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Opportunities to Connect: State funding and Head Start

Homelessness is a traumatic experience with long-term consequences, particularly for young children. For young children, various living situations occur, often hiding what is technically being homeless. Some examples would be a child living with their family in a car, motel, emergency shelter, or even sleeping in various locations as parents find places to stay as people take them in.

In 2021, all states received American Rescue Plan- Homeless Children and Youth ARP-HCY dollars. It is strongly encouraged that Head Start programs connect to their local school districts as there could potentially be some funding left that could, if not allocated, help support children 0-5.

What are some potential ideas that LEAs and Head Start can partner in together to support early learners?

- Funding to provide transportation for children from motels or shelters to school
- Ensure that younger siblings are being identified and referred to Head Start programs
- While the HSCO will provide cross-training with all McKinney-Vento liaisons, Head Start programs can cross-train so that all LEAs are familiar and have an established relationship with their local Head Start programs. Click to view the [Florida McKinney-Vento Program District Contact Directory](#).

In addition to these federal funds, the Division of Early Learning has launched a new funding opportunity for ELCs called the *ARP Act Early Learning Discretionary Grant Program – Families Experiencing Homelessness*. Per the Division of Early Learning, the target population is, “unemployed and underemployed families/parents experiencing homelessness, as verified by a DCF-designated lead agency on homelessness, that have children eligible for the SR program and receiving housing assistance in specific areas across the state.” These funds, provided by the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Discretionary Childcare and Development Block Grant Trust Fund in section 53 of Chapter 2023-239, Laws of Florida, will provide over \$10 million to ELCs for the following initiatives, per the Division of Early Learning:

1. Provide funding to ELCs/RCMA to provide outreach materials to the target population and providers to support and market the program.
2. Provide funding to support ELCs/RCMA and providers with offsetting the cost of required background screening and pre-service health and safety training to become childcare staff at the childcare provider that serves the children of unemployed and underemployed families/parents experiencing homelessness and receiving housing assistance.
3. Provide funding for the target population to continue to grow their skill set as childcare staff giving them the opportunity to potentially pursue further training and/or credentialing to become an early learning professional (e.g., lead teacher/teacher). -
4. Provide funding to pay participating providers the difference between the SR provider reimbursement rate and the provider's private pay rate for the enrolled SR children of families experiencing homelessness to further reduce the cost of childcare for homeless families. -
5. Provide funding to pay participating providers the cost of up to six months' salary to individuals employed through this initiative at a wage of \$15/hour.

The HSCO has connected with each ELC to inform them that this work aligns with the work of Head Start programs across the state, and Head Start programs are encouraged to connect to their ELC to take advantage of initiatives this funding opportunity may allow for providers.

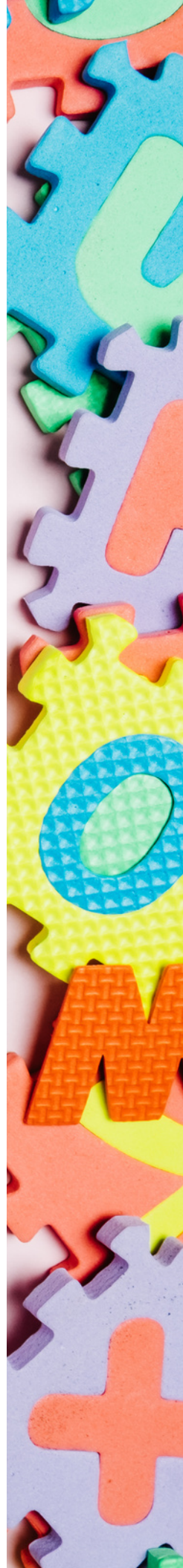
Florida's Head Start Programs and Refugee Services

Florida is home to one of the largest refugee populations, who have children under age six, in the country. According to the DCF website, refugee services include;

- **Refugees** are individuals forced to flee their home country due to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. Refugees are granted status before they arrive in the United States.
- **Cuban/Haitian Entrants** is a term used to describe Cuban and Haitian nationals who enter the United States, are granted parole upon entry, apply for asylum, or are in removal proceedings.
- **Asylees** are persons already in the United States who, due to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country, have been granted asylum by asylum officers or immigration judges in the United States.
- **Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrants (SIV)** are Iraqi and Afghani nationals who worked with the U.S. military and were granted special immigrant status.
- **Certified Victims of Human Trafficking (VOT)** are individuals from foreign countries who, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion, have been forced to perform a commercial sex act or have been subjected to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery

The HSCO and local Head Start programs are meeting with each Refugee task force in the state to build awareness of the work and overlap of work we each do. These task forces are located in Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Miami-Dade, Orlando, Tampa, and West Palm, and they serve the wider area around their counties. The HSCO provides a broad overview of what Head Start is and what it can offer during these meetings, while programs can share specifics on how a case worker can support a family applying to Head Start with enrollment staff.

Supporting the enrollment of these families falls squarely within the priority areas of the OHS to ensure we are capturing our most in-need families.





