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Dear Reader,

I am pleased to bring you the 2021-2022 edition of the Head Start Annual Report! As the Head Start Director of the Office of Child Development, I have had a front-row seat to an eventful year at Community Action Council's Prep Academies.

As a member of the National Community Action Head Start Task Force representing our region, I worked on a policy change that now allows families who receive SNAP benefits to be automatically eligible for Head Start benefits. This change, which took effect this year, reduces the unnecessary paperwork burden for our staff and families.

For three years, Community Action has been aggressively seeking Head Start funds to build a much-needed state of the art Prep Academy in Powell County. After meeting with Heather Wanderski – Program Operations Division Director for the Office of Head Start –to advocate in person, I learned that we were approved for \$5.7 million. We will soon be able to share more information about the plans for a new facility that will better serve our families and children.

As an agency, we have served families with children successfully throughout the coronavirus pandemic and done so in a stellar fashion.

The Office of Head Start observed our operations, and we earned two perfect reviews. (page 10)

Our hard work has been noticed. Since earning these successful reviews, our staff has presented at the Community Action Kentucky Conference about the review process and helping other grantees. We've either had conference calls, virtual meetings, or gone in person to help teams across the Commonwealth prepare for their reviews.

In August of 2021, we opened The Prep Academy at Madison County, a brand-new state-of-the-art facility to serve families in Richmond, KY. That same month we began direct management of One Parent Scholar House in Fayette county, which allowed that program to remain open after a partner could no longer do so.

Despite the great work over the last year, Head Start was not immune to trials. Workforce shortages continue to grip the nation, and we've embarked upon ambitious hiring campaigns to ensure our centers are sustainably fully staffed. Currently, we offer a hiring incentive, a bi-weekly temporary wage supplement for teachers, and a cash incentive for referrals from existing staff.

The Office of Head Start has instructed us to be more intentional about promoting work-life balance and incentivizing staff. As an incentive, Community Action Council has instituted a wellness reimbursement to defray the cost of mental health appointments and just added reimbursements for gym memberships and physical training.

It's been a great program year, and we have much to be proud of.

Sincerely,

Jessica Coffie





About our Head Start Program

School Readiness & Kindergarten Preparation

The Council offers home-based and center-based education through seven child development programs funded through the federal Office of Head Start. The Council's Head Start programs promote comprehensive school readiness in children from families with low income and/or children with disabilities by providing high-quality education and health, social, and family support services.

Each program offers a stimulating and culturally appropriate learning environment, an evidence-based curriculum, and an integrated family engagement strategy designed to prepare children to succeed in school. Head Start instructors boost children's language and social abilities and work with families to develop children's innate curiosity and problem-solving skills through open-ended questioning. Much of this work is done outdoors, rather than in a classroom, through child-centered, play-based learning, in which each child's interests and imagination take the place of a rigid curriculum; through this process of exploration and discovery, children learn lifelong skills such as autonomy, self-motivation, and critical thinking.

Head Start's two-generational approach ensures that programming does not focus on children in isolation but supports all family members in their efforts to create a healthy environment for the child to grow. Accordingly, the Council's Head Start program serves as an economic development vehicle for families by promoting increased educational attainment, job skills development, employment opportunities, and higher wages. In this way, the program strengthens families and the community.

Studies have demonstrated that children from under-resourced communities who participate in programs such as Head Start, compared with children from under-resourced communities who did not, on average, graduate from high school at higher rates, enroll in more years of post-secondary education, earn higher wages, and are less likely to have some ongoing health problems like high blood pressure.

In operating Head Start, the Council considers the evolving needs and resources of the community as a whole. The Council believes that the entire community can reap future rewards by investing in early childhood development and allowing all children to grow into their full potential as individuals and as members of society. A recent study by Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman notes that each public dollar spent on high-quality child development programs such as Head Start offers an annual return of 13% to the economy.



The Prep Academy at Madison County opened in 2021.

Prep Academies

The Council's 19 direct-managed Head Start locations are known as Prep Academies. This designation signals the Council's commitment to excellence and professionalism in preparing children successfully for school and future life. Prep Academies feature enhanced play spaces, culturally diverse educational materials, and state-of-the-art technology to support early learning.

Disability Enrollment

At least 10 percent of a Head Start program's enrollment must be filled by children who qualify for special education, as determined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Children with disabilities face various educational and social obstacles, ranging from inadequate funding of special education programs to failing schools and services to accommodate each child's individual abilities and needs. For these children, Head Start offers a real chance to begin learning to overcome the difficulties they face in their schooling and everyday lives. Likewise, for the parents of children with disabilities, Head Start offers direction to additional services and helps them become strong advocates for their children's education.

