



The Resilience of Head Start

Supporting Arizona's
Children, Families
and Communities



Arizona Head Start Association

Annual
Report
2021

Head Start: The National Early Education Program

Head Start was founded in 1965 as a national early education program based on the premise that every child, regardless of circumstances at birth, has the ability to reach their full potential. Together, Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) offer comprehensive, multi-generational, community-based programs that provide health, nutrition, and family services to children from birth to age five and pregnant women. Working closely with local communities to identify and meet specific needs, Head Start promotes family health and stability while engaging parents as equal partners in their child's education.

The network of organizations that administer Head Start in Arizona include Tribal governments, local municipalities, non-profit agencies, and school districts. Federal funds are granted to these community-based programs through the Office of Head Start under the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.



Positive Statewide Impact

- Head Start federal funding added \$176,476,969 to Arizona's economy
- Arizona Head Start programs employed 4,732 individuals
- 14,456 children/pregnant women and 13,074 families served
- 10,075 parents employed, in school or job training
- 548 homeless families served; 117 acquired housing

2021 Arizona Head Start/EHS at a Glance

- 21 Head Start programs
- 23 Early Head Start programs
- 3 Migrant and Seasonal HS/EHS programs
- 14,334 cumulative children served
- 122 EHS pregnant women
- 9,779 Head Start preschool children (3-5 years)
- 3,763 Early Head Start children (birth-3 years)
- 968 center-based classes (8 double session)
- 459 children received transportation services

In addition to membership dues, funding for AZHSA studies, projects and training is provided by the Arizona Head Start Collaboration Office through a grant from the Administration for Children and Families. The Arizona Head Start Association has prepared this annual report. Development, production and distribution were supported in part by funds from the Arizona Head Start State Collaboration Office.

"I think the flexibility of this program to accommodate changing times and changing demands has been one of its innate strengths. It has not been a dormant, frozen, static program. It is a living program... And this is the kind of thing that we need to nurture in the future." -President Jimmy Carter

Arizona Head Start Association

Led by a Director and volunteer Executive Committee, the Arizona Head Start Association (AZHSA) was created to empower the coalition of organizations that provide Head Start programs. AZHSA is the driving force behind Head Start's statewide initiatives across organizational, governmental, and community levels. Focused on advocacy, collaboration, and education, we strengthen and enhance the work of our member agencies and partners through four comprehensive committees. Whether developing agreements with key partners, collaborating on critical issues, driving program excellence, or promoting professional development, these committees keep AZHSA at the forefront of statewide leadership.

Our Mission

Advocate for the needs of Head Start children and their families

Act as a liaison with other public and private agencies that support the educational, health, and social service needs of young children and their families

Provide a forum for discussing statewide, regional, and national issues

Develop statewide collaborative efforts that strengthen the delivery of services to children and families

Provide a communication link and unified voice to statewide, regional, and national stakeholders



Jessica Rivera-García



Eve Del Real



Shandeen Gomez



Patricia Kirkland

Not Pictured:
Jennifer Robinson

AZHSA Leadership 2020-21

Director: Moises Gallegos/Jessica Rivera-García

Executive Committee:

Eve Del Real, President

Amy Corriveau/Patricia Kirkland, Vice-President

Jennifer Robinson, Secretary

Natalie Alvarez/Shandeen Gomez, Treasurer

AZHSA Committees and Leaders:

Disabilities & Mental Health

Ana Herron-Valenzuela, Chair; Rosemary Sigala, Vice-Chair

Early Childhood Development

Alexis Horne, Chair; Leonor Moreno-Lundholm, Vice-Chair

Integrated Health & Safety

Carolyn Willmer, Chair; Marcia Archer, Vice-Chair

Parent, Family, and Community Engagement

Jessica Rivera-García, Chair, Cinthia Moreno, Vice-Chair



A Message from our Director

AZHSA Members and Friends,

It is with great pride that we present the 2021 AZHSA Annual Report, a summary of remarkable achievement in the face of unprecedented challenges. We hope that you feel the resilient spirit of Head Start on every page. At the same time, annual PIR statistics and brief narratives cannot begin to capture the dedication of our parents and staff, working together to overcome every obstacle.

