

HSSCO QUARTERLY REPORT

Activities for June-August 2008

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.

Working with Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education, our state funded pre-k administering agency, in developing a joint letter to be signed by HSSCO director and DCCECE director in addressing the new requirement of Head Start reauthorization that Head Start programs have a signed MOU with state funded pre-k programs within their communities.

Ongoing communication with Governor's staff to ensure that Head Start continues as an important component of the comprehensive system for early education options within our state.

Participation in pre-k and early childhood education discussions with Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families, Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education, and Invest Early Coalition to propose enhanced collaboration for early childhood efforts during the 2009 state legislative session.

Arkansas Head Start State Collaboration Office and representative from Arkansas TA Network are participating in collaborative development of parent handbook for Arkansas Better Chance for School Success programs. There are two documents being developed; one for Arkansas Better Chance programs and one for other early childhood education and child care providers, including Head Start.

Participated in National Governor's Association conference call on Best Practices and also in Office of Head Start conference call on Head Start-Pre-K efforts in New York in June.

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

- Health Care**

Participating in Arkansas Finish Line Coalition, a group of advocates and experts in children's health across Arkansas, which is leading a three-year effort to ensure every child in Arkansas with health insurance. The Finish Line Coalition is working to reduce the number of eligible, un-enrolled children in ARKids First, expand ARKids eligibility from 200 to 300 percent of poverty, and develop a buy-in program for families at and above 300 percent of the poverty line. Access to health care services for children already enrolled is another priority of the coalition.

Attended Governor's Round Table on Health Care on June 5th.

HSSCO continues in collaborative effort with Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education and Division of Behavioral Health Services in the Arkansas Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative. Initial early childhood partners are phasing out formal pilot site linkage with identified community mental health centers, in an effort to increase and support early childhood mental health in newly identified early childhood education programs other than state funded pre-k and Head Start. Ongoing research and evaluation continue within the Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative.

Attend monthly CASSP Coordinating Council meetings and quarterly Arkansas Children's Behavioral Health Care Commission meeting. Continued active participation on Services, Supports & Standards workgroup.

Participation in monthly meetings of Arkansas Oral Health Coalition, as well as ongoing networking opportunities with coalition members relative to community fluoridation issues.

Continued collaborative relationship with Delta Dental Plan of Arkansas in examining opportunities for partnership activities among Delta Dental, the Arkansas Head Start Association, HSSCO, and local Head Start, Early Head Start and Migrant & Seasonal Head Start programs in Arkansas. With support from Delta Dental of Arkansas, Cavity Free Kids training and curriculum will be provided to fifty participants from Arkansas Head Start, Early Head Start, and Migrant & Seasonal Head Start programs, as well as Arkansas TA Specialists this fall.

Invited to participate in Land of Smiles training on August 7th, a collaborative effort with Arkansas Department of Education, Coordinated School Health and Delta Dental, focusing on oral health training and curriculum for K-3 teachers in Arkansas.

Participated in OHS Oral Health Planning conference call on July 1st.

- **Welfare**

Continued work with Arkansas Coalition for Economic Security (ACES) in promoting economic security of all Arkansans through public education, advocacy and collaboration.

Met with representative from Office of Child Support Enforcement in an outreach effort to custodial parents in Arkansas. Invited representative from OCSE to speak to group in Hot Springs which included participants from Head Start, Community Action, and Child Care agencies on June 15th.

- **Childcare**

Attended luncheon on August 19th at Governor's Mansion for release of report from Governor's Task Force on Best Practices for After School and Summer Programs.

Routine participation in Arkansas Out-Of-School Network meetings and serving on AOSN Communications Work Group. Attended High Scope quality training for out-of-school providers held in Little Rock on August 21st.

Attended Arkansas Early Childhood Commission meeting on June 15th.

Participated in round-table discussions focusing on content areas for quality child care and early childhood education.

Attended ECERS and ITERS training with Debby Cryer on June 20th at Arkansas Cooperative Education. A special invitation was extended to Head Start programs by DCCECE inviting them to participate in the discussion and training.

Member of newly-formed evaluation team for QRIS looking at tools to evaluate the Quality Rating Improvement System when it rolls-out in Arkansas. Participated in QRIS training for representatives who will be working with identified early childhood sites prior to implementation of quality rating system.

- **Education**

Working with Arkansas legislative representatives, Department of Education, Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education, and the early childhood community in proposing a "Birth to Five" licensure program for Arkansas. This effort is in response to an Interim Study of the State Legislature. Meetings held with Higher Education partners, with a White Paper being drafted to share with legislators and the general public on the importance of a Birth to Five licensing program for early childhood educators in Arkansas.

Participated in Arkansas Department of Education sponsored conference focusing on Coordinated School Health programs in Arkansas held in North Little Rock on June 24th–26th.

- **Community Services**

Participated in Arkansas Crisis Response stand-by for call-out due to Gulf Coast hurricane evacuation.

Serving as Board Member for Arkansas Supportive Housing Network. Participation in various committee and board meetings, as well as assisting with public awareness fun-walk focusing on homeless issues in central Arkansas.

Assisted with and co-sponsored MOU retreat with Community Action Association, Head Start Association, Office of Community Services, and Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education held in Hot Springs on June 15-16. Other partners included in this retreat included representatives from Arkansas Resource & Referral Agencies, who are now full partners in this collaborative endeavor of shared training opportunities and resources. A one-day workshop is scheduled for September which will include topics identified at the retreat, including technology and communications, rural health, and full day / full year options and services for child care.

- **Family Literacy Services**

Continuing work with Department of Education and Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education in developing materials showcasing quality early childhood opportunities in Arkansas, with focus on family literacy.

Participation in Parent Education Involvement Task Force meeting on August 18th.

