

Program Options and Component Services Including Data Analysis

All Head Start components are important, but the efforts to meet the Health, Social Service, and Parent Involvement needs have resulted in placing emphasis on decreasing the number of children and families served by each Family Case Manager. Of the 14 Family Case Managers, all but three (3) have received their S.S.C.B.T. credentials. The training provided to the staff, and emphasis on the positions have proved important as Head Start parents and children appear to be enrolling with more family problems than before or previously recognized. Efforts to serve the "neediest children" and serve more referred children with diagnosed disabilities prior to enrollment have also changed the general make-up of those served. A large number of our families have had involvement with other agencies, and the percentage of grandparents raising children and protective services cases is increasing each year. A greater than average number of children have disabilities, and these families have increased stress and tension as parents cope with their problems. All of the parents state they feel the need for their children to attend a Head Start Center as opposed to home based. All of the parents feel that their children need to be in an "educational" setting, and many are surprised at the comprehensive nature of our program and the emphasis on parent education and involvement. A component and topical breakdown of component service emphasis and decision making follows.

Family Education: Approximately 376 Head Start adult family members of children currently enrolled have attained a high school diploma or GED. The literacy level of the parents is being considered in producing parent education documents, activities, and written materials. Most of the parents have not been exposed to a preschool classroom or volunteered in a community organization, and need training in how to use their skills with the staff and children. Although literacy and adult education has been emphasized for some time, one-on-one encouragement is needed and efforts to improve the availability and access to adult education will continue.

Nutrition: There has been an observed lack of parent knowledge in what constitutes a well balanced diet and in cooking skills related to new foods and optimize cooking methods and numerous parents have listed nutrition education as high priority. Parents have been invited to attend training sessions emphasizing nutrition each year. We have encouraged parents to participate in the WIC Outreach Program where it is available, and have included information during home visits where needs have been identified. The presentation "You Are What You Eat" is presented at each parent meeting. Although very few of the Head Start children are currently anemic, a significant number lacked sufficient vitamin - A rich food in their diets. The Asst. Director for Child Health Services works with the school systems in ensuring that the cycle menus continue to include frequent servings of vitamin A and iron-rich foods. Some of the families participate in food banks (churches and community service centers), which are believed to be adequate in our community at this time. A fairly large number of parents qualify for food stamps and are using the service. There has been an increase in children that are over-weight for their height. We counsel parents concerning the potential health problems for over-weight children and give them information concerning nutritional low fat foods for their child. We weigh all children in September and again in February to monitor their weight. Children that are overweight will be followed every two months and nutrition information given to parents. A letter is also sent to parents of overweight children for them to take to their family physician asking them to evaluate the child's nutritional status and make their recommendations.

Some parents feel that being over-weight is normal for their child because it has been a "normal" occurrence in their family. Encouragement and education is needed to try and change some of the myths about being over-weight.

Parent Involvement: Family Case Managers are essential along with the teaching team in ensuring adequate parent involvement in the Head Start Program. The Assistant Director for Parent Involvement will continue in efforts to provide appropriate leadership to the Head Start staff. Every effort will be made to involve parents in decision making, provide training and information on topics that have been identified by parents as being needed, and to recognize and promote parents as the primary educator for their child. This will be accomplished through a variety of means i.e. Parent Committee Meetings, Policy Council Meetings, Parent Day Programs (including special programs for fathers), Newsletters, Parent-Teacher Conferences, Home visits, Parent Information Packets, Resource Library, and including parents at In-Service Training throughout the year. The Parent Involvement component's main objective is to help improve the lives and the well-being of children. We want to see more children grow up with committed and involved fathers in their lives. We will strive to provide information and training to help fathers, mothers, kids and everyone to know that fathers play an irreplaceable role in the lives of their children.

Medical: Health care services for children in our seven (7) county area has improved since providers have been assigned to children enrolled in TennCare. The problem still exists for families who do not qualify for TennCare and cannot afford to pay premiums for health insurance through their employment. At times it becomes a challenge to help the Spanish population in developing a medical home since health insurance many times is impossible to attain. Dental services for children with TennCare have improved considerably since more dentists are contracting with TennCare. There has been a significant increase in the number of dentists who accept TennCare in our area. There are at least two (2) or more dentists now accepting TennCare in five (5) of the counties we service and one (1) dentist in Henderson and Counties who accept TennCare.

Housing: Many Head Start parents state their housing is not desirable or adequate. Referrals will continue to be made to the Human Resource Agency which has the Weatherization Assistance Program, Homeless Assistance, LIHEAP, and Emergency Services Program when it appears parents might qualify.

Career Development: Our Agency will continue in its efforts to employ qualified Head Start parents and to provide training leading up to CDA credentials, SSCBT credentials, or college degrees for staff. Currently, all of this Program's teachers possess a CDA and all but three (3) of our 14 Family Case Managers possess a SSCBT. Two (2) Family Case Managers have started SSCBT classes. The third Family Case Manager will begin classes during the 2007-2008 program year as they are offered. As of September 2003 this program meets the mandate issued in the Head Start Act stating that 50% of all Head Start Teachers must possess an Associate in Early Childhood Degree. Eighteen (18) of this Program's 31 teachers and 4 teacher assistants currently meet the mandated requirements. Additional teachers and teacher assistants are also currently working toward an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education. Teachers and teacher assistants are encouraged to take college course to renew CDA certification as opposed to obtaining CEU's.

A need to provide more direct instruction on our program goals and procedures has been noted, and increased staff training is being emphasized at the Agency level, using both consultants and key staff.