Direct-Managed Centers

- Prep Academy at BCTC
- Prep Academy at Berea
- Prep Academy at Bourbon County
- Prep Academy at Chrysalis House
- Prep Academy at Garrard Educational Center
- Prep Academy at Harrison County Community Center
- Prep Academy at Laurel County
- Prep Academy at Lebus Child Development Center
- Prep Academy at Madison County
- Prep Academy at Nicholas County
- Prep Academy at One Parent Scholar House
- Prep Academy at Powell County
- Prep Academy at Richmond
- Prep Academy at Russel School
- Prep Academy at Scroggins Park
- Prep Academy at South Lex
- Prep Academy at Terrace Park Child Development Center
- Prep Academy at Winburn

Who We Serve

Program	Head Start	Early Head Start	Early Head Start- Child Care Partnership
Target Population	Children age three to five, and their families	 Children from birth to age three, and their families Pregnant women 	Children from birth to age three, and their families
Counties Currently Served	Fayette, Harrison, Nicholas, Scott	Fayette, Bourbon, Harrison, Nicholas, Scott	Fayette, Scott
Total children served	779	352	143
Total pregnant women served	N/A	39	N/A
Number of funded slots	757	329	128
Average monthly enrollment	71%	91%	
Total families served	727	319	124
Estimated population eligible for services	2,101	4,192	
Percent eligible population served	37%	12%	



With health insurance

97% 96% 85%

With a medical home

Up-to-date on EPSDT well-child schedule

South Central Head Start	South Central Early Head Start	Migrant and Seasonal Head Start	Total
Children age three to five, and their families	 Children from birth to age three, and their families Pregnant women 	Children of migrant and seasonal farm workers, from birth to age five, and their families	
Clark, Estill, Garrard, Jackson, Laurel, Madison, Powell, Rockcastle	Clark, Estill, Garrard, Laurel, Madison, Powell, Rockcastle	Fayette, Bourbon, Madison, Pulaski, Warren	
692	171	227	2,364
N/A	3	N/A	42
595	130	253	2,192
80%	91%	64%	78%
638	148	181	2,137
1,742	3,481	7,604	19,120
40%	5%	3%	12%

Up-to-date on all possible immunizations



With a dental home

61% **Receiving a dental** exam in past year

14%

Having a disability



Parenting credential program offers child-rearing skills for Head Start moms and dads

In July 2021, Community Action Council (the Council) offered 30 parents from its Migrant Head Start programs in Fayette, Bourbon, and Madison Counties the parenting credential program, "Nurturing the Families of the World." The virtual class taught parents how to build stronger relationships with their children through social-emotional development, behavior management (known as "Conscious Discipline"), and providing a healthy diet. Course content was delivered in both English and Spanish. Parents completing the course were issued a certificate and a goodie bag with story books, a list of activities to do with their children, and a Head Start HERO t-shirt.

The course, which was coordinated by Health & Nutrition Director, Laura Sheffield, and Mental Health and Disabilities Director, Jonas Cooper, had a positive impact on participants. In a post-program survey, several parents reported an increase in their capacity to provide unconditional love, their understanding of appropriate discipline, and in setting realistic expectations for their children. Families reported having more confidence in expressing emotion in a positive manner.



Open specifically to our Migrant families in Fayette, Bourbon, and Madison Counties









GRADUATING with a Head Start

Families and teachers gathered in May 2022 to celebrate the graduation of more than 200 students from Community Action Council's Head Start program, the first in-person event of its kind since 2019. Graduation ceremonies were held at the Gifford Theater on the campus of Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, and Frederick Douglas High School in Lexington, for 14 Prep Academies and home-based programs.

The ceremonies included formal caps, gowns, and diplomas for the students. Students kept the tassels from their mortarboard caps as mementos, and both events had resource fairs, carnival games, and food after ceremonies. In addition to celebrating the achievements of their students, the ceremony's format allowed those in attendance to recognize the teachers for their work while also allowing teachers to share in the success of their students.

Laura Landrum, Health and Nutrition Director for the Council, said the ceremonies exemplify how the Council takes an active role in our communities.

"The event was an extension of the community outreach we do with our programs," said Laura. "And the families really enjoyed it."

