

# About Head Start and Early Head Start

## What We Do

Head Start is a federal program that promotes the school readiness of children ages birth to five from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Head Start provides a learning environment that supports children's growth in the following domains:

- language and literacy;
- cognition and general knowledge;
- physical development and health;
- social and emotional development; and
- approaches to learning.

Head Start provides comprehensive services to enrolled children and their families, which include health, nutrition, social, and other services determined to be necessary by the family, in addition to education and cognitive development services. Head Start services are designed to be responsive to each child and family's ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage.

Head Start emphasizes the role of parents as their child's first and most important teacher. Head Start programs build relationships with families that support:

- family well-being and positive parent-child relationships;
- families as learners and lifelong educators;
- family engagement in transitions;
- family connections to peers and community; and
- families as advocates and leaders.

## About BCCAP Head Start and Early Head Start

Burlington County Community Action Program (BCCAP) administers or is the grantee for the Head Start and Early Head Start Programs in Burlington County, NJ. The program services 491 children including pregnant women and children with disabilities through their center-based and home-based program options. The program has three state of the art Early Childhood Centers in Browns Mills, Lumberton and Delanco Townships. The program offers both part day and extended hours for parents that are working, in school/training, or have a justified need for extended hours. All services are provided at no cost to qualified families including transportation in designated areas.

## Quality Services

- The program uses Creative Curriculum which is widely regarded as a forward-thinking, comprehensive, rigorously researched curriculum approach that honors creativity and respects the role that teachers play in making learning exciting and relevant for every child. In addition, Creative Curriculum is an approved preschool curriculum by the state of New Jersey meeting the Common Core Standards.
- Head Start and Early Head Start conduct the following assessments and screenings on all children:
  - Teaching Strategies Gold is based on 38 research-based objectives that include predictors of school success and are aligned with the Common Core State Standards, state early learning guidelines, and the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.
  - The Early Screening Inventory–Revised is a developmental screening that provides a quick assessment of a child's development of visual–motor/ adaptive, language and cognition, and gross-motor skills and abilities.
  - The Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) is a standardized, valid and reliable instrument for children ages 2-5 that measures child protective factors as well as screens for behavioral concerns. The DECA, to be completed by both staff and parents, provides a tool to better understand a child's behavioral and social strengths and needs as well as determine when further assessment is necessary.
  - ( Early Head Start Only) Brigance is a screening tool that is used to identify learning delays, as well as strengths and weaknesses in language, motor, self-help, social –emotional and cognitive skills. The assessment tools are divided by age group: Birth to 11 months, 12 months to 23 months, 2 years, 2.5 years, 3 years, 4 years and K/5 years.
  - Health screenings are completed within the first 45 days after the child starts the program. Health screenings including hearing, vision, blood pressure, height, weight and body mass index (BMI). When there is a concern with the health screen the parent is notified and referred to a health care professional.
- The program employs degreed, credentialed and licensed staff as Teachers, Family Partners, Food Service, Bus Drivers and Administrators. All staff is required to participate in on-going training and professional development including in-service training once a month during the school year. In addition, staff is trained in CPR, first aid, child abuse and neglect, food safety, and evacuation and disaster training. The program also encourages employees to go back to college to complete their degree or to

complete advanced degrees. The program has paid for employees to go back to school when funds are available.

- Head Start and Early Head Start has written service plans and procedures to ensure the program complies with the Head Start and Early Head Start Performance Standards and Regulations. The program completes a comprehensive Strategic Plan every five years outlining the program's goals and future direction. A self-assessment is completed annually by staff to ensure the staff is in compliance with the Performance Standards and Regulations. The self assessment is also an opportunity to identify areas of high quality and areas that need improvement. Every five years the Head Start and Early Head Start Program is reviewed by a Federal Review team to ensure the program is in compliance and to ensure the health and safety of Head Start and Early Head Start children and families. Two of the Head Start Center locations are accredited by National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).