

# HSSCO ANNUAL STATE PROFILE REPORT

## Activities for January – December 2006

### Arkansas

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**A. Briefly describe your accomplishments in the following areas. Where possible, indicate the goals from your work plan and the desired and actual outcomes.**

- 1. *Help build early childhood systems and access to comprehensive services for all low-income children.***

***Include a description of how you are supporting Head Start-child care-pre-kindergarten collaborations at the local level and Head Start- pre-kindergarten collaborations at the state and local levels.***

The Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABCSS) funding increased to \$60 million through state general revenue in 2005. The Arkansas Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO) continued to work with the Arkansas Head Start Association, Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families, Arkansas Kids Count Coalition, Arkansas Early Childhood Association, Invest Early Coalition and other early childhood advocates to support and enhance collaborative efforts. The increase in state funding provided for a total of 18,731 children being served in state-funded pre-k programs in 2006, along with 9,950 Head Start children also being served throughout the state.

An Early Childhood Partnerships workgroup, implemented in September 2005 and continued in 2006, worked to address specific issues around local collaboration with state funded pre-k, resulting in a potential loss of Head Start children to the state funded programs (Arkansas Better Chance for School Success). Workgroup members include representatives from the Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education, Community Action Agencies, Head Start programs, Educational Cooperatives, private providers of state-funded pre-k programs (center-based and home-based), HIPPIY, Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families and the Arkansas Head Start State Collaboration Office. The group met routinely and was a part of legislative committee meetings. Work continues in this area with support from a wide range of partners.

Worked in conjunction with the Arkansas Head Start Association in developing a position paper, "Quality Early Childhood Education Collaboration," adopted in November. The expansion of state pre-kindergarten programs has opened up a range of opportunities for Head Start; however, with these opportunities have also come challenges. The goal of the position paper is to strengthen collaboration between state pre-k and Head Start by offering recommendations that could be used to enhance coordination at the local level, while maximizing both federal and state resources. The position paper was shared with state legislators, state agency and partner organizations, government and elected officials, community leaders and the early childhood community.

Participated in various conference calls with HSSCO directors regarding state pre-k and Head Start issues and concerns with Pre-K Now, National Head Start Association, and Office of Head Start. Also participated in Pre-K Now satellite downlink on state pre-k services in September.

Participation in Invest Early steering committee meetings to discuss 2007 state legislative agenda on early childhood education in Arkansas. Meetings also held with Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families regarding Head Start and early childhood education collaboration, as well as other issues and services pertaining to low income children and families.

**2. Encourage widespread collaboration between Head Start and other appropriate programs. Describe your accomplishments and outcomes in the eight priority areas.**

- **Health Care**

Continued leadership role in collaborative effort with Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education and Division of Behavioral Health Services with the Arkansas Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative. Funding continued in 2006 for three pilot projects with Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC) who are working with Arkansas Better Chance programs, Arkansas Head Start programs and other state quality approved early education programs to provide early childhood mental health consultation and education services for young children, families and caregivers.

Monthly conference calls continued in 2006 with CMHC early childhood specialists and clinicians. These calls are a cooperative effort among the Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education, Division of Behavioral Health Services and the Arkansas HSSCO to enhance information and education relating to early childhood development and early childhood mental health issues.

Selected to serve on the Arkansas System of Care Stakeholders Planning Committee, a group of families, consumers, advocates, community collaborators, providers of services and state agencies who advise and assist the Department of Health & Human Services in the development of an effective "system of care" for behavioral health services to children and families in Arkansas. Served as member of the Governing & Finance subcommittee and the Medicaid Workgroup. Proposed legislation to be filed on behalf of the Stakeholders Planning Committee in an effort to reform children's mental health services in Arkansas during the upcoming 2007 state legislative session.

Active participation in Arkansas Oral Health Coalition meetings; HSSCO director continued to serve as Chair of the Coalition in 2006. Annual Governor's Oral Health Summit held in July; HSSCO director emceed the event. Assisted with Oral Health Coalition outreach and education event during opening night of Arkansas Travelers Baseball in April.

Participation in national workgroup with five other Head Start State Collaboration Directors and state dental directors network to develop on-going communication process and mechanism to share information, initiatives and resources that will unite Head Start and state dental offices in an effort to increase services for children age five and under.

