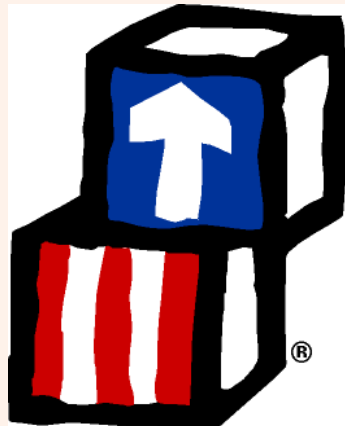


Community Action Resource
& Development, Inc.
Head Start/Early Head Start
Annual Report 2019-20



Helping People.
Changing Lives.

Community Action Resource and Development's mission is to bring together resources to reduce poverty, revitalize low-income communities, and empower low-income people to attain the skills, education, and opportunities to become self-sufficient.



Administrative office:
P.O. Box 947
Claremore, OK 74018
918.341.5000 x 366
www.cardheadstart.com

Karol May
Executive Director

Barbara Hankins
Head Start/Early Head Start Director

The year of 2019-2020 started as most other years, and things were rocking along swimmingly, and then, there was a **pandemic**. The Annual report reflects our journey during initial stages of the crisis.

Like the majority of programs, CARD did not anticipate such a radical upheaval of our world. As late as early March, the state leaders still believed that this little virus was not significant and surely couldn't reach our little corner of the world. Yet, by late February some CARD leadership were talking about it. It seemed so unreal.

And why wouldn't it seem unreal? A pandemic of such proportion had not happened within most of our lifetimes. In a world where there is a great degree of exaggeration, the virus was discounted by many. March was to usher in a period of uncertainty. All public schools from Pre-K to medical schools dismissed for spring break and did not return for many months. At this writing, some have still not yet returned to in person classes.

Faced with the knowledge that CARD could not safely operate classrooms, all classroom services ceased during spring break. Management worked to create a plan for families to receive services via virtual means, and focused on connecting families with resources amidst shortages of necessary items such as bread, milk, formula, diapers, wipes, and cleaning supplies. CARD leadership shifted tasks to their home offices during the early weeks of the pandemic. Research, zoom meetings to tease out procedures for keeping staff, parents and families safe, and developing systems for thinking through pandemic-related issues happened from one's couch or kitchen table, while one's children, spouse, and pets distracted or "helped."

Foremost in our minds was always, "How do we serve? How do we keep everyone safe? How do we support them when things feel overwhelming?" How do we bring children back and keep everyone safe?

The program shifted emphasis. School readiness became more focused on emotional support and mental health support for families, and ensuring families had basic necessities. Management focused on listening carefully to staff, and viewing everything through a pandemic lens. . As the summer progressed, CARD worked on the "nuts and bolts" of service during a pandemic. Sourcing needed supplies like cleansers, diapers, masks, and gloves was a challenge, as well as creating plans in a world where the information constantly changed!



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Home sewers made hundreds of masks and used t-shirt strips for the elastic, because there was no elastic in the stores. Educating staff on new procedures and the necessity of a high level of diligence in hygiene, etc. was critical. The program checked in with families asking, “How are you doing? What do you need? Are you working and desperately NEED childcare? What do you think would help you feel comfortable sending your baby back to school? “

And we listened, and researched, and explained, and listened. And we watched. What were public schools going to do in August? What would this mean for our staff who have children in the public schools? How will we manage the exposures, isolations, quarantines, etc.? How does one staff during a pandemic?

How can we make our environments safer? What about fresh air? When we are doing SO MUCH, what are the barriers and can they be overcome?



Investments in outdoor environments, air quality improvements, cleaning foggers and other strategies to increase the safety followed, as did increasing the technology capacity of the program. Many families opted for only virtual services. Families who have loved ones in a high risk category often chose virtual services, knowing that protecting the vulnerable had to be their first priority. Wireless devices, hot spots, and other technology took on an importance as never before. All management meetings, parent training, and a host of other previously “in-person” activities became “ZOOM events.”

