



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Office of Head Start | 4th Floor – Switzer Memorial Building, 330 C Street SW, Washington DC 20024 eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov

Program Performance Summary Report

To: Authorizing Official/Board Chairperson

Mr. Dave O'Dell

Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation

215 South Barnes Avenue

Springfield, MO 65802 - 2204

From: Responsible HHS Official

Date: 03/21/2022

Dr. Bernadine Futrell

Director, Office of Head Start

From January 17, 2022 to January 21, 2022, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted a Focus Area One (FA1) monitoring review of the Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation Head Start and Early Head Start programs. This report contains information about the recipient's performance and compliance with the requirements of the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) or Public Law 110-134, *Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007*.

The Office of Head Start (OHS) would like to thank your governing body, policy council, parents, and staff for their engagement in the review process. The FA1 review allows the OHS to understand how programs are progressing in providing services in the 5-year grant cycle. The report includes the performance measures used to understand recipient progress towards program goals. You can use this report to identify where your program was able to describe progress toward implementing program services that promote quality outcomes for children and families. Please contact your Regional Office for guidance should you have any questions or concerns. Your Regional Office will follow up on the content of this report and can work with you to identify resources to support your program's continuous improvement.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE REPORT

Copies of this report will be distributed to the following:

Mr. Clarence Small, Regional Program Manager

Mr. Carl Rosenkranz, Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director

Ms. Kimberly Shinn-Brown, Head Start Director

Ms. Kimberly Shinn-Brown, Early Head Start Director

Glossary of Terms

Opportunity for Continuous Improvement (OCI)	An OCI is identified when the recipient is determined compliant in an area; however, through intentional, continuous improvement strategies, the agency has the opportunity to enhance overall program quality.
Area of Concern (AOC)	An area for which the agency needs to improve performance. These issues should be discussed with the recipient's Regional Office of Head Start for possible technical assistance.
Area of Noncompliance (ANC)	An area for which the agency is out of compliance with Federal requirements (including but not limited to the Head Start Act or one or more of the regulations) in one or more areas of performance. This status requires a written timeline of correction and possible technical assistance or guidance from the recipient's program specialist. If not corrected within the specified timeline, this status becomes a deficiency.
Deficiency	<p>As defined in the Head Start Act, the term "deficiency" means:</p> <p>(A) a systemic or substantial material failure of an agency in an area of performance that the Secretary determines involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) a threat to the health, safety, or civil rights of children or staff; (ii) a denial to parents of the exercise of their full roles and responsibilities related to program operations; (iii) a failure to comply with standards related to early childhood development and health services, family and community partnerships, or program design and management; (iv) the misuse of funds received under this subchapter; (v) loss of legal status (as determined by the Secretary) or financial viability, loss of permits, debarment from receiving Federal grants or contracts, or the improper use of Federal funds; or (vi) failure to meet any other Federal or State requirement that the agency has shown an unwillingness or inability to correct, after notice from the Secretary, within the period specified; <p>(B) systemic or material failure of the governing body of an agency to fully exercise its legal and fiduciary responsibilities; or</p> <p>(C) an unresolved area of noncompliance.</p>



Program Design and Management

Program Design

The recipient's program design and structure takes into account community strengths and needs.

Program Management

The recipient has an approach for providing effective management and oversight of all program areas and fiduciary responsibilities.

Program Governance

The recipient maintains a formal structure for program governance that includes a governing body, a policy council (or policy committee for delegates), and parent committees.

Program Design and Management Summary

Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation serves low-income families in urban, suburban, and rural communities throughout ten southwestern Missouri counties. The service area includes many communities that are designated as child care deserts, prompting the program to provide primarily center-based services at its 23 sites to meet the needs of each community. Funded to serve 656 Head Start children, the program offers full-day and part-day center-based options as well as home-based services. Additionally, the program provides Early Head Start center-based and home-based options for 274 children and expectant families.

Pandemic-related challenges, including vaccine and mask mandates, negatively impacted the program's ability to recruit and retain qualified staff. With support from the Board and the policy council, the program created a goal to address this issue. Objectives for this goal included increasing staff compensation, providing additional staff support through professional development opportunities, and streamlining the onboarding process. Specific steps to help advance goal progress included completing a wage comparison study; updating human resources procedures; and providing training on active supervision, trauma-informed care, and reflective supervision. The program's efforts contributed to decreased staff turnover during the 2020-2021 program year.



Designing Quality Education and Child Development Program Services

Alignment with School Readiness

The recipient's approach to school readiness aligns with the expectations of receiving schools, the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF), and state early learning standards.

