

Head Start 50 Years: Leading the Way Comprehensive Services – The Foundation of Head Start

[Music]

Amanda Bryans: From the beginning, Head Start has offered comprehensive services to children and families. These include educational, health, and social service support all of which ensure children are ready to learn.

From the moment families first come to Head Start, we work with them to set family goals, and address their most pressing needs. We help them identify their strengths, and most of all, help them find their own voices.

Teen Mom: The teachers were amazing. The help – it wasn't just, "Okay, give me your child. I'll watch your child while you're – while you're at school." It was, "Okay, I'll watch your child. Do you need something? Do you have a house? Do you have transportation to school? Do you have enough food? Let me show you all these programs that can help you."

Amanda: Head Start offers a lot of services that foster children's growth and development such as health screenings, linking families to medical homes and to community services, and providing safe, nurturing and engaging learning environments.

Julie Smith: I think mom was really surprised, and Head Start was saying, well this is what we can provide for your child; things in the home that they can help her with through home visits, and just at a school, following up on how to work with Elías.

Araceli: [Speaking in Spanish] I've learned a lot through the program. I don't think my child would have made progress without it. They helped me see I needed to become more involved. He's a happy child, and I'm very happy with him.

Amanda: Another part of comprehensive services is supporting social and emotional health. Relationships are the foundation of Head Start and of early learning.

Barbie-Danielle DeCarlo: Young children who are emotionally connected to others are more likely to show positive developmental and learning in later years, outcomes like good social skills and greater initiative.

Young children who are emotionally connected to others may show less negative behaviors such as aggression. And these relationships may buffer or protect young children from the adverse effects of a variety of stressors.

All Together: [Singing] ♪ All my friends are here with me/♪

Tammy Mann: Truthfully, relationships provide the pathway for children to grow and develop. Parents are their child's first and most important teacher. And so, to the extent that in our programs, we really set a foundation of expectation where parents really do understand the critical importance of the role they play in helping to foster their children's learning and

development through responding to cues and providing support as they are learning to explore the world around them, it makes a tremendous difference in children's ability to develop confidence, curiosity, and all of the things that really make for a really great start in life.

Amanda: Head Start includes a mixture of adult directed and child directed learning experiences that can occur inside or outside the classroom or home. Each interaction between the adult and the child is an opportunity to support social and emotional development, communication and language, and thinking skills.

Teacher: What's making it go down?

Children: The water.

Teacher: The water is making it go down?

Children: Yes, yes.

Child: It's so strong.

Teacher: It is. Oh. Jason says it's very, very strong. If you just leave the sand right here without the water, will it go all the way down? What do you think? You want to try? Okay. Okay, go ahead.

Amanda: Healthy nutrition is another comprehensive service.

Laura Annunziata: What really makes a healthy diet for a small infant or a small child. What I think of as healthy nourishing food may be very different than the diet that someone else chooses to nourish their child with. People all over the world and in different communities and families eat differently.

Amanda: Mealtimes offer opportunities for social interaction, learning new concepts, and developing fine motor skills. All of these comprehensive services strengthen parents and families, so that in turn they can help their child prepare for school, and not just school, but for their whole life.

[Music]

Ann Linehan: It's the excitement of knowing that you're making an impact. I am still challenged every day. I still learn every day. There's something about Head Start, when you understand what it does for children and families. It grabs you and you become passionate. It is the passion that drives us.

[Music]

[End video]