



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Office of Head Start | 330 C St., SW, 4th Floor, Washington DC 20201 | eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov

January 11, 2021

Western Kentucky University

Re: Grant No. 04CH011269

Dear Head Start Grantee:

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Head Start (OHS) recently conducted a monitoring review of your program. The attached report contains information about your agency's performance and compliance with the requirements of the Head Start Program Performance Standards, Public Law 110-134, Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, and other applicable regulations.

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.

If the report has findings the corrective action period will begin 72 hours from the time this email was sent.

Sincerely,

OHS Monitoring Team



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

Ms. Laura M. Hagan

Western Kentucky University

1906 College Heights Blvd

Tias #11031

Bowling Green, KY 42101 - 1000

From: Responsible HHS Official

Date: 01/08/2021

Dr. Deborah Bergeron

Director, Office of Head Start

From December 7, 2020 to December 11, 2020, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted a Focus Area One (FA1) monitoring review of the Western Kentucky University Head Start program. This report contains information about the grantee'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 grantee 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

Ms. Heather Wanderski, Acting Regional Program Manager

Mr. James Christopher Watkins, Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director

Ms. Thelma Jackson, Head Start Director

Glossary of Terms

Opportunity for Continuous Improvement (OCI)	<p>An OCI is identified when the grantee is determined compliant in an area; however, through intentional, continuous improvement strategies, the agency has the opportunity to enhance overall program quality.</p>
Area of Concern (AOC)	<p>An area for which the agency needs to improve performance. These issues should be discussed with the grantee's Regional Office of Head Start for possible technical assistance.</p>
Area of Noncompliance (ANC)	<p>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 grantee's program specialist. If not corrected within the specified timeline, this status becomes a deficiency.</p>
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, Management, and Quality Improvement

Program Design

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

Program Management and Quality Improvement

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

Program Governance

The grantee 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, Management, and Quality Improvement Summary

Western Kentucky University Head Start program used community assessment and program data to design, deliver, and monitor services. The service area was a community of 118,000 permanent residents and 20,000 college students from Western Kentucky University (WKU). Data showed many WKU college students were both working and attending school and preferred longer hours of service. To accommodate them, the program located a center that provided full-day Head Start services on the university campus and utilized additional funding sources and fees for service agreements to provide wrap-around care. The service area was also designated a refugee relocation area by the United States Department of State. As a result, many Burmese families, whose first language was Zomi, lived in that area. To better serve these families, the program placed classrooms on the grounds of a Housing Authority apartment complex where many refugee families resided, hired staff who spoke Zomi, and partnered with the WKU Department of Foreign Languages and International Programs for additional language support. The management team and governing bodies used data from a locally designed monitoring tool and ChildPlus to provide program oversight. They reviewed program information during monthly management meetings and at quarterly policy council and Board of Regents meetings to identify strengths, challenges, and areas for continuous program improvement. In response to data showing a need for additional mental health support, the program employed a graduate student, interning with the mental health consultant, to provide an additional 20 hours of service per month. Program data also influenced service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. When spring 2020 child outcomes data showed virtual learning resulted in declining skills, the program decided to return to in-person preschool services in August 2020. Western Kentucky University program's management team and stakeholders used program data and collaborations with the university and community partners to ensure services supported children and families.



Designing Quality Education and Child Development Program Services

Alignment with School Readiness

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

Supporting Teachers in Promoting School Readiness

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

Home-based Program Services

Not Applicable.

Designing Quality Education and Child Development Program Services Summary

Western Kentucky University Head Start program used goals, knowledge of kindergarten expectations, and educational resources to prepare children for the next school setting. The program used the Kentucky School Readiness Goals to create its education plan. This plan included goals to support successful transitions and was approved by the governing board and the policy council annually. Western Kentucky University incorporated its school district's expectations for children's physical and language development, as well as math proficiency, into educational services. The program also used the same child assessment tool, Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG), as local kindergartens used, which resulted in the alignment of child goals and outcomes across Head Start and the receiving schools. TSG data was aggregated and analyzed three times per year and allowed teachers to assess children's progress and provide individualization to support school readiness. This individualized support included responsive services to children with disabilities through full inclusion, modifications, on-site therapy services, and the placement of Western Kentucky University college students in classrooms for added support. Principals and kindergarten teachers visited the Head Start centers to provide family orientation every April and invited families to participate in the Jumpstart program which provided additional kindergarten information and school visits for children and parents. The program leveraged state and local expectations to prepare children for kindergarten.

The program supported education staff as they prepared children for kindergarten. The mental health consultant completed classroom observations at least twice per year and provided feedback and classroom management strategies to the teachers. Although the education coordinator position was vacant for more than a year as a result of the program's hiring processes and a COVID-19 hiring freeze, management team members assumed the responsibilities of supervising and supporting the teachers, providing intensive coaching, and completing the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) observations. Additionally, teaching teams worked through the vacancy to support each other by sharing ideas, discussing TSG observations, relying on experienced teachers' expertise, and preparing progress reports. Consequently, data showed there were no changes to child outcomes data resulting from the vacancy. Teachers received training and support necessary to guide children's individual development.



