

**Head Start State Collaboration Offices  
2012-2013 Mid-Year Report (March 1-August 31, 2012)**

## **Arkansas**

**Collaboration Director**

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**Briefly describe your accomplishments and actual outcomes in the following areas.**

Facilitate collaboration among Early Head Start and Head Start Grantees and entities that provide child and family services to low-income families. Describe your accomplishments and outcomes in the four required priority areas.

- **School Transitions, including state data systems**

The HSSCO is collaborating and working with the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) in planning a statewide event to address several critical topics in early childhood education and maintaining communication between pre-k and Kindergarten teachers. The HSSCO has been meeting on a monthly basis with the Department of Education and the Division of Early Childhood Education to put in place an ongoing system of collaboration and communication for School Readiness/Transition between State-Funded Pre-K, Head Start, HIPPY, and the Public School system. These groups will come together for the first time in Arkansas on November 5, 2012 to address transition, school readiness, and data systems. An ongoing communication plan is being developed to support the ongoing work and to maintain an open line of communication with all early childhood programs.

A presentation was given during the AECC meeting in April and to the Head Start Directors in July, 2012 by the Arkansas Research Center. As part of the State Longitudinal System, information and data was shared on achievement gaps and poverty. Statistical data was shared to show how poverty and sickness has the most impact on children's learning. The ARC will be working with EHS/Head Start programs in collecting program data to track the progress of children from birth to third grade. They will also be reviewing a process to track the education levels of teachers and the impact these various levels have on student learning. Sarah Argue has been assigned to work with Head Start/EHS programs in the state to collect data to use in the state's longitudinal data system.

{HSSCO Strategic Plan, Goal 2}

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- **Professional Development**

*The Arkansas Head Start-State Collaboration Office met periodically with the TTA ECE staff to update the School Readiness Implementation plan and to discuss professional development activities scheduled in the state with grantees. The TTA ECE staff also agreed to assist with the Region VI (5-state) Institute, which is scheduled for November 5-8, 2012 by conducting sessions for the pre-institute and the institute.*

*Booz Allen Hamilton conducted statewide school readiness training on data systems and how Head Start programs could collect student progress data in their programs. This two-day training for all Head Start program was held in August.*

*Arkansas has begun implementation phase of the Arkansas Birth through Pre-K Teaching Credential. The core competencies have been approved and it is now open for Higher Education institutes to apply for permission to offer*

*the coursework that qualifies for the credential. Currently, Pulaski Technical College has been approved to offer the courses. The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education will administer the credentialing process. The Higher Education Workgroup is currently looking at options that may allow current teachers with degrees to apply for the credential. A representative Pulaski Tech will provide an update to program directors in September.*

The HSSCO director provides ongoing state updates to EHS/Head Start programs through scheduled bi-monthly meetings, emails, director-to-director small talk (conference calls), and random visits to programs. Directors are given information and resources on the national centers, upcoming training and technical assistance, and updated resources.

For the first time in Arkansas, the HSSCO, the Department of Education and the Division of Early Childhood Education is working together to put in place an ongoing system of collaboration and communication for School Readiness/Transition between State-Funded Pre-K, Head Start, HIPPY, and the Public School system. Each area of the state is asked to put together teams to participate in a school readiness summit to address transition, data systems, and school readiness. There will be a consultant from the National Center for Quality Teaching and Learning (NCQTL) and a representative from the Arkansas Research Center to present and share information to the teams on November 5, 2012.

The Arkansas Head Start-State Association and the HSSCO are making plans for the 2012 Region VI Head Start (5-state) Institute to be held in Rogers, Arkansas, November 5-8, 2012. Some of the professional development opportunities and activities to look forward to include:

1. Pre-Institute Sessions
2. General Sessions w/Guest Speakers
3. Institute Sessions w/presenters
4. Regional Office Update
5. Exhibitors, Networking, & State meetings

The HSSCO director also collaborates with other agencies and partners by sharing information at state and regional conferences, setting up an informational booth about the AHSA and the HSSCO, and providing resources about EHS/Head Start programs in the AR. Ongoing communication continues with representatives from the national centers to assist with state needs in preparation and planning through webinars and developing resources.

