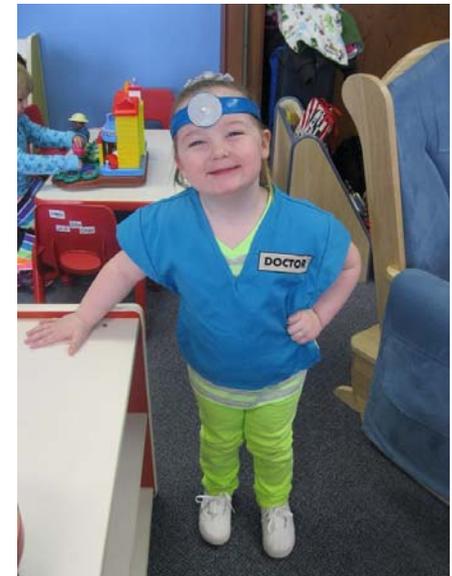
# Children & Families Served

Program Option	Funded Enrollment	Total Children and Families Served	Average Monthly Enrollment
Early Head Start Home-based	130	200	100%
Early Head Start at Educare of Lincoln	48	62	100%
Head Start at Educare of Lincoln	102	116	100%
Head Start at Lincoln Public Schools	358	381	100%
Head Start at Wahoo Public Schools	44	45	100%
<b>TOTAL OR AVERAGE</b>	<b>682</b>	<b>804</b>	<b>100%</b>



# Medical & Dental Exams

Program Option	Funded Enrollment	Percentage that Received Medical Exams	Percentage that Received Dental Exams
Early Head Start Home-based	140	93%	84%
Early Head Start at Educare of Lincoln	48	98%	91%
Head Start at Educare of Lincoln	102	88%	95%
Head Start at Lincoln Public Schools	376	91%	98%
Head Start at Wahoo Public Schools	44	96%	100%
<b>TOTAL OR AVERAGE</b>	<b>710</b>		



# School Readiness

Community Action's Early Head Start and Head Start School Readiness Goals were developed by the Community Action Early Head Start and Head Start School Readiness Committee, which built objectives that are fully aligned with the then *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework (now the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework)* and *Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines*. Facilitated by the Early Childhood Education Coordinator, the Committee is comprised of educators, program managers, Policy Council Representatives, parents, and community members from all Early Head Start and Head Start program options. Additionally, the participation of representatives from local school districts on the Committee ensures that children and families leaving the program will be equipped to meet the requirements and expectations of the schools into which they will transition. The program's School Readiness Goals were last reviewed and approved by the Policy Council and Board of Directors in December 2013. The School Readiness Committee plans to begin a thorough review of goals again next year.

## **Current School Readiness Goals:**

### **Language and Literacy**

- Children will use and comprehend language for conversation and communication.
- Children will demonstrate an understanding of print.
- Children will demonstrate an appreciation of books and engage with books every day.

### **Cognition and General Knowledge**

- Children will apply math knowledge and skills to everyday routines.
- Children will use scientific skills and methods.
- Children will understand the relationship between people and the world around them.

### **Physical Development and Health**

- Children will develop coordination, balance, spatial awareness, and strength needed for age appropriate fine and gross motor activities.
- Children will demonstrate and practice healthy and safe habits.

### **Social-Emotional Development**

- Children will engage in positive relationships and interactions with others.
- Children will develop a sense of self and confidence in their abilities.

### **Approaches to Learning**

- Children will use initiative, curiosity, and persistence to learn about their world.
- Children will demonstrate sustained attention and cooperation when working with varied materials, activities, and information.

Information regarding children's developmental growth and progress towards meeting School Readiness Goals is shared with parents and the community via Policy Council/Committee meetings, Board meetings, Parent Committee meetings, and at home visits and conferences with families. The School Readiness Committee meets throughout the year to share and analyze collected assessment data from a variety of sources in order to identify trends within and across program options and plan corresponding professional development activities



# School Readiness

Early Head Start and Head Start Family Educators and Teachers track children's progress through the ongoing child assessment system, Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG). TSG is an assessment system specifically designed for early childhood, comprised of 36 objectives that are predictive of school success and aligned with the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework*, *Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines*, and the *Common Core Standards*. In the 2014-2015 program year, the program compiled information from TSG after each checkpoint period (October, February, May, August) to examine trends amongst children who were below, meeting, or exceeding expectations in the key areas of development (social-emotional, physical, language and cognitive), as well as key areas of content learning (math and literacy). At the end of the year, increases were seen in the number of children meeting or exceeding widely held expectation in all areas of development throughout all program options. The vast majority of children ended the year meeting developmental milestones. Results from the final checkpoint were as follows:

Early Head Start August 2015 Checkpoint		
	Percentage of Children Meeting/Exceeding Widely Held Expectations	
Area of Development	Early Head Start Home-Based	Early Head Start at Educare
Social-Emotional	92%	89%
Gross Motor	90%	96%
Fine Motor	97%	98%
Language	83%	80%
Cognitive	93%	86%
Literacy	79%	77%
Mathematics	81%	77%



# School Readiness

Head Start 2015 Final Checkpoint*			
	Percentage of Children Meeting/Exceeding Widely Held Expectations		
Area of Development	Head Start at Educare	Head Start at Wahoo Public Schools	Head Start at Lincoln Public Schools
<b>Social-Emotional</b>	95%	98%	95%
<b>Gross Motor</b>	97%	100%	94%
<b>Fine Motor</b>	98%	100%	97%
<b>Language</b>	91%	98%	89%
<b>Cognitive</b>	93%	100%	95%
<b>Literacy</b>	91%	98%	93%
<b>Mathematics</b>	86%	95%	87%

\*Note: Final data for Lincoln Public Schools and Wahoo Public Schools is reported from the May checkpoint period as classes are not in session over the summer. All other data is from the final checkpoint period in August. These outcomes are consistent with trends the program has seen in past years.

During the 2014 -2015 Program Year, families in the Early Head Start Home-based program option and families enrolled in the Head Start Part Day program option made significant improvements in areas that research links with long-term child well-being. Among Part Day families, statistically significant positive increases were seen in many areas including: family routines, positive discipline and guidance, storytelling, and singing songs. Families also reported a significant increase in the following areas: *I know who to contact in the community when I need help; I have confidence in my ability to parent and take care of my children; and I have someone to talk to when I am worried about my child.* Total scores also showed a significant increase from the initial assessment to the end of year assessment. Among Early Head Start Home-based families, statistically positive increases were seen in the areas of family routines and reading.

Research shows that children develop social competence and love of learning when families engage in learning activities with their children. Families also reported a significant increase in the following areas: *I have relationships with people who can provide me support when I need it; I know who to contact in the community when I need help; I have confidence in my ability to parent and take care of my children; and I have someone to talk to when I am worried about my child.* These are important changes because families who have connections with others are more likely to be engaged with their children's schools, which ultimately leads to school success. Total scores for families in Early Head Start home-based also significantly increased from the initial assessment to the end of the year assessment. In the upcoming program year, continued emphasis will be placed on language, literacy, and mathematics instruction, as these continue to be the areas in which the fewest number of children are meeting widely held expectations program wide. Additionally, as we continue to support parents as their children's first and most important teachers, a Developmental Parenting approach will be adopted within the Early Head Start Home-based program. Developmental Parenting is an evidenced-based, parenting-focused model that promotes positive, warm, supportive interactions between parent and child, which are critical for setting the foundation for healthy development in the early years and beyond. Initial training on the model will begin during pre-service week, with training with two national presenters, including one of the authors of Developmental Parenting, to follow in January 2016.

# Family Engagement

In the 2014-2015 school year, Family Engagement Specialist hosted eleven Head Start Engagement opportunities for families. These ranged from open house celebrations, to workshops on topics such as routines, mealtimes and budgeting, as well as parent support networks. Head Start staff also got out and about in the community at several events talking about the program and providing fun activities that families could easily recreate at home. Head Start families also received monthly newsletters in their child's backpacks including upcoming events, recipes to try at home, recaps of the latest Head Start event and more.

Over the summer months, Head Start staff hosted parents to share feedback on events in various ways. Parents expressed that they enjoyed the events and learned from them. Parents also had great ideas and their feedback directly impacted event planning for the 2015-2016 school year, including a family spotlight that has now been implemented in the newsletter, adjusting the days and times of events, providing events in more languages ,and many more ideas that have helped to continuously increase family engagement.