- **Welfare**

Continuing work with Arkansas Coalition for Economic Security (ACES) in addressing Earned Income Tax Credit Education Initiative and other priorities identified by the Coalition. ACES worked in coordination with Give Arkansas a Raise Now, an interfaith coalition of churches and community groups, to educate the public on the need to increase the state minimum wage. In April, Arkansas became the first state among our southern neighbors, to increase the minimum wage by \$1.10, to \$6.25 an hour. In August, "The State of Working Arkansas," an educational forum on the economic climate in Arkansas and the implications for working families was held; Jared Bernstein, economist with the Economic Policy Institute and author of *All Together Now: Common Sense for a Fair Economy* was the featured speaker.

- **Childcare**

Governor's Summit for Extra Learning Opportunities held in March. The Summit was sponsored by the Arkansas Out of School Network (AOSN) with support from the National Governor's Association for Best Practices and Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. The purpose of the Summit was to identify new stakeholders and partners, collect information on existing out of school time programs, and develop a plan for quality out of school care. Arkansas HSSCO director facilitated small group discussions during the Summit and is a member of the AOSN. Working with Quality Standards committee for Out of School

programs, as well as member of Public Education and Awareness Committee for AOSN. Attended meeting in July with National League of Cities representative for Arkansas, public officials and child advocates regarding quality after school programs and activities for children and youth in Arkansas.

Active participation in Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative; serving on Social Emotional Health–Medical Homes joint committee. Also attended meetings of the Parent Support and Family Education workgroups. Worked closely with state project director for AECCS Initiative in preparing for national meeting between HSSCO directors and SECCS directors held in January 2007. Participated in conference call with Child Care Bureau and HSSCO directors in June on update on SECCS and mental health System of Care.

Participated in planning activities and statewide celebration of Arkansas Children's Week held in April. A number of Head Start programs were involved in local activities in support of Arkansas Children's Week.

- **Education**

Participated as invited guest in roundtable event and press conference in March for releasing report by Southern Education Foundation (SEF) on "Miles to Go: Pre-Kindergarten in Arkansas" at Fair Park Early Childhood Education Center, Little Rock School District. Other guests included state legislators, Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families, Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Arkansas Chamber of Commerce and other dignitaries.

An annual publication by the National Institute on Early Education Research (NIEER) that assesses the quality standards of state pre-k programs found Arkansas to have one of the best pre-k programs in the nation. Arkansas allows any willing provider that meets state quality standards to be a part of the Arkansas Better Chance for School Success pre-k program; ten Head Start grantees also provide state funded pre-k services.

- **Community Services**

Member of Arkansas Kids Count Steering Committee. Regional forums hosted throughout Arkansas during the fall. Sponsored Arkansas Kids Count Pre-Legislative Conference in November. Governor-Elect Mike Beebe addressed the conference at the opening session.

As a member of the Arkansas Crisis Response team, assisted in preparation for Second National NOVA (National Organization for Victim Assistance) Crisis Responder training held in Little Rock in November. Arkansas HSSCO was recognized as a participating sponsor of the event. Twenty-one states and four countries were represented at the conference.

Governor's Family Friendly Awards luncheon held in April. Served on host committee and assisted with registration and other details.

Met with representative from Arkansas Children's Hospital (ACH) to explore options of outreach and educational resources from ACH to Head Start, Early Head Start, and Migrant & Seasonal Head Start programs throughout the state. ACH representative met with Head Start directors and staff in May and has now made available "on-line" information for Arkansas programs.

- **Family Literacy Services**

Participation in Arkansas state-level team for "Reading & Talking Together: Promoting Research Based Practices in Parent-Child Interactive Literacy Activities" professional development training for southern region states, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, held in Nashville, Tennessee in January.

Continuing dissemination of CD-Rom that is made available to early childhood education providers for reproduction of English and Spanish versions of "Getting Ready for Kindergarten: A Calendar of Family Activities" which allows for personalization on the calendar of the local program. The calendar is a collaborative effort between the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education and the Arkansas Head Start State Collaboration Office.

- ***Services to Children with Disabilities***

Worked collaboratively with partners in expanding the ECHO (Early Childhood Hearing Outreach) project, through the National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management, Utah State University, to Arkansas as a cooperative effort among Early Head Start, Migrant & Seasonal Head Start, Arkansas Children's Hospital, and the Arkansas Department of Health & Human Services EHDI Program. Six Arkansas Early Head Start programs, as well as the delegate agency for Migrant & Seasonal Head Start, were chosen through an RFP selection process to participate in this collaborative effort. The goal of this project, funded by ACF, Office of Head Start, is to initiate a concentrated state-based effort to enhance the capacities of Migrant Head Start and Early Head Start grantees to conduct objective hearing screenings for children birth to three years of age and to ensure that appropriate follow-up diagnostic and intervention services are provided for children who do not pass the screening. Activities began in October and will run through September 2007. HSSCO Director serves on State ECHO Team.