While Laura coordinated the events in Lexington, Cassie Owens, Education Manager for South Cen-



tral Head Start and Early Head Start, took care of graduation ceremonies in the Council's southeastern service area.

"Parents had a lot of gratitude," said Cassie about the event. "Everyone had a great time."

For many, the graduation ceremonies were the first time in a long time that students, families, friends, and staff could gather under one roof and celebrate as a community. The Council would like to congratulate the Head Start students who graduated and thank the parents and teachers who helped them reach this milestone. We wish you all continued success and happiness. **66** Parents had a lot of gratitude. Everyone had a great time."

GRAD

CASSIE OWENS













Federal Review a Success

How do you improve on perfection? Head Start is showing us the way with its outstanding federal review.

Each year, the Office of Head Start monitors Head Start programs to measure their performance and ensure accountability for dollars spent and out-

comes achieved. This year our Head Start program received a perfect score on their annual federal review.

The focus of this year's review was "Understanding Performance for Continuous Program Improvement." Essentially, federal monitors checked to make sure that our program is tracking its performance and using the data to We want to be providing the best possible services to our Head Start families."

"

JESSICA COFFIE

"This year, the process was very different," said Head Start Director Jessica Coffie. The Office of Head Start recently changed the review process, which came to include a week-long review process and required months of teamwork and preparation. Jessica said, "Not knowing what to expect was

> a challenge," but through planning and preparation, Head Start hit its mark.

The review required a laundry list of charts, ledgers, minutes, and credentialing information on top of data system reviews and interviews with parents, teachers, policy council members, and board of director members. Staff worked as

make positive adjustments as needed. The review looked at five key areas: health services, management systems, education, and child development services, parent/family/community engagement services, and financial and administrative services. a team with parents and council members to make sure that everything was ready and that everyone was prepared when the time came to meet with the reviewers.

Staff remained flexible and willing to serve despite





seeing a high COVID-19 infection rate at the time. They even took part in Saturday Learning Sessions designed to keep them informed, help them understand the data, and learn more about the process guiding their work. "This was really a team effort," Jessica said. "The most satisfying part was seeing everyone working as a team up until the very last day."

This year was Jessica's first year as Head Start Director and her first time being in the driver's seat for the review, coordinating staff, and data from the beginning to the end. Jessica said that "being the last eyes on the material" felt intimidating but relying on the excellent work that the staff does all year long helped to assuage any nervousness. "I have a saying, 'Always be prepared, so you don't have to get prepared.' We want to make sure that we're ready for anything."

Looking forward, Jessica says that continuous quality improvement is constantly at top of her mind. "We want to be providing the best possible services to our Head Start families." Instead of resting on their laurels, Head Start staff will continue to review, reflect, and look for ways to make an excellent program even better.



66

This was really a team effort. The most satisfying part was seeing everyone working as a team up until the very last day."

JESSICA COFFIE



Meet Hazel

Hazel the Bouvier/Aussie Doodle visits Russell Head Start. Hazel is a certified Therapy Dog through Pawsibilities Unleashed.

Pause for paws!



New faces join the Council's Head Start classrooms every year. What was different this year is that some of them are four-legged and furry! Therapy Dogs certified by "Pawsibilities Unleashed" have been visiting classrooms at the Russell School Community Services Center and South Lexington Preparatory Academies since the Fall of 2021, bringing laughter, comfort, and healing to Head Start kids.

"Lots of people think that Therapy Dog visits are just 'puppy playtime,' but they're so much more than that," shares Jonas Cooper, the Council's Assistant Director of Head Start, who spearheaded this pilot program.

Certified Therapy Dogs have been highly trained and are specially selected for their tolerant temperaments towards people and other animals. Their presence in classrooms has been shown to alleviate stress and trauma. relieve anxiety, enhance socio-emotional skills, promote confidence, and encourage movement, socialization, and verbalization.

Spending connected time with loved ones releases oxytocin, even when they have wet noses and four paws."

"

JONAS COOPER

ported children who are especially shy or introverted coming out of their shells when the Therapy Dogs are present, and the kids ask all the time when they're coming back. One of the best qualities therapy dogs have is that they transcend language barriers, making their presence especially valuable in the Council's Migrant and Seasonal Head Start centers.

The past three years have been especially hard on many Head Start families, and Mr. Cooper sees therapy dogs as a proactive way to "help little ones combat those strong, negative emotions by creating

> an opportunity to emotionally, physically, and neurologically experience the many benefits of a therapy dog visit."

