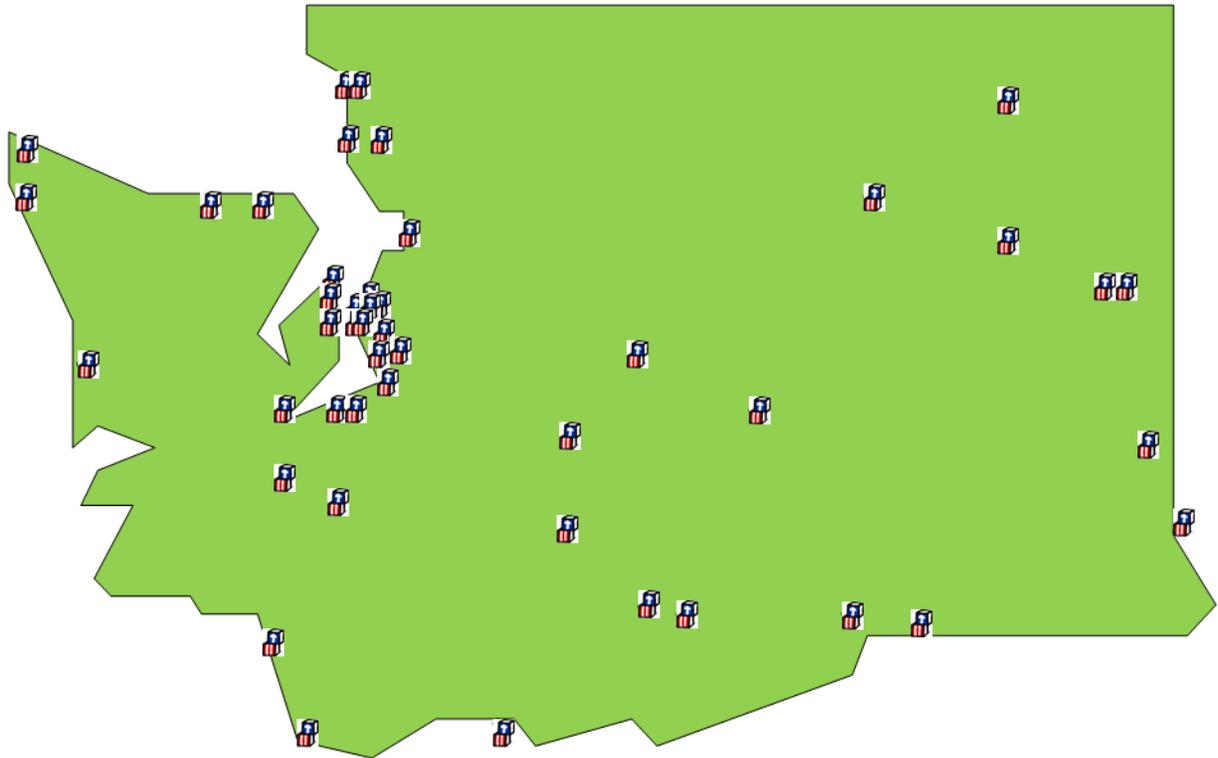


**Washington State  
Head Start State Collaboration Office  
Strategic Plan  
2012-2016**



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## **Introduction**

The purpose, objectives, and initiatives of the Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO) exist within a diverse and ever-changing national, regional, state and local context. This involves a number of new and existing regulations and priorities that require constant adaptation and dedicated collaborative efforts. With an abundance of new requirements outlined in the Head Start Act of 2007 and a sobering national and state economic forecast, it is more pivotal than ever for the HSSCO to serve a vital role in facilitating collaborative opportunities and fostering new partnerships to build a sustainable, comprehensive early learning system for our children, families and communities.

In the Head Start Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-134), the HSSCO in each state is charged with implementing an annual statewide needs assessment of Head Start programs to determine the specific needs of programs and to develop a strategic plan based on the results of the assessment. In Washington State, a needs assessment survey was implemented with Head Start/ Early Head Start programs in October 2008 as the primary mechanism for gathering data with regard to their needs related to the nine (9) HSSCO priority areas, which include: *Health Services; Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness; Family/Child Assistance; Child Care; Family Literacy; Children with Disabilities; Community Services; Education (Publicly-funded Pre-K Partnership Development and Head Start Transition and Alignment with K-12); and Professional Development*. The results of the 2008 assessment, in addition to feedback gathered through a survey completed by external partners, informed the development of the 2009-2013 strategic plan.

This updated HSSCO strategic plan reflects the results of the 2010 and 2011 needs assessment surveys and is in alignment with the HSSCO 2011-16 five year grant application. This updated plan will serve to guide the efforts of the HSSCO in Washington State over the next five years.

The plan, designed for the HSSCO to take a leadership role in facilitating essential partnerships and collaborative opportunities to meet the specific needs of Head Start/Early Head Start programs in the state, also positions the HSSCO to continue to maintain critical partnerships with statewide public and private entities alike, and to persist in contributing valuable efforts toward the development of a comprehensive early learning system for all Washingtonians.

## **The HSSCO and Early Learning in Washington State: Current Context**

In Washington State, the HSSCO is located in an executive branch agency, the Department of Early Learning, which serves as a central mechanism for bringing visibility, focus, and a streamlined effort to early learning infrastructure, funding, and leadership throughout the state.

There has been significant progress in the development of early learning systems in Washington over the past several years. In 2010, Washington's first comprehensive Early Learning Plan was released. The Plan provides a 10 year road map for the early learning system in Washington State and is serving as a rallying point for organizations and systems to come together and move forward with the development of coordinated, aligned efforts to meet the needs of young children and their families. The Early Learning Plan is structured based upon the Ready Framework for a comprehensive system for care, education, programs and services for children and families organized by who needs to be involved to make the work happen. The elements of the framework are: ready and successful children; ready and

successful parents, families and caregivers; ready and successful early learning professionals; ready and successful schools; and ready and successful systems and communities. Within this framework, the Plan lays out 21 outcomes and 36 strategies which were developed through a collaborative and inclusive process with stakeholders and partners across the state.

DEL has joined with two of its primary partners, Thrive by Five Washington (a public/private partnership), and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to form the Joint Resolution Partnership. The Partnership has worked together to identify 11 strategies within the plan to focus on as priorities in for the first year of Plan implementation and will continue to select relevant priorities moving forward.

The Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC), created by the legislature to advise DEL on early learning issues and to work in conjunction with the department to build a statewide, comprehensive early learning system, is poised to play a key role moving forward. Currently, the Council is focusing on the development of a state-local early learning coordination structure that provides consistent opportunities for local and state voices to inform and align each other's actions. Following the receipt of Head Start State Advisory Council grant funds, the HSSCO is now included as a permanent seat on the council.

