

# Region VI Head Start Association

## AHSA/ARHSSCO

### MEETING REPORT

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#### **I. Overview and Updates**

- Designation Renewal System
- Conversations from Head Start to EHS
- Center Closures within programs
- Better Beginnings four - Six Star Ratings

Level	Number	%
★★★★★★	27	15.88%
★★★★★	3	1.76%
★★★★	62	36.47%
★★★	69	40.59%
★★	2	1.18%
★	1	0.59%
0	6	3.53%

#### **II. EHS/Head Start, Migrant-Seasonal, and EHS-CCPs Programs**

Head Start programs serve low-income three- and four-year-old children and their families. The purpose is to promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social, and cognitive development of children and families. There are eighteen grantees in Arkansas serving 5,323 children and families.

Early Head Start (EHS) programs serve low-income families with infants, toddlers, and pregnant women. The purpose of EHS is to promote healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women, enhance the development of very young children, and promote healthy family functioning. There are seventeen grantees in Arkansas serving 2,891 children and families.

Migrant/Seasonal Head Start Programs serve children birth to five years of age and their families. and their families. Migrant families move from one geographic location to another for agriculture work. Seasonal families work primarily in seasonal agriculture and have not moved in two years. There is one grantee in Arkansas serving 159 children and families.

Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships (EHS-CCP) serve low-income families with infants and toddlers in a childcare setting with wraparound services from EHS. There are three grantees in Arkansas serving 584 children and families. (See attachment I)



Please see attachment I for a list of programs and information on the AHSA and the HSSCO.

### **III. HSSCO State Initiatives**

In July 2024, *Arkansas Imagination Library (ARIL)* and local program partners in all seventy-five counties will celebrate a statewide milestone: More than five million Dolly Parton's Imagination Library books have been mailed to the homes of Arkansas Children, ages birth to five years. Currently, approximately 84,000 Arkansas children (46% of the state's total birth to five population) receive books each month from local program partners. The annual cost is \$26 per child. ARIL provides half of the program costs (\$13

per child per year), while the remaining \$13 per child per year is raised by local program partners. Congratulations ARIL! (See Attached Document II)

The *Arkansas Fatherhood Initiative* is still going strong as we work to complete our quarterly Powerful Conversations with fathers (PC/F) this year. We will have our last PC/F on November 12<sup>th</sup>, whereby, Kevin Carnes, President of Lakeshore Learning Materials will share the pros and cons of being a great father and grandfather.

We are still working hard to end *Homelessness* for families experiencing homelessness by getting resources and materials out to programs and continuing to make connections between Head start and the McKinney Vento Liaisons in the school districts.

The HSSCO and the Office of Early Childhood will continue to sponsor quarterly *EHS-CCP* Informational meetings in Arkansas based on program needs.



*Racial Equity Website* – (See attached Document III)

The *Opioid and Substance Misuse* (OSM) advisory committee continues to work hard to address substance misuse in Arkansas. We have invited all early childhood programs to join us in this fight for prevention and recovery. We have such a great state team and we have learned that we can conquer all things when we work together.

The *2024 School Readiness Summit* will focus on the process for Early Childhood LEADS in Arkansas and the work that comes from the LEARNs Act.

#### **IV. State Partnerships and Activities**

##### **EBT Summer Cards**

The Summer Food Program designed for eligible Head Start children was slated for implementation in Summer 2024 and the HSSCO director was contacted to assist by reaching out to the Head Start population.