The Arkansas Head Start-State Collaboration director completed the following mid-year professional development activities:

- APNET (AR Prevention Network) in Jacksonville, AR on March 8, 2012
- School Readiness Summit in Dallas, TX on March 27-29, 2012

- Governor's B-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Policy Institute in Virginia on May 9-10, 2012
- AR Prescription-Drug Summit in Little Rock, AR on April 26, 2012
- ACAAA (Community Action Agencies) in NLR, AR on May 23, 2012
- Birth-to-K Licensing Summit in Little Rock, AR on May 30-31, 2012
- NAEYC Professional Development, Indianapolis, ID on May, 2012
- CDC, Dallas, Texas on May, 2012
- Governor's Oral Health Summit, NLR, AR on June 15, 2012
- AR Citizens' First Congress, Ferndale, AR on June, 2012
- AR Coalition of Excellence, Little Rock, AR on August, 2012

{HSSCO Strategic Plan, Goal 3}

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- **Child Care and Early Childhood Systems/QRIS**

The Arkansas Head Start-State Collaboration Office continues to work with Head Start/EHS in encouraging them to participate in Arkansas Better Beginnings (State QRIS) since implementation in July 2010. In March 2011, the Arkansas Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education developed a reciprocity process for Head Start programs (and other nationally accredited programs including NAEYC) participating in Better Beginnings. The reciprocity agreement allows Head Start grantees to submit Form A of the application along with their recent monitoring reports and CLASS scores. The Division of Child Care reviews this information and makes a determination about the level of rating or if the grantee needs further review. Reasons for developing the reciprocity policy include: non-duplication of resources including financial, acknowledgement of systemic monitoring approaches that include program improvement, and the ability to focus resources on less resourced early childhood and school age programs. Early Head Start Centers will still have to be reviewed using the ITERS Scale. Currently, 80% of Head Start and Early Head Start Centers have received a rating of two or three stars with three being the highest level currently. Arkansas has begun working on the development of levels four and five.

The HSSCO director serves on the Arkansas Better Beginnings (BB) Quality Rating Improvement System committee. Programs in the state of Arkansas are currently going through the three-level process. Arkansas has approximately 891 quality approved centers that provide quality services to over 62,000 children. These numbers include the following breakdown of children served in Arkansas as of March, 2012:

- Infants & Toddlers – 10,339 children
- Preschool – 138,905 children
- School Age – 12,972 children
- Family Child Care – 590 children

In addition to these numbers, we have many programs that are in the process of completing levels one, two, and three. Head Start has approximately 88% of its programs that have completed all three levels. The BB QRIS committee

is currently working on adding levels four, five, and maybe six. This committee meets every month and lately at the HSSCO.

*{HSSCO Strategic Plan, Goal 4}*

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Arkansas is participating in the National Strengthening Families Network by utilizing the three “*levers for change*” and *putting a plan in place to incorporate the importance of this network with all state partners, plus getting the governor involved. An advisory committee will be formed to move this network forward and the committee will meet for the first time in September, 2012.*

*{HSSCO Strategic Plan, All Goals}*

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The HSSCO director has been partnering with the Department of Higher Education and the Department of Education DHS/DCCECE to access early childhood resources related to child care and cross trainings. All three teams come together monthly to work on building a quality early childhood education/assessment system. The team also works closely with the Arkansas Research Center to identify what data we need to show progress and plans for our infants and toddlers and preschool children. The HSSCO director has been working consistently with the DHS/DCCECE on planning, creating, and coordinating state activities between Head Start/EHS and state-funded pre-k. ABC programs and Head Start/EHS are working to expand services for infants and toddlers in the state, plus building a seamless system for quality early childhood education and assessment.

*{HSSCO Strategic Plan, Goal 1}*

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The HSSCO director agreed to partnership with the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to build collaboration between the child welfare and early childhood education systems in Arkansas so that young children who experience maltreatment have an opportunity for brighter educational beginnings. The overall goal is to improve access to high-quality early childhood education for young children in foster care. The project will be called “Building Bridges for Better Beginnings.” This will be a great opportunity to improve the way things are currently being done through child welfare. This was a concern on the needs assessment for Head Start programs.

