



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. Asalia Casares

Kids Are First, Inc

404 Pena St

Carrizo Springs, TX 78834 - 3216

From: Responsible HHS Official

Date: 02/10/2022

Dr. Bernadine Futrell

Director, Office of Head Start

From January 10, 2022 to January 14, 2022, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted a Focus Area One (FA1) monitoring review of the Kids Are First, Inc 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. Kenneth Gilbert, Regional Program Manager

Mr. Aniceto Colunga, Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director

Mr. Aniceto Colunga, Head Start Director

Mr. Aniceto Colunga, Early Head Start Director

Glossary of Terms

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| 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

Kids Are First, Inc. is funded to serve 642 Head Start and Early Head Start children in the southern part of Texas, just miles from the U.S.-Mexico border. The program provides center-based services at seven locations across four counties. The majority of enrolled families are bilingual and speak Spanish as their primary language.

The leadership team valued staff relationships with enrolled families and leveraged those connections to strengthen the program's staffing model. Due to its rural location, the program often had difficulty recruiting qualified employees. To improve the candidate pool, staff members began encouraging parents to go to school to obtain the proper credentials to work within the program. Using professional development funds, the recipient paid for the training parents needed to meet the staffing requirements. As a result, parents with solid ties to the program were hired for various educational positions. At one center, 50 percent of the staff were formerly enrolled parents. Leadership creatively increased the program's employee base by encouraging parents to become Head Start workers.



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

Not Applicable.

Education and Child Development Services Summary

Kids Are First, Inc. continued to meet the educational needs of children during the pandemic. Management staff realized they would need additional support to initiate education services online for families. In response, the recipient purchased the virtual companion to the existing curriculum and trained parents on using the platform. This supplemental computer program allowed parents to upload photos and videos of their children completing educational tasks. Furthermore, the recipient purchased software that allowed families and staff to communicate with ease, strengthening children's academic development through feedback. By providing virtual services, the recipient was able to continue to prioritize education throughout the pandemic.



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

Kids Are First, Inc. partnered with community health representatives to improve services to children and families. The Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) consisted of trusted community members, some with expertise in medicine, dentistry, mental health, and social services. Families felt comfortable with these members due to their longstanding presence in the community. The program benefited from those relationships in that they helped families recognize the importance of staying updated on health needs. The program also identified the needs of the families by utilizing members' extensive knowledge of the service area. Additionally, the HSAC aided the program in creating policies and procedures and was instrumental in creating the reopening protocol during the pandemic. The HSAC helped the program support children and families in obtaining needed health services due to the experience of its long-term members.



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

Kids Are First, Inc. used data from parent surveys to inform decisions about which resources and services to prioritize. Family services staff assisted families throughout the pandemic by providing food and referrals for utility assistance and presenting virtual workshops on safety protocols. Staff also noticed that families were experiencing more stress and mental health issues than before the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, the program hired two more family services staff members to lower the ratio of workers to families in order to provide more intense support. The program also hired an additional mental health consultant who specialized in marriage and family therapy to offer relationship support to families in need. By asking families what they wanted, the program was able to add services that met families' specific needs during the pandemic.



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.

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

Enrollment Verification

The recipient maintains and tracks full 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

Kids Are First, Inc. adjusted its application process during the pandemic to keep families and staff safe. The recipient recognized the fear families and staff were experiencing regarding in-person services, particularly during the application and interview process. In response, the recipient offered more online options when applying for enrollment. For example, the recipient created an online application, allowed families to submit documents virtually or through the mail, and conducted interviews via video conferencing or phone. By modifying the application process, the program helped families and staff stay safe.

Kids Are First, Inc. supported the oversight and budgeting of Federal funds. The program leadership team, governing bodies, and fiscal team used data to create a budget that met program needs. After reviewing the effect COVID-19 had on the community, the program budgeted to expand its personnel to help support families and accomplish tasks related to the pandemic. In addition, the recipient used Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act funds to purchase UV light filters for the HVAC systems in center classrooms. The recipient also sought to reduce face-to-face interactions by using funds to acquire additional communication methods, including electronic software applications and electronic marquee signs at each center. The program's fiscal structure ensured the budget supported services that met the needs of children, families, and staff.

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