

OKLAHOMA: EARLY HEAD START INITIATIVE

DECEMBER 2012

SUMMARY

The Oklahoma Early Childhood Program uses public and private funds to enhance and expand high quality early care and education opportunities for children birth through age 3. The George Kaiser Family Foundation initiated the pilot in 2006 by matching state general revenue with private donations. Since that time, other private funders and providers have begun to contribute matching funds.

The program offers two models to participating programs, “Expansion” and “Enhancement.” Under both models, participating programs must provide services that meet state quality standards and a specific set of program requirements, which are based on selected federal Head Start Program Performance Standards. Participating programs must also provide services for a minimum of eight hours per day and 48 weeks per year. As the public funding source of the program, the state requires that funds reach at least one urban and one rural program. Federal Head Start and Early Head Start (EHS) grantees and community-based child care programs are eligible to participate.

Programs participating in the “Expansion” model may use funds to serve additional children with services that meet the above standards. Programs participating in the “Enhancement” model may use funds to improve quality of services to meet the above standards and use the funds to extend the day or year for children currently receiving federally funded EHS services.

OKLAHOMA'S APPROACH TO BUILDING ON EHS

- Extend the day and/or year of existing EHS services
- Increase the capacity of existing Head Start, EHS and community-based child care programs to serve additional children
- Provide resources and funding to community-based child care providers to help them deliver services meeting selected EHS standards

STATE PROGRAM

What is the eligibility for children and their families?

- **FAMILY INCOME:** Families must make 185 percent or less of the Federal Poverty Level.
- **PARENTAL WORK STATUS:** The initiative does not have a parental work status requirement.
- **CHILD AGE:** Birth through age 3
- **OTHER RISK FACTORS:** A child is eligible if in foster care, the family can demonstrate eligibility for tribal care or EHS, or if the child has special needs (regardless of income).

- **LENGTH OF ELIGIBILITY:** Families remain eligible for the program year.
- **EXPECTANT MOTHERS SERVED:** No

Who are the eligible providers?

- Federal Head Start grantees
- Federal Early Head Start grantees
- Private for-profit child care centers
- Private non-profit child care centers
- Faith-based child care centers
- School districts
- Community agencies
- Tribal Agencies

Is there a co-pay?

- No co-pay is required for the program, although families may be required to pay a co-pay if they receive a child care subsidy. The Oklahoma child care subsidy program does not require a co-pay if family income is less than 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

NUMBER SERVED BY STATE INITIATIVE

2,642 children birth through age 3 served in FY 2012

NUMBER SERVED BY FEDERALLY FUNDED EARLY HEAD START

Federally funded EHS served 3,245 children birth to age 3 and expectant mothers (according to federal Program Information Report data for 2011).



What are the program standards?

- **FEDERAL HEAD START PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS REQUIRED?** All participating programs that are federal Head Start or EHS grantees must comply with the federal Head Start Program Performance Standards for Early Head Start. All other participating programs must meet Oklahoma Early Childhood Program Requirements which are based on selected federal Head Start Program Performance Standards, including all standards relevant to programming content. Programs are required to provide comprehensive services, including: a Family Partnership Agreement and referrals to help families meet goals; assistance in finding a medical home; immunizations; and screening for disabilities.
- **ARE THERE ADDITIONAL STATE STANDARDS?** Participating programs in both models must meet the state child care licensing requirements and:

1. **STAFF QUALIFICATIONS:** Programs must have a lead teacher with a bachelor's degree for every two classrooms serving children birth to age 3. Lead teachers must have a bachelor's degree and must also have an early childhood certification or begin the process to obtain certification within one year of employment. Assistant teachers must have an associate degree, and the aide must have a General Educational Development (GED) certificate and a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or higher. Programs must employ a family support specialist with a bachelor's degree and have a caseload that is reasonable. Teachers for 0-3 year olds must have WestEd-based Program for Infant Toddler Care (PITC) training, which includes on-site technical assistance provided by trainers.
2. **PAY EQUITY:** Lead teachers with a bachelor's degree must be paid a salary comparable to a public school teacher with similar experience.
3. **PROGRAM STANDARDS:** Programs must be in the process of being accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Providers may use any of the following tools for classroom curriculum/ assessment/data collection: Genesis, COPA Child Assessment Result System, the Head Start Family Information System (HSFIS), High Scope and ChildPlus, or such other tools, systems, or technologies as may be approved by the Oklahoma Early Childhood Programs (OECF) manager. Providers must enter all collected child assessment data into an online tracking tool developed by Teaching Strategies specifically for infant-toddler providers and provide a copy of the resulting assessment report to the OECF manager.
4. **HOURS OF OPERATION:** Programs must operate for a minimum of eight hours per day and 48 weeks per year. Two weeks of professional development for teachers are required in addition to this 48-week schedule.

Do other children besides those enrolled in the EHS model benefit when services are delivered in child care settings?

Services are targeted to eligible children, but the initiative is implemented by classroom. If 90 percent of children in the classroom receiving services are income-eligible, that program can be reimbursed as part of this initiative. Participating programs may have some classrooms that are part of the initiative and others that are not, based on the children's eligibility.

What is the length of the day/year?

Programs must operate for a minimum of eight hours per day and 48 weeks per year. Some programs are open 10 hours per day.

FUNDING AND SUPPORTS

What are the funding sources and budget for the program?

In FY 2008, the total funding increased to \$25 million; \$10 million in state general revenue and \$15 million in private sources. The funding has remained the same since FY 2008.

What support and technical assistance does the state offer?

The program is administered by the Community Action Project of Tulsa County (CAP), which provides telephone and on-site technical assistance focused on the lessons learned in WestEd PITC training. Additionally, CAP provides technical assistance associated with NAEYC accreditation and other identified areas of professional development.