Building upon the strong foundation of the Early Learning Plan and committed partnerships, Washington recently submitted a successful proposal for Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge grant funds which will support expedited scale up of the QRIS system, WaKIDS, and the professional development system. Washington was one of 37 applicants for Race to the Top and one of only nine grant recipients. This represents a substantial victory and opportunity for early learning in Washington.

Additionally, many other innovative activities and initiatives are currently in motion and will serve well to support implementation of the goals and strategies of the Early Learning Plan. The Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) initiative continues to support state, local and regional efforts to build strong and sustainable early learning systems. The state Department of Health has been awarded one of a few Project LAUNCH grants in the nation from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to improve the social/emotional and mental health of young children 0-8. Washington's Council for Children and Families has continued to integrate the nationally-known Strengthening Families framework into a number of successful strength-based approaches for building the social and emotional competencies of children, families and communities. Washington is the first state to have been invited to join the Frontiers of Innovation (FOI) project which is an effort led by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University and other partners to support innovation in the field by bringing together a national community of researchers, practitioners, policymakers, states, and sites committed to advancing implementation of creative, new ideas. These are just a few examples of the exciting work taking place in Washington.

These developments represent the work of a highly dedicated group of partners and stakeholders supporting the state's efforts to create a comprehensive, coordinated early learning system. Despite the

current economic environment and the rapid change in the field, early learning continues to garner public interest and support in Washington. This support is helping to make great strides in building a system designed to improve outcomes for children and families.

### **The HSSCO: Past Performance and Progress**

Concurrent with the constantly changing early learning environment (nationally and within the state), the HSSCO has continued to serve as a leader and catalyst in facilitating the development of multi-agency and public/private partnerships across the state. Over the last decade there have been two significant changes to the HSSCO in Washington State. The first was a structural move from the Office of the Governor, Family Policy Council to the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Division of Child Care and Early Learning (DCCEL) in June 2001; the second was a transition from DSHS to the Department of Early Learning upon its establishment in 2006. Despite these major transitions, the HSSCO has continued to prosper and accomplish a number of goals and objectives in recent years, playing a significant role in developing and supporting initiatives that improve opportunities and outcomes for children and families in Washington State and ensuring Head Start/Early Head Start remain key players in the process. A few initiatives/activities of the HSSCO in recent years include:

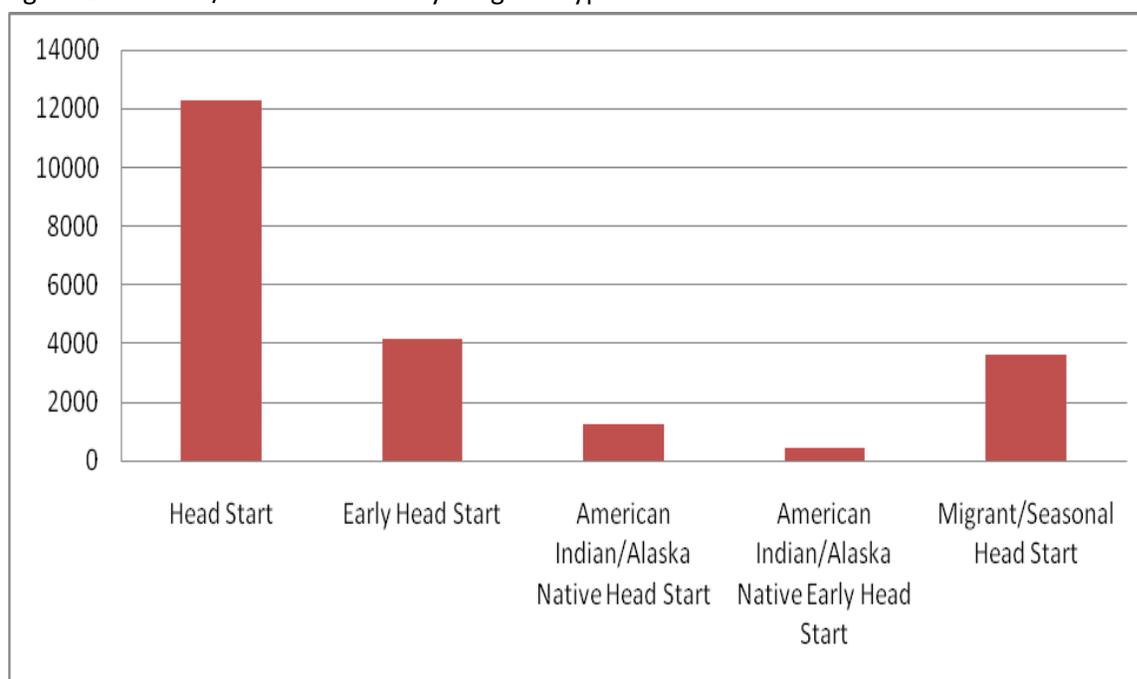
- **Statewide Needs Assessment of Head Start programs**
- **Serving in a coordination role for the development of the Early Learning Plan**
- **Supporting the effort to redesign the Early Learning and Development Benchmarks**
- **Serving as a member of the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)**
- **Department of Social and Health Services Data Share Agreements for Head Start programs**
- **Head Start/AAPD Dental Home Initiative** (leadership team member, planning and development)
- **Supporting efforts to develop a comprehensive Professional Development System in Washington** (DEL Professional Development Consortium, Head Start Higher Education Roundtable, QRIS, etc.)
- **Partnerships with Multiple Organizations/Entities** (i.e., Department of Social and Health Services, Department of Health, Foundation for Early Learning, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems, Council for Children and Families, OSPI, University of Washington, Washington State Association for Head Start and ECEAP, RX Office of Head Start, Thrive by Five Washington, Educational Service Districts, etc)
- **Supporting, through resources and funding, the development of community-based early learning coalitions**

Collectively, these activities/initiatives illustrate the significant impact that the HSSCO can have in building early childhood systems around specific early childhood groups and initiatives. The HSSCO continues to actively and effectively engage in activities that build systems, encourage collaboration and facilitate the involvement of Head Start and Early Head Start in state policies and plans. Further, by focusing its efforts on key systems building strategies, especially those reflecting the HSSCO and Early Learning Plan priority areas, the HSSCO is poised to make substantial contributions, not only in meeting the needs of Head Start/Early Head Start programs, but also to the future development of Washington's early learning system.

### Identifying the Needs of Washington Head Start and Early Head Start programs

In Washington, there are four different Head Start program options that meet the diverse needs of children and families in our state: Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant/Seasonal Head Start, and American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start. The programs are geographically diverse, representing both rural and urban settings. In the 2010-11 program year a total of 21,733 children and families were served through a total of 52 Head Start programs, many of which providing more than one type of Head Start service. Of these 52 there were; 30 programs providing Head Start, 27 programs providing Early Head Start, 17 programs providing American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start, 8 programs providing American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start, and 2 programs providing Migrant/Seasonal Head Start in Washington.