*{HSSCO Strategic Plan, Child Welfare -Goal 8}*

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The Invest Early in Education Coalition in partnership with Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families and the Arkansas Early Childhood Association has worked to expand and build support for Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) programs. The Invest Early Coalition is grateful for this investment and supports

increased access to high quality care for more of Arkansas' youngest citizens. The coalition meet each quarter to allow partners to provide an update on state initiatives and to address the established goals for ABC expansion, expanding services for infants And toddlers, and activities to enhance parenting education in the state.

{HSSCO Strategic Plan, Goal 1}

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- **Support of Regional Office Priorities**

The HSSCO director supported the Dallas Regional Office by assisting with the School Readiness Summit for all Head Start programs in the region. This summit was held in Dallas, Texas on March 27-29, 2012. The HSSCO director also worked with Head Start directors during this week to get school readiness ideas for the upcoming Region VI Institute.

The HSSCO director also participates in the Regional Office conference calls when scheduled by the Dallas Regional Office. The purpose for these calls is to provide updates on each state's activities, planning updates, and to maintain effective communication between the Regional Office and each state (AR, TX, OK, NM, & LA) collaboration office. Other communications include ongoing emails and phone calls.

The HSSCO director participated in monthly conference calls with the Office of Head Start and the Dallas Regional Office. The purpose for these calls is to provide updates on each state's activities, planning updates, and to maintain effective communication between the Regional Office, each state (AR, TX, OK, NM, & LA) collaboration office, and on a national level. Other communications include ongoing emails and phone calls.

{HSSCO Strategic Plan, Goal 5}.

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**Briefly discuss the following aspects of your work:**

**Your activities as a member of the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care**

*The Arkansas Early Childhood Commission (AECC) convenes on a quarterly basis (January, April, and October). The commission is charged with supporting and advising the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education by ensuring that all Arkansas children and their families have access to a safe high-quality, developmentally appropriate, nurturing, learning environment and by educating and assisting parents, providers, and communities to prepare children for future success. The work continues for strengthening and expanding partnerships with other*

agencies and organizations for connected action, as the commission focus on a diverse set of topics and activities.

The HSSCO director was officially appointed by the Governor to serve on the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission. She was sworn in on July 19, 2012 with a term limit that extends to July 1, 2015. The HSSCO director has attended every commission meeting and has been asked to serve as chair. The nomination committee will make a recommendation to the commission for chair and co-chair during the October meeting.

The new committee, Arkansas Comprehensive Early Childhood Education/Assessment Model (ARCECEAM Taskforce) established to create a state early childhood system and assessment has had several meetings and continues to meet monthly. The taskforce has been working endlessly to create an early childhood system and assessment for all early childhood programs in the state. The taskforce has created an assessment checklist to identify an assessment to use in the state with all early childhood programs in order to collect data on the progress of our children. The team has also identified 13 categories to improve the early childhood education for all programs in the state. The taskforce will provide an updated report to the AECC in October.

The HSSCO director served as part of the Arkansas team in attending the National Governor's Association (NGA) for Best Practices in Arlington Virginia on May 9-10, 2012. The NGA supported governors' offices and early childhood advisory councils in working together to develop a robust policy agenda. The purpose of this institute was to attend sessions and work as a team to build a birth to third grade state policy agenda. Topics covered included:

1. How councils and governor staff can connect early childhood policy to K-12 reform activities;
2. Implementation of Common Core State Standards implementation for early childhood and early elementary policies; and
3. Promoting 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency through a birth-to-eight agenda.

The outcomes for Arkansas in attending this institute include restructuring the State Advisory Council, adding more responsibility to the SAC, add two co-chairs to the SAC, conduct strategic planning with SAC members in October, and assigning ado committees (people who are doing the work in the state) to showcase the work to support the established goals for the commission.

The UALR College of Business team is working on a mapping system to include all DHS resources. The goal is to have a website that is efficient for the general public. They are looking for a name for the mapping project. The goals are to create an online mapping system, online resource guide and a place for to house the "Getting Ready for School" publications. It was noted that this is still a work in progress. Tonya Russell shared that DCCECE would have brochures from UALR, social media to let folks know about the new initiative. Use of the Better Beginnings site

and word of mouth to get the information out to the public. UALR will also be sharing at meetings and events that they are scheduled to attend.

