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Head Start Child Development Program

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Head Start is a national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families.

Brief Program Description: The Head Start Child Development Program (HSCDP) is a comprehensive, family-focused child development program providing health, mental health, nutrition, education, disabilities services, and other services to families. The program focuses on positive child and family outcomes to close the achievement gap, and to build a better future for children, families, and communities served by the Head Start Child Development Program.

Who We Serve: The program serves low-income pregnant women and children birth to five years of age. Ten percent of the program's enrollment must be children with a certified disability. Another ten percent of our enrollment may be children whose family income exceeds the federal poverty guidelines.

Established: The program was established in 1965 nationally and 1968 locally.

Funding We Bring to Our Community: In 2013, our budget is \$6,328,123. Since the program's inception, we've brought more than \$102 million to our community.

How We Operate: HSCDP operates ten centers throughout Lake and Mendocino Counties. We collaborate with many agencies within the two county service area, including Health & Human Services, Department of Social Services, First 5, SELPA, MPIC, Easter Seals, Redwood Coast Regional Center, Rural Communities Child Care, Foster Grandparents, Garden's Project, Community Health Clinics and many more.

How Many People We Serve: We serve approximately 460 children and their families each year.

Life Without Head Start:

Since the program's inception, we've provided services for 13,476 children and their families. Without our services, more children would drop out of high school, end up in juvenile detention, commit more crime, receive more public assistance and require more special education services.

Toddler Success Story

Earlier this year a homeless mother and her two-year-old child enrolled in the Early Head Start program. The child had no language skills, and communicated only by grunting and pointing. The family had no stable home and moved from one friend's house to another; they had no idea where they would be staying on a daily basis.

The first day the child came to class, the teacher submitted a speech referral for special education services. Because it takes time for the first speech therapist's observation, the Head Start teachers began working with the child immediately, showing him to use signs along with simple words (e.g., "help" and "more").

The Family Resource Specialist and Site Supervisor began the process of finding a stable place for this family of two to live.

The teacher gave the child's mother techniques to use at home to help develop the child's language skills. This partnership of Head Start staff with client families is what creates success. With love, encouragement and support from teachers and his mother, this child now says "stop, help, bye, mom, and hi." The family has a stable living environment, and mom is planning to take college classes next semester.

Preschool Success Story

On the first day, a preschool-aged child came to Head Start. He was non-verbal, and he screamed the entire day. It was clear to staff that the mother was very depressed. When communicating with her, staff noticed that she looked down at the floor and never made eye contact with them. Teachers referred the child for a speech assessment and Head Start staff continued to work with the mother and child. It took real patience, but the child stopped screaming when he came to school and began to communicate in short, 3 to 4 word phrases. He also began to make eye contact with the teachers. As the relationship between the mother and staff blossomed, the mother's behavior began to improve and the child now enjoyed coming to school. He had many successful days.

The child has now built trusting relationships with teachers and his peers, and he comes to school with a big smile on his face. He knows the classroom rules and often lets his peers know about the rules as well.

As a result of the support this family received from Head Start staff, the child was able to get speech services and attended play therapy sessions. The mother was so pleased with his progress, she nominated the child's teacher for the Lake County Teacher of the Year. This truly deserving teacher received the award with heartfelt gratitude.