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Contact:

Altoria E. White

Director, Strategic Communications

Episcopal Children's Services

(904) 612-5982 (C)

[altoria.white@ecs4kids.org](mailto:altoria.white@ecs4kids.org)

## **EPISCOPAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES OPENS NEW HEAD START CENTER IN ALACHUA COUNTY**

**Hawthorne, Fla.**, April 4, 2022 – Episcopal Children's Services (ECS) has opened the doors to its newest Head Start/Early Head Start center in Alachua County in the city of Hawthorne. This early education center is the first ECS center in the city to serve children and their families with a variety of resources including early learning, health and mental health services, nutrition and disability services as well as parent and community engagement resources. The center will serve children from birth to the age of five, with two classrooms focusing on Head Start and Early Head Start curriculum.

The center, located at 5837 SE Highway 301 will serve 28 children and families in a community where over 50% of children under the age of five live in poverty. In Alachua County, 18% of children are food insecure and do not have reliable access to nutritious food. Episcopal Children's Services programs offer a nutrition assessment and provide daily nourishing snacks and meals. ECS also hopes to serve as welcome relief in the Hawthorne community as a quarter of households in the area dedicate a large percentage of their monthly budgets to child care. Episcopal Children's Services programs provide free, high quality early education services available by application at [www.ecs4kids.org](http://www.ecs4kids.org) or by scheduling in person appointments with the center's Family Advocate.

ECS programs provide additional family supports, such as literacy workshops, parenting skills training, as well as targeted attention on meeting specialized needs to children with disabilities, behavioral challenges, and health concerns. This is all a part of the comprehensive approach to total school readiness. "We are thrilled to open our newest center in Hawthorne and expand quality services in this area to even more children and families," said ECS Chief Executive Officer Connie Stophel. "Alachua County and particularly the City of Hawthorne's population is growing rapidly. We are delighted to be able to meet the need with our services."

The Hawthorne Head Start/Early Head Start center will hold an open house this Wednesday, April 6 from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. for the community to tour the building, receive additional information about the enrollment process and meet the staff.

### **About Episcopal Children's Services**

Episcopal Children's Services serves more than 25,000 children and their families in 14 counties in Florida. ECS offers School Readiness, Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Baker, Bradford, Clay, Duval, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, Marion, Dixie, Gilchrist, Lake, Levy, Citrus and Alachua counties.

ECS uses research and best practices to help families ensure their children enter school ready to learn. Talented, dedicated teachers and staff work proactively with children from birth to age five and their families to build a strong educational foundation.

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