Effective and Intentional Teaching Practices

The recipient has strategies to ensure teaching practices promote progress toward school readiness.

Supporting Teachers in Promoting School Readiness

The recipient has an approach for ensuring teachers are prepared to implement the curriculum and support children's progress toward school readiness.

Home-based Program Services

The recipient has strategies to ensure home-based program services help parents to provide high-quality learning experiences.

Education and Child Development Services Summary

Ozarks Area Community Action Agency supported parents as their children's first teachers and developed program goals to engage them in their child's education. For example, one objective focused on providing ongoing communication with families about their children's development and creating educational goals based on their strengths, needs, and interests. Additional objectives included encouraging parent-child activities in the home and increasing participation in transition planning for kindergarten. Home-based families were included in home visit lesson planning and encouraged to complete parent-child activities using everyday materials found in the home. These program strategies promoted strong parent-child relationships that fostered each child's growth and development.



Designing Quality Health Program Services

Child Health Status and Care

The recipient has an approach for ensuring the delivery of high-quality health services.

Safety Practices

The recipient implements a process for monitoring and maintaining healthy and safe environments and ensuring all staff have complete background checks.

Health Services Summary

Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation used a community-based approach to help families establish ongoing health care. One of the ways the program leveraged local resources was by contracting with a licensed pediatrician who reviewed children's health outcomes data and offered medical advice when needed. The pediatrician also provided medical oversight for health staff during on-site medical and dental screenings and fluoride applications. Furthermore, the program connected families with local resources offering necessary medical and dental care, including a mobile dental clinic that provided on-site dental examinations and treatment. By engaging local providers, the program supported positive health outcomes for children.

The program promoted the overall mental health of children, families, and staff. To ensure staff had the tools and skills to support children and families, the program supplied training on trauma-informed care and a social-emotional curriculum. In addition, licensed mental health staff helped teachers strengthen their classroom management skills and develop individual child support plans. The mental health staff also completed child assessments and provided counseling to staff and families. Lastly, the program contracted with 12 community mental health professionals who reviewed screening results, provided classroom support, conducted psychological evaluations, and offered individual and family therapy. These supports strengthened the social-emotional development and well-being of children, families, and staff.



Designing Quality Family and Community Engagement Services

Family Well-being

The recipient has an approach for collaborating with families to support family well-being.

Strengthening Parenting and Parent-Child Supports

The recipient has an approach for providing services that strengthen parenting skills.

Family and Community Engagement Services Summary

Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation helped families achieve their goals by connecting them with impactful services. During enrollment, program staff partnered with families to learn about their strengths and needs and assist them in creating attainable goals. An analysis of families' goals indicated the most common areas of interest included parenting techniques, understanding kindergarten readiness, pursuing higher education, and completing financial literacy training. To support families' goal progress, the program capitalized on the recipient's internal resources, which included classes on finding and retaining employment, budgeting and managing money, and strengthening parenting skills. The program also developed an electronic system to maintain current site-specific information about community providers that helped staff link families to resources. This approach ensured families received the resources needed to improve their well-being.



Developing Effective Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) Strategies and Fiscal Infrastructure

Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance

The recipient enrolls children or expectant mothers who are categorically eligible or who meet defined income-eligibility requirements.

Enrollment Verification

The recipient maintains and tracks enrollment for all enrolled participants.

Fiscal Infrastructure, Capacity, and Responsiveness

The recipient's fiscal staff have the qualifications needed to provide oversight of the grant.

The recipient has a budget development and revision process that includes stakeholders and appropriate approvals, and ensures continuous alignment with program design, goals, and objectives.

ERSEA and Fiscal Summary

Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation's ERSEA strategies and systems supported the enrollment of vulnerable children and families. Family advocates/home visitors met with families to help them complete their applications, review enrollment documentation, and determine eligibility. To ensure accurate enrollments, program staff completed multiple data eligibility verifications. In 2021, the program revised its selection criteria to support its trauma-informed care approach by adding points for children who were recently adopted, homeless, or living in foster care placement. These practices ensured the enrollment and participation of eligible children and families most in need of services.

Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation's fiscal systems and infrastructure provided financial oversight of Federal funds and supported program goals. Led by the chief financial officer, the finance office comprised seven staff members, including one dedicated solely to Head Start and Early Head Start invoices. Fiscal staff utilized fund accounting software and followed established policies and procedures to oversee financial operations and reporting. The Head Start management team worked with fiscal staff and the governing bodies to develop a budget that included staffing patterns and the necessary resources to implement program priorities. These collaborative efforts ensured Head Start funds strengthened services for children and families.

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