Head Start State Collaboration Office coordinated process with Child Care Law Center National Inclusion Project and Arkansas partners (Arkansas Head Start Association, Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education, Special Education Part B, Division of Developmental Disabilities Part C, Partners for Inclusive Communities) to bring to the state information about the legal frameworks of the ADA and IDEA as they pertain to child care and early childhood education. One day forum was held in November with over 100 participants in attendance.

In January, a collaborative networking meeting was held to provide opportunities for Head Start, Educational Cooperatives, and school districts to meet and discuss the updated state MOU agreement. As a part of this meeting, each Head Start program and Part B participant developed a plan of action to address barriers or concerns that currently exist at the local level. A follow-up meeting was held in September to discuss implementation of their plans and note local successes.

Collaborative effort with Part C in updating current state MOU agreement among Early Head Start, Migrant & Seasonal Head Start, Arkansas Head Start Association, Head Start State Collaboration Office and Department of Health & Human Services Division of Developmental Disabilities Part C. Signatures obtained and MOU distributed to appropriate parties in February. In November, a collaborative networking meeting was held to provide opportunities for Early Head Start and Migrant & Seasonal Head Start to meet with Part C Early Intervention staff and discuss the state MOU. Head Start programs were also invited to participate in this meeting. Plans of action were developed to address barriers and concerns that exist at the local level.

- ***Services to Homeless Children and Families***

Active member of Arkansas Homeless Coalition and Homeless Policy Academy. Both policy academy groups (Chronically Homeless and Homeless Families with Children) voted to merge efforts in May; quarterly meetings began in July. State Homeless Conference held in September. Participated in various meetings to plan for "stand down" which was held at Philander Smith College in Little Rock in September. There were 115 women, 200 children, 177 non-veteran men and 174 veteran men for a total of 666 homeless. There were 268 registered volunteers, bringing the total of 934 people involved in the stand down. Homeless Outreach Dinner held in Little Rock in November. The dinner was a collaborative effort among faith-based organizations, churches, the Arkansas Democrat and Republican parties and service providers, including the Arkansas Homeless Coalition. Three hundred dinners were served to men, women and children. Various activities were available for children, along with distribution of backpacks, blankets and other items for those in attendance.

Served on review team for McKinney-Vento homeless grants for Arkansas Department of Education.

### **3. Facilitate Head Start's involvement in the development of state policies, plans, processes and decisions.**

Hosted meeting with Higher Education, Education, Child Care and Head Start in February regarding issues pertaining to proposed language in the Head Start Reauthorization Act that would require Head Start teachers to meet the state pre-k qualifications of a P-4 license. Survey sent to Head Start directors

to collect data on proposed impact of such legislation. Worked with state pre-k leadership to address potential issues should legislation be enacted. Attended Arkansas Board of Education meeting in September where discussion occurred on proposed changes in teacher qualifications for state pre-k. State regulations now allow for pre-k teachers in classrooms, other than public school settings, to hold a Bachelor degree in early childhood education, child development or related degree.

Co-sponsorship of Early Childhood Summit on "A Focus on Brain Development and the Early Childhood Years" in collaboration with Community Outreach for Legislative Affairs (COLA), and in conjunction with the Arkansas Senate Interim Committee on Children & Youth and the House Interim Committee on Aging, Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs, held in October. State legislators, Head Start directors and staff, child care & pre-k providers, and child advocates were among the participants.

Representative from Arkansas School Boards Association met with Arkansas Head Start directors to discuss Head Start potential participation by sponsoring local activities for the Arkansas Study Circles Project "Building Bridges for Early Learning Birth to School." This process promotes schools and communities to work together so every child will start school eager to learn and ready to succeed through public dialogue and problem solving. Several Head Start programs in Arkansas expressed interest in the process and worked with the Study Circles Project.

Participating in newly established workgroup focusing on transportation issues for state funded pre-k in Arkansas. Workgroup also includes representatives for local Head Start programs.

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

**1. Describe how you have supported and collaborated with the Regional Office on national and regional priorities (e.g. Fatherhood, Faith-Based and Community, Healthy Marriage, Youth and Rural Initiatives and TA Network, professional development, Community Action Agencies, State Head Start Association, and other activities.**

Arkansas HSSCO worked with the Arkansas Head Start Association in planning for and hosting the Arkansas Head Start Annual Training Institute held in Hot Springs in July. A recognition luncheon was held in conjunction with the Institute in honor of Head Start teachers and staff who had completed degrees during the past two years. Seventy-seven teachers and staff were in attendance for the recognition luncheon, with a total of ninety-two honorees who attained degrees.

