

Capstone Head Start & Early Head Start

2020 Annual Report

Program Year Snapshot

Head Start's 2019-2020 program year was one of opportunities and challenges as faced by early educators in Vermont, and elsewhere with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year we were initially challenged in finding both qualified staff and eligible families; after the COVID-19 onset our new challenge was how to best support our families in that new environment. Our program provided remote/virtual services to our families in early March when the state of Vermont mandated remote work for all but the most essential workers. Thanks to the foresight of our director, we did some advance planning as the pandemic was escalating, and found we were well situated when the mandate came. We immediately began virtual visits and support services, and provided meals to all enrolled families. We delivered activity packets for children so that parents could continue in their role as the primary teacher of their children. Over time we delivered **39,500 meals and 12,946 activity packs**.

Capstone was again awarded our Head Start/Early Head Start grant through the re-competition process. This new grant included a redesign of program services based on community needs data. We are expanding our Learning Together Center in Barre to include 2 additional infant/toddler classroom; the needs assessment pointed to an enormous lack of services for this age group within our service area and throughout the state of Vermont. We continue our classroom services through our two centers – the Learning Together Center in Barre and the Lamoille County Early Learning Center in Morrisville, as well as five LEA collaborative classrooms in Washington and Orange Counties. The collaboration classrooms are moved to a six hour per day model, and for some of them where we formerly shared space with other sessions we will now have our own Head Start classroom. We continue to provide home-based services for Early Head Start with this redesign, but home-based services for Head Start are now available only in eastern Orange County where we have no classroom services available.

We continued to receive funding through Act 166, Vermont's universal preschool legislation, which provides 3 and 4-year old children with 10 hours of high-quality early education during the school year regardless of family income.

Along with the rest of the country we have faced the challenges of the increasing numbers of families experiencing homelessness and the repercussions of the opioid crisis. We have seen escalating numbers in ACES reported, increased numbers of reports made to DCF, and decreased numbers in the 0-5 age population while the senior population continues to increase annually in Vermont.

Despite the challenges we are all facing, Capstone Head Start has fared well this past year. **We are proud of what has been accomplished by our dedicated staff.**



Parent Engagement

Our birth to five Head Start/Early Head Start program encourages parent engagement in every aspect of the program. In the 2019-2020 program year we had many Head Start and Early Head Start parent volunteers working with their children to achieve their developmental milestones despite the difficulty of doing so within the framework of the pandemic.

Our program offers family outing socialization opportunities, consisting of a shared meal or snack, and a structured activity designed to enhance parent/child interaction. They provide opportunities for each parent to meet other parents with children of similar age. These went on as usual until the mid-March when COVID-19 hit. Parent trainings were offered on literacy, preventing child abuse and neglect, social emotional development, budgeting, and the importance of well-child visits. A financial counselor from Capstone's Community Economic Development (CED) program offered to work with our parents on making wise use of their stimulus funds. One family paid back rent, while another paid down their credit card. Parent workshops were offered on topics parents indicated were of interest to them through a survey. We continued to provide outings in the no/low contact environment. It was a challenge.

Parents also participated in program leadership opportunities such as planning committees, Policy Council, Vermont Head Start Association and New England Head Start conferences and meetings, with some serving on Capstone Board of Directors as well.

Head Start / 169 children ages 3-5 in 155 families

- Average monthly enrollment: **97%**
- Medical Exams: **40%** ▼
- Dental Exams: **48%** ▼

Early Head Start / 185 children birth to 3 in 136 families

- Average monthly enrollment: **98%**
- Medical Exams: **47%** ▼
- Dental Exams: **0%***

Early Head Start Child Care / 54 children birth to 4 in 46 families

- Average monthly enrollment: **94%**
- Medical Exams: **83%** ▼
- Dental Exams: **0%***

**Early Head Start children generally receive dental screenings as opposed to exams. These are provided by both family dentists and our program's Tooth Tutors, who are certified dental hygienists.*

▼ Reduced numbers due to COVID-19 closure dental offices/remote medical services.

94% of eligible applicants served through Head Start.
87% of eligible applicants served through Early Head Start.

100% of eligible applicants served through Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships.

Ready for Kindergarten

At Capstone Head Start we believe that school readiness means children are ready for school, families are engaged in supporting their children's development and well-being, and receiving schools are ready for children. The Capstone Head Start School Readiness Goals serve as a guide for staff and families while preparing young children, birth to five years, for school.

Staff partner with parents to facilitate parents' understanding of their children's development and, together, staff and parents implement a broad range of strategies that lead to positive child outcomes. Capstone Head Start recognizes play, both facilitated and child initiated, as the primary mode of learning for young children.

By articulating school readiness goals linked to the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five, Capstone Head Start Program Goals, the Vermont Head Start Association School Readiness Goals as well as the Vermont's Early Learning Standards, we create a culture of educators, caregivers, and families that work together to prepare children for school.

Preschool teachers are observed using the CLASS research-based tool. This tool assesses teacher interactions in the domain areas of emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support.

To meet the challenges presented by COVID in the latter half of the year but continue supporting child development and school readiness, staff delivered developmentally appropriate activity bags twice weekly to enhance parent/child developmental interaction, coupled with remote/virtual home visits. Classrooms provided hybrid services through an in-person/virtual combination model and provided activity bags as well.

School Readiness Goals 2019-2020

The five developmental areas for school readiness are:

- Social Emotional
- Physical Development and Health
- Approaches to Learning
- Language and Literacy
- Cognition

The School Readiness Plan was updated on January 2, 2020 by the education manager to be reflective of the various tools used by program options for curriculum and assessment.

The school readiness goals are aligned with the domain indicators for:

- *Teaching Strategies Gold*
- *The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF)*
- *Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS)*
- *Parents as Teachers (PAT) curriculum and Milestones for School Readiness*
- *The Ounce Scale*

These alignments create a culture of educators, caregivers and families that work together to prepare children for school. From the onset of enrollment into our program to the time a child transitions to their next placement, school readiness is a priority for their experiences while in Head Start.

Capstone Head Start's *School Readiness Plan* is available by request.

Head Start Program Funding Sources

\$ 4,455,180 - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
 \$ 503,080 - State of Vermont DCF/CCFAP
 \$ 165,450 - State of Vermont Act 166 Funds
 \$ 64,140 - USDA Nutrition Program/CACFP

Statement of Expenditures	FY 2020		FY 2020
	Proposed Budget		Actual
Expenditures			
Direct			
Personnel	\$ 2,067,393		2,695,801
Fringe	\$ 744,262		901,809
Travel	\$ 17,891		1,349
Contractual	\$ 90,062		26,416
Supplies	\$ 139,937		61,614
Other	\$ 713,395		497,248
Indirect	\$ 682,240		889,614
Totals	\$ 4,455,180		5,073,851

Program Review Results

Financial and Compliance Audits (Federal Uniform Administrative Requirements) are conducted annually by the certified public accounting firm of Leone, McDonnell & Roberts. The results of the most recent audit (FY 2020) found that financial statements were presented fairly and identified no significant material weakness. The audit found no instances of non-compliance or other matters required to be reported under Government Auditing Standards.

We were not scheduled for any Head Start performance reviews during the 2019-2020 program year.