Across the nation, those living in poverty and vulnerable populations have endured the most profound hardships and setbacks in economic security during this global crisis. Arizona is no exception. AZHSA's value as a networking forum took on a new meaning as our members came together to share resources, challenges, concerns, and best practices. Our committees provided a source of trusted leadership, supporting members through the constant balancing act between service delivery and pandemic safety protocols. At the same, AZHSA leaders continued to address far-reaching state objectives, moving forward on strategies and action plans guided by the newly released Head Start State Collaboration Office 2020-2026 Strategic Plan.

As the work of this program year concludes and another begins, we want to thank Arizona's Head Start staff for their tireless efforts in extraordinary circumstances. Many of them were experiencing the same stressful situations as the families they were serving. Appreciation also goes out to every individual and organization whose open-hearted generosity expanded the support that our programs were able to offer during an extended period of increased need. We are grateful for the vision of our leaders and governance, the dedication of our professional consultants, and the soul of Head Start—our courageous parents.

Now more than ever before, the proven success of Head Start's two-generation support for children, families, and communities provides a national model for renewal and transformation. In the work of ensuring that all of Arizona's children have the same opportunity for success in school and life, we are truly "in it together."

Jessica Rivera-García

Jessica Rivera-García, Director
Arizona Head Start Association

"For millions of families, Head Start has been a lifeline.
And for millions of kids, it's been the start of a better life."

- President Barack Obama

Dynamic State and National Partnerships

The Arizona Department of Education's Early Childhood Education unit administers the state's federal Head Start Collaboration grant, establishing links between Head Start, child care, social welfare, health and state-funded preschool programs, and K-12 education. AZHSA works closely with Arizona's Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO) to support strategic planning and carry out statewide initiatives.

Collaborating with community partners, non-profit organizations, private child care providers, and state agencies, AZHSA strengthens the early childhood workforce and improves both quality and delivery of services. We also bring the voice of Head Start to committees for key statewide stakeholders such as First Things First, Arizona's Child Care administration, and the Arizona Early Childhood Alliance (AZECA). Progress is accelerated and efforts are strengthened when partners identify new collaborative allies and work together to create effective solutions.

AZHSA maintains equally strong ties to the National Head Start Association (NHSA), communicating frequently on federal-level activities, budget, monitoring, resources, technical assistance, and coordination of efforts. Our presence at NHSA's Fall Leadership Institute in Washington, D.C. offers unique opportunities to voice the concerns and importance of the Arizona Head Start community, meet with members of Congress, engage in relevant discussions, and participate in professional development opportunities including advocacy and media training.

The Transformative Power of Head Start

Over the decades, millions of families who were struggling with poverty and other socioeconomic challenges have found life-changing support through Head Start programs. Head Start's two-generation model supports and guides families in achieving their goals for financial stability and growth through education and employment.

Primary Types of Eligibility

Families with income at/below 100% of federal poverty line

Recipients of public assistance such as TANF or SSI

Children in foster care

Children/families experiencing homelessness

Children/families qualifying based on other types of need

Families with income between 100-130% of federal poverty line



“The people who are drawn to the Head Start program are not just working a job. They are incredibly dedicated teachers who take the time to know and understand the children and build strong relationships with parents and families.” -Samanta A.

Resilience in action

- 109,618 home visits
- 2,595 all-day, full-year slots available for working parents
- 3,424 behavioral screenings for newly enrolled children
- 8,258 children up to date on all screenings
- 5,505 children received preventative dental care
- 738 children received treatment for chronic health condition
- 10,298 families received services promoting family outcomes
- 4,764 families received crisis/emergency services (food, clothing, shelter)
- 4,952 fathers involved in child’s educational experiences

Dual Language Support

- 5,479 children from homes where English is not primary language
- 1,329 staff who are proficient in one/more languages in addition to English

Collaborative Community Partnerships

- 93 formal agreements with child care partners (EHS-CCP)
- 253 Local Education Agency (LEA) agreements

Head Start Volunteers

- 5,950 volunteers serve Head Start/EHS
- 4,920 are current or former HS parents

Arizona’s Critical Need for the Head Start Advantage

When the Arizona Head Start State Collaboration Office published its Strategic Plan for 2020-2026, the report cited a number of daunting statistics:

