The Climate of Arizona Head Start
Renewal, Support, and Access to High-Quality Services

Annual Report 2022

Arizona Head Start Association
The Voice of Arizona Head Start

The Arizona Head Start Association (AZHSA) was created to empower the coalition of organizations that provide Head Start programs. AZHSA works closely with Arizona’s Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO) to support strategic planning and carry out statewide initiatives across organizational, governmental, and community levels. With a mission of advocacy, collaboration, and education, we strengthen and enhance the work of our member agencies and partners through four committees: Early Childhood Development; Disabilities & Mental Health; Integrated Health & Safety; and Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. These committees keep AZHSA at the forefront of statewide leadership, whether collaborating on critical issues, driving program excellence, or promoting professional development.

Positive Statewide Impact

Head Start federal funding added $175,213,573 to Arizona’s economy

Arizona Head Start programs employed 4,788 individuals

15,984 children/pregnant women and

14,525 families served

641 homeless families served,

159 found housing by year-end
STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS

AZHSA Leadership 2021-22

**Director:** Jessica Rivera-García  
**Executive Committee**  
President: Eve Del Real  
Vice-President: Patricia Kirkland  
Secretary: Janell Stringfellow  
Treasurer: Shandeen Gomez

**Recognizing our Generous Sponsors**  
**Silver Level:** Discount School Supply and Lakeshore®  
**Bronze Level:** Dave Bang Associates, Kaplan®, and LENA®

AZHSA Committee Leadership

**Disabilities & Mental Health:**  
Chair: Anna Herron-Valenzuela,  
Vice Chair: Rosemary Sigala  
**Early Childhood Development:**  
Chair: Gretchen Bonkoske  
**Integrated Health & Safety:**  
Chair: Marcela Zepeda,  
Vice Chair: Marcia Archer  
**Parent, Family and Community Engagement:**  
Chair: Sonya Montoya,  
Vice Chair: Dulce Quevedo

In addition to membership dues and sponsors, funding for AZHSA studies, projects and training is provided by the Arizona Head Start Collaboration Office through a grant from the Administration for Children and Families. The Arizona Head Start Association has prepared this annual report. Development, production, and distribution were supported in part by funds from the Arizona Head Start State Collaboration Office.
A Message from Our Director

AZHSA Members and Friends,

We proudly share with you the 2021-22 Annual Report, a year where a commitment to “renewal, support, and access to high-quality services” led the way to remarkable achievements. In a world still reeling from pandemic disruption, setbacks, and economic stress, our statewide community of AZHSA members rolled up their sleeves and recommitted to the promise of Head Start. On every page you can see the impact of AZHSA committee leadership as we supported their efforts through collaboration, workable strategies, and creative solutions.

To address the critical shortage of workers and widespread recruitment needs, AZHSA hosted, in partnership with every Head Start Program in the state, the first large-scale Job Fair in our organizational history. We created informative flyers in multiple languages that supported statewide Head Start enrollment efforts, along with specialized strategies for reaching more of Arizona’s most vulnerable populations. AZHSA leaders brought the voice of Arizona Head Start to elected representatives in Washington, D.C., and those at our own State Capitol. To deepen the reach of our message into neighborhoods and communities, we amplified our online presence with a reimagined website and active social media.

Appreciation goes out to every individual, group, and organization that collaborates and partners with us in providing Head Start and Early Head Start’s multi-dimensional, life-transforming programs. Thousands of supporters in public and private sectors assist us in meeting critical needs. We are grateful for the invaluable contributions of our volunteer committee leaders and members, the generous support of community partners and advocates, and the dedication and vision of our governance. Together, we can navigate a shifting landscape without losing sight of our common goal: Doing what is best for the children and families of Head Start to help them thrive.

Jessica Rivera-García, Director
Arizona Head Start Association
Children
6,334 behavioral screenings for newly enrolled children
999 received care for chronic health condition
6,960 received preventative dental care
9,880 up-to-date on periodic/diagnostic screenings

Community
364 Head Start/EHS centers statewide
10,026 Head Start/EHS classrooms
1,441 preschool classroom teachers/assistant teachers
459 EHS center-based teachers

Families
111,882 home visits throughout the year
11,059 families received support services
11,039 parents employed or in school/job training
5,151 fathers involved in child’s educational experiences

Arizona Head Start At-a-Glance
211 Head Start programs
11,085 Head Start children
18 Early Head Start programs
3,726 infants/toddlers;
150 pregnant women

OUR MISSION
The mission of AZHSA is to pursue excellence in collaboration with local agencies and partners that promotes educational achievements, family self-sufficiency, and generational progress. To achieve this, we advocate for the wellbeing of a high qualified workforce, including opportunities for state level engagement with key stakeholders and elected leaders.