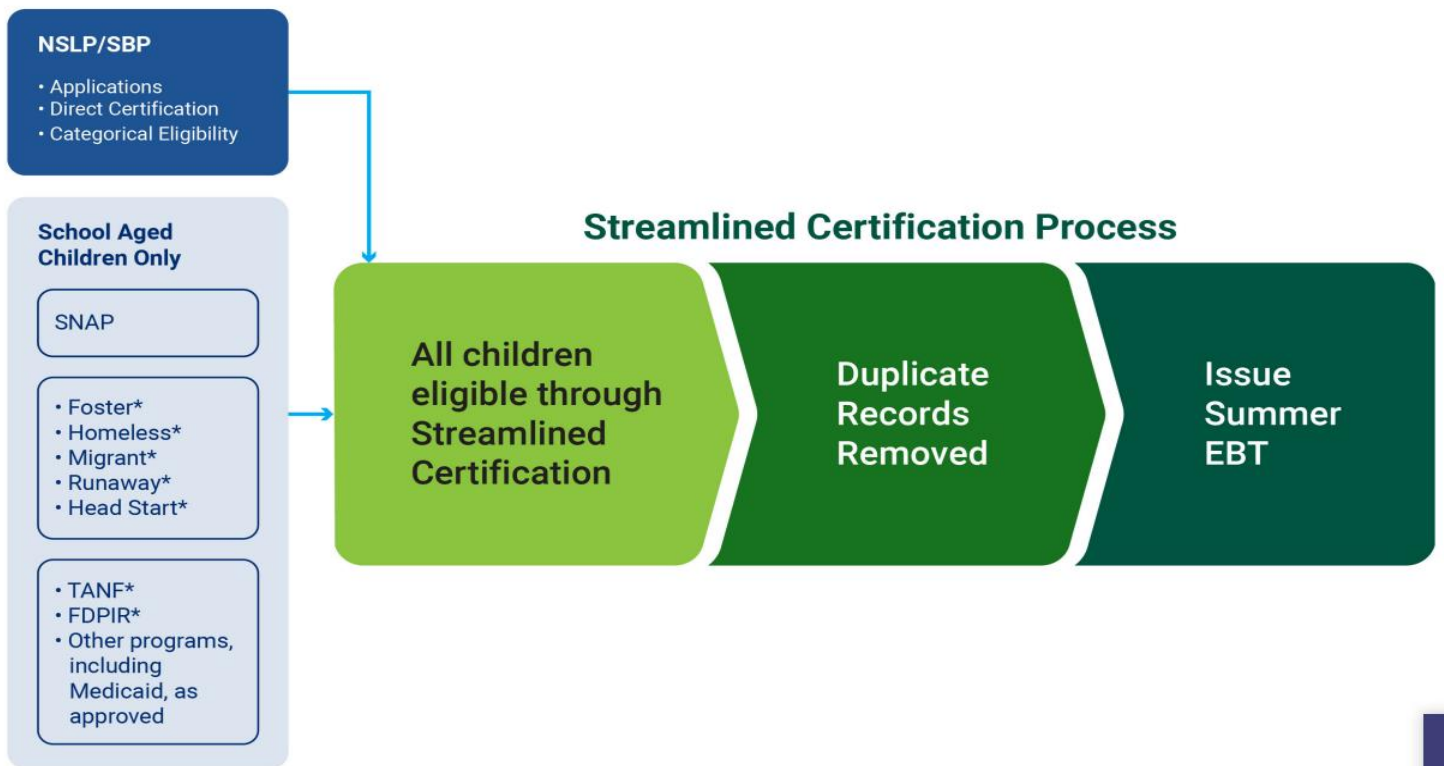
Children who are enrolled in Head Start programs are eligible for a new federal program called Summer EBT Program (Sun Bucks). Each eligible child will receive \$120 in food benefits on an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. The program is designed to provide additional nutrition assistance to families during the summer months when programs are not in session. This does not take place of the Summer Meal programs provided by the schools and this does not affect SNAP enrollment, children can participate in all programs.

During the school year, many children receive free or reduced lunches. However, when schools are closed for the summer, these children may face a gap in access to nutritious meals. The Summer EBT/Sun Bucks program aims to address this issue by providing eligible families with electronic benefits transfer cards that can be used just like a SNAP EBT card to purchase food.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Department of Education have teamed up to ensure all eligible children receive benefits. DHS will be the agency to issue benefits and as they were reviewing the guidance, they realize that they will need access to student/parent information from children enrolled in Head Start Programs to issue the benefits.

We have attached a spreadsheet for information needed on each child from each Head Start program that is not associated with a school district. Head Start programs that are part of a school district will be received by DHS through data sharing with ADE. Per FNS guidance children who attend the Head Start Program and meet age requirements are directly eligible to receive benefits. The HSSCO director contacted all EHS/Head Start programs to complete a data spreadsheet on each child and family. All spread sheets were submitted to DHS for them to receive the EBT card.

The diagram below shows a streamlined certification process and all children who would be eligible for the summer EBT program.



