



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Office of Head Start | 4th Floor – Switzer Memorial Building, 330 C Street SW, Washington DC 20024 eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov

Program Performance Summary Report

To: Authorizing Official/Board Chairperson

Mr. Jeffrey Meyer

Washington County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.

11 St Paul's Drive

Hudson Falls, NY 12839

From: Responsible HHS Official

Date: 07/27/2021

On behalf of Dr. Bernadine Futrell

Director, Office of Head Start

From May 24, 2021 to May 28, 2021, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted a Focus Area One (FA1) monitoring review of the Washington County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. Head Start and Early Head Start programs. This report contains information about the grantee's performance and compliance with the requirements of the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) or Public Law 110-134, Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007.

The Office of Head Start (OHS) would like to thank your governing body, policy council, parents, and staff for their engagement in the review process. The FA1 review allows the OHS to understand how programs are progressing in providing services in the 5-year grant cycle. The report includes the performance measures used to understand grantee progress towards program goals. You can use this report to identify where your program was able to describe progress toward implementing program services that promote quality outcomes for children and families. Please contact your Regional Office for guidance should you have any questions or concerns. Your Regional Office will follow up on the content of this report and can work with you to identify resources to support your program's continuous improvement.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE REPORT

Ms. Carolyn Baker, Regional Program Manager

Mrs. Traci Ross, Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director

Mrs. Patricia Salvarezza, Head Start Director

Mrs. Patricia Salvarezza, Early Head Start Director

Glossary of Terms

Opportunity for Continuous Improvement (OCI)	An OCI is identified when the grantee is determined compliant in an area; however, through intentional, continuous improvement strategies, the agency has the opportunity to enhance overall program quality.
Area of Concern (AOC)	An area for which the agency needs to improve performance. These issues should be discussed with the grantee's Regional Office of Head Start for possible technical assistance.
Area of Noncompliance (ANC)	An area for which the agency is out of compliance with Federal requirements (including but not limited to the Head Start Act or one or more of the regulations) in one or more areas of performance. This status requires a written timeline of correction and possible technical assistance or guidance from the grantee's program specialist. If not corrected within the specified timeline, this status becomes a deficiency.
Deficiency	<p>As defined in the Head Start Act, the term "deficiency" means:</p> <p>(A) a systemic or substantial material failure of an agency in an area of performance that the Secretary determines involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) a threat to the health, safety, or civil rights of children or staff; (ii) a denial to parents of the exercise of their full roles and responsibilities related to program operations; (iii) a failure to comply with standards related to early childhood development and health services, family and community partnerships, or program design and management; (iv) the misuse of funds received under this subchapter; (v) loss of legal status (as determined by the Secretary) or financial viability, loss of permits, debarment from receiving Federal grants or contracts, or the improper use of Federal funds; or (vi) failure to meet any other Federal or State requirement that the agency has shown an unwillingness or inability to correct, after notice from the Secretary, within the period specified; <p>(B) systemic or material failure of the governing body of an agency to fully exercise its legal and fiduciary responsibilities; or</p> <p>(C) an unresolved area of noncompliance.</p>

Performance Summary

Service Area	Grant Number(s)	Compliance Level	Applicable Standards	Timeframe for Correction
Designing Quality Education and Child Development Program Services	02CH011434	Area of Concern	1302.91(e)(2)(ii)	Follow up with Regional Office for support
Designing Quality Health Program Services	02CH011434	Area of Concern	648A(g)(3)	Follow up with Regional Office for support



Program Design, Management, and Quality Improvement

Program Design

The grantee's program design and structure takes into account community strengths and needs.

Program Management and Quality Improvement

The grantee has an approach for providing effective management and oversight of all program areas and fiduciary responsibilities.

Program Governance

The grantee maintains a formal structure for program governance that includes a governing body, a policy council (or policy committee for delegates), and parent committees.