**The work you have completed to date on the required annual needs assessment update of the needs of Head Start grantees in the State with respect to coordination, collaboration, and alignment of services and alignment of curricula and assessments**

The required annual needs assessment has been analyzed and those needs have been written as goals for the HSSCO's 2012 Five-Year Strategic Plan. The Arkansas Head Start-State Collaboration Office updates the strategic plan quarterly to identify the work that is being done and the completed goals. The AHSA's Board reviews the plan annually for updates and changes (if any). The revised strategic plan is posted on the Head Start Enterprise System, ECLKC, and the AHSA's website.

**How you have involved the State Head Start Association and other partners in the ongoing work of the State Collaboration Office throughout the grant year**

The HSSCO director serves on so many committees in the state to see how to could coordinate services to Head Start/EHS programs with other state partners. Other partners include such agencies and organizations as: Arkansas advocates, Invest Early, Medical Homes, AR Health Department, Parenting In Arkansas, UALR, Oral Health Coalition, Dept. of Higher Education, and many more. The HSSCO puts forth every effort to share information with the AHSA in a variety of ways.

The Arkansas Head Start Association reviews, approves, and/or disapproves budgets, the Collaboration Grant, and all other board items prior to submission. The Collaboration Director provides state reports to the Arkansas Head Start Directors Class and Arkansas Head Start Association Board of Directors at their bi-monthly meetings. The Collaboration Director and Administrative Services Manager disseminate information via emails on upcoming initiatives and trainings frequently. The Arkansas Head Start-State Collaboration Office solicits input from the Arkansas Head Start Association about representation from Head Start and Early Head Start on state-level committees. The Collaboration Director meets via conference call with the Arkansas Head Start Association President on a regular basis

The AHSA's Board meets bi-monthly, whereby the HSSCO director provide state updates and information to all Head Start directors. During this time, the director plans for a Region VI Institute planning meeting, Class (Directors, Staff, Friends, & Parents), meetings, and the AHSA's Board meeting. The AHSA's Board monitors and approves all financial changes and updates. The HSSCO director works closely with the Association's president and maintains ongoing communication via emails

and phone calls. The AHSA Board will be installing new officers to the Board in November, 2012.

The AHSA is serving as host for the Region VI Institute, which will be held in Rogers, Arkansas during the week of November 5-8, 2012. The HSSCO director worked closely with the association in putting together a planning team (which consists of directors and staff) to plan for this five-state Institute. The HSSCO director meets with the Institute's planning team to assist and follow-through with assign roles for the pre-institute and the institute.

The Arkansas Home Visiting Network (HVN) was formed to build support and collaboration among all home visiting programs in Arkansas. The Arkansas Department of Health received a grant to expand the home visiting programs in Arkansas. The funds went to support the first five programs listed below, however, existing home visiting programs such as EHS and Save the Children are still a part of the network. The network consists of the following programs:

- *Nurse Family Partnership*
- *HIPPY*
- *Parents As Teachers (PAT)*
- *Following Babies Back Home*
- *Healthy Families America*
- EHS
- Save the Children

The HSSCO director worked closely with DHS/Division of Developmental Disabilities, First Connections, and Part C in developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the state level to support all EHS, Migrant and Seasonal programs (MSHS). The purpose of the agreement is to establish working procedures that support services to infants and toddlers (birth to three years old) with disabilities and their families in Arkansas. This agreement serves as a model for local EHS and MSHS programs in developing and maintaining their local inter-agency agreements. The agreement also highlights and references the Head Start Performance Standards in relation to the First Connections, Part C regulations. The agreement was signed on May31, 2012. The HSSCO director provided a copy to all EHS, MSHS, and Head Start programs in the state.

The HSSCO director has been in communication with the State Department of Education to complete a MOU with for Part B services for pre-school children with disabilities on the state level. The department is short-handed at this time, but do plan to complete the agreement on the state level.

