



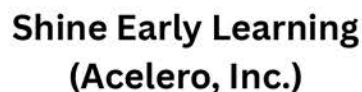
Florida Head Start Association
Excellence. Advocacy. Leadership.

ANNUAL REPORT FY 23-24



OUR CORPORATE FRIENDS

Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much.
— Hellen Keller —



Thank you for your support!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from FHSA President & Executive Director	1
Looking Forward	2
FHSA Board of Directors 2023 - 2024	3
FHSA Committees	4
Strategic Scorecard	6
Financials	7
A Year in Review	
<i>Advocacy - Early Learning</i>	8
<i>National Advocacy</i>	9
<i>Children's Advocacy Week</i>	10
<i>Public Awareness</i>	11
<i>Congressional Engagement</i>	12
FHSA Dashboard	13
Compensation & Benefits Study	14
Leadership & Commitment	15
Training Events	16
Member Engagement	17
Awards Program	18
Grantee Members	19
Florida Head Start Program Quick Facts	20

MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Dear Members, Partners, and Friends of the Florida Head Start Association,

We are privileged to present the Florida Head Start Association's (FHSA) Annual Report for the fiscal year October 1, 2023, to September 30, 2024 — a year defined by resilience, partnership, and purpose.

From classrooms to boardrooms and in every corner of Florida, Head Start programs continue to change the trajectory of children's lives. More than 40,000 children and families accessed not only early learning but also health services, nutritious meals, and pathways toward stability. Head Start programs have paved the way for many parents to pursue education, training, and employment. That impact is real, and it is made possible by *you*.

This year, programs persevered through staffing shortages, inflationary pressures, and structural barriers. Yet, day after day, our network responded with innovation, empathy, and excellence. FHSA stepped forward with strong advocacy, strategic partnerships, and a renewed commitment to amplifying the stories that fuel change.

Highlights from this year include:

- **Strategic Advocacy:** We mobilized members statewide to champion Head Start during key legislative moments to ensure decision-makers heard directly from the front lines.
- **Collaborative Growth:** We strengthened relationships with partners across sectors, creating new opportunities for collaborations in health, nutrition, and family empowerment.
- **Voices Amplified:** Through storytelling and narrative-building, we've elevated the experiences of Head Start families, transforming data into powerful human stories.

None of this would be possible without our members, partners, donors, and friends. Your advocacy, your time, and your belief in our shared mission have are the foundation of our success. Thank you for standing with us.

Together, we are not only building stronger programs — we are supporting resilient families and strengthening communities. As we look ahead, FHSA remains focused on the future: aligning with more community partners, supporting practitioners on the front lines, and equipping them with the tools needed to prepare children for school and help families thrive.

We are committed to strengthening the voice of Head Start in Florida and invite you to continue shaping what comes next. Transformation begins when we lead with unity, vision, and heart.

In Partnership,



Maria Riestra
FHSA President



Wanda Minick
FHSA Executive Director

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

We envision a future where all Head Start families thrive.

OUR MISSION

Empower members to advocate, lead, and enhance the education, health, and social services provided to families by Head Start.

OUR PURPOSE

To provide high-quality professional development for Head Start, Early Head Start, and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start personnel, parents, and community members;

To advocate for policies that address the needs of vulnerable families with young children; and,

To provide a statewide forum for addressing the challenges faced by Head Start leaders in serving children from birth to age 5 and their families.

WHO WE ARE & WHO WE SERVE

The Florida Head Start Association, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit, nonpartisan organization, was founded to represent the interests of Florida's Head Start/Early Head Start, Migrant & Seasonal Head Start/Early Head Start, and Child Care Partnerships. Our commitment to elevating the Head Start voice is demonstrated through the programs, conferences, training, and events we have provided since 1999. These initiatives unite the Head Start Community, fostering a sense of connection and shared purpose as we strive to better serve families and children facing the greatest barriers throughout the state.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**President**

Dr. Maria Riestra-Quintero, Directors Affiliate Group
Assistant Director Early Childhood Programs, Miami-Dade Community Action and Human Services Department

**Secretary**

Bob Bialas, Friends Affiliate Group
Executive VP of Children & Head Start Services, Lutheran Services of Florida

**Past President**

Kymberly Cook, Friends Affiliate Group
Executive Director, Children's Home Society of Florida

**Vice President**

Sean Murnane, Staff Group
Contract Administrator, County & Family Services Department Head Start Division Orange County

**Treasurer**

Gloria Gonzalez, Staff Affiliate Group
Regional Director, Redlands Christian Migrant Association



Ex-Officio, FHSA Executive Director
Wanda Minick

DIRECTORS



Terri Barlow, Directors Affiliate Group
Assistant Director, Brevard Public Schools Head Start Program



Brigette Davis, Staff Affiliate Group
Associate Director of Head Start/Early Head Start, Children First, Inc.



Akia Davis, Directors Group
Director of Early Head Start, Early Learning Coalition of Palm Beach County, Inc.



