



Florida Head Start Association

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LETTER FROM FHSA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we approach our nation's one-year anniversary gripped by the COVID -19 pandemic, which cost people's lives and exposed our communities' inequities. The healing process continues and rightful so as there is still so much more work that needs to be done.

Our Congressional leaders have taken a bold step towards helping America's most at-risk children and families with the [American Reuse Plan Act of 2021](#). This package will help with childcare, paid leave, the child tax credit, and extended rental assistance that families we serve most desperately need. The package also includes [\\$1 Billion in Head Start](#) recovery funding to ensure local programs continue delivering safe, high-quality services.

As our nation continues to heal and recover, FHSA commends Congress and President Biden for their tenacity to help struggling families.

FHSA would like to thank those that supported us while hosting our first virtual conference & expo on March 3-5, "*Head Start Leaders 2021: Quality Focused - Innovation Driven*". There were over 160 Head Start, Early Head Start directors, managers, staff, teachers, and policy council attendees participating in this three-day virtual event, complete with 30 educational breakout sessions and learning opportunities from other Head Start colleagues. All sessions were recorded and available to registered attendees until April 5.

We could not have been more pleased with this year's keynote speaker, Dr. Iheoma U. Iruka Thompson. Dr. Iruka Thompson provided attendees with an in-depth look at Head Start's role in dismantling systemic racism in Early Care and Education and how eliminating white-centeredness is paramount as we move towards realizing racial equity for our youngest children. This year's closing session panel discussion was led by LaTanya Wynn-Hall, Regional Executive Director, Lutheran Services Florida, Duval; Dr. Sabrina Tassy-Lewis, Early Head Start Section Manager, Community Action and Human Services Department, Miami; and Kathy Vega, Associate Executive Director, Redlands Christian Migrant Association, on how their programs pivoted and leaned into the curve to become more adaptable and innovative all while tackling COVID-19.

Save the date for FHSA 2022 annual conference & expo March 2-4, Orlando, FL.

Hope to see you there,
Wanda Minick
FHSA Executive Director

A GLIMPSE OF WHAT'S INSIDE:

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Florida Head Start
State Collaboration Office

Gold Level



Bronze Level



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UPDATES FROM THE OFFICE OF HEAD START



The Office of Head Start (OHS) named its new [Director, Bernadine Futrell, Ph.D.](#)



Dr. Futrell, a Head Start child alumni, has indeed come full circle and is a testament to Head Start works. She launched her career as an assistant Head Start teacher in Richmond, Virginia, and led the superintendent certification program at the American Association of School Administrators. Prior she served as the senior director for effective practice with the National Head Start Association (NHSA). We are thrilled to have Dr. Futrell serve in her new role, and FHSA looks forward to partnering with her as we work together to strengthen Head Start and supporting kids, families, and communities on their path to success. For more information about Dr. Futrell, [click here.](#)

[President Biden Announces Vaccine Priority for Child Care, Head Start, and Early Childhood Setting](#)

On March 1, 2021, President Biden announced that he is directing states to prioritize teachers, early educators, and child care staff for COVID-19 vaccination. Staff in child care, Head Start, and other early childhood settings will be able to sign up for appointments.



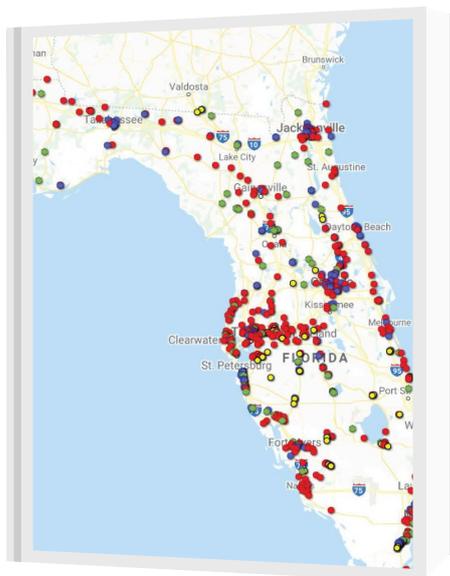
UPDATES FROM HSSCO

The HSSCO and FHSA will host its monthly Directors group call on [March 18 at 10:00 a.m.](#) Watch your inboxes for meeting details.

The Florida Office of Early Learning (OEL) will be hosting their PreK-K Transition to Kindergarten Summits this Spring 2021. These summits are set to kick off in April. Each two-day summit (8:30 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. each day) will inspire preschool and public school educators as they plan ways to support the transitional changes children and families face when moving from preschool to kindergarten. For more information about this summit, [click here.](#)

OEL has a few proposed rules and updated forms affecting Statewide Provider Contracts for the School Readiness and VPK Programs. The State Board of Education will meet on March 17, 2021. [Click here](#) to view a complete list of rules and forms.

Have you viewed the OEL March Parent pages? March is National Reading Month. [Click here](#) to read about the importance of storytime and how it affects brain development, Summer VPK, Development Disabilities & Cerebral Palsy Awareness, and so much more.



What's Happening Around the State

Let's travel around the state to see what Head Start/Early Head Start programs have been up to.

Congratulations to LaTanya Wynn-Hall, regional executive director for Lutheran Services Florida (LSF) Duval Head Start Program for being recognized as Jacksonville 2021 Image Pinnacle Award recipient for her remarkable achievements in Jacksonville's African American community. [Click here](#) to read more about this prestigious award.



Dual Language Learners Week was February 22-26, 2021. Our friends at The Early Learning Coalition of Palm Beach County EHS/CCP shared how their program celebrated through this [video clip](#) of the fun their kids had while honoring different languages and how "Everyone Smiles in the Same Language". Take a moment to watch their [video clip here](#).