Designing Quality Health Program Services

Child Health Status and Care

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

Safety Practices

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

Designing Quality Health Program Services Summary

Western Kentucky University program used local resources and the Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) to provide health services to children and families. The component coordinator gathered health data, entered it into ChildPlus, and monitored for expired events and follow-up needs. The program had numerous internal resources to support health care services to families, including the Western Kentucky University program on-site dental clinic and a psychologist who acted as the mental health consultant. Community resources, such as a free medical clinic and public transportation, were also utilized to ensure children and families received services to fit their needs. The program leveraged the HSAC members' expertise to ensure children stayed healthy. The HSAC nurse practitioner completed growth assessments on children and identified a trend of children who were overweight. As a result, the dietician, on the committee, provided information to families about healthy eating habits. Another HSAC member, a child care health consultant from the Health Department on the HSAC who provided information and guidance on COVID-19 to staff and families. The grantee assisted families with access to health care information and services to keep children up to date on a schedule of well-child care.

The program ensured environments were healthy and safe for children and staff. The facilities associate and the teachers completed health and safety checklists of indoor and outdoor facilities, equipment, and materials before children arrived each morning. They notified the Western Kentucky University Maintenance Department of any issues requiring repair or follow-up. Data from the checklists were used to identify trends and were provided to the governing bodies to review and discuss actions for program improvement. Additionally, the facilities associate, the education coordinator, and the Head Start director trained staff on health and safety procedures. Further, the grantee abided by the Standards of Conduct set by both the university and Head Start Program Performance Standards, and all employees received background checks before being hired. The grantee had practices in place to ensure the facilities were safe for children to grow and learn.



Designing Quality Family and Community Engagement Services

Family Well-being

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

Strengthening Parenting and Parent-Child Supports

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

Designing Quality Family and Community Engagement Services Summary

Western Kentucky University program supported family well-being by assessing needs, assisting with goals, and strengthening parenting skills. The component coordinator completed family needs assessments with all families and offered them the opportunity to establish family goals. To improve this process for families, the component coordinator recently received additional training on family partnership agreements and revised the family needs assessment format. These revisions resulted in an 18 percent increase in the number of families who took the optional step of establishing goals for themselves. Responsive parent and family engagement required the program to be mindful of the characteristics of unique populations served, including immigrants, college students, and those experiencing homelessness. With these trends in mind and to support families with their goals, the component coordinator cultivated resources within the Western Kentucky University system and the community. Resources within the university included medical and dental clinics, mental health services, and language services. Some community resources included the local education agencies, social service agencies, shelters, public libraries, local food banks, local churches, the Housing Authority, and community education programs. To improve parenting skills, the program implemented a research-based parenting curriculum and encouraged parents to be involved in their child's education. Parent involvement occurred through home visits, parent-teacher conferences, on-site family engagement activities, and volunteering in the classroom. The program collaborated with families to support well-being and their ability to positively parent their children.



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

Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance

At least 10% of the grantee's total funded enrollment is filled by children eligible for services under IDEA or the grantee has received a waiver.

The grantee enrolls children or pregnant women who are categorically eligible or who meet defined income-eligibility requirements.

Enrollment Verification

The grantee maintains and tracks full enrollment.

Fiscal Infrastructure, Capacity, and Responsiveness

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

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

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

Western Kentucky University maintained full enrollment of eligible children. The component coordinator gathered documentation during enrollment to determine eligibility based on the grantee's selection criteria, which was reviewed annually and updated based on the community assessment. This year, the program revised the selection criteria to prioritize the community's growing number of homeless families. The selection criteria also prioritized children with disabilities to ensure they made up at least ten percent of the total enrollment. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the program had maintained full enrollment, and it continued to serve children virtually or in-person after the pandemic's onset. According to program policies and procedures, the program maintained a waitlist used to fill vacant slots within 30 days. The practices in place resulted in program services being fully utilized by eligible children and families.

Western Kentucky University provided fiscal oversight and a budget development process for its Head Start funding. A fiscal officer from Western Kentucky University Grants Post Awards Division provided direct financial management of the Head Start grant, and a financial manager handled day-to-day operations. The fiscal manager prepared the monthly financial reports documenting real-time expenses, and the fiscal officer reviewed them. This data was provided to the governing board and the policy council for a review and approval at their quarterly meetings. Fiscal policies and oversight yielded a 2020 Federal audit with no findings. The program reviewed allotted funds, actual expenditures, community assessment, self-assessment results, and program goals during the annual budget development process. The governing bodies reviewed proposed budgets, gave feedback, and provided final approval. The two delegate agencies were responsible for budget development of their own allotted amounts under this grant with oversight from the Western Kentucky University. The program had a strong history of fiscal oversight that provided effective management of federal program funds.

----- End of Report -----