Disabilities/Mental Health: Family and child needs related to Head Start family problems and needs have increased. Better information management and tracking should allow for improved services. Both disabilities and mental health areas are identified for increased training emphasis, along with general "classroom management" which must be excellent in dealing with our clients. Mental Health Consultants are taking an active role in parent/staff conferences of children who have previously been identified by Mental Health Consultants during Mental Health Classroom observations. Mental Health Consultants in Henderson and Chester County have agreed to come to the classroom and provide counseling to children whose behavior is disrupting the classroom and where they are having problems functioning within the group. These services would be provided with the parents' consent and presence when possible. This active role has increased the parents' cooperation in following through with the Mental Health Consultants recommendations.

SOCIAL SERVICES

22% of our Head Start Primary adult members have an educational level less than a High School diploma. 376 primary adult members have a High School Diploma or GED. In program year 06-07 18% of primary adult family members had some type of college training or Degree compared to the previous program year having 15%. The number of High School Graduates has dropped due to parents seeking higher education than a high school diploma. It still holds true that many jobs now require a High School Diploma or GED to be employed. The Head Start program has paid for parent's GED testing fees to assist parents in receiving their GED. Our Head Start families still receive opportunities from our Head Start program to make a change in their educational and employment status. To assist our program in encouraging family members to continue their education our Head Start program still hold partnerships agreements with agencies such as ABE programs, Libraries, etc. Our Family Case Managers have referred several family members for job opportunities. The coming program year we will provide more opportunities and encouragement to family members in assisting them in working towards a GED or working towards a higher educational level. This will be done by linking family members to various trainings, and agencies that can provide educational services to adults.

Labor and Unemployment

Tennessee non-seasonal unemployment in November 2006 was 4.8%. November 2005 it was at 5.6%, indicating a slight decrease compared to last year. The United States is 4.3%. Our seven county areas that we serve had a range of 5.6% in Chester County to 8.1% in Haywood County. Our program will be expecting to provide job search assistance for these counties in the coming program year by direct or referral services as in the past. Unemployed parents are encouraged to seek employment as a family goal when possible.

Single Parent Families

Women head the overwhelming majority, more than 90%, of single-parent households. Single women are almost 100% more likely to live in poverty than single men. A high number of our Head Start children live in single parent households. Head Start single parents that are employed, work at local industries in the counties that they live or in the surrounding counties. Even in the work force many single parents still have a need for financial assistance. We are finding that many of our former Head Start families are no longer income eligible for our Head Start program although their need for Head Start services continues even more than before to keep them working towards self sufficiency. Our Head Start families have received services ranging from GED classes, emergency assistance, employment, housing assistance and parenting classes have been made to assist in providing opportunities for our Head Start families. Additional ongoing follow-ups and referrals are being made to encourage and assist families in reaching their goals. Parents receive a variety of parent educational training that can assist single parents in dealing with day to day stress. Trainings range from parenting skills, mental wellness and to various community resources that can assist single parents as well as all parents in meeting their needs. This coming program year, the Family and Community Partnerships component will seek out and partner with agencies

that can provide support in meeting needs of single parents on a broader scale in providing stress management, child support assistance, healthy marriages, fatherhood and financial assistance.

Literacy: The Southwest HRA Head Start Program has partnership agreements with the Seven county LEA'S to provide literacy services for our Head Start families. In addition to literacy services, transition services have been enhanced through these partnerships by each LEA providing services such as registration dates and information needed to enroll a child for Kindergarten. The coming program year parents and their child will be given a date that they will be invited to attend a Kindergarten class as a field trip or attend a Kindergarten Open House held at night to receive information about Kindergarten. These partnerships have provided for school representatives to attend Parent Committee Meetings to educate and prepare parents for transition into the local school systems. These services have also prepared and involved children in transition experiences. Our Head Start Program has enhanced literacy services to our Head Start Program by providing book bags for our Head Start children. Book bags have provided parent and child togetherness time as well as an educational learning experience. Our surveys from parents have shown that parents are pleased with this service and they are utilizing these services to prepare their children for transition into the local school system. The book bag has also provided for appropriate books to be circulated into the homes of our Head Start families. Our book bags now have flannel board stories, wooden clocks, and puzzles as part of the book bag activities for the parent and child to use home. The partnership we have established with the WLJT-TV, a local television station, provide literacy services for our children through a partnership established with the county Libraries. This new project will be called Ready to Lead in Literacy. Library representatives will be visiting the classrooms to provide child literacy activities. Children who participate will receive free books. Our partnership agreements with our seven (7) county libraries still exist. Library representatives have presented workshops on the importance of reading to a child. The partnerships that have been formed with WLJT-TV and the Libraries in our communities will assist in strengthening collaboration between Head Start and our community Libraries. Family members have also been encouraged to apply for a library card, and have been informed of the additional services offered by their county libraries. Our Head Start program will continue to provide the Ready to Lead in Literacy sessions that teaches parents how to use television as an effective teaching tool, along with teaching how to chose related songs, crafts activities, and a book that would relate back to the TV series. This partnership has provided for all Head Start Children to leave the Head Start Program with at least one child appropriate book. Our Head Start Literacy services have provided for additional partnerships with community programs such as the Even Start Program. In past years, our Even Start Program in McNairy County has provided our Head Start program with parent trainings and books for the children.

Our Head Start program has also had an influx of Hispanic/Latino families living within the seven (7) county service areas. We now have a bilingual specialist who assists in translating for the Hispanic/Latino families that we serve, along with formatting written materials from English to Spanish.