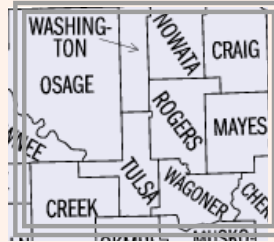
All areas of the program were impacted, AND systems that we would have previously thought efficient and effective were found to be cumbersome and too slow during a pandemic. Priorities and methodologies changed, sometimes evolving so rapidly that one had to remember to just “breathe.” Breathe deeply, exhale slowly, calm the brain and drink some water. We can do this!

And “doing this” has been what we have been doing, as have our families!

Where are we?

Geographic Service Area

CARD Head Start/EHS services areas are: **Washington, Nowata, Rogers, Mayes, Wagoner** counties and **Broken Arrow School district (Tulsa county).**



Enrollment & Number Served

HS funded for 574; **served: 526**

EHS-funded for 143; **served: 206**

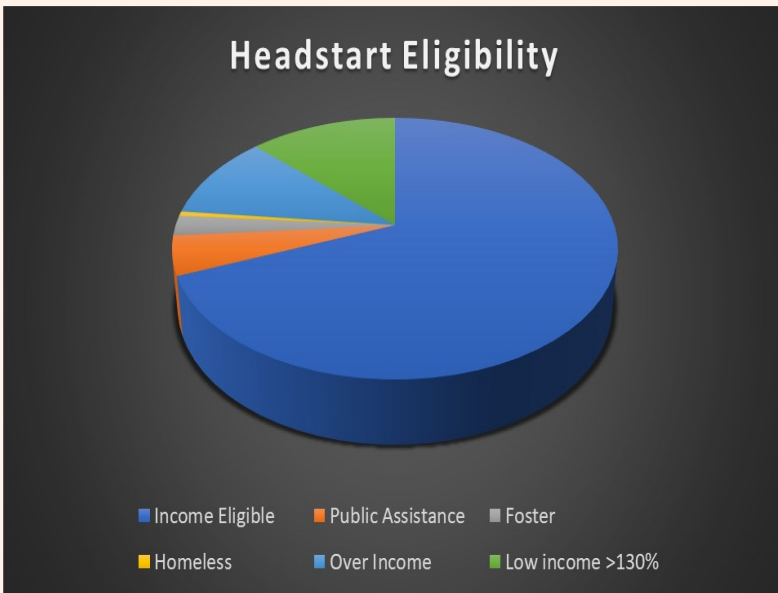
Total number served: 732 % eligible =86%

Avg. monthly enrollment as a percentage of funded enrollment for HS

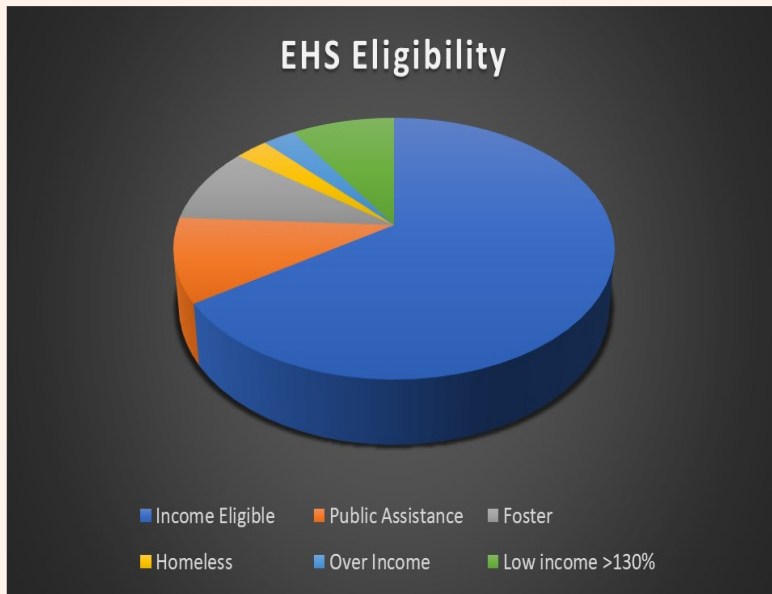
Included in enrollment are children with special needs (on an IFSP or IEP), of which the program served over 10% of the funded enrollment.