The Transformative Power of Head Start
Over the decades, millions of families who were struggling with poverty and other socioeconomic challenges have found life-changing support through Head Start programs. Head Start’s two-generation model supports and guides families in achieving their goals for financial stability and growth through education and employment.
In the wake of the pandemic, one of the most critical challenges was a shortage of workers in nearly every field. This was especially devastating in the area of child care, where a survey by the National Association for the Education of Young Children found that 80 percent of respondents reported staffing shortages. Working collaboratively, the Arizona Head Start community hosted a highly successful Job Fair on May 7, 2022. AZHSA members who showcased their Head Start/Early Head Start programs and brought a strong recruiting presence to the event included Alhambra Elementary School District, Catholic Charities, Chicanos Por La Causa, Child Crisis Arizona, the City of Phoenix, Maricopa County, Northern Council of Governments, Pinal Gila Community Child Services, Southwest Human Development, and Urban Strategies. United in a mission to engage teachers, home visitors, and social services professionals in more than 300 job openings and a possible career in early care and education, Job Fair participants included several key stakeholders such as Cactus Kids Preschool and Ottawa University. The announcement of “The Biggest Job Fair in Town” concluded with an open-hearted invitation: The Head Start community has always stood together in our mission: to provide the best quality services to children and families. We’re ready to keep building up the next generation of learners. #HeadStartForward

AZHSA-Sponsored Child Tax Credit Webinar

As part of the American Rescue Plan, the Child Tax Credit provided historic relief to working families. Many families were automatically receiving monthly payments of $250 or $300 per child without taking any action. Unfortunately, some working families have an income so low that they are not required to file taxes and could miss their benefits. Reaching out to the Head Start community, AZHSA sponsored a Child Tax Credit webinar to ensure that every eligible family had the opportunity to sign up for payments before the deadline passed.

Early Childhood Day at the Capitol

Encouraging statewide Head Start community participation, AZHSA leaders joined voices with hundreds of community partners, business leaders, parents, and educators at the Early Childhood Day at the Capitol. Held virtually on February 24, 2022, due to pandemic precautions, the event gave participants a chance to lobby and educate state legislators on what they can do to support young children, families, and the early childhood workforce. Opportunities to foster relationships with legislators enable a better understanding of their positions on early childhood issues.

#HeadStartForward
STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS

Proud Graduates of Parent Advocacy Group Cohort 2
Few things speak more powerfully about the impact of Head Start services than a personal story of life-changing support and transformation. AZHSA founded the Parent Advocacy Group for that very reason: To give our Head Start parents an amplified voice and opportunities to develop confidence and leadership skills on program, community, and statewide levels. As current and former Head Start parents, they share a deep interest in and desire to advocate for the education and well-being of their children. The Parent Advocacy Group participates in trainings provided by community agencies and learns about Arizona’s legislative processes including the most effective way to contact district representatives. Completing all requirements, Parent Advocacy Group Cohort 2 graduates in 2022 were Brad Weyrauch, William Burns, Natasha Neal, Juanita Pearson, and Mary Wilson.

Head Start Leader Named to Phoenix Titan 100 List
Charity Russell, CEO of Pinal Gila Community Child Care Services (PGCCS), was recognized as one of the top business leaders in Phoenix. As the pandemic response closed educational facilities, she led the Head Start organizational shift to home-based teaching and support. Using iPads to ensure virtual connections, PGCCS continued to deliver services and maintain close contact with parents, families, and community providers until it was safe for children to return to in-person programming.

AZHSA Joins in Celebrating Grand Openings
In the wake of pandemic-related disruption and economic distress, Head Start support and services have been a lifeline for many struggling families. Southwest Human Development Head Start responded to a critical need for expansion of access to high-quality, full-working-day child care and education with two grand openings: Solano Elementary Enrollment and Resource Center and Longview Elementary School Head Start. Serving as hubs of community collaboration, both facilities provide new birth-to-five centers in the Osborn School District of Central Phoenix.

Innovative Head Start Center for South Mountain Village
AZHSA leaders joined community and Head Start leaders in celebrating the grand opening of a new Greater Phoenix Urban League Head Start classroom at the Avalon Villas apartment complex. Collaboration between the Greater Phoenix Urban League and Celtic Property Management LLC has resulted in the first privately held housing community in Phoenix with an on-site Head Start classroom. More than half of the children in the classroom are from families who reside in the apartment complex, located at 825 West Broadway Road. The ribbon-cutting ceremony marking this history-making occasion featured Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego.