Figure 2. Children/Families Served by Program Type



Head Start programs in Washington represent a diverse and innovative team of staff, parents, and community partners, as demonstrated through their significant efforts to provide quality services to children and families in their communities. To successfully implement a comprehensive service model in their communities, Head Start programs in the state have initiated a number of exceptional partnerships with school districts, the state Pre-K program (ECEAP), community action agencies, health providers and organizations, community service organizations, state government agencies and a host of other entities.

In addition to the many successful partnerships cultivated within their communities at the Head Start program level, the HSSCO was established to serve as a state-level support mechanism for the various efforts of programs to provide quality, comprehensive services to children and families. Specifically, the

HSSCO is charged with the following federally-mandated goal areas in its efforts to support Washington programs:

- **School Transitions:** To foster seamless transitions and long-term success of Head Start children by promoting continuity of services between the Head Start Child Development and Learning Framework and State early learning standards including pre-k entry assessment and interoperable data systems.
- **Professional Development:** To collaborate with institutions of higher education to promote professional development through education and credentialing programs for early childhood providers in states.
- **Child Care and Early Childhood Systems:** To coordinate activities with the State agency responsible for the State CCDBG program and resource and referral, to make full-working-day and full calendar year services available to children. Include Head Start Program Performance Standards in State efforts to rate the quality of programs (Quality Rating and Improvement System, or QRIS) and support Head Start programs in participating in QRIS and partnering with child care and early childhood systems at the local level.
- **Regional Office Priorities:** To support other regional office priorities such as family and community partnerships; health, mental health, and oral health; disabilities; and support to military families.

Encompassed within these goals are the 10 HSSCO priority areas; health care, services for children experiencing homelessness, welfare/child welfare, child care, family literacy services, services for children with disabilities, community services, education (school readiness, HS-PreK partnership development), school transitions and alignment, and professional development.

In 2007, P.L. 110-134 (the Head Start Act of 2007) specifically charged the HSSCO in each state to conduct a statewide needs assessment of Head Start programs and use the results to inform the development of a strategic plan. In addition, the HSSCO is required through the Act to produce a report to the public on the results of the needs assessment.

In 2008 a team of HSSCOs from across the nation developed a needs assessment template based upon the 10 priority areas. In 2011 the team updated the template and added an additional area relevant to the work of HSSCOs; Early Childhood Systems. The Washington HSSCO released a customized version of the national survey in Survey Monkey format in November of 2011. Head Start program directors were each sent a web address for the survey and encouraged to include relevant staff members in its completion. Participation in the survey process was voluntary. Following the collection of data from programs, the HSSCO engaged an advisory team of key partners (see Appendix A for a list of advisory team members) and internal staff to analyze and identify overall trends and key priority areas that

served to guide major aspects in the development of this strategic plan. The following outlines key trends from the most recent assessment results (see Appendix B for the HSSCO Needs Assessment Report to the Public for a more detailed version of the assessment process and results).

**Summary of Strengths Identified in the Needs Assessment:**

- Partnering with oral health professionals on oral health-related issues
- Partnerships and collaboration with medical/dental community
- Partnerships with school districts to prepare transition plans and align curriculum/assessment
- Partnerships with local Part B/619 and Part C providers
- Relationships with a variety of state and local family literacy programs and services
- Implementing policies to prioritize homeless children for enrollment and allowing families to enroll and receive services while obtaining required documentation
- Programs who operate Head Start and ECEAP (dually funded) report strong partnerships with DEL and school districts
- Most programs have strong partnerships with two-year higher education institutions

**Summary of Barriers/Needs Identified in the Needs Assessment:**

- Limited mental health services
- Lack of medical and dental coverage for parents of the families
- Transportation to medical/dental appointments
- Facilitating shared T/TA opportunities with family/child welfare service providers
- A number of programs reporting “no working relationship” with the local McKinney-Vento liaison
- Difficulty developing family outreach, supports and transition planning with the local school districts
- Lack of access to full-day, full-year services for families
- Barriers to maintaining child care subsidies
- Lack of alignment of educational activities, curricular objectives, and instruction with school districts
- In accessing professional development opportunities, programs cited “lack of staff release time” and “financial support” as the two primary barriers in meeting Head Start teacher qualification
- Increasingly limited access to community services as community agencies are impacted by budget cuts
- Need more information about how to engage in state systems initiatives such as QRIS, state data systems, and the Early Learning Advisory Council.

The trends identified above and the feedback provided by the Head Start Advisory Team was instrumental in the design of the plan. Advisory Team members not only provided broad-level feedback regarding the overall direction of the plan, but also supported the HSSCO in identifying specific strategies to accomplish the goals of the plan.

**Washington State HSSCO Strategic Plan 2009-2013: Goals, Objectives and Strategies**

Based on the statewide needs assessment results and subsequent feedback from the strategic planning advisory team and external partners, the HSSCO has outlined a strategic plan to include goals, objectives, and strategies for the next five years that support the federally-mandated goals and priority areas outlined in the Head Start Act of 2007. In addition, the goals, objectives and strategies have been intentionally aligned with the outcomes and strategies of the Early Learning Plan) in an effort to ensure that the work of the HSSCO is evolving with and supporting the larger early learning systems development in Washington. Finally, it is important to reiterate that although this strategic plan is aiming to advance the most current needs of Head Start/Early Head Start programs and all low-income children and families in Washington, it builds upon and reflects the existing federal HSSCO grant which spans 2011-2016.

The five overarching strategic plan goal areas for 2012-2016 are:

- **Goal #1: Increase the availability of appropriate and coordinated health services for children and families**
- **Goal #2: Improved ability of families to obtain quality early learning programs and services that meet their needs**
- **Goal #3: Improve/increase opportunities for Head Start/Early Head Start programs to be involved in state-level activities, initiatives and programs that enhance services to children and families**
- **Goal #4: Contribute to the development of a coordinated, statewide comprehensive professional development system for all early learning professionals in Washington State**
- **Goal #5: Improve the governance, functional operations, and perceptions of the HSSCO to be a transparent and inclusive leader in supporting policies and initiatives that further advance services to children and families**

As the goals, objectives and strategies of this plan are set in motion, it is important to keep in mind that the early learning landscape may be altered by changes and actions of the legislature during the timeframe in which this plan exists. Each year, the legislative session usually dominates activities through April, making it difficult to convene groups and outline a specific timeline for activities listed. In addition, the annual needs assessment of Head Start programs in the state may inform and/or require necessary modifications or additions to the plan to meet the immediate needs of programs. The following tables outline the proposed strategic plan for the next five years.