> Oxytocin, Mr. Cooper explains, is known as the "love hormone" and plays a role in social interaction, romantic relationships, and caregiver bonding. It helps us feel generous, empathetic, trusting, and content. It also influences our

At Russell School, students have learned to always ask permission before petting a dog and have even learned literacy skills from their furry friend Hazel. Samantha, Hazel's owner, has taught Hazel how to "read"— the kids work on sounding out words like cat and dog and are amazed when Hazel can tell the difference.

Teachers at Russell and South Lexington have re-

physical health—it can slow down the heart rate, ease breathing, and overpower stress hormones.

"Spending connected time with loved ones releases oxytocin, even when they have wet noses and four paws."

Looking forward, Mr. Cooper is reaching out to other therapy dog organizations in order to expand this pilot initiative and include more of the Council's Head Start classrooms across Kentucky.

The Head Start program gave me & my children a better life

Brenda Walker wrote this piece as a retirement announcement from the Community Action Council Head Start Program in Jackson County. It was published in the Lexington Herald-Leader 8/26/2022.

I would like to take this opportunity to brag about my life as an employee at Head Start program in Jackson County. If it had not been for Head Start. I do not know where I would be right now. Probably struggling to survive and depending on the system to care for me. However, thanks to Head Start I have gone to college and gotten my degree, and worked at a job that I

I cannot thank the wonderful people that make up Head Start for believing in me, for encouraging and supporting me and for guiding me through my educational and teaching journey

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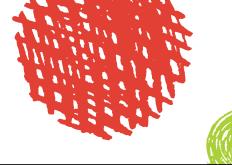
BRENDA WALKER

killing hogs, milking cows, and helping raise my 15 younger siblings.

My life with Head Start started in 1989 as a parent volunteer when my son Adam was enrolled in the

program. My daughter Autumn was enrolled in 1994 and I was hired as a cook aide in 1995. I was very shy and scared to death to talk to strangers because as a child raised back in the woods. I was not used to being around strangers. Since I had no early education, Charlotte Witt, the center director encouraged me to enroll in the adult education program at the Jackson County

have loved for 27 years. I love working with children and their families and would not be retiring, but I just cannot keep up with all the job responsibilities anymore due to my age. The reason I appreciate Head Start so much is because I was raised as a farmer's daughter in the hills of Kentucky with 16 siblings. I did not go to school and my lessons at home were working in the garden, canning food, Board of Education. I studied very hard and I got my diploma and went on to get my GED. When I got my GED, the Jackson County Sun newspaper and the Lexington Herald-Leader newspaper did an article with me in hopes to encourage more people to go get an education. Paul Harvey then did a short talk on the radio about my family.



Terrified that I was not smart enough to go to college, Head Start staff encouraged me to enroll in Midway College. There I sat in the back seat and prayed because I was so scared that I could not do the work, but I started getting B's on my test and that gave me encouragement to keep taking classes. I then went on to graduate from Eastern Kentucky University. I graduated there with a 3.4 GPA and made the honor roll. This was possible because Head Start staff was encouraging me all the way. My last amazing opportunity was getting to work for Community Action Council Head Start. I have met and been trained by the most caring, considerate, helpful and supportive people I have ever known. I so appreciate all the amazing staff that have helped and encouraged me be a better teacher/educator these past years. It has been a true blessing to work for Community Action Council and I thank them all so much. I cannot thank the wonderful people that make up Head Start for believing in me, for encouraging and supporting me and for guiding me through my educational and teaching journey, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to work in a job I loved for 27 years and that is working with young children and their families.



Thank you Head Start. I appreciate all you have done for me.







Head Start's Whole Family Approach to Learning

Caring connections make the difference

"Life gets harder when you don't have help," said persevering Head Start parent Tiffany Norris.

As the single parent of five children, Tiffany struggled to make ends meet. She was making \$8.20 an hour, trying never to miss a day at work to support her children, and struggling to find a better-paying job. A past criminal charge was preventing her from moving on to better opportunities.

With her youngest children being four and one year old, Tiffany found her way to the Head Start Prep Academy at the Russell School Community Services Center. There she found more than just childcare assistance; she found a supportive group of people who encouraged her to become her best self.

Head Start staff know that for children to succeed, their parents must succeed too. Tiffany shared her struggles with the staff, who surrounded her with compassion, education, and love. "It's been love since I've been here, since day one."