- Arizona met just 3 of the 10 quality indicators for early childhood education according to a 2019 report by the National Institute for Early Education.
- Of the 520,556 young children under the age of 6 in Arizona, 26% are living in poverty.
- Only 22% of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in preschool have access to a high-quality early learning setting.
- Of the non-working poor with children under age 5 in Arizona, 71% cite lack of access to adequate care as the reason they are not working.
- Approximately 300,000 children under the age of 6 with parents in the labor force need care but just over 256,000 slots are available—a gap most profoundly felt by those in rural areas, in minority groups, with limited English, or below 200% of the federal poverty level.
- The massive impact of COVID-19 had a significant impact on Arizona’s homeless population, including the fourth-largest increase of homeless people in families with children.

This data shines a bright spotlight on the importance of Arizona’s Head Start programs and the leadership role of AZHSA. Maintaining a focus on statewide issues and strategic planning, HSSCO contracts with AZHSA to carry on the work of Head Start’s collaborative initiatives. Through our committee structure, we provide clarity on challenges, guidance on resources, and direction on Memorandums of Understanding. AZHSA brings attention to issues that need to be addressed on a statewide level and guides HSSCO work when collaboration is required.

The words “working together” are at the very heart of our organization. As we continue to build and strengthen the network of public and private organizations that share our passion and vision, we can meet today’s challenges with creative solutions and ensure an even brighter tomorrow.

Early Childhood Development

AZHSA plays a key role in the continual improvement of early care and education program delivery including professional growth. In collaboration with Arizona's Department of Education (ADE) and other key stakeholders, we assist in the implementation of statewide policies, standards, and tools. AZHSA also works closely with Training and Technical Assistance specialists from Head Start Region 9 to support and grow the Arizona Mentor Network. During the 2020-21 program year, 993 Head Start/EHS education/child development staff received coaching and 210 staff provided coaching through partnerships.

During the 2020-21 academic year, the Early Childhood Development Committee focused on action plans in alignment with HSSCO's objective to increase Head Start's active involvement in supporting and implementing the Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry. This statewide database provides a world of professional development benefits and advantages for Head Start/EHS staff and programs alike:

- Provides visibility as a professional in early childhood services
- Validates levels of professional development and appropriate compensation
- Enables applying for new positions/negotiating salary increases
- Documents learning/training experiences
- Supports planning for future education/career goals
- Offers opportunities for incentives, awards, and scholarships/grants

In addition to promoting Head Start involvement in the Registry, the Committee began intensive research in collaboration with Arizona's Department of Education and HSSCO to resolve issues with the master database including inaccuracies and duplications. One of the key process changes that emerged was a need to simplify and expand administrative access to the Registry database, enabling Head Start/EHS programs to run their own reports and manage staff more effectively. Increased awareness of and participation in the Registry will create a strong foundation for AZHSA to support another HSSCO 5-year plan objective: To annually increase Head Start/EHS staff who are acquiring higher education degrees.

Head Start Staff Profile

- 4,732 total HS/EHS staff/contract employees
- 1,545 preschool teachers/assistant teachers
- 669 EHS staff serving infants/toddlers
- 166 home visitor staff
- 531 family services staff
- 9 child development specialists supporting 43 family care providers

"Since my son has started attending Head Start, he has absolutely blossomed. He went from being a shy and somewhat apprehensive boy to an outspoken, outgoing young man. The teachers are so sweet and supportive and do a truly great job of teaching!"

Summer B.



“Head Start is incredible, it’s awesome, it’s amazing, it’s the foundation for an education and I am living proof of Head Start. I was with the program since I was three and now I’m able to give back to the community.” –Andrea G.



Integrated Health & Safety

Head Start helps children thrive by supporting the entire social-emotional environment with timely screenings, primary and preventative care, immunizations, and treatment for chronic health conditions. During the 2020-21 academic year, our Integrated Health and Safety Committee was deeply involved in sharing effective pandemic responses and practical strategies to support children and families through hardship and rising stress levels. Discussions covered critical topics from the safety protocols needed to reopen classrooms to best practices for staying connected to and supporting families who were not receiving in-person services.