**Goal #1:** Increase the availability of appropriate and coordinated health services for children and families.

Objective	Strategy
Promote collaboration among policymakers,	Support the implementation of an early childhood health summit to facilitate learning, dialogue and awareness around health issues

<p>teachers/providers and other stakeholders around the health; oral health; and social, emotional and mental health of young children</p>	<p>impacting young children and their families</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Year one.</p>
	<p>Support the work of the Coalition for Safety and Health in Early Learning</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Ongoing.</p>
	<p>Convene dialogue around creative approaches to transportation issues.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Year one.</p>
	<p>Continue to provide funding and support to the Strengthening Families Washington initiative and associated activities (i.e., Community Café, etc.). Promote the integration of the Strengthening Families protective factor model in multiple state-level systems, activities and initiatives. Provide opportunities for Head Start/Early Head Start programs to become involved in the Strengthening Families Washington Initiative.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Ongoing.</p>

	<p>Support Washington efforts to improve access to mental health services through revision of access to care standards and increases in available training and resources.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Because this work involves both increases in funding and substantial capacity building it is unlikely that substantial progress will be made immediately. However, access to mental health services is a strategy in the Early Learning Plan. Strategies will be further developed in the next five years. Mental health was identified as a high priority by Head Start programs, therefore the HSSCO will look for opportunities to move this work forward whenever possible.</p>
<p>Increase access to and utilization of dental homes by young children and their families.</p>	<p>Continue to serve on the Leadership Team for the Head Start Dental Home Initiative in Washington.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Two years remain on this five year initiative.</p>
<p>Support Head Start/Early Head Start programs in helping parents to obtain health insurance</p>	<p>Work with the HSSCO Advisory Team to identify strategies for supporting parents in accessing health insurance.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>In light of the current financial crisis and the prospect of widespread service cuts, it is not known when progress on this strategy will be possible.</p>
<p>Support Head</p>	<p>Work with HSSCO Advisory Team to identify strategies for</p>

Start/Early Head Start programs in promoting good nutrition for children and families	<p>promoting nutrition for children and families.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Year 3.</p>
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**Goal #2:** Improved ability of families to obtain quality early learning programs and services that meet their needs.

Objective	Strategy
<p>Improve coordination and policy development between Head Start/Early Head Start programs and the Department of Early Learning (DEL) to provide improved child care access for children and families</p>	<p>Serve as a liaison between Head Start/Early Head Start programs and the State Child Care Administrator (and related staff) to continually discuss options and actions for improving the child care subsidy system.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Ongoing.</p>
<p>Promote practices and policies that ensure smooth transitions for children and families</p>	<p>Support implementation of the newly redesigned Early Learning and Development Guidelines (formerly Benchmarks)</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Year one.</p>

<p>between Head Start/Early Head Start programs and the K-12 system.</p>	<p>Support implementation of the annual Starting Strong conference which brings together teams of early learning and K-3 providers to learn about and engage in planning related to building aligned P-3 systems.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>The Starting Strong conference takes place on an annual basis.</p>
<p>Support the capacity of Head Start/Early Head Start programs to meet the needs of families experiencing homelessness.</p>	<p>Work with OSPI McKinney-Vento lead to promote improved partnerships between Head Start/Early Head Start programs and local school district McKinney-Vento liaisons.</p>
<p>Improve coordination and policy development between Head Start/Early Head Start programs and the K-12 System (local education agencies, OSPI) for the purpose of supporting services to children with disabilities</p>	<p>Finalize, implement and update as needed the working partnership <i>Memorandum of Agreement</i> (shared vision, scope of collaborative activities, identify legal and programmatic needs and barriers) between Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), WSA, the HSSCO, the RX T/TA Network, and the Region X OHS that focuses on IDEA, Part B and Part C Special Education and Transitions.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Final revisions, signing and promotion of the new MOA will be done in year one. Updates will occur in year five.</p>

<p>Facilitate partnerships between Head Start/Early Head Start programs and the K-12 system for the purpose of improving the alignment of curriculum and assessment practices and data collection</p>	<p>Support Head Start’s inclusion in Washington’s efforts to develop a P-20 data system.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Year one: provide information about Head Start data collection practices and requirements.</p> <hr/> <p>Coordinate information sharing with OSPI regarding Head Start/Early Head Start curriculum/assessment requirements (i.e., Head Start Child Outcomes Framework, components outlined in the Head Start Act of 2007, etc.)</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Year one and ongoing.</p>
<p>Promote and increase innovative Head Start-Child Care collaborative models that meet the changing needs of children and families</p>	<p>Work to promote the inclusion of Head Start programs in Washington’s Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and ensure Head Start/Early Head Start participation in the QRIS development process where possible.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Ongoing.</p>
<p>Support Head Start/Early Head Start program communication and outreach.</p>	<p>Continue to facilitate data share contracts with grantees to enable them to receive DSHS client data to be used in targeted recruitment mailings.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>This occurs on an annual basis each winter in order to prepare for spring recruitment efforts.</p>

	<p>Update Head Start/ECEAP Profile document which can be shared with parents, policy makers and other interested partners.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Biennial updates.</p>
<p>Strengthen networks between Head Start/Early Head Start and programs serving children in foster care and children of incarcerated parents</p>	<p>Partner with DSHS to support efforts to improve services to children in foster care.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Ongoing.</p>
<p>Promote Head Start involvement in the development of an expanded Washington PreK system</p>	<p>Serve as an information and communication conduit regarding the inclusion of Head Start in Washington’s efforts to develop an expanded PreK system.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Ongoing.</p>
<p>Strengthen networks between Head Start/Early Head Start and programs serving children in foster care and children of incarcerated parents</p>	<p>Build upon DEL efforts to strengthen supports to children of incarcerated parents.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>As opportunities arise.</p>

<p>Promote coordination opportunities with appropriate government entities regarding issues that impact immigrant families</p>	<p>Convene conversations and dialogue with appropriate entities regarding deportation of immigrant families and its impact on children in Head Start/Early Head Start programs</p> <p><b>When:</b> Years two and three.</p>
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**Goal #3:** Improve/increase opportunities for Head Start/Early Head Start programs to be involved in state-level activities, initiatives and programs that enhance services to children and families.

