

Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships Quality Early Learning for Infants, Toddlers, and Families

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Narrator: Everyday, low-income families with infants and toddlers face many challenges. One of the biggest challenges is simply finding high-quality care for their young children that is both affordable and provides the comprehensive services that allow children to develop to their full potential. This type of quality care is, unfortunately, out of reach for many families across the country. To find an answer, the Office of Head Start and the Office of Childcare, working together in the Federal Administration for Children and Families, are providing exciting opportunities for communities and states to offer Early Head Start-Childcare Partnerships to meet this need. One of the central goals of the Early Head Start-Childcare Partnerships is to increase the supply of, and access to, quality care for infants and toddlers particularly for low-income families who need comprehensive services to help their young children succeed. These services also support parents' continued efforts to study, work, and contribute to their communities. Partners are working hard to build that supply and access.

David Morgan: I was really excited because this was a whole new frontier. Number one, it was the idea of sharing assets. When you look at the private childcare settings and you look at the networks of family childcare homes, they are an incredible breadth of opportunity for family access and they bring a lot of skills and expertise. And then you match that with the highest mark of quality which is Head Start and Early Head Start, and it just seemed like a perfect fit to put them together.

Dr. Williams: We had all of these children who needed to be in daycare, but whose parents could not afford daycare.

David: These are very quality-competent settings and they are going to increase their capacity to articulate this thing we call Early Head Start over time. And it'll just become footprint in the community of what, really, Head Start's all about in this whole network of options for families around accessibility. Even being culturally responsive to the needs of those families.

Narrator: There's a lot of work that needs to be done to plan and implement a new partnership and expand services. The partnership implementation teams include members from both the Early Head Start program and Childcare Partner and are supported with technical assistance.

Christine Reich: One of the things we learned early on is that our folks at the regional office, they're learning right along with us -- the Office of Childcare at the national level -- everybody's learning how is this going to play out.

Patricia Valenzuela: Once we set a date and we were all committed to the date, we were able to enroll those 39 families. And so, we're very proud of that moment. It felt like that's when it started.

Narrator: A key component of quality care for infants and toddlers is continuity of care, or the opportunity to allow children to form a nurturing relationship with their caregiver over time. One of the strengths of partnering with childcare providers is that they often serve infants to school-age children as well as multiple children from the same family. They can provide true continuity of care by ensuring the same teacher or caregiver stays with the same group of children over time and, often, in mixed age groups.

Stephanie Joy Robinson: You'd have smaller classrooms, more time to spend with your students and with the continuity of care, you stay with your students until they are three. And that's ideal.

Narrator: Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships also ensure continuity by working together with families to ensure childcare subsidies do not lapse unnecessarily and comprehensive services continue to be available. This is the first time that many childcare partners can offer the benefits of full comprehensive services that are an important part of the Early Head Start program to the children and families they serve. These services include health and developmental screening, nutrition, high-quality childcare environments and equipment, and family development services. Comprehensive services make a difference in the lives of Early Head Start children, families, and childcare partners. Let's listen and learn more.

Gladys Lazurk: We have an education coordinator that works with our teachers, giving them regular support with their lesson plans and feedback about observations in the classroom and ways to set up classrooms. And we also have health services by a nurse that comes from Head Start to weigh and measure the children and provide vision and hearing screenings.

Kiobenit Urena: Every time someone comes in, I let the parents know the children are going to be weighed, they're going to check their eyes. Then the parents, they are happy that these services are available for them.

Ruth Welsey: We do have a special-needs child in our classroom. He is now privy to so many services. It's been really nice to see the system working with him to get him what he needs.

Melissa Madrid: There was time where families, working families, come to you and they say, "I just can't afford to buy diapers this week because "I have this bill or that bill." Now I can provide those diapers for that family because that's what's needed for that family. So I think that's the biggest benefit is be able to give these working families the support that they need.

Mindy Zapata: We're very pleased that two of our partners are actually providing services to homeless families. We thought outside the box and actually approached an apartment community that has subsidized apartment availability for families through non-federal share. The apartment complex gave us two units that we were able to renovate.

Theda Willis: My FSW, she makes sure that I set my goals, reasonable goals, not too high, not too low. They wanted me to actually go to housing council meetings and, you know, interact with other parents. And that's what I did. I actually became a Policy Council parent and became the secretary.

Tomiya Wilson: What hooked me was the opportunities. And one of those opportunities was the Policy Council. It was kind of like "For the people, by the people."

LaToya Williams: Our three main goals that we set were for me to get my youngest child into daycare, for me to try to get some type of low-income housing for me and my children. And I think my other goal for her was for me to start school. So that was my three goals that we're working on.