Tiffany joined the Head Start staff, where she became interested in earning a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential and working on getting her criminal record expunged. She said of her past, "I fell in with the wrong people and wound up doing things that I should not have done. I did something wrong, but I'm not a bad person." With the assistance of the Council and Head Start staff, she is now staying on top of all the requirements to earn her expungement. "The people here just push me to do better and keep pushing me toward my goals," she said.

Loving children led her to work in childcare in the past, but she has stepped up her game with her CDA. Tiffany tried once before to earn her CDA but missed the test deadline. This time she began taking prep classes over Zoom twice a week. She said working in a school setting like the one the Prep Academy provided kept her focused and motivated. She said, "I felt like I learned more, and being around people who just push you to do the best you can make a difference."

Tiffany's latest goal is to become a kindergarten teacher. She plans to return to college soon and credits the love and education that Head Start provides for giving her the drive to move forward. "The best part has been getting to know all the people [at the Prep Academy]. They've taught me how to talk to children, how to respond to them, to their emotions, and how to get on their level. I've learned so much from them."

But it's not only about the education for Tiffany; it's about the connections as well. "I've only been here a year, and it feels like home," she says. "[The staff] care about me. They want to make sure that we have food, that we have gas. I know that I can turn to them for help. They teach me self-esteem, how to have less stress, how to help my kids get on the best path." Tiffany says she has a second family in Head Start and that she and her children have a lot to look forward to in their brighter future.



66
I've only been
here a year,
and it feels
like home.

TIFFANY NORRIS



Financials

Results of most recent financial audit

The Council is subject to the Single Agency Audit Act and is audited annually. The auditor's report presents an unmodified opinion on the consolidated financial statements of the Council and Affiliates. It is the published opinion of the independent auditor that in the most recently completed audit for the fiscal year 2020-2021, the Council was found to be compliant in all material aspects with the requirements applicable to each of the Council's major programs.

2021-22 Monitoring Events

The Council received a Focus Area Two (FA2) monitoring review of its Head Start and Early Head Start programs in March 2022. Based on this monitoring review, the Office of Head Start found that the Council's Head Start programs meet the requirements of all applicable Head Start Program Performance Standards, laws, regulations, and policy requirements.

Summary of Revenue All Head Start Programs, 2021–2022

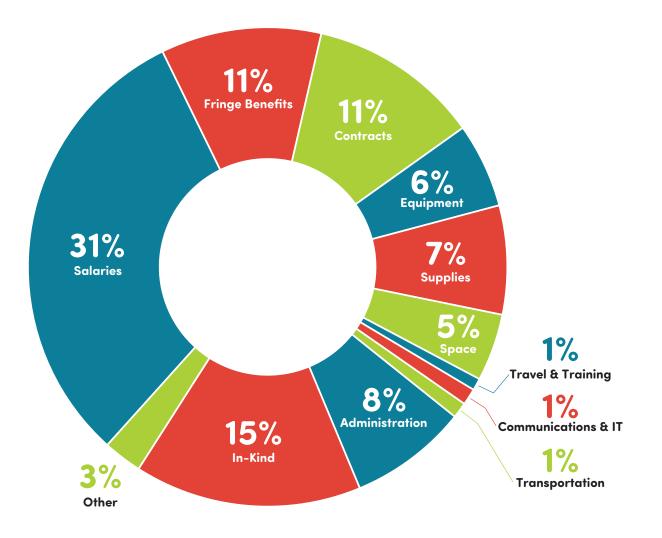
Total	\$50,497,462
American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)	\$141,049
Region XII	\$454,569
Head Start Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act	\$715,431
Region IV	\$2,963,492
In-Kind Contributions	\$4,258,631
Carryover Funding (Combined)	\$4,707,599
Grant Revenue	\$31,121,158

Summary of Expenditures All Head Start Programs, 2021–2022

Total	\$36,387,267
Indirect	\$3,166,961
Other	\$5,786,440
Contractual	\$7,318,655
Supplies	\$2,176,630
Equipment	\$1,174,069
Travel	\$103,711
Fringe	\$4,088,772
Salaries	\$12,572,030

Proposed Budget

All Head Start Programs 2022-2023





Community Needs Summary

Community Action Council completes a comprehensive Head Start community assessment process annually. The Head Start Community Assessment, along with data from the annual self-assessment, program information reports and other sources, helps to provide insight into the services, allowing for more effective decision-making at the program and organizational level.

Based on available data, the Head Start programs serve approximately 28.6 percent of eligible Head Start-age children and 7.2 percent of eligible Early Head Start-age children.