Program options: EHS provides home based services in BA, Wagoner, Mayes & Rogers counties, and in Washington/Nowata counties as an option change only. Additionally, extended day/year services are offered at all EHS sites except Wagoner, and selected HS sites based upon the family needs assessments.

County	Town/Site name	# HS classrooms	# EHS
Wagoner	Coweta	2	
	Porter	2	
	Wagoner	2	1
Mayes	Locust Grove	2	
	Pryor Central	2	1
	Pryor South	0	2
Rogers	Catoosa Spunky	2	2
	Catoosa Public	5	
	Chelsea	1	
	Claremore	2	
Tulsa	BA - Southside	9	1
	BA ELC		5
Nowata	Nowata	2	
Washington	Bartlesville East	2	
	Bartlesville West	2	
	Bartlesville Quapaw	0	2
	Dewey	1	



The Head Start/EHS program is funded by a Federal grant which contains income guidelines for participation; Head Start programs are required to document family income; 90% of participants must fall within the federal definition of poverty or a qualifying factor, e.g., homelessness, public assistance (TANF, SSI), and foster care. Programs may also accept up to 10% of children who have risk factors which indicates a strong need for a school readiness program, but whose families are over federal poverty income limits. Additionally, 10% of the program's funded enrollment must be comprised of children who qualify as having a disability. CARD has strong partnerships with Parts B and C entities to identify, evaluation and facilitate providing high quality services in an inclusive environment to these children. As more 3 year olds are served in HS relative to 4 year olds, (currently only 27% of the HS enrollment are 4's) it is much more difficult to secure the "10%" as Part B providers are inclined to give the child time to adjust to a new learning environment prior to qualifying for services. "Over-income" slots are often used to include "high-risk" populations and thus increase the successful service to children who qualify by virtue of a disability.



Families are admitted as income eligible, program eligible or within the “working poor” range of 100%-130%. Head Start and Early Head Start families are more alike than different, however, relatively more EHS children are admitted under “public assistance” status and foster, and most years also in homelessness. This is consistent with state data for this vulnerable population. Because EHS has fewer slots, children with greater stressors will be over-represented relative to HS. Those accepted in “over income” are often experiencing extraordinary stressors.

What did COVID-19 do to enrollment? Many families chose to keep all of their children home because the inconsistencies with COVID-19 were stressful. Some families were desperate to resume care. Attendance was impacted as family members were exposed to COVID-19 and children had to stay home in quarantine for weeks at a time. Families lost jobs, and had little energy to pursue above their basic needs.

Annual Budget

Revenue 2019-20	
Grant funds	\$7,787,100
CACFP	482,838
State Appropriated Funds	98,227
Childcare	231,200
Donations, other	1,858,894
CARES funding	630,105
TOTAL	\$11,088,364

Expenditures 2019-20	
Salaries & fringe	\$5,649,471
Child and Adult meals	342,672
Equipment & supplies	401,976
Contractual	67,129
Professional Development	95,060
Other	1,037,612
CARES Expenditures	290,231
TOTAL	\$7,884,151

The 5 year grant funding cycle HHS federal reviews began in 2018-19 with the first Focus Area I review in the spring of 2019. The last federal review results indicated no findings. Annual financial audit results indicated good fiscal health.

The budget reflects a substantial percentage of the funding is spent on staff salaries and benefits. This is a normal expenditure for a Head Start program. The budget now includes CARES funding to assist in addressing the program needs relative to COVID-19 mitigation. Funding has been used increased sanitation, improved ventilation, increased filtration in HVAC, additional staff to keep group sizes small and in “pods” to minimize the spread of COVID-19, additional tech and IT support as work has become increasingly virtual, increased mental health and wellness services to support staff and families, materials for virtual services for families in-home, and improvements in outdoor play spaces to increase the outdoor classroom opportunities for children.