# Health

Back in 2012, we noticed that nearly 40% of the children in our Head Start program were overweight or obese. We knew we needed to implement a project that would promote healthy behaviors to reduce this percentage over time. As a result, with grant support from the Community Health Endowment of Lincoln and local non-profit /public health collaborative Teach a Kid to Fish, we were able to develop an evidence-based nutrition education curriculum to be used specifically with children ages 0-3 in home-based learning environments. This curriculum is called “Growing Great Beginnings” and is used to guide nutrition education interventions within our Early Head Start Home-based program. It is composed of six lessons designed to positively change eating, sleep, and physical activity behaviors of young children to prevent them from becoming overweight or obese in later childhood years. In its pilot year (2013) we had already noticed great outcomes as a result of Growing Great Beginnings interventions. For example, the number of enrolled children eating recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables increased by 49% after receiving interventions guided by the curriculum.

Within the last program year, all Growing Great Beginnings lessons have been translated into Arabic. Community Action's Head Start and Early Head Start programs work with a number of non-English speaking families, many of whom speak Arabic languages. Having these lessons translated into Arabic (and Spanish) has significantly increased learning opportunities for our non-English speaking families.

Additionally, this past year (2015/2016 program year) we hired a full-time Nutrition Coach, Sheila Stratton, MSW. Sheila has previous experience with life coaching and fitness training, has been trained on the curriculum and motivational interviewing, and has begun work with families. Although she was hired just seven months ago, Sheila has already had a huge impact. To describe just one example, she is currently working with a Spanish-speaking family composed of three children, a father, and a mother. The mother, Maria, does the majority of cooking in the family and has set a variety of goals to get her family eating healthier, including increasing their daily intake of fruits and vegetables. In partnership with the family's Family Educator and Maria, Sheila put together a plan of action to help Maria achieve her goals. It was decided that in-home cooking classes would be a good strategy to do this. During one of the in-home cooking class sessions, Sheila showed the family how to make zucchini bread. Maria had never used her oven before (she was using it to store pots and pans) and was apprehensive to crack an egg because she was afraid of getting shells in the dish. Needless to say, making zucchini bread was definitely outside of Maria's comfort zone, but Sheila assured her that she could do it. Maria's three-year-old daughter helped in the preparation and when the final product was finished, no one in their family could believe there was zucchini in the bread. The father even testified that it was "the best thing Maria had ever made." With each intervention, Maria is feeling more empowered and growing in her confidence to prepare healthy meal options.



# Mental Health



Early Head Start and Head Start promote mental wellness for children and families in the home and classroom by integrating mental health consultation into education, health, and family engagement services. Mental health consultants from the UNL Clinical Psychology Training Program assist education and family engagement staff to understand child and family mental health needs and build skills to address them by effectively working with parents experiencing depression, promoting self-regulation and problem-solving skills in children, addressing challenging behaviors, and understanding the impact of trauma such as domestic violence on families. In team meetings, one-on-one meetings, and parent workshops, mental health consultants also directly provide information to assist parents in understanding their children's mental health needs and promote healthy social emotional development by establishing healthy relationships, routines, limits, and using effective praise and reinforcement.

In addition to providing mental health assessments and follow-up support to enrolled expectant mothers, mental health consultants worked directly with families to address challenges such as sleep problems, separation anxiety, and behavioral challenges at home. Program wide, Early Head Start and Head Start mental health professionals consulted with staff three or more times for 293 children and consulted with 54 parents about their child's behavior or mental health. They also facilitated 41 referrals for mental health services in the community.

# Review & Financial Audit

The program was reviewed in July 2014 by the Administration for Children and Families Office of Head Start. At this time, it was determined that Community Action had corrected the deficiency given to the agency in June 2014 related to the following requirement(s): PART 1304 - Program Performance Standards For Operation Of Head Start Programs By Grantees And Delegate Agencies 1304.52 Human Resources Management. Following its July 2014 onsite review, Administration for Children and Families Office of Head Start closed the previously identified finding and determined that no further corrective action was required. Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties' consolidated financial statements were audited by independent auditors in November 2014. Due to annual expenditures of greater than \$500,000 in federal funding, the audit was conducted in compliance with the requirements of U.S. Office of Management and Budget Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations. The Head Start Program was tested as a major program. The audit contained no significant deficiencies or material weaknesses. A copy of the results is available at: [harvester.census.gov](http://harvester.census.gov).



Revenues	\$
Head Start	4,090,306
Early Head Start	2,248,156
USDA	178,355
Child Care	360,084
Community Funding	171,339
Donations	3,291
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$7,051,531</b>
Expenditures	\$
Delegate Costs	2,322,737
Salaries & Fringe	3,075,819
Indirect	865,482
Travel	36,498
Equipment	31,272
Supplies	197,101
Contractual	168,480
Other	354,142
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$7,051,531</b>