Program Design, Management, and Quality Improvement Summary

Washington County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. used community and program data to design its Head Start and Early Head Start service delivery in Washington County, New York, ensuring services and options met families' and children's needs. Based on program data, the grantee used duration grant funding to help expand services to a full day to support working families' schedules. Toward this aim, a partnership with the Whitehall and Hudson School Districts allowed families to dually enroll children in Head Start and state pre-kindergarten classes to receive full-day services for working parents. The county's director of social services, a member of the Board of Directors, informed recruitment staff of the local homeless population and how these families often lived in hotels, temporarily cohabitated, and accessed other short-term housing solutions. The grantee also identified a growing population of immigrant, Spanish-speaking families who had not sought services. In response, the grantee collaborated with Head Start programs in neighboring counties to obtain a state-funded grant to provide needed services and resources to this population. Using community information and leveraging its Board members, the grantee designed support systems for enrolled families and increased its recruitment area.

The program's ongoing monitoring and communication systems helped identify gaps in its program design and management structure. The grantee identified issues related to staff turnover in both administrative and direct service staff, including teacher turnover within the past 2-year period. In September 2020, program leadership worked with the Board and the policy council to develop an onboarding coordinator position. This position provided oversight of vacancy postings and supported candidates through the hiring process, orientation, and transitioning to the program's practice-based coaching model to support a culture of workplace wellness. The program's ongoing monitoring allowed them to evaluate the effectiveness of this new system. Administrative staff meetings added monthly training to build leadership skills and support planning. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the grantee increased the internet capacity and ensured access to electronic devices and web/cloud-based software to enable staff to work from home. The program implemented an approach to monitor program data to provide oversight in staff recruitment and retention.



Designing Quality Education and Child Development Program Services

Alignment with School Readiness

The grantee's approach to school readiness aligns with the expectations of receiving schools, the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF), and state early learning standards.

Effective and Intentional Teaching Practices

The grantee has strategies to ensure teaching practices promote progress toward school readiness.

Supporting Teachers in Promoting School Readiness

The grantee has an approach for ensuring teachers are prepared to implement the curriculum and support children's progress toward school readiness, but improvement is needed.

AOC 1302.91(e)(2)(ii)

**Timeframe for Correction: Follow up with Regional
Office for support**

1302.91 Staff qualifications and competency requirements.(e) Child and family services staff. (2) Head Start center-based teacher qualification requirements. (ii) As prescribed in section 648A(a)(3)(B) of the Act, a program must ensure all center-based teachers have at least an associate's or bachelor's degree in child development or early childhood education, equivalent coursework, or otherwise meet the requirements of section 648A(a)(3)(B) of the Act.

In a discussion, the Head Start director stated two of nine (22%) Head Start center-based teachers did not have an associate's degree in early childhood education. Each teacher had a professional development plan that the Head Start director monitored and updated after each semester's coursework. The teachers were in the process of receiving their associate's degrees in early childhood education with expected completion dates of August 2022.

Home-based Program Services

The grantee has strategies to ensure home-based program services help parents to provide high-quality learning experiences.



Designing Quality Health Program Services

Child Health Status and Care

The grantee has an approach for ensuring the delivery of high-quality health services.

Safety Practices

The grantee implements a process for monitoring and maintaining healthy and safe environments and ensuring all staff have complete background checks, but improvement is needed.

AOC 648A(g)(3)

**Timeframe for Correction: Follow up with Regional
Office for support**

Sec. 648A Staff Qualifications and Development (g) Staff Recruitment and Selection Procedures- Before a Head Start agency employs an individual, such agency shall-- (3) obtain--(A) a State, tribal, or Federal criminal record check covering all jurisdictions where the grantee provides Head Start services to children; (B) a State, tribal, or Federal criminal record check as required by the law of the jurisdiction where the grantee provides Head Start services; or (C) a criminal record check as otherwise required by Federal law.