Projected Revenue 2020-21	
Grant Funds	\$7,880,756
CACFP	238,244
State Appropriated Funds	106,041
Childcare	250,000
Donations, other	1,970,189
CARES	339,874
TOTAL	\$10,785,104

Projected Budget 2020-21 Expenditures	
Salaries & Fringe	\$6,185,409
Child & Adult meals	195,500
Equipment & supplies	419,327
Contractual	129,831
Prof. Dev.	94,334
Other	1,008,915
CARES	339,874
TOTAL	\$8,373,190

Education & Curricula Key Points

CARD's classroom curriculum is Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum.

- Scientific basis, developmentally appropriate & supported by strong research
- Measures the essential domains as identified by Head Start & aligns with the Oklahoma Early Learning Guidelines for Birth through 5.
- Observation-based tool for ongoing child assessment (GOLD) is linked to that child's individual curriculum.
- Awesome parent tools—Parents can see the curriculum on-line & make meaningful contributions to assessment and planning for their child's education.
- Based upon children's interests rather than arbitrary themes, teachers have the freedom to pursue their interest & support the "curriculum within" for children!
- The Assessment tool, GOLD, is used by EHS home visitors along with the home visiting curriculum *Partners for a Healthy Baby* and other supporting curricula. In 20-21 EHS will start using the DRDP.
- Assessment data informs program decisions; data seem to suggest that the vast majority of children meet or exceed expectations for growth in the central domains of Social & Emotional, Language, Cognition, Physical, Literacy & Math.
- Data further suggest that further growth could be realized in math, and that a number of children need greater support in Social/Emotional and Language. Self-regulation and communication are two critical school readiness skill sets!

The Pandemic Effect—

Greater emphasis on health and safety

Greater emphasis on supporting mental health

Dropping materials for families to use in learning activities in the home

Accessing more materials for home visiting curricula to be used for the virtual children until they resume classroom attendance

More importance placed on parents partnering to make good observations

Increased difficulty in getting referrals and services for children with special needs

Greater inconsistency in parental engagement as they navigate the impact of the pandemic on their home, jobs, etc.

Greater supported needed for staff to be able to meet children and families' needs, as they, too, are navigating a pandemic.



School Readiness in HS and EHS

Our parents usually state that the thing they want most for their child is their future success. We AGREE! CARD believes that school readiness is complex! We know that there are factors which “stack the deck” for children’s success!

- Good health and dental care (It’s hard to learn if I’m sick or in pain, or if my eyes or ears aren’t working well!)
- Good nutrition (My brain needs the right food!)
- Good social/emotional health (When I can manage my emotions and my attention span, I learn more!)
- Strong families (When mom & dad do well, I thrive! When they parent me by focusing on the positive, I have the confidence to learn more!)
- Expectant moms get good dental & prenatal care, health, nutrition, etc. to support developing baby. Dads take care of themselves, too!
- Involved & engaged parents (I learn more if I know you are there, cheering for me!)
- Appropriate learning environment (When my teacher & my parents know **how** to teach me, **what** to teach me and they encourage me to **teach myself**, I learn more!)

Pandemic Impacts included challenges for families in accessing well baby exams, referrals for health and mental health services, as well as referrals and services for children needing therapies such as speech, OT/PT, etc. Families found navigating the online systems for some services such as WIC to be difficult or not readily accessible to them and many lost services. The program saw a decrease in health services for enrolled children.

Of HS & EHS enrolled children, 77% and 80% received well child exams respectively. For EHS this represents a decrease in the typical percentage; this age was particularly impacted as they need many more exams than the older children and many doctors were not scheduling any exams. Eventually they began offering virtual exams which did not appeal to many HS families or were inaccessible due to lack of internet service. In person dental examinations by a dentist (not required for EHS children) were completed for 77% of the children; most such examinations would have occurred prior to the pandemic in 2019. About 14% of EHS children received a dental exam by a dentist, which is lower than usual. Referrals for Part B and Part C services and the continuation of such services was also negatively impacted.