Nacole Guyton, Friends Affiliate Group
Executive Director, Florida Association for Community Action



LaFonda Heidel, Directors Group
Chief Executive Officer, Kids Incorporated of the Big Bend



Tanya Stanton, Directors Group
Director of Early Learning Programs, You Thrive Florida



Maritza Vazquez, Friends Affiliate Group
Emotional Support Specialist, Children's Home Network



Vicki Wolin, Friends Affiliate Group
Director of Early Childhood Programs, Pasco County Schools Head Start Program

ADVOCACY

The Advocacy Committee ensures FHSA remains a powerful voice for issues that impact Head Start programs across Florida. From supporting our mission and strategic plan to championing policy priorities, the committee fosters collaboration and celebrates the successes of local programs serving children and families statewide.

Chair: Kymerly Cook, FHSA Past President

AWARDS

The Awards Committee leads the development and implementation of FHSA's annual awards program, honoring excellence and innovation across our community. The committee manages the nomination process, selects recipients, and advances Florida's nominees to the regional level.

Chair: Arlene Dobison

BY-LAWS

The By-Laws Committee safeguards the integrity and clarity of FHSA's guiding rules. By ensuring our bylaws reflect best practices and evolving needs, the committee helps keep the association strong, transparent, and mission-focused.

Chair: Tim Center

FINANCE

From crafting the annual budget to guiding fundraising efforts, the Finance Committee ensures FHSA has the resources to sustain and grow its work. The committee also reviews financial performance and recommends membership dues, working closely with the Board and staff to steward funds responsibly.

Chair: Gloria Gonzalez

MEMBERSHIP

The Membership Committee leads efforts to grow and strengthen FHSA's network. By developing member services, enhancing engagement opportunities, and reviewing policies, the committee builds a vibrant, connected community committed to advancing Head Start's mission.

Chair: Sean Murnane

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This Professional Development Committee champions learning and career growth for Head Start professionals. Partnering with Florida institutions, it identifies funding opportunities, advocates for continuing education, and organizes training and technical assistance to help programs meet and exceed educational mandates.

Chair: Francesca Brown and Michelle Toral

RESEARCH

The Research Committee drives data-informed decision-making for FHSA and its members. By conducting, supporting, and sharing high-quality research, the committee informs policy, strengthens program effectiveness, and promotes positive outcomes for children, families, and communities.

Chair: Dr. Maria Riestra-Quintero and Kim Singer

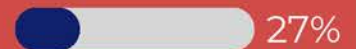


This plan spans from October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2025, and current statuses are based on the FY 2023-2024 period.

SMART
GOAL
#1

Ensure that FHSA has sufficient financial resources for ongoing needs and strategic plan implementation.

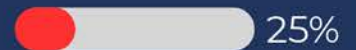
STATUS



SMART
GOAL
#2

Expand FHSA's advocacy efforts and increase the awareness of Head Start Programs with the general public, state, and local officials.

STATUS



SMART
GOAL
#3

Improve the coordination of, enhance the content of, and expand the delivery methods of Professional Development.

STATUS



SMART
GOAL
#4

Identify methods of increasing member engagement in FHSA activities.

STATUS



FY 23- 24 FINANCIAL STANDING

The success of this year is a testament to the commitment and engagement of our members.

41%

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

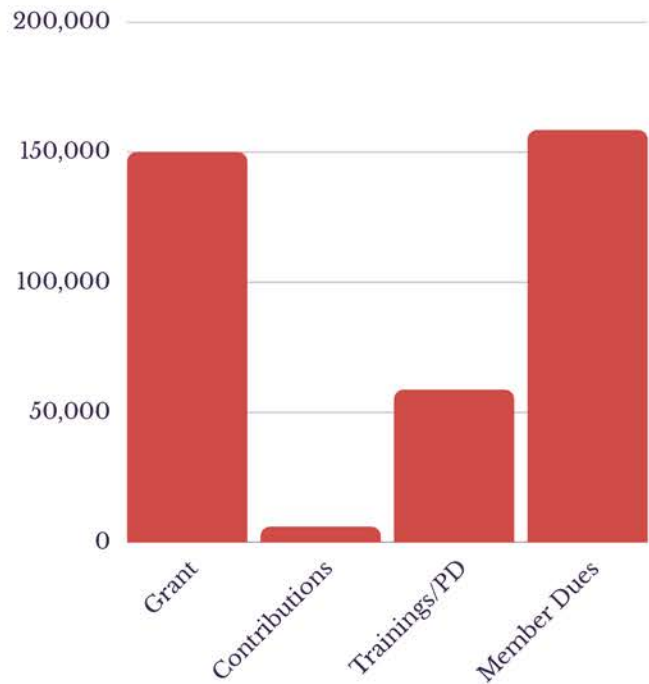
Clear evidence of our expanding reach, influence, and impact.