Objective	Strategy
<p>Ensure Head Start/Early Head Start's involvement in activities and initiatives of the Department of Early Learning</p>	<p>Provide regular updates via in person opportunities and a regular newsletter to Head Start/Early Head Start programs regarding the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) and the activities of the Department of Early Learning including information about opportunities for participation in relevant activities/initiatives.</p> <p>Continue to collaborate with the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) in coordinating activities and communicating about issues concerning Head Start/Early Head Start and ECEAP programs</p> <p><b>When:</b> Ongoing via quarterly newsletter and participation in WSA meetings</p>

	through the year.
Ensure Head Start/Early Head Start's involvement in the continuing development and implementation of Washington's statewide early learning plan and other key systems-building activities	<p>Provide leadership and support to the Early Learning Plan implementation process. Continue to support, through in-kind and funding, activities associated with the Early Learning Plan. Ensure Head Start/Early Head Start participation in various workgroups and activities associated with implementation of the plan.</p> <p><b>When:</b> The Early Learning Plan covers ten years and therefore will span the grant period and beyond.</p>
Ensure Head Start/Early Head Start's involvement in initiatives/activities related to developing policies or programs for infants and toddlers	<p>Involve Head Start/Early Head Start programs in state-level planning regarding infant/toddler initiatives or plans (i.e. birth to three plan, home visiting)</p> <p><b>When:</b> Both the birth to three plan and the home visiting plan under way will span the grant period.</p>
Ensure Head Start/Early Head Start's involvement in the development of a statewide Kindergarten Assessment process and	<p>Engage Head Start/Early Head Start partners in the workgroup/stakeholder process for expanding a kindergarten assessment process. Provide mechanisms for programs to provide feedback to the process in a variety of ways. Provide programs with regular updates about the progress/status of the initiative.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p>

the identification of common outcomes for children in Washington	Years one through three
Increase Head Start/Early Head Start programs' involvement with community service/volunteer-based programs	Support partnerships with programs such as AmeriCorps, City Year (Seattle-based), etc. to provide Head Start/Early Head Start programs' with the ability to collaborate with volunteer and community-based initiatives to enhance services in programs.  <b>When:</b> As opportunities arise.

**Goal #4:** Contribute to the development of a coordinated, statewide comprehensive professional development system for all early learning professionals in Washington State.

Objective	Strategy
Support various projects and initiatives that enhance the ability of Head Start/Early Head Start staff in complying with professional development requirements outlined in the Head Start Act of 2007	Partner with the Region X Office of Head Start and the Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP to convene a next phase higher education roundtable to develop strategies for working with higher education institutions to improve professional development pathways to Head Start/Early Head Start staff.  <b>When:</b> Year one.
	Promote and advocate for professional development programs and opportunities specific to infant/toddler development  <b>When:</b>

	Ongoing.
Support the establishment of a statewide, comprehensive Professional Development system for early learning professionals	Participate as an active member and involve Head Start programs where possible in the implementation of the recommendations of the Professional Development Consortium.  <b>When:</b> Ongoing.
Improve coordination efforts between the HSSCO, WSA, RX Office of Head Start, ECEAP, and the RX Head Start T/TA network to ensure Head Start/Early Head Start staff have access to appropriate and timely professional development opportunities	Continue to support the coordination and facilitation of regular meetings with the Head Start/ECEAP Partnership for Quality (that includes the HSSCO, WSA, ECEAP, the Office of Head Start, and the RX Head Start T/TA Networks)  <b>When:</b> This group meets on a monthly basis.
Support the	Support implementation of the newly developed Early Learning

<p>development of leadership development opportunities to build a renewed and lasting network of leaders prepared to advance innovative approaches that benefit children and families</p>	<p>Fellows program administered by the Foundation for Early Learning.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Planning will occur in year one with actions in successive grant years.</p> <p>Funding issues may prove a significant limitation to moving this work forward at this time.</p>
<p>Support the sharing of Head Start best practice resources across the early learning system.</p>	<p>Distribute information from the Head Start National Centers to key early learning partners.</p>

**Goal #5:** Improve the governance, functional operations, and perceptions of the HSSCO to be a transparent and inclusive leader in supporting policies and initiatives that further advance services to children and families.

Objectives	Strategies
<p>Develop regular mechanisms for communicating with Head Start programs regarding status and</p>	<p>Continue to distribute bimonthly newsletter to Head Start/Early Head Start programs related to the status and progress of HSSCO activities and initiatives and other statewide activities.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p> <p>Bimonthly.</p>

<p>progress of statewide activities, initiatives, and events affecting the Head Start population.</p>	<p>Continue to participate in Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP Director meetings and events as a primary venue for providing updates to Head Start/Early Head Start programs</p> <p><b>When:</b> Meetings throughout the year.</p>
<p>Obtain ongoing feedback from regarding the effectiveness of the HSSCO and how the HSSCO can best meet their needs</p>	<p>Conduct an annual statewide needs assessment of Head Start/Early Head Start programs and use the feedback to inform federal grants, plans, and continuation applications.</p> <p><b>When:</b> Annual basis.</p>
	<p>Conduct site visits to Head Start/Early Head Start programs across the state to continually build partnerships with local programs and staff and learn about their specific strengths and needs</p> <p><b>When:</b> At least twice per year.</p>
	<p>Continue to work with the HSSCO Advisory Team to inform the ongoing activities and initiatives of the HSSCO</p> <p><b>When:</b> Group meets twice per year.</p>
	<p>Conduct regular surveys to assess the effectiveness of the HSSCO with external partners and use the feedback to continually inform the direction of the grant.</p> <p><b>When:</b></p>

	Biannual basis.
Ensure Head Start/Early Head Start's participation in the Department of Early Learning's Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)	As a member of the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC), serve as a liaison to Head Start/Early Head Start programs and the Early Learning Advisory Council to ensure Head Start/Early Head Start involvement and voice on the council.  <b>When:</b> Council meets quarterly.
Develop and maintain partnerships that serve to advance initiatives and activities specific to the needs of American Indian/Alaska Native and Migrant/Seasonal Head Start programs in Washington State	Develop ongoing, regular opportunities to communicate with the AIAN and M/S Head Start Collaboration Directors on issues impacting their programs in Washington.  <b>When:</b> Year one.  Share and exchange data and information regarding AI/AN and M/S Head Start programs with the Region 11 and 12 Collaboration Directors.  <b>When:</b> Ongoing.

