



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

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Agenda Item Number: 4

Agenda Date: February 27, 2024

In Control: Economic and Workforce Development Committee Meeting

DEPARTMENT: Department of Human Services

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Melody Woosley

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Early Head Start and Head Start Programs Briefing

SUMMARY:

Staff briefing on the City of San Antonio Department of Human Services Early Head Start and Head Start Programs

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) requires recipients of Head Start grants to provide regular briefings on program and fiscal activities throughout the program year to their governing body. The City Council and the Head Start Policy Council serve as the governing body for the City of San Antonio Department of Human Services Early Head Start and Head Start programs. While City Council must maintain its legal and fiscal responsibilities, it has authorized the Community Action Advisory Board (CAAB) to oversee other key responsibilities. The DHS

Head Start Program reports to the Head Start Policy Council and CAAB monthly for program oversight.

The Early Head Start and Head Start programs are federally funded and administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Serving as a grant recipient for over 40 years, the DHS Head Start Program provides early childhood education, family support, and comprehensive support services to eligible children between the ages of six-weeks to five years old, and their families, within the Edgewood Independent School District (EISD) and San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) attendance zones.

DHS Early Head Start and Head Start programs serve children at or below the federal poverty level and prioritizes the most vulnerable children, including those with disabilities, experiencing homelessness, and in the foster care system. The program's mission is to prepare children and engage families for school readiness and lifelong success. The DHS Early Head Start and Head Start programs serve a total of 3,148 children: 905 children in the EISD (777 HS Pre-K program and 128 EHS infant and toddler program) and 2,243 children in the SAISD (2,243 HS Pre-K program only). The DHS Head Start Program contracts with EISD and SAISD to provide early education services, the Metropolitan Health District for dental services, and University of the Incarnate Word for health services.

ISSUE:

The DHS Early Head Start and Head Start programs successfully completed a non-competitive five-year grant cycle as of January 31, 2024. DHS was recently awarded a non-competitive five-year grant starting February 1, 2024 due to successful federal monitoring reviews and implementation of a high quality program in all areas, including early childhood education, family support, health and mental wellness services, and programmatic and fiscal management. Part of the grant requirements are that the governing board must receive programmatic and financial updates of the program.

Over the past five years, DHS' Head Start and Early Head Start programs have provided \$92,897,822 in Head Start funds to EISD and SAISD to fund high quality early childhood education for children birth to five years. Of this amount, \$5,137,751 were utilized to improve aging facilities at both school districts.

The ultimate goal of Head Start is to support children, families and communities to prepare children for kindergarten and life-long success. DHS Head Start and Early Head Start Programs implement high quality curriculum including Creative Curriculum, SAVVAS' Three Cheers for PreK and Scholastic's PreK On My Way. Children are assessed three times a year to ensure that the program is meeting established school readiness goals. Classrooms are assessed using the CLASS tool which provides the ability to measure and improve the interactions that matter most for children's outcomes. .

A unique facet of the Head Start Program across the nation is the level of engagement of parents in every aspect of the program. Programs are required to establish a Head Start Policy Council, comprised primarily of enrolled parents, and elected by enrolled parents, to serve alongside its

governing body. Parents play a crucial role in approving key program elements including budgets, grant applications, criteria for selecting children into the program, program policies and more. Throughout enrollment in the program, family members engage in supportive activities to include family goal setting, establishing medical and dental homes for their children, access to healthy meals, mental wellness support, developmental and health screenings, and access to research-based parenting education such as Triple P courses.

The next five years bring important developments to the DHS Head Start Program. Together with multiple stakeholders, including the City of San Antonio City Council, Head Start Policy Council, CAAB, EISD and SAISD, and a multitude of community agencies and higher education institutions, the program is developing a five-year strategic plan to guide the work of the five-year grant.

The 2022 Community Assessment conducted The University of Texas at San Antonio showed the need to increase the availability of Early Head Start slots for infants and toddlers. Approved by City Council in October 2023, a plan to convert Head Start PreK slots to EHS infant and toddler slots is currently being implemented. Beginning in the 2024 – 2025 school year, DHS Head Start will increase infant and toddler care by 16 slots on the east side of San Antonio ISD service area.

Other services to be strengthened in the next five years are:

- support to families around job training and workforce outcomes
- increased awareness and preparation around becoming a trauma informed organization
- expansion of wellness services to children, families, and staff
- community engagement around the issue of staff retention and improved workforce conditions for early childhood staff.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no impact to the general funds as a result of these updates.

ALTERNATIVES:

The briefing to City Council is required under the program governance provisions of the grant per the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' rules and regulations for Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for briefing purposes only.