Collaborative Planning Grant

Preschool Inclusion Team

Child Find/Disability Indicators/State Plan

State Interagency Coordinating Council

Excel by Eight

FASD/None for Nine Workgroup

AECC/State Advisory Council

AHVN Collaboration & Conference Planning

Safe Babies Court Team

State Leadership Team Meetings (SLT)

Community of Practice (COP) /” Making Pre-school Inclusion Work” Book Review

Arkansas Childhood Obesity Prevention (ARCOP)

Arkansas Early Childhood Association - Apprentice and AECA Advisory Council

Arkansas Oral Health Coalition

Collaboration with a variety of Publishing Companies

New Partnerships

- New Director at Arkansas Advocacy – Keesha Smith
- ACAA State Interagency Partnership Verbal Agreement – Tomekia Moore
- MV State Liaisons/Head Start Homeless Liaisons
- Early Childhood Special Education/Head Start Disability Coordinators
- Collaboration with State 619 Coordinator

## V. State, Regional, and National Boards

### *ARKANSAS HEAD START ASSOCIATION BOARD/INSTITUTE & ACTIVITIES*

The AHSA is made up of four classes: Directors, Staff, Parents, and Friends. The AHSA meets every other month to oversee business for each of the classes. The Board is made up of twenty-four members, six from each of the four classes, and Board meetings are set for every other month as well.

The AR Institute planning committee meets every other month in planning for the AHSA Annual Institute, addressing critical issues, inviting speakers based on needs, financial and other reports, and so much more.

The 2024 Institute was held on April 29 – May 3, 2024. We had some dynamic speakers and invited Khari Garvin, Director for the Office of Head Start, who did attend and met with directors and executive directors in a special meeting to listen to their concerns and share information. This year's institute included the following activities:

- Pre-Institute Session on Opioids and Substance Misuse
- Invites to ALL early childhood programs in Arkansas,
- A special partnership reception,
- Come as YOU wish Networking Fun,
- Outstanding Masquerade Awards and Degreed Celebration,
- Silent Auction,
- Fantastic Exhibitors, and
- So Much More.

AHSA/HSSCO takes pride in recognizing our outstanding program and degreed staff each year. They are recognized at a banquet in their honor each year at our state institute and are presented with a framed certificate. We appreciate our Head Start family and all their accomplishments!

### *REGION VI HEAD START ASSOCIATION*

The HSSCO director serves on the Region Six Board and provides quarterly, oral, and written reports that outline all activities for the previous quarter. Since the last Region 6 Board meeting, the HSSCO director has been engaged in the following:

- Working on Scholarship information.
- Providing and sending out information on the AR/Region VI Institute.
- Providing the zoom link for quarterly virtual meetings.
- Posting information on the Region's website.
- Collaborating, planning, and sharing information with Collaboration Directors in Region VI monthly.

- Sending emails and trying to coordinate with Region VI President, Gloria Lopez.
- Preparing for the NHSA Board and sub-committees, whereby, I report to the Region VI Head Start Association and the state association.

The Region Six Head Start Association will have its conference for 2024 this year in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The HSSCO Director maintains contact with the *Dallas Regional Office* on several issues regarding upcoming meetings, the LEARN Act, Designation Renewal System, HSSCO work, and more. Joseph Laster is the assigned Program Specialist to Arkansas, Information and responses were given and things are moving forward.

### *OFFICE OF HEAD START (OHS)*

This Notice of Proposed Rulemaking proposes new and enhanced changes to the Head Start Program Performance Standards in three principal areas: workforce support, mental health, and other quality improvements. The Office of Head Start (OHS) **announced significant changes** to the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) that would ensure fair compensation is a key component of high-quality early care and education. These proposed changes, if enacted, would stabilize the Head Start workforce and improve the quality of the comprehensive services that Head Start families count on. They would significantly increase compensation for many Head Start staff, integrate mental health services into Head Start programming more broadly, and otherwise enhance services to help Head Start programs effectively and equitably meet the evolving needs of the communities they serve.



## OFFICE OF HEAD START

An Office of the Administration for Children & Families

Specifically, the proposed rule puts forward proposals for public comment that will improve wages, benefits, and job-quality for Head Start educators and other staff, as well as enhance program quality for children and families. The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking proposes changes designed to:

- Increase wages to align with preschool teachers in public school settings, to make progress toward full pay parity with elementary school teachers!
- Improve benefits for Head Start staff, including health insurance and paid leave, and enhance staff health and wellness support!
- Ensure better integration of mental health supports in program services!
- Improve child health and safety in program facilities!