The Committee reviewed HSSCO’s 5-year objectives and focused on establishing methodologies with the greatest potential to positively impact children’s lives. Collecting the latest data and reviewing the tally of outcomes, the Committee questioned the underlying reasons behind the statistics. What specific challenges and obstacles did Head Start staff encounter in their attempts to connect with families? Why were outcomes for some case workers better than others? What best practices have proven most effective in reducing missed healthcare appointments and closing the critical gap between diagnosis and treatment? Based on this inquiry and review process, the Committee identified a system of data collection that provides smaller, more specific units of accountability. Allowing a deeper review than PIR statistics alone can offer, these detailed metrics can create a foundation for continual improvement that can be duplicated across Head Start/EHS programs and supported through coaching, mentoring, and trainings.

Year-End Health Profile Across Programs

In the face of overwhelming delays and obstacles in connecting to healthcare services throughout the pandemic, Head Start/EHS programs remained remarkably successful in supporting parents and families as evidenced by the following key metrics:

- 92% children with health insurance
- 93% children with all possible immunizations or exempt
- 93% children with continuing source of medical care
- 93% children with continuing source of dental care
- 89% pregnant women received prenatal health care

“My daughter is beautiful, smart, clever and funny but she has a difficult time communicating. As a parent you want your child to be accepted for the person they are and you want your child to live a ‘normal’ and happy life. The Early Head Start inclusionary settings have made that a reality. After just a few months, she was already showing improvement in her communication, adaptive, and personal social skills.” -Lindsey C.

Disabilities & Mental Health

Head Start/EHS programs take advantage of the early intervention window so crucial to remediating developmental delays and disabilities. AZHSA has played a leading role in strengthening statewide collaboration between Arizona’s Child Care Administration, Department of Education (ADE), and Early Intervention Program (AZEIP) with the revision and renewal of an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding). Guided by AZHSA’s Disabilities & Mental Health Committee, the MOU’s finalization in April of 2021 culminated 20 months of painstaking evaluation and review.

Key benefits include:

- Strategies for effective identification of children in need of intervention services
- Enhanced cooperation between agencies and programs for a coordinated approach
- Elimination of duplicated effort for increased efficiency
- Definition of collaborative roles and responsibilities for Early Head Start and AZEIP
- Opportunities to raise public awareness of resources for children and families

Evidence-based research strongly supports the value of early childhood mental health consultations in achieving far-reaching positive social and emotional outcomes. Settings with supportive adult relationships can mitigate the psychological effects of trauma and help children learn how to respond to stressors in healthy ways. Partnering with statewide stakeholders, AZHSA assesses and supports training needs for effective Head Start classroom strategies.



Mental Health and Disabilities Services

- 617 staff consultations with mental health professionals
- 1,410 total children with IEP* or IFSP*
- 1,035 Head Start children with IEP or IFSP
- 305 Early Head Start children with IEP or IFSP
- 70 Migrant/Seasonal Program children with IEP or IFSP

*Individualized Education Program (IEP),
Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

“A program like Head Start is important because our
As a former Head Start student and parent, I have seen
of children and helps parents become the first teachers

Parent, Family & Community Engagement

Respected as the very heart of Head Start, parents are involved in governance, program planning, and classroom activities. During the 2020-21 program year, 5,950 volunteers served Head Start programs of which 4,920 were current or former Head Start parents. Parents receive support for personal and family goal-setting along with guidance on creating a stable and healthy home environment. Father engagement is emphasized, and parents have access to educational programs on topics from health literacy and nutrition to parenting.

The focal point of state-level work for our Parent, Family & Community Engagement Committee was the renewal of the Foster Care MOU between HSSCO and Arizona’s Department of Child Safety (DCS). Updating, refining, and expanding the original 2015 MOU is a critical step in supporting the HSSCO objective to increase the number of children in vulnerable populations who are receiving Head Start services. The new MOU dramatically tightens the lines of communication between Head Start and DCS. Key improvements include establishing a DCS liaison for every Head Start program and electronically sharing that database across the statewide DCS office network. The Committee’s ultimate goal is for every AZHSA member to have a dedicated contact for their local Homeless Liaison, DCS office, and school district.