**APPENDIX A:  
HSSCO/ECEAP Advisory Team Members**

**Claire Wilson**  
Puget Sound ESD

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**APPENDIX B:**  
**HSSCO Needs Assessment: State of Washington 2010-11 Survey Results**

# Head Start State Collaboration Office Needs Assessment

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*State of Washington  
2010-2011 Survey Results*



**December 2011**

## Introduction

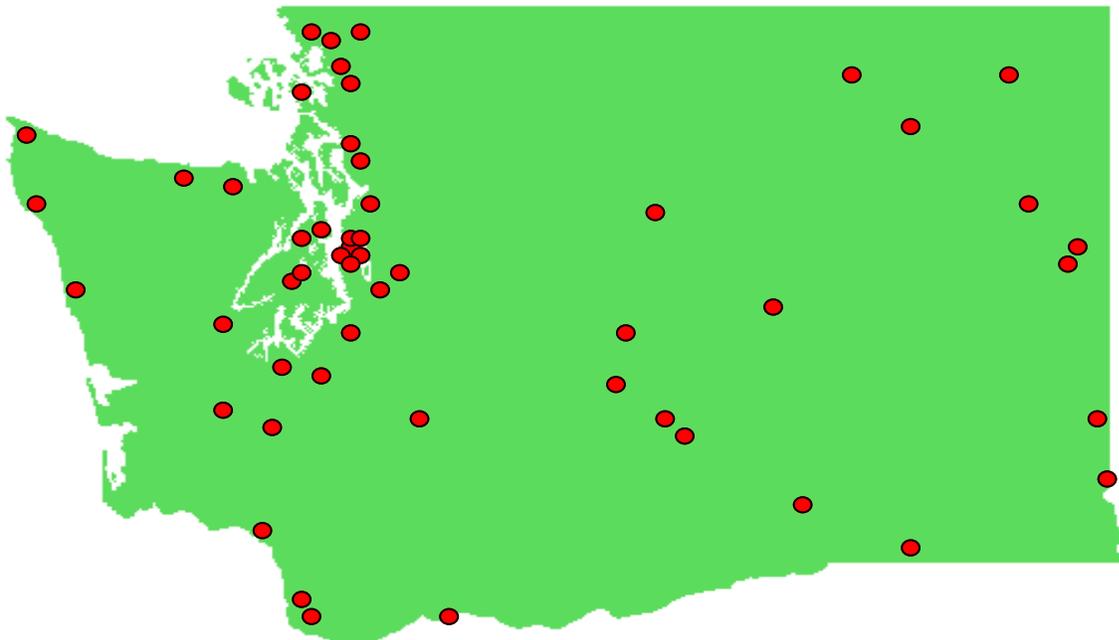
Head Start is a national program that directs comprehensive child development services to help children from low-income families become ready for school. Eligible children ages birth to 5 and pregnant women and their families receive assistance and information in the areas of education and early childhood development; medical, dental, and mental health; disabilities; nutrition; and parent involvement.

The federal Office of Head Start in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) provides funding for grants to local public agencies, private organizations, Indian tribes, and school systems. These organizations, in turn, operate Head Start programs.

### Head Start in Washington State

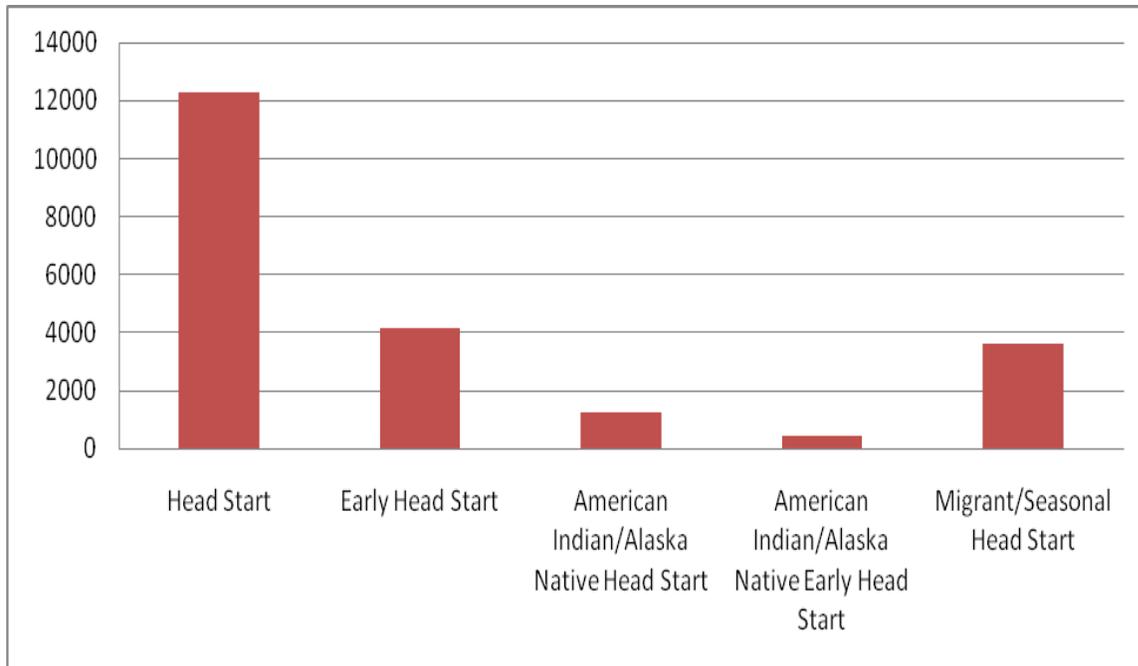
In Washington, there are four different Head Start program options that meet the diverse needs of children and families in our state: Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant/Seasonal Head Start, and American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start/Early Head Start. The programs are geographically located throughout the state, in both rural and urban settings.

Figure 1. Locations of Washington Head Start Programs



In the 2010-11 program year a total of 21,733 children and families were served through a total of 52 Head Start programs, many of which providing more than one type of Head Start service. Of these 52 there were; 30 programs providing Head Start, 27 programs providing Early Head Start, 17 programs providing American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start, 8 programs providing American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start, and 2 programs providing Migrant/Seasonal Head Start in Washington.

Figure 2. Children/Families Served by Program Type



### Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO)

The HSSCO in Washington is the main point of contact for Head Start at the State level. It is housed within the Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL). The HSSCO was established to serve as a state-level support mechanism for the various efforts of Head Start programs to provide quality, comprehensive services to children, families, and their communities. Specifically, the HSSCO is charged with the following federally-mandated goal areas in its efforts to provide state-level support to programs and all low-income children and families:

- **School Transitions:** To foster seamless transitions and long-term success of Head Start children by promoting continuity of services between the Head Start Child Development and Learning Framework and State early learning standards including pre-k entry assessment and interoperable data systems.
- **Professional Development:** To collaborate with institutions of higher education to promote professional development through education and credentialing programs for early childhood providers in states.
- **Child Care and Early Childhood Systems:** To coordinate activities with the State agency responsible for the State CCDBG program and resource and referral, to make full-working-day and full calendar year services available to children. Include Head Start Program Performance Standards in State efforts to rate the quality of programs (Quality Rating and Improvement

System, or QRIS) and support Head Start programs in participating in QRIS and partnering with child care and early childhood systems at the local level.

- **Regional Office Priorities:** To support other regional office priorities such as family and community partnerships; health, mental health, and oral health; disabilities; and support to military families.

Encompassed within these goals are the 10 HSSCO priority areas; health care, services for children experiencing homelessness, welfare/child welfare, child care, family literacy services, services for children with disabilities, community services, education (school readiness, HS-PreK partnership development), school transitions and alignment, and professional development.

