

REGION VI HEAD START ASSOCIATION BOARD

Quarterly Reporting Form



Name: Casey Lafferty **Position:** New Mexico HSCO Director

Organization: New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department

Reporting Period: November, 2024 – January, 2025

Email: casey.lafferty@ececd.nm.gov

Correspondence:

- Regional Office
- Region VI Collaboration Directors
- NMHSA
- Local Colleges and Universities
- State Department Staff

Content Topics:

1. Collaborate with state systems to align early care and education services and supports for children and families prenatally to age five

- **Grants to support the conversion of Head Start slots to Early Head Start slots**

This is a PDG funded project that is still in development. Last quarter, I reported that we worked to determine which grant recipients are in the conversion process, and that we also analyzed feedback from grant recipients to determine need. Our next steps are to determine a structure for awarding grant funds, create a request for application, and get the funds out. In the next quarter, there should be more to update on this work.

- **Infant Early Childhood Mental Health**

The Social and Emotional Early Development (SEED) initiative is New Mexico's Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) program. SEED supports early childhood educators, families, and caregivers in fostering the social and emotional well-being of infants and toddlers. The initiative embedded culturally responsive practices to address the needs of New Mexico's diverse communities, strengthened parent and family engagement, and expanded access to mental health consultation services, particularly in underserved

areas. We just began our second year implementing this program and have increased the number of participating agencies and consultants, which has helped to address accessibility and reach. In this effort, infant and toddler educators are prioritized, but not necessarily Head Start. Understanding the changes in the final rule surrounding mental health supports, we are working with the local association to help determine need in New Mexico.

- **QRIS Redesign**

ECECD also prioritized the redesign of its Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), FOCUS. Guided by input from stakeholders and the state's advisory council, the redesign emphasizes higher professional qualifications for child care programs, improved alignment with equity-focused outcomes, and streamlined processes for program participation. This work aims to raise the bar for early learning quality while ensuring that systems are inclusive and accessible for all providers. It is a priority to ensure that Head Start providers are included in this Redesign to ensure participation without duplication of efforts

2. Work with state efforts to collect and use data on early childhood programs to guide decision- making and improve child and family outcomes.

- **Needs Assessment Update**

It was reported last quarter that the annual Head Start Needs Assessment and subsequent report will be completed by June 30. I have engaged in conversations to draft a scope of work with UNM's Cradle to Career Policy Institute who have helped provide this Assessment in previous years. The scope is with our General Counsel and is expected to be moved forward soon.

- **Quality Progress Report**

Head Start Data was also used to inform the state's CCDF Quality Progress Report which measures the impact of that funding source and the quality of early childhood services. This includes monitoring outcomes related to child development, provider qualifications, and the quality of care provided to children from low-income families.

- **State Legislative Asks**

ECECD responds to various legislative data requests by reporting on Head Start enrollment, service delivery, funding utilization, and outcomes. This data supports lawmakers in making informed decisions regarding funding allocations, policy development, and early childhood priorities. Most recently, Head Start data has been instrumental in shaping discussions around budget proposals and funding for early childhood programs, emphasizing the importance of investing in quality services for all children. Head Start data enables ECECD to track progress, identify trends, and respond to emerging needs within early childhood education. Head Start data is included in the state's annual outcomes reports, which measure the effectiveness of early childhood programs in meeting key benchmarks, such as school readiness, health outcomes, and family engagement. By reviewing PIR data, we can help monitor trends in enrollment, service delivery, and program outcomes. This data provides valuable insights into areas of success and identifies gaps, which inform ongoing program adjustments and policy recommendations.

3. Support the expansion of and access to high quality workforce and career development opportunities for staff

- **Early Childhood Workforce Scholarships, Pay Parity, Mentor Networks, Bilingual Incentive, and Wage Supplement**

With our Scholarship program, ECECD is able to cover the costs of tuition, books, and fees for students working in child care centers. This scholarship can function in alignment with the state's Opportunity Scholarship, as well as any federal financial aid. This year over 2,700 scholarships were awarded to the early childhood workforce. With a strong articulation agreement among all of New Mexico's 2 and 4-year colleges and universities offering early childhood coursework, we can also count on transferrable and stackable credits, and common course numbering. ECECD's Wage Supplement Program previously provided incremental financial awards to educators earning less than \$16 per hour, and in this year, it was raised to \$18 per hour, as part of the efforts to help address wage disparities in the early childhood sector: ECECD's Bilingual Incentive Program recognizes the critical role of bilingual and multilingual professionals through a one-time awarded payment of \$1,500 to eligible early childhood educators. Since the program's inception, 424 individuals representing 14 languages have received the incentive. To further address pay disparity, ECECD also continues efforts to align early childhood educator salaries with those of public school teachers through Pay Parity programs for state-funded PreK, Head Start, and most recently for Infant and Toddler educators. Over \$5 million in parity has been awarded in FY25 to over 400 individuals.

- **Revision to New Mexico's Common Core Competencies**

ECECD initiated a thorough revision of the state's Common Core Competencies and Early Learning Guidelines--soon converting to Early Learning Standards. In partnership with the University of Colorado, and Western New Mexico University's Center of Excellence, this work is being addressed simultaneously because ECECD recognizes the importance in connecting what we believe educators of our youngest children should be able to do, with helping young children accomplish developmental goals as well.

4. State and Regional Priorities as Needed:

- **Meetings, Conferences, and Events**
 - **NMNSA Monthly Board Meetings**
 - **November 21, 2024**
 - **December 2, 2024**
 - **January 23, 2025 (pending)**
 - **Head Start Collaboration Office Workforce Summit**
 - **October 15 – 18, 2024**

Joined the Collaboration Office Directors in Texas to share out about early childhood workforce initiatives happening in our states. We also unveiled the Region VI Workforce Resource Guide!

- **Head Start Region VI Annual Conference**
 - **October 22 – 25, 2024**

This year, the Region VI Annual Conference happened to take place in Albuquerque. I had the opportunity to be a keynote speaker (my first time) at this event. It's wonderful to be able to blend my early childhood knowledge and education and my state leadership experiences to my HSCO role.

- **NAEYC Annual Conference**
 - **November 5 – 9, 2024**

Attended the NAEYC Conference as part of the state's work supporting ten of our local two and four year colleges and universities to obtain NAEYC Accreditation of their higher education teacher preparation

programs. I also was invited to sit on a panel to share out once again on the workforce initiatives and supports New Mexico is engaging in .

Board Action Items: none

Report Attachments: none

Signature(s): _____

Date: 01/17/2025