Narrator: Research has shown that well-prepared and well-trained teachers provide higher quality care for children. The Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships provide opportunities for teachers to obtain credentials and degrees that include a focus on infant-toddler care and development. Through the

partnerships, we are hearing about the experiences of Childcare Partners and what it has been like for them. Arturo

Magana: I think that providers that are willing to put in the time, you know, become more educated, learn about what quality childcare education is, are reaping the benefits. Raven

Thompson: The benefits that I've received from the partnership is obtaining my CDA, honestly, just the continuing professional development. The trainings, they give you a different perception. They help you in new strategies and things like that. Tonya

Bradley: The coaching, the professional team that comes out and shows you one-on-one experiences and different aspects of how to go about- to add and implement things.

Narrator: Childcare subsidies are a key element in both implementing and sustaining the Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships. This funding helps parents purchase the childcare services they need to work and attend school. Partnership grantees and policy makers are doing things differently and making changes to help families access and retain the childcare subsidy they qualify for.

Mindy: We've been able to get some small moves in public policy with our state subsidy agency allowing us to streamline the eligibility process and collaborate with families to submit subsidy applications. So applications are coming in more complete. It's not requiring that families take two days off of work to complete that documentation and it's making it a more seamless conversation.

Harriet Feldlaufer: We've actually established a liaison that works with each of these three grantees and the families to help them apply for our Care for Kids program to see if they're eligible. If they are, we'd like them to use those funds first. And if not, then we use the state carve-out. We've come up with, for instance, a one-page checklist in English and in Spanish that the providers can use with families to ensure that they're going to through all the steps to secure and apply for eligibility. We've linked, in the eligibility period, to be aligned with the program requirement. And that's also a great relief because the providers know once they're enrolling the children, the children will remain in their program.

Angela Card: The Family Support Workers are critical in understanding the subsidy process. So they can really facilitate supporting the family through those channels.

Theda: The FSW sat with me and, you know, if I needed her to hold my hand, she would hold my hand. But for the most part, she wanted me to at least take the first step.

Narrator: Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships are possible only when resources are layered to provide both the childcare and the comprehensive services needed to provide a high-quality program. This layered approach to funding isn't always easy, but it is possible with creativity and commitment.

Ellen Wheatley: So the layered funding thing is something that lots of people have trouble understanding. But it really boils down to, well, we have Head Start funding upfront, we have Childcare Subsidy funding and as long as we have that full-day funding from Childcare Subsidy, we're able to not only have children receiving childcare but, layered on top, the comprehensive services that Head Start provides.

Mindy: The Childcare community has a lot to offer us. I can't stress enough how much we've learned within our own Head Start program from these wonderful individuals that have come into collaboration with us.

David: If you are a grantee considering doing this, recognize and value the autonomy of the Childcare Partner, the family Childcare home.

Narrator: Early Head Start Childcare Partnership Programs must meet both Head Start Program performance standards and Childcare and Development Fund regulations. This is where the term "Partnerships" becomes critical to achieve these high standards.

Amy Caucci: The performance standards do have to be done and they're extremely important, but I think approaching it in very tiny, little steps.

Nicole Villanueva: The most important thing is explain why.

Angela: Already you're meeting standards because you have state standards. Pass all your licensing reviews with flying colors. And so when these new standards come into play, I think it's just trying to facilitate and think through- "What is it that is different?" Celebrate those things that you're already doing. Here's areas where we need to meet the standards. And it's really just kicking up a notch. It's just doing a little bit more.

Narrator: One of the intended outcomes of the Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships is to impact not only the children and families enrolled in the partnership program, but the other children in the childcare setting as well. Let's learn more about how that happens.

Gladys Lazurek: It benefits the rest of our program, also, because it's not just those eight children that have the Head Start slots, it's all 16 of those kids and the whole center. We do the same for all of our families.

Raven Thompson: They all benefit from anything that we know, anything that we learn, new strategies, new techniques that we try. Right now we're working on these lesson plans that we allow the children to lead. So even the community children and the Early Head Start children are working on things that they all have interest in.

Angela: They're all getting ongoing child assessment All of the children get screenings. They have tooth-brushing. They all have their meals covered. They all get diapers and wipes. I mean, everything is the same.

Narrator: Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships are helping to shift the odds for thousands of young children across the United States. Thank you to the families, childcare partners, Early Head Start grantees, TA professionals, and state and federal administrators who have shared their stories of how Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships are growing in their community and how a vision of high-quality early care and comprehensive services for babies and toddlers can become the reality for young children and their families.