



## **Early Childhood Department Annual Report FY16 Addendum**

Howard Area Community Center's NAEYC-accredited Early Childhood Department delivers year-round child care and nutrition services along with on-site and home visiting family-strengthening programs to over 225 children ages 0-5 through our Family Center and Home Visiting programs.

### **HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START**

In FY16, which began on July 1, 2015 and ended June 30, 2016, over 158 Head Start and Early Head Start families found full-day, affordable early childhood care and education at the Sheila H. Berner Family Center. Our Head Start funded program provided center-based care and education to 42 eligible children, and Early Head Start served 99 eligible children and their families and 17 expectant mothers with either on-site care, or home visiting services and support.

During FY16, 98% Head Start children who enrolled in our program entered the classroom. 95% of the children served in the Head Start program were eligible based solely on family income.

The remaining families (5%) were eligible over-income. 93% of our Head Start children were able to maintain an up to date schedule of age-appropriate and preventive and primary health care. 100% of the children diagnosed with a chronic condition received medical treatment. 98% of enrollees were up to date with all immunizations appropriate for their age. Of our Head Start children, 62% received a dental exam. In the Head Start program, the average monthly enrollment as a percentage of funded enrollment was 91%.

During FY16, all Early Head Start children who enrolled in our program entered the classroom. 93% of the children served in the Early Head Start program were eligible based solely on family income. The remaining families (7%) were eligible over-income. Our Early Head Start was 92% compliant with age-appropriate medical exams. 100% of the children diagnosed with a chronic condition received medical treatment. 93% of enrollees were compliant with up-to-date immunizations according to Illinois Department of Health audit. In our Early Head Start program, the average monthly enrollment as a percentage of funded enrollment was 99%.

## **SCHOOL READINESS**

From birth, our goal is to support families in preparing their child for a productive, successful life in the world in which we live. Our philosophy is to promote children's development through play, parent involvement, and goal setting. Our staff is dedicated to the vision of fostering children's optimal potential throughout every developmental milestone.

With a focus on school readiness, we cultivate/encourage/promote

- Self-regulation
- Self-esteem
- Responsibility
- Cooperation
- Courage
- Confidence
- Good decision making
- Character development (compassion, acceptance, creativity, respect, dependability and integrity)

### **School Readiness Plan: The Steps That Connect to Success**

## **PARENT GOALS**

We begin with the firm belief that all parents want their children to be successful in life. We focus on building a working relationship with families, so that we can

purposefully plan for children to be exposed to experiences that help form trust, independence, and social skills. We want to work with families in preparing their children to be industrious, creative, and productive individuals with a sense of identity. We believe this begins by asking families to envision your children as successful adults.

## **PARENTS AS TEACHERS**

All children will learn, grow and develop to realize their full potential. Our goal is to provide the information, support, and encouragement parents need to help their children develop optimally during their crucial early years of life. The early years of a child's life are critical for optimal development and provide the foundation for success in school and in life. Parents are their child's first and most influential teacher. All young children and their families deserve the same opportunities to succeed, regardless of any demographic, geographic or economic considerations. An understanding and appreciation of the history and traditions of diverse cultures is essential in serving families. This is why we value family involvement in the program. Parents have expertise and knowledge of their child's strengths and abilities.

## **HEALTHY FOUNDATIONS**

Good physical health is a foundation for optimal growth and development. At Howard Area we understand that a child's physical health and overall level of wellbeing impacts all other areas of their development. We pride ourselves in our approach of modeling strategies that support good health and wellness. We put great effort into supporting families' understanding of current best practices for providing for the health, oral health, nutrition, physical safety and mental health of their children. We use Go, Slow, Whoa healthy nutritional messaging guidelines, I'm Moving/I'm Learning initiative, our own unique Howard Area Early Childhood Obesity prevention plan and other health & nutrition education frameworks to support healthy foundations.

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

Infant and early childhood mental health is observed and assessed as social emotional development. In very young children mental health develops as a capacity for the child to form close and secure relationships; experience, regulate, and express

emotions; explore the environment and learn. Children learn these important skills in the context of family, community, and cultural expectations. Children's relationships with their family members first teach them what to expect from other adults and their childcare and school experiences help them learn to be with other children. Both home and school provide children with experiences to help them express emotion and feel confident and competent in the exploration of their environment. Exploration and play are the basis for all learning making mental health an important part of a healthy child.

## **APPROACH TO LEARNING AND CURRICULUM**

The HACC ECE Department believes that children construct knowledge based on hands-on experience and play. Our curriculum models, The Creative Curriculum and Parents as Teachers, are based on play. They incorporate current educational research and are designed to encourage children to explore, solve problems, and make sense of the world they live in by freely interacting with a variety of materials made available to them inside and outside of the classroom. We actively create an environment that allows children to explore and enjoy - to see, to hear, to feel, to touch, and to move. Our emphasis is helping children reach their fullest developmental potential in the process of engaging with people, equipment, and materials rather than on the creation of a product or result. We focus on child-directed, process-based activities that foster children's educational independence and creativity. The Center's classrooms and home visiting experiences are planned and organized to maximize the following areas of development: Social/Emotional development, Physical development (Gross and Fine motor), Language development, Cognitive development, and Literacy and Math skills. We also plan so that children have the opportunity to explore Arts, Social Studies, and Science. We use the March of Dimes' Becoming a Mom/ Comenzando Bien as well as Parents as Teachers for general prenatal education. Lastly, we have adopted Georgetown University's, Bright Futures for health and nutrition parent education.