Charity Russell’s Head Start leadership earned a Phoenix Titan award.

Southwest Human Development Head Start opens new Solano and Longview birth-to-five centers.

Mayor Kate Gallego with Head Start children
AZHSA maintains strong ties to the National Head Start Association (NHSA), communicating frequently on federal-level activities, budget, monitoring, resources, technical assistance, and coordination of efforts. Our presence in Washington D.C. heightens the visibility of the Arizona Head Start community, from voicing concerns to emphasizing the life-changing impact our programs have on vulnerable children and families. During the 2021-22 academic year, AZHSA leaders took advantage of two opportunities to engage virtually with members of Congress or their representatives. At the NHSA Winter Leadership Institute, we met with Michael Wong representing Senator Kyrsten Sinema, Chad Michaels representing Rep. David Schweikert, and Katherine Philips representing Senator Mark Kelly. Virtual meetings with legislators or their representatives at the NHSA Fall Leadership Institute included Rep. Tom O’Halleran, Rep. Paul Gosar, Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick, and Rep. Greg Stanton.

AZHSA plays a key role in the continual improvement of early care and education program delivery including professional growth. In collaboration with Arizona’s Department of Education (ADE) and other key stakeholders, we assist in the implementation of statewide policies, standards, and tools. During the 2021-22 academic year, the Early Childhood Development Committee strengthened our partnership with Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry by providing free staff trainings and improving connections between Outreach Coordinators and Head Start programs. We also continued the work of updating Registry records for a more accurate census of Arizona Head Start program staff. Participation in the Registry’s statewide database provides a world of professional development benefits and advantages for Head Start/Early Head Start staff and programs alike, including opportunities for incentives, awards, and scholarships or grants.

The Registry is a valuable partner in achieving the overarching goal of raising staff education levels and meeting each position’s higher education degree requirements. Increasing staff awareness of and participation in the wide range of benefits available through the Registry supports Head Start staff growth through professional visibility, validation of experience, and career planning. One of the most crucial advantages for Registry users is access to scholarships for higher education, particularly Child Development Associate® certification and associate degrees. In collaboration with ADE, the Committee also provided Head Start programs across the state with resources on free staff trainings and new staff cohorts designed to further professional development with a focus on specific school readiness topics including language and literacy.

The Head Start commitment to professional development Our workforce performance standards require no less than 15 hours of high-quality, intensive professional development each year that has a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction.
Head Start helps children thrive by supporting the entire social-emotional environment with timely screenings, primary and preventative care, immunizations, and treatment for chronic health conditions. Our Integrated Health & Safety Committee continued collaboration with the Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO) to incorporate a new Health Questionnaire as part of the data collection methodologies. This research-based questionnaire will provide a more thorough evaluation of healthcare outcomes to identify best practices and inform continual improvement through trainings, coaching, and mentoring.

Other state-level collaborative and leadership work included:
- Presented “What is Head Start?” at the quarterly contractor’s meeting for AHCCCS (Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System), the state’s Medicaid agency.
- Provided Banner Health with information on Head Start health services and opportunities to support the pregnant women and children in our programs.
- Invited TAPI (Arizona Partnership for Immunization) to share information with the Committee on vaccines and why they are safe, including those developed for COVID-19.
- Attended the Latinx Health Equity Summit, where Committee Chair Marcela Zepeda heard from experts on health equity topics and met the first Latino U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary, Xavier Becerra.
- Began proactive work on the renewal of our nationally recognized Head Start-WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Office of Head Start highlighted our WIC MOU as an example of data-sharing between programs that coordinates services, preserves data confidentiality, and streamlines administrative procedures.

## Health Services Snapshot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Insurance</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Home</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All possible immunizations/exempt</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental Home</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Disabilities & Mental Health

Head Start/EHS programs take advantage of the early intervention window so crucial to remediating developmental delays and disabilities. AZHSA has played a leading role in strengthening statewide collaboration between Arizona’s Child Care Administration, Department of Education (ADE), and Early Intervention Program (AzEIP). During the 2021-22 academic year, the Disabilities & Mental Health Committee focused on wider exposure for Head Start program services and recruitment efforts to reach more of Arizona’s vulnerable children and families. The result was four colorful flyers that are available for use by all AZHSA member organizations and key stakeholders:
- Head Start Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Early Head Start Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)
- Head Start Program Recruitment

The first three flyers are available for viewing and download on the AZHSA website under the menu option of WHAT’S NEW. Available in Dari, English, Farsi, Pashto, and Spanish languages, the flyers are a welcome tool in meeting the long-range goal of increasing Head Start access for children in foster care, those with an IEP/IFSP, military family children, and unhoused children and their families. Committee members began active distribution of the flyers to community partners for ongoing Head Start recruitment support, from local school districts and the Arizona Department of Education to AzEIP service providers, Raising Special Kids, the Arizona Department of Child Safety, Child Crisis Arizona, and other key stakeholders.