What incentives are there for child care providers to participate?

Participating child care programs receive funding, intensive training, and technical assistance. Programs also receive training in, and access to, Teaching Strategies GOLD, an online system for assessment, program planning, and reporting of early childhood programs.

GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION

What state agency administers the funding for this initiative?

The Oklahoma Department of Education, which has awarded CAP the responsibility to administer the program.

How does the funding flow to local providers?

Both the public and private funds flow to CAP, which recruits and selects programs to participate. CAP then establishes a Provider Agreement with each participating program. Participating programs submit monthly documentation to CAP and are reimbursed.

Can a child in the state initiative also have a child care subsidy?

Yes. In expansion classrooms or programs, providers are reimbursed for the full cost of operation of the classroom or program minus the relevant revenue received, including a child care subsidy. In enhancement classrooms or programs, providers are reimbursed only for the incremental costs resulting from meeting program criteria, which would not affect any child care subsidies received.

Does the state coordinate with federally funded Head Start agencies to conduct any of the activities?

While the state does not work directly with participating providers to conduct activities, it does coordinate with CAP, which is a federally funded Head Start agency, to administer funding and assistance to other providers, some of which are also federally funded Head Start agencies.

Does the state coordinate with the Head Start-State Collaboration Office to conduct activities?

No, although the Head Start-State Collaboration Office is aware of the initiative and working to increase collaboration among child care, Head Start, and pre-kindergarten in the state.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

What state agencies are responsible for monitoring, and how often is on-site monitoring conducted in a year?

Programs are monitored by the contractor, CAP. When the program first began, CAP subcontracted with Smart Start Oklahoma, a public-private partnership focused on school readiness, to provide a staff person and assistance with on-site monitoring. Once the program became established and standard processes were in place for monitoring, the function became part of CAP's operations. Programs are monitored on-site at least three times a year for performance and consistent reporting on program criteria. Additionally, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services child care licensing department monitors participating programs.

Are there specific measurement tools used to monitor services provided?

Programs submit monthly reports to CAP on how they are meeting program criteria. Providers may use any of the following tools for classroom curriculum/assessment/data collection: Genesis, COPA Child Assessment Result System, the Head Start Family Information System (HSFIS), High Scope and ChildPlus, or such other tools, systems, or technologies as may be approved by the Oklahoma Early Childhood Programs (OECF) manager. Providers must enter all collected child assessment data into an online tracking tool developed by Teaching Strategies specifically for infant-toddler providers and provide a copy of the resulting assessment report to the OECF manager.

At the contract year's start, providers complete and submit a Work Plan for meeting selected federal Head Start Program Performance Standards. They also submit a Teacher Tracking Tool, which is used to collect data on degrees of teachers, configuration of staff within the child care program, ratios, capacity, and teacher attendance at required trainings. Finally, programs complete a Provider Compliance Report prior to monitoring visits.

Smart Start Oklahoma has developed a form to be used for on-site monitoring that captures a range of information documenting administrative, programmatic, staffing, and other data. The programs are monitored on a set of service delivery objectives modeled on those required to be reported by federal grantees through the Program Information Report (PIR) process.

Are programs monitored by federal agencies?

EHS and Head Start programs are also monitored by the Office of Head Start every three years using the federal review process.



Has the state evaluated the effectiveness of the state EHS initiative?

CAP is currently contracting with the University of Oklahoma-Early Childhood Education Institute (ECECI) to evaluate the program. A three-phase evaluation plan was designed to answer three main questions:

- Are the programs meeting grant expectations?
- What is the quality of the programs?
- What is the impact of the program on children?

The fiscal investment in centers by the Pilot Program enables centers to offer much higher structural quality than typical community child care centers. In the case of Pilot Program centers, positive outcomes come from better ratios, teacher education and training, and teacher compensation. The improved structure and focus on quality enable children to have a better early care and education experience. (Source: *SPP/Community Comparison Study by ECECI 2008-2010. A full report available upon request*)

Are state funded programs required to report data to the state?

CAP reports the number of staff and children served, levels of teacher training, and salaries on a quarterly basis to the Oklahoma Department of Education.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

CONTACT INFORMATION

- Interviewed in 2008 for original profile - Nancy Von Bargen and [Susan Kruk](mailto:Susan.Kruk@smartstartok.org) (Susan.Kruk@smartstartok.org), Oklahoma Smart Start; May 2007 (updated April 2008)
- Interviewed in 2011 for updated profile - [Kay Floyd](mailto:kfloyd@okacaa) (kfloyd@okacaa), State Director of Head Start Collaboration; 2012
- Edits and updated profile provided in 2012 - [Amy Fain](mailto:afain@captc.org) (afain@captc.org), Manager of the Oklahoma Early Childhood Program.

ONLINE INFORMATION

- The [Community Action Project of Tulsa County](#) maintains information about the Oklahoma Pilot Early Childhood Program on their website.
- The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) has individual [state profiles](#) analyzing the Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) data from 2010.

AUTHORS: CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY (CLASP) AND ZERO TO THREE

This profile was updated in 2012. An earlier version was written in 2008 as part of the report, *Building on the Promise: State Initiatives to Expand Access to Early Head Start and their Families*.

CLASP develops and advocates for policies at the federal, state, and local levels that improve the lives of low-income people, focusing on policies that strengthen families and create pathways to education and work.

ZERO TO THREE is a national, nonprofit organization that informs, trains, and supports professionals, policymakers, and parents in their efforts to improve the lives of infants and toddlers.



WWW.CLASP.ORG
1200 18th Street NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036
TEL: 202.906.8000



WWW.ZEROTOTHREE.ORG
1255 23rd Street NW
Suite 350
Washington, DC 20037
TEL: 202.638.1144