Beginning in early 2022, the Office of Sustainability staff began collecting data through a survey of Head Staff parents, guardians, staff, governing body members and community partners. Of the 474 surveys, 60.9 percent indicated they received Head Start services.

Based on the results of this survey and the overall community assessment, the Council continues to recommend a focus on advocacy for the early childhood education workforce, increasing the availability of Early Head Start services, prioritizing the mental health of staff, children and families, and supporting engagement and collaboration to address civic issues and prepare for the future of Head Start.





Migrant & Seasonal Head Start: Building Community For All

Classrooms & Community



As the statewide grantee for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) services, Community Action Council (the Council) plays a vital role in the lives of migrant and seasonal farm working students and families across the Commonwealth.

One of the biggest challenges migrant farm working families can face is language barriers. To communicate effectively with program participants, the Council and its partner agencies make every effort to recruit staff that speak the same home language as our students. The MSHS program's curriculum supports dual-language learners and allows students to thrive in a culturally inclusive environment. Annia Royo, Assistant Director of Child Development, oversees the MSHS program and is a crucial point of contact between families, program staff and administrators. Fluent in both Spanish and English, Annia works with program staff and partners to make sure program participants have access to the full array of resources and services that the Council and its partners provide.

The relationships she has forged with Head Start families took on new meaning when, in December of 2021, a deadly tornado ripped through several Western Kentucky counties, leaving a path of destruction in its wake.

Cecilia Suriano and her family were among the thousands of people whose lives were forever changed. Cecilia had recently learned of the MSHS program, which would prove to be a lifeline.

"I worked cutting tobacco," said Cecilia. "I didn't earn much money, and I was paying a babysitter [to watch my] three children; it was very expensive. When I enrolled my kids [in Migrant Head Start]... they received food, diapers, and transportation services. When the tornado happened, I lost everything. I had nowhere to live. I let the program know about my situation, and they quickly helped me find an apartment. I will always be very grateful for the Migrant Head Start program and its staff."

Early Education Partners

Head Start/Early Head Start

Arlington Elementary School Bluegrass Technical and Community College Brite Beginnings Campus Kids Early Learning Center Children's Treehouse of Knowledge Family Care Center Growing Together Preschool James Lane Allen Elementary Kids Empowerment Learning Academy (KELA) Nicholas County Elementary One Parent Family Scholar Shaw's Child Care The Preschool Center University of Early Childhood Lab Williams Wells Brown Elementary School

Early Head Start–Child Care Partnership

Brite Beginnings Campus Kids Early Learning Center Growing Together Preschool MegaMinds Educare

South Central Head Start/Early Head Start

Clark County School District Clay City Elementary Garrard Education Center McKee Elementary Sandgap Elementary South Irvine Early Learning Center Stanton Elementary Tyner Elementary

Migrant & Seasonal Head Start/ Migrant & Seasonal Early Head Start Expansion

Community Action of Southern Kentucky Lake Cumberland Community Action Agency

Head Start Policy Council

Parent Representatives

Cindy Davis SCHS Head Start Home-Based Felisha Watkins SCHS Head Start Center-Based Hope Burton Regional Head Start Center- Based Stevie Rogers SCHS Early Head Start Home-Based Megan Lawson SCHS Early Head Start Center-Based Katey Tomlin Regional Early Head Start Home-Based Hope Snapp Regional Early Head Start Center-Based Ashlee Vogelsang Early Head Start CCP Brandy Dillon Early Head Start CCP Diana Ramirez MSHS

Community Representatives

Lt. Nate Mueller Lexington Police Department Anthony Jackson Department of Parks and Recreation Sincere Holmes UK Human Development Institute Cristina Hiten Lexington-Fayette County Health Department WIC Elizabeth Mays Restoring Grace Amy Winn First Steps Debbie Link Child Care Council

Ambassadors

Laura Puente BCTC Amanda Wright Kentucky Educational Television Janine Griffin Bourbon Co. Home Based

Community Action Council Board of Directors

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Our Staff



Jessica Coffie Director of Child Development



Keshia Richardson ERSEA Director



Elizabeth Carter Office Manager



April Mullins-Datko Associate Director of Child Development



Jonas Cooper Assistant Director of Child Development



Laura Sheffield Health & Nutrition Director



Annia Roy Assistant Director of Child Development



Celeste Presley Head Start Projects Manager

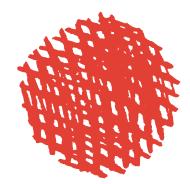
We've had another fantastic year!

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COMMACTION.ORG

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