



HHS Announces Additional Centers of Excellence in Early Childhood



The Centers of Excellence program was established in the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. Ten additional Centers of Excellence are being designated for a period of up to five years. Applicants had to be nominated by their Governor for quality services in Head Start and Early Head Start. Among these Centers are the first American Indian Alaska Native (AIAN) Head Start program, the first Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program (MSHS), and the first Head Start program in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to be designated agencies with exemplary accomplishments.

Central California Migrant Head Start – Modesto, CA

This grantee has grown from its early days of serving 70 children to now serving almost 5,000 children and families in seven counties. This agency is engaged in exemplary local, ongoing monitoring and program self-assessment of its services and employees. As a result of these efforts, the agency is engaged in pursuit of innovative ways and times to deliver professional development to education staff. One approach supported in this agency is the Mentor Teacher Project utilizing coaching.

Mid-Iowa Community Action, Inc. – Marshalltown, IA

This grantee demonstrates excellence through enhanced services for dual language learners through targeted, ongoing program-wide professional development and monitoring of effective teaching practices. In keeping with this area of excellence, Mid-Iowa CAA, Inc. continues to establish and/or revise policies and procedures to better support children who are dual language learners, and their families.

Project NOW, Inc. – Rock Island, IL

Over nearly 40 years, Project NOW has built a local reputation upon the provision of comprehensive, high quality services by meeting or exceeding Head Start Program Performance Standards. This agency is engaged in exemplary partnerships, evidenced through formal, written agreements at the local and state levels to better serve low income children and families.

Pueblo Laguna, Department of Education – Laguna, NM

This AI/AN grantee is known for excellence in utilization of the Touchpoints parent-staff interaction/reflection approaches; family support and financial literacy services, and enhancing the K'awaika Keres language and culture experiences for children and families.

Board of Regents, obo University of Nevada – Reno, NV

Everyday excellence in this grantee is focused on the competencies of staff in supporting high quality services to Early Head Start children and families with a focus on children's social-emotional development as the foundation for comprehensive school readiness. Board of Regents, Reno is also engaged in peer mentor-coaching to enhance professional development.

Westchester Community Opportunity Program (WestCOP), Inc. – Elmsford, NY

Westchester Community Opportunity Program serves as an exemplary model of local partnerships, through the Early Step Forward model, with special emphasis on approaches to mental health services that promote healthy social-emotional development in preschool children and to support overall school readiness and achievement. In addition, this agency is an active partner in the Early Childhood Network, Westchester's System of Care to provide strength-based, culturally competent, comprehensive services for children and families. WestCOP participates in the Childhood Network in seven communities.

Community Action Project of Tulsa County (CAP) – Tulsa, OK

This agency continues to be engaged in a significant number of partnerships to increase the number of children served. Highlights of their exemplary work include the ability to leverage other funds and to contribute targeted program efforts toward enhancing the school readiness of young children – including attention to parent and family factors such as maternal health and the formation of strong parent-child relationships.

Little Dixie Community Action – Hugo, OK

Throughout its long history, Little Dixie has worked to improve and expand services to economically disadvantaged families in three counties of southeast Oklahoma. Because of the serious nature of economic conditions, Little Dixie is focused on promoting the self-sufficiency of the families it serves. In order to best and most fully provide the services needed by children and families, Little Dixie maintains nearly 20 active partnerships and other grant programs including AmeriCorps, Smart Start Oklahoma, Early Reading First, and others.

Diocese of Mayaguez – Mayaguez, PR

This grantee serves Head Start and Early Head Start children as well as pregnant women. They also serve agricultural workers in the west and southwest of Puerto Rico. The areas of excellence are nutrition services, services to pregnant women, responsible fatherhood, and services to children with disabilities.

City of Chattanooga, Human Services – Chattanooga, TN

This grantee is heavily focused on improving the school readiness and early academic success of the children served. The goal of continuous improvement in this area is being addressed through professional development, quality learning environments, and promoting quality adult-child interactions.