- Improve family engagement services!
- Modernize the processes for programs to identify and meet community needs!

### *NATIONAL HEAD START ASSOCIATION (NHSA) Board*

The HSSCO director serves as a Board member for NHSA. The National Head Start Association's mission is to coalesce, inspire, and support the Head Start field as a leader in early childhood development and education. We hold the belief that every child, regardless of circumstances at birth, can succeed in life. We are the voice for more than 800,000 million children, 250,000 staff, and 1,600 grant recipients in the U.S.

NHSA's vision is to lead—to be the untiring voice that will not be quiet until every income-eligible child can access the Head Start model of support for the whole child, the family and the community—and to advocate—to work for policy and institutional changes that ensure all children and families have what they need to succeed. We envision a future where:

- The Head Start voice is powerful and united.
- The Head Start field is a valued partner and resource to early childhood development and education.
- There is nonpartisan support for increased federal commitment to Head Start; and
- Our children are healthier, our families empowered, our communities stronger and more vibrant.

NHSA is the central association for the Head Start workforce and serves as the national voice for early childhood education and leadership on Capitol Hill.

Preparation is also being made for:

- The NHSA Leadership conference in September in Washington D.C.
- The 2024 National Parent Conference in December

### **VI. HSSCO Grant Re-Application**

The HSSCO Refunding application will be completed and submitted in November 2024. The HSSCO will begin the fifth year of the five-year grant application in March 2025. Therefore in 2025, it will be time again for the new five-year grant application.

### **VII. Upcoming State, Regional, and National Events**

#### ARKANSAS

- AECA Conference – October 9-12, 2024, at the Wyndam in NLR
- The Heart to Care Fashion Show- October 12, 2024, at Children's Hall in LR
- The Poverty Summit -October 24, 2024, at ARVAC in Russellville
- Launching of the Racial Equity Website – Statewide & Virtually - TBA
- School Readiness Summit w/EC LEADS – November 1, 2024, at Children's Hall
- Powerful Conversation w/ Fathers-Kevin Carnes – November 12, 2024, Virtual



REGIONAL

- Region 6 Head Start Association Conference – October 21-24, 2024, in NM

NATIONAL

- NAEYC Conference – November 6-12, 2024, in Anaheim, California
- NHSA Leadership conference - September 23-26, 2024, in Washington DC
- The National Parent Conference – December 16-19, 2024, in San Diego. CA

*For more information, please feel free to check out our website at [www.arheadstart.org](http://www.arheadstart.org)*

HSSCO – JG



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- AHSA Institute Sessions – May 1-3, 2024
- Silent Auction and Exhibitors

#### 5. School Readiness Summit

- Date: November 1, 2024
- The focus this year will be on the LEARNS Act/Arkansas Leads
- Location: Children's Hall

#### 6. AR Imagination Library (ARIL)

- ARIL- expanding our goals to work with children in Foster Care & Hospitals
- Surveyed ALL EHS/Head Start/CC children to ensure they are receiving books.
- HSSCO continues to work with the Dollywood Foundation
- As an ARIL Board member, the HSSCO provides collaborative grants to the ARIL each year to support AR children and the operation of the ARIL State Office.

#### 7. Professional Development

- Collaboration w/OECand others to place EHS/Head Start trainings on the PDR.
- HSSCO Offers Informational Webinars on Racial Equity
- EHS-CCP Quarterly Training & Informational Meetings
- Homelessness in ARKANSAS RESEARCH
- Powerful Conversations with Fathers (One Hour of Power)
- AHSA/HSSCO's Annual State Institute

#### 8. Arkansas' Oral Health Coalition

- Collaborative Strategic Planning
- Collaboration with EHS/Head Start Programs in 2024

#### 9. New Partnerships

- New Director at Arkansas Advocacy – Keesha Smith
- ACAA State Interagency Partnership Agreement
- MV State Liaisons/Head Start Homeless Liaisons
- Early Childhood Special Education/Head Start Disability Coordinators
- State 619 Coordinator

#### 10. HSSCO Upcoming Events for 2024:

- Powerful Conversations with Fathers – March, July, and November

- School Readiness Summit/Arkansas Leads – November 1<sup>st</sup>
- The Roll Out of the Racial Equity Informational Webinars – TBA once approved.
- AHSA/HSSCO State Institute – April 29-May 3rd

***This concludes my report. Thank You!***

*HSSCO – JG*