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DESPITE PANDEMIC CHALLENGES, EPISCOPAL CHILDREN SERVICES ACHIEVES STELLAR REVIEW FROM NATIONAL GOVERNING AGENCY

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., December 17, 2021 - After a weeklong review of Episcopal Children's Services (ECS) Head Start and Early Head Start programs, the Administration for Children and Families found ECS compliant with the requirements of the Head Start Performance Standards. In October of this year, ECS completed the Focus Area One (FA1) monitoring review, which allowed the Office of Head Start (OHS) to understand how programs are progressing within the agency over a five-year grant cycle period. ECS received a perfect score.

The report showed zero areas of noncompliance or concern and no deficiencies. The summary particularly highlights health services of the agency, sighting the team's ability to work together and provide health care access to families in the community during and beyond the ongoing pandemic. ECS was also commended for its community outreach and engagement throughout the pandemic, despite obstacles that came with social distancing and isolation. The staff was highlighted for reaching out to families in quarantine to consistently assess needs and assist whenever possible. This collaborative community approach to family well-being helped improve outcomes for families and children in the 14-county area.

COVID-19 also brought new challenges to the traditionally fully enrolled programs as the pandemic forced center closures and brought anxiety concerns to face-to-face services. ECS was praised for implementing new safety protocols and creatively filling vacancies to attract families who were concerned about health and safety in the centers. The program's overall enrollment increased significantly.

Overall, ECS was commended highly in all areas, including program accessibility, wraparound services provided by its childcare partners and diversity of staff to meet the needs of the community served by the program.

"Episcopal Children's Services continues to excel and surpass expectations in providing quality services to our children and families in the Northeast and Central Florida areas," ECS Chief Executive Officer, Connie Stophel stated. "I am beyond proud of the work we do, and our staff is among the best in the business. The results of this review validate what we work hard to achieve every day."

Autumn Tomas, Vice President of ECS Head Start and Early Head Start agrees. "I am so grateful for the fabulous team at ECS who continued to go above and beyond through the pandemic," she said. "The results of the Focus Area One Monitoring visit only demonstrated what I already knew...we are one big diverse family all working toward the one goal of providing an excellent HS/EHS program!"

With the notification of outstanding performance and compliance, the agency looks forward to continuing to do the work in the community and providing resources and assistance for those in need.

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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