## Needs Assessment Survey

The Head Start Act of 2007 requires that each HSSCO conduct, and update annually, a statewide needs assessment of Head Start programs. The results of the assessment in each state are intended to inform the development and updating of a 5-year strategic plan for the HSSCO.

### Survey Objectives

The Washington HSSCO in DEL released a needs assessment survey in November of 2011. The purpose of the survey was to identify the challenges and strengths of Head Start programs in Washington with regard to collaboration, coordination, and alignment of services. The survey was structured around the 10 HSSCO priority areas.

### Survey Design

In 2008 a team of HSSCOs from across the nation developed a needs assessment template based upon the 10 priority areas. In 2011 the team updated the template and added an additional area relevant to the work of HSSCOs; Early Childhood Systems. The Washington HSSCO released a customized version of the national survey in Survey Monkey format in November of 2011. Head Start program directors were each sent a web address for the survey and encouraged to include relevant staff members in its completion. Participation in the survey process was voluntary.

Each of the 11 areas of focus included 3 types of questions:

- Part 1 of each area asked programs to rate their involvement with various service providers and organizations. Participants used a four-point scale and definitions to reflect their progress in relationship building.

<b>No Working Relationship</b> (little/no contact)	<b>Cooperation</b> (exchange info/referrals)	<b>Coordination</b> (work together)	<b>Collaboration</b> (share resources/agreements)
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- Part 2 of each area asked programs to rate the level of difficulty they had with a variety of activities and partnerships, such as sharing data and information with agencies or creating and implementing transition policies with local school districts. The purpose was to identify challenges programs may be experiencing in building successful partnerships at the local and state levels. Programs rated the difficulty on a four-point scale ranging from “Not At All Difficult” to “Extremely Difficult.”

<b>Not At All Difficult</b>	<b>Somewhat Difficult</b>	<b>Difficult</b>	<b>Extremely Difficult</b>
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- Part 3 of each area included open-ended questions at the end of each of the nine sections of the survey. These questions asked for feedback on other issues/challenges as well as examples of what is working well in programs.

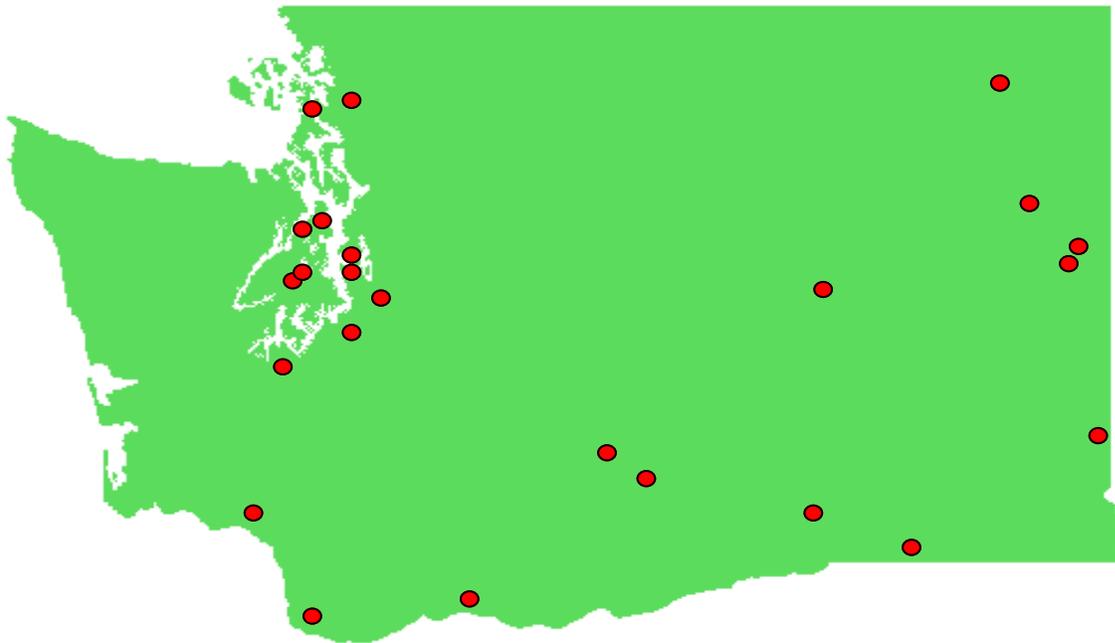
### Response rate

The survey was released to all Washington programs, including Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant/Seasonal Head Start, and American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start. In total, we received 23 completed surveys out of the total 52 eligible programs. The charts below show responses by program type and geographical location.

Figure 3. Responses by Program Type

Program Respondents	Percentage
Head Start	79.2%
Early Head Start	66.7%
Migrant/Seasonal Head Start	8.3%
American Indian/Alaska Native	16.7%
Child Care Partnership Option	8.3%

Figure 4. Respondent Locations



## Survey Results

After receiving the completed surveys, we analyzed results and compiled summaries to inform the strategic plan. Below are summary highlights from the survey, including strengths and challenges in each of the priority areas. Full survey results are available in Appendix B.

### Health Care

Survey questions about health care assessed the programs' relationships with members of the health community, including medical, mental health and dental providers, as well as local agencies and community resources.

Areas of strength evident in the responses include:

- Relationships with medical home providers
- Relationships with oral health providers
- Partnerships with programs providing nutrition services

Potential barriers/challenges include:

- Relationships with local/tribal agencies providing mental health and prevention services and community/tribal health centers
- Relationships with WIC

- Relationships with home visiting programs
- Relationships with programs/services related to child fitness/obesity prevention
- Assisting families with transportation to appointments

Narrative responses emphasized that lack of available services is a significant barrier in some communities, in particular those located in rural areas. Narrative comments also cited challenges associated with obtaining health services for parents.

### **Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness**

In the survey, programs were asked to assess their relationships with community partners as well as their own policies, procedures, and data collection related to families experiencing homelessness.

Areas of strength evident in the responses include:

- Implementing policies to prioritize homeless children for enrollment
- Allowing families to enroll and receive services while obtaining required documentation in a reasonable time frame
- Relationships with local McKinney-Vento homeless liaisons

Potential challenges include:

- Relationships with school district Title 1 directors (if Title 1 is being used to support ECE for homeless children)
- Engaging community partners in staff cross training and planning activities
- Working with LEAs on family outreach and support and transition planning
- Relationships with local McKinney-Vento homeless liaisons (this is reported under strengths and challenges because while reported relationships have improved over the last few years, there is still significant room for improvement in this area)

In narrative comments, many respondents pointed to the increase in the homeless population and the insufficiency of available resources to address the need.