Routine communication with liaison from Booz-Allen-Hamilton, contractor for Region 6 ACF Head Start, to Arkansas HSSCO which includes ongoing discussion of current state initiatives in early care & education as well as ideas for involvement in various statewide activities and HSSCO priorities, including state quality approval certification process for increasing the number of Head Start programs in Arkansas with state quality approval.

Participant in financial management training provided by WIPFLi and Howard Gesbeck, Jr. on the 'Review of OMB Circulars Plus Head Start Issues.' This was a collaborative effort that the MOU workgroup planned for through supplemental grant funding, but was not held until April. Other participants included representatives from Community Action Agencies, Head Start, state agencies and TA specialists.

MOU Workgroup held quarterly conference calls to discuss continued collaborative efforts among Head Start, Community Action, Community Services and Child Care. Plans being made to update current MOU agreement in 2007.

Participated in Arkansas Community Services Block Grant Program Implementation Assessment (PIA).

**2. Describe additional activities and successes in the past year.**

Continued coordination and collaborative efforts throughout 2006 with state and local agencies, organizations and programs in response to the needs and services for Hurricane evacuees who relocated to Arkansas in fall 2005.

Co-sponsored, participated, and presented workshops at numerous State conferences in 2006.

Collaborative effort with Arkansas Commission on Child Abuse, Rape & Domestic Violence in co-sponsoring a Forum on "Endangered Children in Arkansas" held in February. Over 130 participants from Head Start, child care, education, child welfare, law enforcement, juvenile justice, child advocates, mental health, substance abuse prevention, and others attended the one day event. Evaluations were very positive and efforts will be made to continue similar events of interest with ACCARDV. The next forum, tentatively scheduled for spring 2007, will focus on domestic violence and drug related concerns for children and families, particularly in the area of methamphetamine use.

Continued participation with the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI) Health Insurance Round Table. ACHI and members of the Round Table developed strategies to expand health insurance coverage and increase the quality of health care services in Arkansas. In March, the Governor announced that Arkansas had received approval of a federal waiver that will provide health coverage to thousands of Arkansans working in small businesses. The program will provide a health coverage option for businesses with less than 500 employees who have not provided group health insurance as a benefit for the 12 months prior to enrollment.

**C. Briefly describe your efforts to support the coordination of Head Start services to Hispanic children and families in your State.**

Serving on 'Welcome the Children' Advisory Committee; the project is funded by the Division of Child Care and administered by Partners for Inclusive Communities. Using research-based training materials, the primary goal is to provide training and technical assistance to help early childhood providers, including Head Start, and other educators understand cultural issues, learn strategies to support Latino children, and make appropriate referrals of children who exhibit possible developmental delays. First annual state conference, "Celebrating Cultural Harmony" was held in May 2006 and the HSSCO was a co-sponsor.

Worked in collaboration with Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families, Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education, and Arkansas Head Start Association in sponsoring one-day workshop to address issues of access to quality early childhood education services for immigrant families. The meeting, held in April, brought together a broad-based group of people to explore opportunities for enhanced collaboration in eliminating barriers among the immigrant community in our state.

**D. How do your responses to the questions above impact your approved work plan for the current or coming year?**

The Arkansas Head Start State Collaboration Office is pleased with the progress achieved during the past year and throughout the previous years of the project. The HSSCO continues to work with the challenges and opportunities that encourage local collaboration between Head Start and the Arkansas Better Chance for School Success programs.

Due to rich collaborative partnerships that have emerged during the past several years via the Arkansas HSSCO, tremendous positive interaction exists among the Department of Health & Human Services Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education, Arkansas Head Start Association, and the State Collaboration Office, as well as ongoing interaction with local directors and staff of Arkansas Head Start, Early Head Start, and Migrant & Seasonal Head Start programs.

Flexibility affords the Arkansas Head Start State Collaboration Office a strength that focuses on many opportunities unique to Arkansas and enhances our ability to build comprehensive early childhood systems through linkages, coordination, and integration of policies and services. We continue to broaden our partnerships with Education, Special Education, Health, Childcare, Welfare, Homeless advocates, Disability services, Community Services, and Child Abuse and Domestic Violence organizations through routine and special activities targeting the HSSCO priorities.

An evaluation compilation of the 2006-2007 Arkansas Head Start State Collaboration Office is available from the HSSCO. The project utilizes information in the evaluation report to plan and focus future direction for the Arkansas Head Start State Collaboration Office.