According to the 2021 Head Start PIR report, 2,289 children in vulnerable populations received the benefit of Head Start/EHS services:

- 792 Head Start/EHS Migrant/Seasonal children
- 646 children in foster care
- 251 children referred by Child Welfare Agency
- 600 children experiencing homelessness
- Of 548 homeless families served, 117 acquired housing

Head Start Family Profile

- 13,074 Head Start/EHS families
- 7,107 two-parent families
- 5,967 single parent families
- 943 with advanced or baccalaureate degree
- 3,844 with associate degree, vocational/ some college
- 5,128 with high school diploma/GED
- 3,178 less than high school graduate
- 9,469 at least one parent employed or enrolled in school/job training



children come ready to learn right out of the womb.
and experienced the way Head Start taps into the potential
for their children.” -Marco R.



Arizona Head Start Programs

For programs in Apache, Coconino, Navajo, & Yavapai Counties contact:

G Northern Arizona Council of Governments
(928) 774-9504 • nacog.org EHS/HS

For programs in Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, Pima, & Santa Cruz Counties contact:

G Child-Parent Centers, Inc.
(520) 882-0100 • childparentcenters.org EHS/CCP/HS

For programs in Gila & Pinal Counties contact:

G Pinal Gila Community Child Services, Inc.
(888) 723-7321 • pgccs.org EHS/HS

For programs in La Paz, Mohave, & Yuma Counties contact:

G Western Arizona Council of Governments
(928) 782-1886 • wacog.com EHS/CCP/HS

For programs in Maricopa County contact:

G Catholic Charities Westside Head Start
(623) 486-9868 • CatholicCharitiesAz.org EHS/HS

G Child Crisis Arizona
(602) 889-6165 • childcrisisaz.org EHS

G Chicanos Por La Causa - Early Head Start
(602) 716-0156 • cplc.org EHS/CCP/HS

G City of Phoenix Education Division
(602) 262-4040 • phoenix.gov/humanservices/program/head-start EHS/CCP/HS

G Maricopa County Human Services Early Education Division
(602) 372-3700 • maricopa.gov/3516/Early-Education-Programs EHS/CCP/HS

G Southwest Human Development Head Start
(602) 560-0000 • swhd.org/program/head-start

G Urban Strategies, Early Head Start
602-353-5313 • earlyheadstart.urbanstrategies.us/arizona/

D Alhambra School District Head Start
(602) 246-5155 • alhambraesd.org

D Booker T. Washington Child Development Center, Inc.
(602) 252-4743 • btwchild.org

D Deer Valley Head Start
(623) 445-4991 • dvusd.org

D Fowler Head Start
(623) 474-7260 • fesd.org

D Greater Phoenix Urban League Head Start
(602) 276-9305 • gphxul.org

D Washington Elementary School District
(602) 347-4806 • wedschools.org

For Migrant & Seasonal Program Services contact:

G Chicanos Por La Causa Early Childhood Development
(602) 307-5818 • cplc.org

For Tribal Program Services contact:

G Cocopah Head Start
(928) 627-2811 • cocopah.com

G Colorado River Indian Tribes Head Start
(928) 662-4311 • crit-nsn.gov/critheadstart

G Gila River Indian Community Head Start
(520) 562-6901 • gilariver.org

G Havasupai Head Start
(928) 448-2821 • havasupai-nsn.gov

G Hopi Head Start
(928) 734-3512 • hopi-nsn.gov

G Hualapai Tribe Head Start
(928) 769-2522 • hualapai-nsn.gov

G Navajo Nation Head Start
(928) 871-6902 • navajoheadstart.org

G Pascua Yaqui Head Start
(520) 838-7150 • pascuayaqui-nsn.gov

G Quechan Head Start
(760) 572-0263 • quechantribe.com/departments-head-start.html

G Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Early Childhood Education Center
(480) 362-2200 • www.saltriversschools.org

G San Carlos Apache Tribe Head Start Program
(928) 475-2740 • sancarlosapache.com

G Tohono O'odham Head Start
(520) 383-7800 • tonation-nsn.gov

G White Mountain Apache Tribe Head Start Program
(928) 338-4938 • whitemountainapache.org



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