Florida Legislative Activities

Florida's 2021 Legislative Session kicked off on March 2nd and runs through April 30. Issues impacting Florida's children and families will once again be at the forefront. The Florida Head Start Association will keep members informed about Legislation that impacts early learning and policy issues that influence Head Start programs, kids, and families.

This year's session will be a little different due to COVID-19. Roaming the Capitol halls is not permissible at this time as access to the Capitol is restricted. The House and Senate have issued COVID-19 Protocols. [Click here](#) to view the House safety measures, and [here](#) for the Senate.

One of the most significant legislation pieces FHS is monitoring is [HB 419](#) and its Senate companion bill [SB 1282](#). The 180-page [Early Learning bill by Rep. Grall \(R-Vero Beach\) HB 419](#) reorganizes the Office of Early Learning into the Department of Education (DOE) to integrate early childhood with the rest of the state's education system, creating a birth - 20 education system. This bill's central policy would be a uniform accountability system for the private and public pre-kindergarten providers around the state, along with professional training standards for programs and teachers. The bill would replace the current kindergarten readiness screener to evaluate Pre-K programs months after the child exited the program. Instead, programs would use progress-monitoring assessments to measure learning gains along with observations of the teaching process and parent satisfaction surveys. [On March 3rd, the House Early Learning & Elementary Education Subcommittee unanimously advanced HB 419 to its second of four committee assignments.](#)

[HB 575 - The Gold Seal Quality Care Program](#) by Rep. Omphroy (D- part of Broward) (CO-SPONSORS) Rep. Valdés (D-part of Hillsborough) This is a related bill to HB 419 and was [heard on March 11 in the Early Learning & Elementary Education Subcommittee and passed favorably](#). The bill provides a type two transfer of administrative responsibility from the Department of Children and Families to the Florida Department of Education (DOE), placing rulemaking authority with the State Board of Education (SBE). This bill revises the Gold Seal program accrediting standards and the requirements for approving an accreditor under the program and allows DOE to revoke an accrediting entity's approval if it has accredited 10 or fewer child care providers in the previous 5 years. The bill also allows the DOE to recommend to the SBE that a Gold Seal provider maintain its status after it is cited for certain violations in specified circumstances. It revises school readiness provider a differential payment of 20 percent vs. up to 20 percent.

Florida Legislative Activities Continued

[SB 380 Child Restraint by Sen. Perry](#) (R- Gainesville) This bill replaces the current law by increasing the age of children, for whom operators of motor vehicles must protect by using a crash-tested, federally approved child restraint device from age five years or younger to age six years or younger. The bill also increases the child's age for which use of a separate carrier, an integrated child seat, or a child booster seat is authorized from age four through five years to age four through six years. This bill passed all its committees and is currently placed on the calendar for its 2nd reading.

[SB 604 Dental Therapy by Sen. Brandes](#) (R- Pinellas) has a House companion [HB 961 by Rep. Bell \(R-DeSoto, Hardee and part of Polk\) \(CO-SPONSORS\), Rep. Plasencia](#) (Parts of Brevard and Orange). This bill authorizes Medicaid to reimburse for dental services provided in a mobile dental unit that is owned by, operated by, or contracted with a health access setting or another similar setting or program; requiring the chair of the Board of Dentistry to appoint a Council on Dental Therapy within a specified timeframe; authorizing a dental therapist under the general supervision of a dentist to administer local anesthesia and operate an X-ray machine, expose dental X-ray films, and interpret or read such films if specified requirements are met. This bill had its first reading on March 2 in the House and was introduced in the Senate.

[SB 414 Economic Self-sufficiency by Sen. Perry](#) (R- Gainesville) requires the Auditor General to perform audits on SNAP, TCA, Medicaid, School Readiness, and House Choice Voucher programs to determine fiscal cliffs created by requirements to participate. Its House companion [HB 1349 by Rep. Aloupis](#) (R-part of Miami-Dade) requires the University of Florida to coordinate with OEL to analyze the assistance programs.

[HB 1287 Child Care Facility Transportation](#) by Rep. Diamond (D-part of Pinellas) Requires certain vehicles, by a specified date, to be equipped with a reliable alarm system that meets specified criteria; requires DCF to adopt by rule minimum safety standards for such systems & to maintain a list of approved alarm manufacturers & alarm systems. This bill is on the Children, Families & Seniors Subcommittee agenda for March 15. Its Senate companion bill [SB 252](#) by Sen. Stewart (D-Orange); (CO-INTRODUCERS) Sen. Torres (D-parts of Orange and Osceola) are identical.

[SB 238- Medicaid Eligibility](#) by Sen. Book (D-Broward) revises the period of eligibility for Medicaid for postpartum women. [HB 645 - Postpartum Medicaid Coverage](#) by Rep. Brown (CO-SPONSORS) Driskell; Duran; Eskamani; Woodson seeks a federal waiver approval or submits state plan amendments. This bill is in its first reading.

UPDATES FROM NHSA



[Congress Passes Emergency Spending Bill to Provide Relief to Families and Communities Impacted by COVID-19](#)

WASHINGTON, DC – The National Head Start Association (NHSA) today celebrated the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP), which includes \$1 billion for Head Start and Early Head Start, among many other key provisions to address the devastating impact of COVID-19. The additional funding for Head Start will provide essential support for local programs' continued delivery of safe, high-quality services to at-risk children and their families. [Click here](#) to read NHSA press release in its entirety.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Calendar of Events](#)

[Employment Opportunities](#)

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