In a discussion, the Head Start director and human resources manager stated that the program did not receive the criminal record check clearance before employment for 16 of 21 employees hired between March 11, 2020, and May 25, 2021. The Head Start director stated that due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the shutdown of in-office services at the Office of Child and Family Services, New York State authorized programs to allow persons with a submitted criminal background check application to begin work if the employees were not left alone with children. The Head Start director confirmed that all 16 employees had worked with children and families either virtually or in-person for a period ranging from 2.5 weeks to 6 months before receiving the clearance. The Head Start director and human resource manager stated this was during the COVID-19 pandemic, and employees hired before March 11, 2020, were cleared before their first day of employment.



Designing Quality Family and Community Engagement Services

Family Well-being

The grantee has an approach for collaborating with families to support family well-being.

Strengthening Parenting and Parent-Child Supports

The grantee has an approach for providing services that strengthen parenting skills.

Designing Quality Family and Community Engagement Services Summary

Washington County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. family and community engagement system and use of data supported families' well-being and parent/child relationships. During the enrollment visit, family advocates and home visitors started the family partnership and goal-setting process by assisting families in identifying their needs and desires. Next, staff members worked with the families to translate those needs and desires into specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals. Family services staff used ChildPlus to document progress towards goals, analyze data monthly, and prepare quarterly reports about trends and progress for stakeholders. Analysis of family data identified financial stability, financial literacy, and food insecurity as the areas of families' highest needs. In response, grant funding from Adirondack Trust Bank enabled the program to offer a series of financial literacy sessions on budgeting, savings, credit scores, and needs versus wants using a curriculum designed for low-income families.

In addition, the program implemented the Eat Healthy, Be Active curriculum to address nutrition education and food insecurity using the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) Program and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. To engage parents in children's learning, the program offered the Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) class twice a year. They also facilitated Parent Cafes to address parents' interests, school readiness, and child development. Well-established family and community engagement strategies allowed the program to effectively respond to families' needs and interests, encourage parent/child relationships, and promote improved family well-being.



Developing Effective Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) Strategies and Fiscal Infrastructure

Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance

At least 10% of the grantee's total funded enrollment is filled by children eligible for services under IDEA or the grantee has received a waiver.

The grantee enrolls children or pregnant women who are categorically eligible or who meet defined income-eligibility requirements.

Enrollment Verification

The grantee maintains and tracks full enrollment.

Fiscal Infrastructure, Capacity, and Responsiveness

The grantee's fiscal staff have the qualifications needed to provide oversight of the grant.

The grantee has a budget development and revision process that includes stakeholders and appropriate approvals, and ensures continuous alignment with program design, goals, and objectives.

Developing Effective Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) Strategies and Fiscal Infrastructure Summary

Washington County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.'s ERSEA process ensured the enrollment and participation of categorically and income-eligible children. ERSEA staff conducted in-person or phone interviews with families using a system of checks and balances to ensure accuracy of verification data, prioritized waitlist, and approved enrollment selection. The program reviewed and revised the selection criteria during COVID-19 to reflect family circumstances related to the pandemic. They also allowed families to submit documents electronically and accepted electronic signatures. Once enrolled, staff tracked children's attendance using ChildPlus and worked with families to address barriers to regular attendance. These efforts helped the program identify and fill vacant slots within the required timeframe. The program's system ensured accuracy in enrolling eligible families and supported children's full participation in the program.

Washington County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. employed a financial management and reporting system that ensured effective oversight of its grant. The chief financial officer oversaw the fiscal department, ensuring roles and responsibilities were dedicated to particular functions such as accounts payable, financial operations, and separations of duties. The fiscal department used the Fund EZ accounting system to track financial transactions using specific program and funding codes. Program administrators, the policy council, and the Board of Directors received monthly financial reports from the chief financial officer, which included an analysis of the budget and non-federal share. Detailed financial reports helped the grantee and stakeholders monitor fiscal practices and make decisions supportive of program goals and needs. The fiscal staffing structure and system of financial management provided effective oversight, safeguarding federal funds.

----- End of Report -----