## Mental Health and Disabilities Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infants/toddlers with IFSP* or IEP*</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool children with IEP</td>
<td>1,074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal/migrant with IFSP or IEP</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Individualized Education Program (IEP), Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)
To make the goal of strengthening families a reality, Head Start relies on partnerships with an entire network of community agencies and service providers. During the 2021-22 academic year, the Parent, Family & Community Engagement Committee grew in member participation and deepened connections across the state. National changes in the Head Start program added to the momentum with automatic program qualification of children from families who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Focused on the most effective way to support this new enrollment opportunity, we worked closely with other AZHSA committees in finalizing and distributing statewide flyers that showcase the full spectrum of Head Start’s life-changing benefits and services. Foster children represent another vulnerable population that automatically qualifies for Head Start services. With the successful five-year renewal of our Memorandum of Understanding with Arizona Department of Child Safety, we can continue to strengthen collaboration between the two programs through outreach, awareness, and training opportunities.

Support for and expansion of male involvement and engagement in Head Start and Early Head Start programs continued as an area of intensified focus. Male involvement refers to engaging fathers, or any male in the family who serves as a role model or father figure, in the life of a child and actively sharing in that child’s educational journey. Committee members researched and shared strategies and approaches that are being developed and implemented in Head Start programs across the state. One of the most successful and exciting of these initiatives is STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics) Learning Communities for men. In addition to hosting Men’s Nights for fun and family learning, these groups supported participation in the Million Fathers March—an event that asks dads and other male figures to show their commitment to children’s education by escorting them to school.

AZHSA continually promotes growth opportunities for Head Start employees and advocates for Arizona’s Head Start community when staffing needs are being considered for statewide initiatives and/or funding. In addition to maintaining close ties with the statewide higher education system, we have formed agreements with area institutions of higher education that provide unique benefits to Head Start staff.

During the 2021-22 academic year, AZHSA Director Jessica Rivera-Garcia and AZHSA Board President Eve Del Real were invited to serve as panelists at one of the conference sessions for the Association for Career and Technical Education (CTE) of Arizona. The two leaders were able to speak directly to CTE Early Childhood Educators about the benefit of partnering with Head Start programs across the state.

“Head Start has empowered me as a parent to take all that I have learned and apply it to improving the lives of my children. It has inspired me to do more so that we can be a stronger, healthier, and happier family. Head Start is not only preparing my child for kindergarten, but it is also providing my child and family with a great foundation for lifelong academic and personal success.” – JORI SANCHEZ, PHOENIX
The mission of AZHSA is to pursue excellence in collaboration with local agencies and partners that promotes educational achievements, family self-sufficiency, and generational progress. To achieve this, we advocate for the well-being of a high qualified workforce that include opportunities for state-level engagement with key stakeholders and elected leaders. Our current Board of Directors membership includes Head Start directors and associate directors, AZHSA executive leadership and committee chairs, parent representatives, and members at large. For the first time in our history, we had the honor of seating two parent representatives on the Board: William Burns from Child Parent Centers and Juanita Pearson from Catholic Charities Westside Head Start.

The AZHSA Board of Directors
Jessica Rivera-García, AZHSA Executive Director
Eve Del Real: AZHSA Board President, Head Start Director
Maricopa County
Patricia Kirkland: AZHSA Board Vice-President, Head Start Director City of Phoenix
Janell Stringfellow: AZHSA Board Secretary, City of Phoenix Head Start
Shandeen Gomez: AZHSA Board Treasurer, Director of Urban Strategies Early Head Start
Ana Herron-Valenzuela: AZHSA Chair Disabilities & Mental Health Committee, City of Phoenix
Gretchen Bonkoske: AZHSA Chair Early Childhood Development Committee, Education Development Center Maricopa County
Marcela Zepeda: AZHSA Chair Integrated Health & Safety Committee, Chicanos Por La Causa
Sonya Montoya: AZHSA Chair Parent/Family Community Engagement Committee, Northern Arizona Council of Governments
Kristin Andrew: Head Start Director, Child Crisis Arizona
Jennifer Brown: Head Start Director, Northern Arizona Council of Governments
Yatin Dua: Head Start Director, Catholic Charities Westside Head Start
Marcia Flores: Head Start Director Chicanos Por La Causa
Erin Lyons: Head Start Director, Child Parent Centers
Charity Russell: Head Start Director, Pinal Gila Community Child Services
Deb Schlamann: Head Start Director, Western Arizona Council of Governments
Mindy Zapata: Head Start Director, Southwest Human Development
Natalie Alvarez: Affiliate Head Start Director, Greater Phoenix Urban League
Josie Ayon: Affiliate Head Start Director, Booker T. Washington
Elizabeth Camu: Affiliate Head Start Director, Fowler Head Start
Rosa Linda Duron: Affiliate Head Start Director, Alhambra School District
Diana Howsden: Affiliate Head Start Director, Washington Elementary Head Start Program
Janet Zeek: Affiliate Head Start Director, Deer Valley Head Start
Cami Foulk: Member at Large, First Things First
Lori Masseur: Member at Large, Read on Arizona
William Burns: Parent Representative, Child Parent Centers
Juanita Pearson: Parent Representative, Catholic Charities Westside Head Start