The HSSCO works closely with the AHSA in updating activities, events, and resources on the association's web-site. The web-site is updated every quarter with new information, new ideas, pictures, videos, newsletters, job announcements, and new activities for EHS/Head Start programs to access.

## **Your efforts to support the coordination of Head Start services to American Indian/Alaska Native and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs**

There are three migrant and Seasonal programs in the state of Arkansas that are also regular Head Start program providers. In coordinating services for these programs, the Arkansas Head Start-State Collaboration Office maintains a section of its web-site that specifically indicates where these programs are located and the services that they provide. The HSSCO also collaborates with Welcome the Children in planning an annual conference and workshops that addresses the needs of working with Migrant and seasonal children and families to ensure that the program needs are met.

The HSSCO also donates a collaborative partnership grant to Welcome the Children in the amount of \$200 to support their quality training efforts in training Head Start programs on such topics as: Cross Cultural Perspectives, Anti-Bias Curriculum, Enhancing Language Development, Exploring Differences within Families, and much more.

We currently have no American Indian/Alaska Native programs in Arkansas.

### **Describe additional activities and successes in the past six months.**

- The HSSCO director met Jeff Nufer, CPA with the Shoptaw, LaBahn,, & Company, P.A. Auditing firm. The financial records for the AHSA/HSSCO were audited as of December 31, 2011 and 2010, and the related statements of activities and statements of cash flow for the years then ended. The report showed that the AHSA/HSSCO is in conformity with accounting principles accepted in the United States/. The company provided an audit report in accordance with Government Auditing standards, which highlights consideration of the AHSA's internal controls over financial reporting and compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grants.
- The Arkansas Comprehensive Early Childhood Education/Assessment Model is being designed by a special early childhood taskforce. The SAC approved a proposal by the HSSCO director to create an early childhood system and assessment for all early childhood programs in the state. The task force has met three times and are well on their way to developing a dynamic system that will call for some minor changes in the state, but huge outcomes for Arkansas' children and families as we look at quality education for all children. The assessment for all early childhood programs will create consistent data to show exactly where our children are academically. This will also support our longitudinal Data system for all programs across the state.
- The HSSCO director implemented a "*Director-to-Director Small Talk*" with EHS/Head Start directors in the state. The purpose of these small talks is to

build relationships with all EHS/Head Start directors and to discuss their program needs in relation to state updates and activities. The small talk will be held every quarter (April, June, October, & December) for the 2012 program year. The small talks were started in April and will end in December. EHS/Head Start directors sign-up on the AHSA's web-site and spend 30 minutes with the HSSCO director. Each quarter different topics are posted on the web-site to share with directors along with activity sheets.

- The HSSCO director also provided support and outreach to new EHS/Head Start directors by visiting their sites to share information and to offer support for their new position. A welcome packet is given to each new director that provides information about the AHSA, the HSSCO, and a list of all EHS/Head Start programs in the state and their contact information. Currently we have four new EHS/Head Start directors in the state. All visits and information sharing was completed by the end of June, 2012.
- The HSSCO director is working closely with the Grade-Level Reading Campaign launched by the Winthrop-Rockefeller Foundation. The campaign goal is to reduce by half the number of children who are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade. The issue originated from student results on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), whereby, 70% of Arkansas's children scored below proficient and AR ranked 35<sup>th</sup> in the nation on the test. Also, 24% of Arkansas' third graders scored below proficient on the 2011 Benchmark exam. Arkansas plans to foster a culture that understands the importance of reading, build capacity at the top level to make policy changes and implement programs as needed, expand the knowledge base about what works to increase reading levels, and to develop and advocate for policy solutions that will increase reading proficiency levels among elementary school children. We are just getting started with the campaign but expect big changes for Arkansas' children.
- The Arkansas Head Start-State Collaboration Office director attended several meetings for the Expanding Opportunities Inclusion project. The project focus on state partners providing input into the development of desired results for children birth to five years with a disability at all levels of the system, identifying key strategies and activities for the development of the Arkansas Expanding Opportunities Initiative, and having renewed energy for actively working towards inclusion of all young children. The grant funds have run out for this initiative, but the committee will continue the work for this project.
- Dental Home Initiative-The Arkansas Head Start-State Collaboration Office and the Oral Health Coalition worked together to plan the Governor's Oral Health Summit, which was held on June 15, 2012. The summit was very successful, whereas, we were able to increase the number of dental homes in underserved areas and the number of dentists who would accept Medicaid for EHS/Head Start programs. Other major areas of focus included awareness