The Case For Helping all Eligible Families Access Services

According to a recent [Urban Institute](#) report, released in August 2023, immigration-related worries continue to have a negative influence on participation in public benefit programs. Because of concerns about their green card status, 25% of mixed-immigrant status families questioned in 2022 indicated avoiding applying for services such as SNAP, Medicaid, or housing subsidies. This illustrates that despite the Biden administration's progress in implementing beneficial policies - such as the 2022 public charge rule that declares that participation in SNAP, Medicaid, and housing programs will not affect certain noncitizens' permanent residency applications - many eligible families are still deterred by fear, misinformation, and lack of trust, leading to underutilization of available benefits.

Head Start programs are essential here, as family engagement staff are critical to help demystify the process for families. They can also potentially provide linguistic support to help families access services and remove barriers, which is a consistent concern for families. Community partnerships are a cornerstone of all Head Start programs, and Head Start programs are anti-hunger and nutrition stakeholders as all programs serve food insecure families. Head Start can directly support families in combatting fear and misinformation, and ensure that these families, who can legally access these services, are receiving the benefits they are eligible for.



National Literacy Month

September is National Literacy Month, and nothing is more important than building a lifelong love of learning for long-term success. National Literacy Month celebrates and highlights the importance and benefits of literacy for children's development, social and emotional health, and long-term success in school and life. While all children are learning emergent literacy skills, it is critical to pay special attention to children who may be struggling and ensure teachers know how to develop these skills to best understand how to plan and meet their needs. Be sure to view the NCEDTL resources to help support staff as they build the foundation for literacy.

Learn about **Alphabet Knowledge and Early Learning** and the companion document **Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing: Highly Individualized Teaching Supplement** to help support children with disabilities and dual language learners.



Upcoming Events

FHSA Affiliate Director Call

The FHSA Affiliate Director Call will be held on October 3rd from 10:30-11:30 with special guest DEL Chancellor Cari Miller

Statewide Infant Toddler Meetings

Statewide Infant and Toddler Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month. The remaining 2023 dates are **10/10**, **11/14** and **12/12**. EHS leadership are invited to attend via Teams at:

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Annual Conference | FLAEEYC

The FLAEEYC annual conference will take place October 11 - 15, 2023, in Orlando, FL. Each year, FLAEEYC hosts Florida's premier Early Childhood Education Annual Conference that brings its members and other individuals within the ECE community together.

For more information about the conference and registration please visit:

[Annual Conference | FLAEEYC](#)

NBCDI 2023 National Conference | NBCDI

The National Black Child Development Institute National Conference Unleash the Promise and Genius of Black Children and Families will take place October 13th-15th, 2023, in Charlotte, NC.

For more information about the conference and registration please visit:

[NNBCDI 2023 National Conference | NBCDI](#)

FHSA Leadership Training & Annual Awards Luncheon

The Florida Head Start Association Leadership Training and Awards Luncheon will take place October 25th-27th, 2023, in Cape Coral, FL.

For more information about the conference and registration please visit:

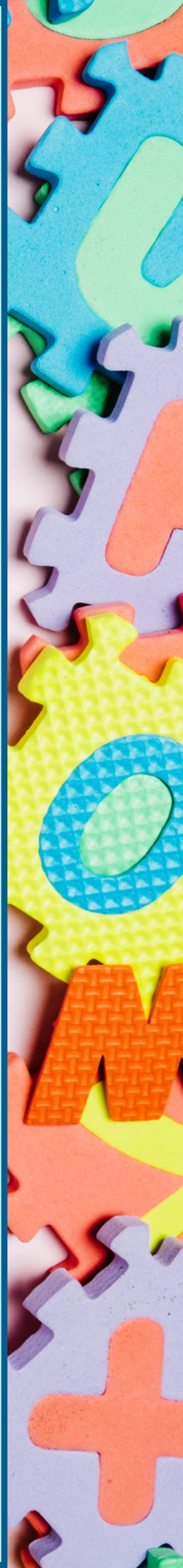
[FHSA Leadership Training & Annual Awards Luncheon](#)

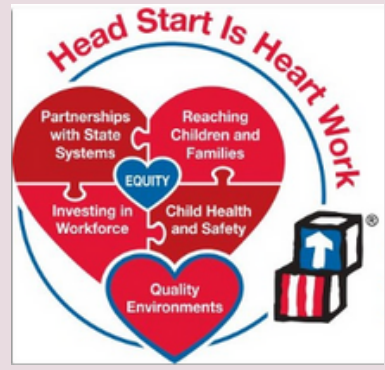
Parent and Family Engagement Conference | NHSA

The annual Parent and Family Engagement Conference hosted by the National Head Start Association will take place December 4 - 7, 2023 in New Orleans, Louisiana. NHSA's annual Parent and Family Engagement Conference is the only national event that focuses on how Head Start parents, families, and staff can best partner to promote both family engagement and children's development.

For more information about the conference and registration please visit:

[Parent and Family Engagement Conference - NHSA](#)





Happy Head Start Awareness Month



You can reach out to the Head Start Collaboration Director at any time at:
Kimberly.Singer@del.fldoe.org



You can now catch up with the Office of Head Start in a new way. Follow them on their new Instagram account at [@headstartgov](https://www.instagram.com/headstartgov) to stay updated.