Design Partnership for Branded T-Shirt
AZHSA leadership launched a fundraising project in 2022, collaborating with State Forty Eight on a co-branded design exclusively for Arizona Head Start Association. Sale funds generated by the new State Forty Eight T-shirts will be used to send one of the parent representatives on our Board of Directors to the National Head Start Association Conference in May of 2023.
Arizona Head Start Programs

For programs in Apache, Coconino, Navajo, & Yavapai Counties contact:

5 Northern Arizona Council of Governments
(928) 774-9504
nacog.org EHS/HS

For programs in Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, Pima, & Santa Cruz Counties contact:

5 Child-Parent Centers, Inc.
(520) 882-0100
childparentcenters.org EHS/CCP/HS

For programs in Gila & Pinal Counties contact:

5 Pinal Gila Community Child Services, Inc.
(888) 723-7321
pgccs.org EHS/HS

For programs in La Paz, Mohave, & Yuma Counties contact:

5 Western Arizona Council of Governments
(928) 782-1886
wacog.com

For programs in Maricopa County contact:

5 Catholic Charities Westside Head Start
(623) 486-9868
CatholicCharitiesAz.org EHS/HS

5 Child Crisis Arizona
(480) 304-9501
childcrisisaz.org EHS

5 Chicanos Por La Causa - Early Head Start
(602) 716-0156
cplc.org EHS/CCP/HS

5 City of Phoenix Education Division
(602) 262-4040
phoenix.gov/humanservices/program/head-start EHS/CCP/HS

5 Maricopa County Human Services Early Education Division
(602) 372-3700
maricopa.gov/3516/Early-Education-Programs EHS/CCP/HS

5 Southwest Human Development Head Start
(602) 560-0000
swhd.org/program/head-start EHS/CCP/HS

Urban Strategies, Early Head Start
602-353-5317
earlyheadstart.urbanstrategies.us/arizona/

3 Alhambra School District Head Start
(602) 246-5155
alhambraesd.org

3 Booker T. Washington Child Development Center, Inc.
(602) 252-4743
btwichild.org

3 Deer Valley Head Start
(623) 445-4991
dvusd.org

3 Fowler Head Start
(623) 474-7260
fesd.org

3 Greater Phoenix Urban League Head Start
(602) 276-9305
gphxchild.org

3 Washington Elementary School District
(602) 347-4806
wesd.org

For Migrant & Seasonal Program Services contact:

3 Chicanos Por La Causa Early Childhood Development
(602) 307-5818
cplc.org CCP

For Tribal Program Services contact:

3 Cocopah Head Start
(928) 627-2811
cocopah.com

3 Colorado River Indian Tribes Head Start
(928) 662-4311
crit-nsn.gov/critheadstart

3 Gila River Indian Community Head Start
(520) 562-6901
gilariver.org

3 Havasupai Head Start
(928) 448-2821
havasupai-nsn.gov

3 Hopi Head Start
(928) 734-3512
hopi-nsn.gov

3 Hualapai Tribe Head Start
(928) 769-2522
hualapai-nsn.gov

3 Navajo Nation Head Start
(928) 871-6902
navajoheadstart.org

3 Pascua Yaqui Head Start
(520) 838-7150
pascuayaqui-nsn.gov

3 Quechan Head Start
(760) 572-0263
quechantribe.com/departments/head-start.html

3 Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Early Childhood Education Center
(480) 362-2200
www.saltriverschools.org

3 San Carlos Apache Tribe Head Start Program
(928) 475-2740
sancarlosapache.com

3 Tohono O’odham Head Start
(520) 383-7800
tonation-nsn.gov

3 White Mountain Apache Tribe Head Start Program
(928) 338-4938
whitemountainapache.org

indicates Grantee
indicates Subgrantees

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