activities focused on increasing participation of dentists and educating staff and parents about the importance of oral health. The summit was made available through a proposal that was completed by the HSSCO director for the Dental Home Initiative (DHI). The final report has been submitted to the DHI. The HSSCO meets with the Oral Health Coalition bi-monthly.

- The Office of Oral Health has hired Bryan Whitaker, DDS to replace Dr. Moulden. Dr. Whitaker is the new director at the Department of Health in Arkansas. He spoke to the members of the Oral Health Coalition and shared his vision of enhancing oral health in Arkansas. The HSSCO made a request for the coalition to send out a list of their training so that Health coordinators in Head start programs could attend. Dr. Whitaker agreed to work on this.
- The HSSCO met with representatives from Arkansas Advocates to share information, state initiatives and to complete a video on the importance of Head Start. The video was posted on the AHSA's web-site. AR Advocates also shared some activities that they would be sponsoring for helping families to go out and vote. The HSSCO director shared all information with EHS/Head Start programs so they could share with their families.
- The Arkansas Head Start-State Collaboration Office participated in the planning for the Arkansas Governor's Work-Life Balance Initiative. The purpose of this initiative is to focus on recognizing Arkansas employers for establishing policies and providing resources that support employees in balancing the needs of both work and family. Profit and non-profit businesses are nominated for the award, and then complete the application process, which consist of 74 questions. The questions address information in the areas such as career personal development, child care, work-time options, wellness, leave, collaboration, workplace culture, and benefits. The nominations were submitted for the award in September with some participation from Head Start programs. The awards were announced in April at the annual luncheon. This initiative will continue, but with a different focus and process.
- The HSSCO worked with the "APPLE" program, which stands for the Arkansas People Participating in Lead Education. This initiative is a collaborative effort between UAMS, Health Department, and the HSSCO to identify and reduce lead poisoning in under-served areas with high potential for undocumented, elevated blood-lead. The overall goal is to collect lead screening results from Head Start centers across the state and compile into one database for easy viewing and interpretation. A system has been put in place to work with Head Start programs to share this data with the health department so that if children have high lead levels, they can immediately get the medical attention they need. It is also to educate participants in advance so they will know what to look for and what to do.

- Arkansas was awarded two federal grants to help develop, expand, and evaluate home visiting services in the state. This grant was awarded to the AR Department of Health. Arkansas' funded proposals have four key components that will provide early childhood services to our most at-risk families and provide a strong foundation for excellence as a national model. This initiative is called the Arkansas Home Visiting Network. EHS/Head Start programs are a part of this network even though they did not receive any funding. The network was developed due to the continued poor outcomes for low-income and medically fragile children in the state. The network will help reach across economic, geographic and culture boundaries to help raise Arkansas children out of the lowest quartile in measured health and education outcomes. The network met in April, May, June, and August. The network will share training, conferences, resources, and other state activities.
- The HSSCO director attended the Arkansas Citizens First Congress Convention, whereby, there were workshops, networking, and to focus on the ten priorities for a better Arkansas. The ten priorities included activities such as: opportunities for all students to learn, Medicaid budget, energy efficient polices, water resources, immigration reform, create a civil rights commission, fair elections in communities, oil and gas industry practices, wage theft laws, and equal access to education, health, jobs, & earnings for women. This convention was very positive, informative, and definitely worthwhile. All information was shared with Head Start/EHS, whereby concerns and input was shared.
- The HSSCO director is very much involved in state decisions and is definitely a team player in working with a variety of agencies and state partners in Arkansas. EHS/Head Start programs have been included in the work of several state agencies who have received grant funding (Home Visiting, Medicaid, Oral Health, etc.) to do specific work in early childhood education

*HSSCO – J. Dedman  
Mid-Year Report*

*Report Sent to:*  
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