Participated in PIRC (Parent Information Resource Center) Board meeting on June 25th.

- **Services to Children with Disabilities**

Ongoing work with partners in ECHO (Early Childhood Hearing Outreach) project, through Arkansas Children's Hospital, in coordination with the National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management, Utah State University. Participation in conference call on July 21st and webinar on August 27th. Communication with Pennsylvania HSSCO in preparation for Pennsylvania participation in the ECHO project.

Attended Arkansas Coalition for Education of the Deaf & Hard of Hearing meetings, which included preparation for State Summit to be held in September.

Part C MOU agreement updated with participation from representatives of Part C, HSSCO and Arkansas TA Network. Finalized draft shared with Early Head Start and Migrant & Seasonal Head Start programs and approved at summer meeting. Signatures being obtained and final document will be shared with Regional Office and affected parties as soon as all signatures have been secured.

- **Services to Homeless Children and Families**

Serving on Arkansas Homeless Coalition and Arkansas Homeless Policy Academy. Attend monthly meetings of Homeless Coalition and quarterly meetings of Homeless Policy Academy. Arkansas Homeless Coalition is taking the lead in sponsoring a Homeless Outreach Event in September. The HSSCO is a co-sponsor of the outreach event and is coordinating and assisting with activities for children & families during the event.

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

Met with Arkansas Medicaid and Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care in addressing potential solutions for identified problems that Head State programs are having with blood lead screening not being completed by physicians as required. A Health Care Round Table is scheduled for September to bring the Arkansas TA Network, along with Health Managers from Head Start, Early Head Start, and Migrant & Seasonal Head Start programs in Arkansas, along with Medicaid and AFMC, to assist in linkages with physicians in appropriate education and awareness of EPSDT requirements. Articles are also being included in routine communication with Medicaid providers about blood lead screening.

Attending quarterly meetings of Child Health Advisory Council which focuses on childhood obesity and other health matters of children and youth in our state. Serving on Education & Early Childhood Work Group to discuss options and methods for addressing proper nutrition and appropriate physical activity to assist in the prevention of this growing epidemic within our state.

Continued involvement with Arkansas System of Care reform initiative, focusing on children's mental health reform in Arkansas.

Participated in numerous Kids Count Steering Committee meetings. Plans have been finalized for the Kids Count Pre-legislative Conference set for October 23rd to be held in Little Rock.

Routine meetings with ABCD (Assuring Better Child Health Development) stakeholders group, a multi-state learning project focusing on preventive care of children whose health care is covered by Medicaid. The project supports efforts to improve early identification of young children with developmental problems.

Participating as a member of legislative Task Force on Substance Abuse Prevention; working on report to be presented to full committee by October 1st, with recommendations for substance abuse prevention activities and potential legislative initiatives.

Continued participation in Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative, including ways in which we could coordinate efforts, including through a state early childhood learning council.

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).

Participated in Region VI Head Start State Collaboration Directors conference calls with Regional Office.

Participated in meetings with Arkansas Head Start Association Board of Directors, as well as Head Start directors and staff.

Routine meetings with Jan Cox, liaison from Booz-Allen-Hamilton, contractor for Region VI ACF Head Start to Arkansas HSSCO.

Attended and participated in Region VI Head Start Institute and Region VI Head Start Association Board meeting in Lafayette, Louisiana in August.

Participated in OHS webinar on August 21st which focused on Migrant & Seasonal Head Start programs.

2. Describe additional activities and successes in the past quarter.

Served as a Region VI representative to Office of Head Start State Collaboration workgroup for development of needs assessment tool for Head Start State Collaboration Offices. Finalized document for use across the states in assessing information from Head Start programs. Participated in OHS conference call regarding needs assessment process.

Working with current evaluator of HSSCO past projects in addressing new requirements of Head Start reauthorization in obtaining needs assessment information from local Head Start programs.

The Arkansas Head Start State Collaboration Office and the Arkansas Commission on Child Abuse, Rape & Domestic Violence are working together to co-sponsored another forum on Endangered Children in Arkansas to be held in October in northwest Arkansas. The forum will include topics on children's cognitive and social/emotional development, trauma issues and children's mental health.

Meeting with Arkansas Voices: Friends of Children Left Behind on June 26th to discuss current efforts focusing on children of incarcerated parents and family care-givers. Working with AARP in effort to support initiative to support grand-parents raising their grand-children.

Participated in Annual MidSouth Summer School on Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment held in Little Rock in June. HSSCO director also serves on MSSS Task Force.

The HSSCO director was invited as a partner participant to the 2008 State & Territorial Child Care Administrators Meeting held in Washington DC in July.

Invited participant in policy briefing meeting with Senator Mark Pryor led by Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families. Other participants included representatives from Community Action and Early Childhood. Focus was on impact on low income children and families in Arkansas due to policy decisions at the Federal level.

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

Continued participation in Welcome the Children Advisory Committee. The primary goal of this project is to provide training and technical assistance for early childhood providers, including Head Start, and other educators in understanding cultural issues, learning strategies to support Latino children, and making appropriate referrals of children who exhibit possible delays. Participated in de-brief after annual conference, with plans beginning for next year. An upcoming workshop is scheduled for the fall.

Attended meeting with evaluators from University of Arkansas at Little Rock and Welcome the Children for report of focus groups from families who have children in the public schools, and their experience around cultural issues in the school environment.

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 progress of the second quarter of the grant period. Several issues have surfaced and are being addressed, even though not identified as a specific part of the current work plan. The HSSCO works in cooperation with the Arkansas Head Start Association and other early childhood education partners in identifying opportunities for enhancing collaborative efforts between pre-k in Arkansas and Head Start. Work also continues in other priority areas with state and local partners.