CARD Head Start & Early Head Start uses these foundational beliefs (which are also based on research) to plan and engage our families and community partners in our goal for ALL children to enter school ready to learn!

School readiness is truly about ALL the areas of the program, as well as all members of the community. ALL citizens have a stake in this endeavor. The education of our children affects our communities, our future! This is a call to action. We invite YOU to help with the work!

“The first five years have so much to do with how the next 80 turn out” - Bill Gates, Sr.

Learn more about our School Readiness task force or the goals by contacting the program office or staff.



Social Emotional Well-being or “Brain Health”

The single most predictive factor for children’s future school success is social and emotional skills. Managing self-regulation, attention span and making friends are essential skills for future academic performance.

All children receive social-emotional developmental screenings as part of their first 45 day services; parents complete the standardized screening, and teachers provide additional information. CARD HS & EHS children, families and staff have professional consultants available, and many families access these supportive services. Partnerships enable the program to offer parenting programs at select locations, and parents are encouraged to access other community services, as well.

What does “social emotional wellness” and “mental health” mean in the context of 0-5 years? For young children, this refers to how well a child develops socially and emotionally. Understanding infant mental health and wellness is the key to preventing and treating such issues for very young children and their families.

It is essential to treat young children’s social emotional issues within the context of their families, homes, and communities. The emotional well-being of young children is directly tied to the functioning of their caregivers and the families. Many Oklahoma families experience great stress. In fact, Oklahoma’s children have the highest Adverse Childhood Experiences scores in the United States. When children have adverse experiences, these experiences literally affect their brain health and their brain structure. There are proven strategies for “buffering” children from these adverse experiences, though! Such services to assist parents in using these strategies for resilience are offered within program.

Preparing children for future school success is a labor-intensive process which works best when parents and educators are all working together. CARD staff know that parenting is incredibly rewarding, but also extremely challenging!

CARD employs many strategies to support parents in this hard and rewarding work:

- Parent conferences/home visits & Parent Meetings
- Parenting events, such as the Incredible Years, Circle of Security, Infant Massage
- Access to therapists in the HS/EHS centers (partnerships!)
- Referrals for children and families for services which may ameliorate stressors and address challenges, as well as build resiliency
- Opportunities to gather with other parents for support for the “World’s Hardest Job”
- Opportunities to identify one’s own family’s strengths and build upon those strengths to reach one’s goals through the family partnership process
- Meaningful volunteer experiences in the classroom, where parents can observe skilled responses to children’s behaviors, thereby broadening their own repertoire of skills



Family Engagement

Head Start understands that it is hard to focus on school when there are other family needs. Family workers (FSR/FMS) partner with families, assist families with their goals and needs, and often connect them with the community's resources. It really works! Sometimes the challenges a family faces are big. In spring and summer of 2020, many families faced food shortages and loss of income; many were quarantined and it is stressful to be isolated at home. The children did not understand why they couldn't see family and friends or come to Head Start. It has been a confusing time. Many families have lost ones they love. The experience of figuring out life during a pandemic was hard for most people, but for some, it was traumatic.

It is into this environment that Family Engagement steps in and supports and strengthens the local family. Data show 89% and 95% of Head Start families and Early Head Start families respectively received at least one social service.

- Over 92% of our families did a strength assessment called "Building Blocks" and are working with their FSR/FMS on achieving family goals
- HS and EHS families were offered parenting education services (Incredible Years, Circle of Security, consultations, etc.) and Parent University, and Pine Wood Derby and Reading Workshops
- Fathers are actively engaged in their children's education. Activities such as family assessment, family goal-setting, Watch D.O.G.S., Dad Fest, involvement in learning activities, program governance and parent education opportunities have fathers as participants. The most commonly noted category for participation is learning activities with children, which captures 56% of fathers in HS, and 44% in EHS
- CARD families make progress in their educational goals which include finishing a year of high school, completing tech training, or working on college classes.
- **Lots of ways to engage!**

POLICY COUNCIL

Parent committees



Health & Program Advisory



School Readiness Task Force



Class volunteer