### **Family and Child Assistance Needs**

This section examined the variety of social services that a Head Start program may help a family to access such as food stamps, and/or employment assistance as well as relationships with child welfare.

Areas of strength evident in the responses include:

- Working with local/county child welfare agency

- Ensuring children in child welfare system are prioritized for enrollment
- Working with TANF, employment and training, and related support services to recruit families
- Exchanging information on roles and resources with other service providers regarding family/child assistance services

Potential challenges include:

- Facilitating shared T/TA opportunities with family/child welfare service providers
- Relationships with state child welfare agency
- Participation in state level planning and policy development regarding family/child welfare

Narrative comments noted challenges related to increasingly scarce resources. Increasing caseloads for service providers means that staff working in those programs are stretched thin and have less capacity to partner.

### **Child Care**

For many Head Start families, it is necessary to find safe, healthy and affordable child care. In this section, programs were asked questions related to their relationships with providers of child care and the capacity of programs to provide full-day/full-year services.

Areas of strength evident in the responses include:

- Relationships with the state agency responsible for child care (DEL)
- Relationships with higher education programs, services, and resources related to child care (e.g. lab schools, student interns, cross-training)
- Sharing data and information on children that are jointly served

Potential challenges include:

- Working with local child care programs to support access to full day/full year services
- Establishing linkages/partnerships with child care providers
- The capacity to blend or braid Head Start and child care funds to provide full day/full year services

Narrative comments emphasized the negative impact of recent cuts to the child care subsidies. This has made it increasingly difficult for Head Start programs to provide full-day/full-year services directly or to partner with child care providers. The Child Care Resource and Referral Network was cited as an important resource for nurturing Head Start/child care partnerships.

## **Family Literacy Services**

This section asked programs questions related to their ability to support family literacy development.

Areas of strength evident in the responses include:

- Relationships with state & local family literacy programs
- Relationships with programs and services for English language learners
- Relationships with public libraries
- Incorporating family literacy into program policies and practices
- Establishing linkages/partnerships with key literacy providers

Potential challenges include:

- Relationships with museums
- Relationships with higher education programs, services and resources related to family literacy
- Exchanging information with other providers/organizations regarding roles and resources related to family literacy

Narrative comments pointed to the impacts of recent cuts to literacy programs including those formerly provided by local colleges, Title 1 “Readiness Counts” and Even Start. The Washington Reading Corp, which places volunteers in classrooms to support literacy development, was cited as a valuable resource for Head Start programs.

## **Children with Disabilities**

Ensuring that children with disabilities are identified and receiving appropriate services is a critical component of Head Start. Questions in this section related to program partnerships and access to services related to children with disabilities.

Areas of strength evident in the responses include:

- Relationships with local Part B/619 providers (special education preschool)
- Relationships with local Part C providers (early intervention)
- Relationships with non-Head Start councils, committees, or workgroups that address issues related to children with disabilities
- Obtaining timely Part C evaluations of children
- Sharing data/information on jointly served children

Potential challenges include:

- Obtaining timely Part B/619 evaluations of children

- Supporting the referral process to Part C for children identified under CAPTA (Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act)
- Applying for SSI and/or waiver programs for children/families with disabilities

Narrative comments emphasized that many Head Start programs have build strong relationships with local providers and are active in community groups. Respondents cited challenges associated with lack of resources, particularly for Part C services.

### **Community Services**

This section asked programs about their relationships with providers of a variety of services critical to meeting the needs of families.

Areas of strength evident in the responses include:

- Partnering with services providers on outreach activities for eligible families
- Establishing linkages/partnerships with public resources related to prevention/treatment services
- Relationships with providers of child abuse prevention/treatment services
- Relationships with providers of domestic violence prevention/treatment services

Potential challenges include:

- Relationships with providers of substance abuse prevention/treatment services
- Establishing linkages/partnerships with private resources related to prevention/treatment services
- Sharing data and information on families served jointly by Head Start and other prevention/treatment services
- Exchanging information related to roles and resources with other providers/organizations regarding community services

Narrative comments emphasized the significant challenges associated with increasing need and decreasing services available.

### **Education: Pre-K**

This section asked programs questions related to promoting school readiness and developing partnerships with public pre-k.

Areas of strength evident in the responses include:

- Established MOUs with the local entity(s) responsible for public pre-k, including plans to coordinate activities

- Establishing selection priorities for eligible children served

Potential challenges include

- Staff training, including opportunities for joint staff training
- Joint/shared technical assistance

Narrative comments emphasized that it can be challenging to work with so many school districts and the relationships with districts vary widely. Respondents noted that the MOU is required for Head Start programs but not for LEAs so it is often a lower priority for them.

### **Education: Transitions**

Smooth transitions between Head Start and the K-12 system are an important element in ensuring children's long term success. Questions in this section focused on relationships and alignment between Head Start and K-12.

Areas of strength evident in the responses include:

- Relationships with LEAs (Local Education Agencies) regarding transitions from Head Start to kindergarten
- Ongoing communication with LEAs to facilitate coordination of programs
- Aligning Head Start curricula and assessments with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework and state early learning standards (Formerly Benchmarks, now Guidelines)
- Coordinating with LEAs to implement systematic procedures for transferring Head Start program records to schools

Potential challenges include:

- Coordinating transportation with LEAs
- Conducting joint outreach to parents and LEA to discuss needs of children entering kindergarten
- Aligning curricula and assessment practices with LEAs
- Organizing and participating in joint training, including transitions related training for school and Head Start staff

Narrative comments emphasized that the level of difficulty in partnering varies widely not only between districts but even between buildings within districts. Respondents also noted that finding time for shared professional development is a challenge.

### **Professional Development**

This section focused on the capacity of programs to partner with and access appropriate staff professional development.

Areas of strength evident in the responses include:

- Relationships with community and technical colleges
- Accessing ECE degree programs in the community
- Accessing online professional development opportunities
- Accessing T/TA opportunities in the community

Potential challenges include

- Accessing the new Head Start National Centers
- Accessing scholarships and other financial support for professional development programs/activities
- Staff release time to attend professional development activities
- Exchanging information on roles and resources with other providers/organizations regarding professional development

Narrative comments cited lack of sufficient resources to support professional development and challenges associated with new degree requirements without corresponding meaningful compensation.

### **Early Childhood Systems Development**

This section was new to the survey and asked questions related program's involvement in state efforts such as state advisory councils (ELAC in Washington), Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), and state data systems. Responses reflected the fact that these efforts are still in very early stages and programs are not yet clear how to participate meaningfully.

### **Next Steps**

The HSSCO shared the results the needs assessment survey with the HSSCO advisory team which includes representatives from Head Start programs as well as a wide variety of agency partners. The team assisted in interpreting the survey results and generating ideas for action. This work will be reflected in the updated HSSCO Five Year Strategic Plan.