## **INDIVIDUALIZATION**

As part of our dedication to partnering with families, we believe that collaborating together to develop individualized goals for each child will provide them with the most beneficial educational experience. We believe that every child is unique, having a variety of strengths, and learning styles. Our goal is to work together with parents to plan and implement goals that are relevant to their child's current stage of

development and individual needs. In the Center, we meet formally with parents to discuss and plan for these goals four times a year, and make ourselves available for additional conversations with families as needed. In the event that a parent or staff have questions about how a child is developing, we believe that working together to provide any additional support that a family may need is the most beneficial approach. This may include offering the family child therapeutic services on-site or at a local school for part of the day once they have an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) from a hospital or Early Intervention Program, or Individual Education Plan (IEP) from a hospital or Chicago Public schools.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

There are many ways for our Early and Head Start parents to become involved and stay engaged in the program, and in their child's education and future. Research shows that children whose parents and families are involved in their education are more successful in school. Getting involved during the early childhood level will prepare parents to be active once their children enter elementary school, middle school, and high school. Schools need parent and family involvement to succeed just as much as children do. We welcome family members to spend time in the classroom. Our program also focuses on providing parents with support on how to create a learning environment at home, and the benefits of doing so, as it further supports classroom learning. As a Head Start program, we will help parents discover even more ways to become role models for their children by providing opportunities to explore and expand education, to search for better suited employment, and tap into support groups where parents and family members encourage each other.

The philosophy of family support services is to build trusting relationships by listening and providing practical and emotional support to create family partnerships that are child-centered, parent-directed, and supportive to the caregiving environment. Each family is assigned a Family Support Worker (FSW) at the time of enrollment. The Family Support Worker will assist each family in meeting personal or family goals, as well as provide referrals to resources within the community. Family Support Workers are also available to discuss children's behavior and development, and work in collaboration with teachers, coordinators, and consultants to support parents in making informed decisions about their child's wellbeing.

Throughout FY 16 the HACC Early Childhood Department offered over 60 Parent/Child Involvement socialization events that focused on parent child activities and relationship strengthening.

Activities included Summer, Fall and Winter Festivals, physical activity themed PlayStreets block parties, and monthly Parent Meetings with a mental health and wellness focus, bi-monthly group socialization events, plus our annual Curriculum Night. Several of these events were specifically geared towards men's involvement, such as a Men's Breakfast. We also held 3 parent meetings and various resource tables for parents to discuss the transition to Kindergarten. The meetings focused on assisting parents with the registration process for the local public and private schools, as well as selective enrollment / options schools, and speaking to parents about how they can better advocate for their children within their new school system. The meetings also focused on informing parents about their rights when advocating for the needs of special education children. Children in our program visited our own Lending Library where children chose books to read at home with their families that focus on going to Kindergarten.

## **ADVOCACY**

We welcome parents to become an advocate for their child. Becoming an effective advocate for a child means becoming involved in many aspects of their life including education. And being involved in a child's life is what it takes to be a great and successful parent! As a Head Start program, we recognize that parents are the strongest supporter of your child and we encourage their involvement as their child's advocate. By law, we, as a Head Start program, are committed to helping parents support their child as they enter Early Head Start or Head Start, and as they transition from Head Start to kindergarten, another preschool program, or a childcare setting.

## **ASSESSMENT**

We believe that assessing individual and group status and progress is the key to planning learning experiences that respond to the needs, interests, and abilities of every child. To help accomplish this, we regularly screen all children within the first 45 days of enrollment into the program, and thereafter as needed. We utilize the Agas and Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional for all children; and the Agas and Stages Questionnaire for children 6 weeks to 3 years; and the Early Screening Inventory-Revised for children 3-5 years of age. The tools are designed to identify children's developmental strengths as well as identify any potential areas of concern regarding their individual development. These screenings look at cognitive development, fine and gross motor skills, language motor skills, language development and social/emotional development.

We routinely screen your child's hearing, vision, height and weight. We accomplish these screenings a number of ways. Hearing and vision skills are often screened by our Community Health Nurse, your pediatrician, or by the City of Chicago. Our Community Health Nurse conducts regular health checks to collect blood pressure, and height and weight information.

We also document children's on-going development through observations. Four times a year we collect a "snapshot" of each child's development by assessing these observations and plotting the children's development on a standardized continuum. The tool we use for this is the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment system. This tool's objectives, dimensions and indicators are aligned with the specific domains and domain elements in the Head Start Early Learning Framework as well as the Illinois State Early Learning Standards.

What follows are some growth highlights from the FY 16 Child Outcomes Data. Our data is organized by age level for more valid comparisons.