\$71K

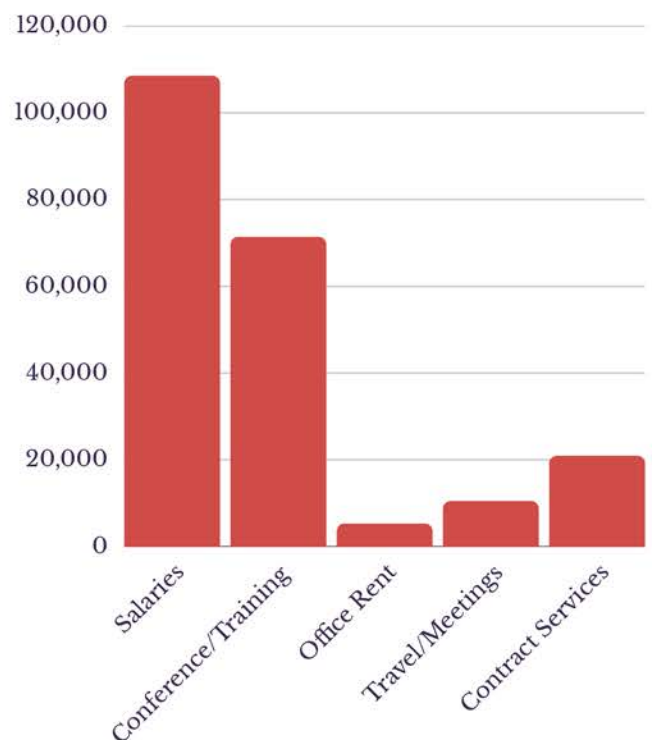
NET INCOME

We delivered impactful training, including the Fall Leadership Training, an Annual Awards Luncheon, SSCBT certification courses, a new strategic plan, and the release of *The Wage Study*.

TOTAL REVENUE \$373,283.00



TOTAL EXPENSES \$301,602.68



ADVOCACY - EARLY LEARNING

If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much.
— Marian Wright Edelman —

You can take pride in knowing that FHSA is the unified voice for Florida's Head Start community at both the state and federal levels. Our Executive Director serves as a key member of the Early Learning Consortium, a coalition of leaders working together to strengthen Florida's early learning system and improve outcomes for the hundreds of thousands of children you support each year.

This partnership brings together provider associations, funders, and subject-matter experts to share insights, address challenges, and present strategic recommendations to state leaders and policymakers. Through this collective advocacy, we help ensure early learning programs remain strong, equitable, and responsive to the needs of children and families.

Members of the Early Learning Consortium include:

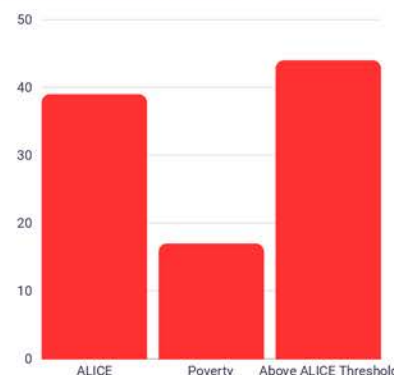
- Association of Early Learning Coalitions (AELC)
- Florida Alliance of Children's Councils & Trusts (FACCT)
- Florida Association for the Education of Young Children (FLAEYC)
- Florida Family Child Care Home Association (FFCCHA)
- Florida Head Start Association (FHSA)
- The Children's Forum
- The Children's Movement of Florida
- United Way of Florida

ALICE IN FOCUS

In 2019, 17% of children below the ALICE Threshold in Florida were infants (0–2 years), 12% were preschool-age (3–4 years), and 71% were school-age (5–17 years). Children in Florida's struggling households are from all demographic groups; they include children born in the U.S. and abroad, of all abilities and races/ethnicities, living with parents or guardians who are married or single, working or not working.

Source: United for ALICE, ALICE In Focus: Children National Research Brief, 2022

Children by Household, Florida, 2019
Number of Children in Florida = 4.2 Million



NATIONAL ADVOCACY

An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.
— Benjamin Franklin —



Pictured L to R: Myra Ingram,
Erika Lundy, Khari Garvin,
and Wanda Minick

We continued our active role in national conversations by participating in the National Head Start Association's (NHSA) Leadership Institute and the annual State Leadership of Associations Meeting (SLAM) at NHSA headquarters. These convenings brought together state and regional association leaders from across the country to strategize around strengthening Head Start's collective voice. FHSA representatives also engaged directly with the Office of Head Start leadership, including Director Khari Garvin, to discuss ways to sustain safe, high-quality programming for children and families.

Additionally, FHSA mobilized members to join NHSA-led advocacy efforts, including the *Families Want a Strong Head Start* campaign – the most successful NHSA letter-writing campaign in recent history – where several Florida programs finished in the top 15 nationwide for parent and caregiver outreach:



Children First, Inc.



4C Head Start



Episcopal Children's
Services, Inc.

CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY WEEK

Education costs money, but then so does ignorance.
— Sir Claus Moser —

As a long-standing partner in Children's Week at the Capitol, FHSA supported program participation in legislative meetings and highlighted the importance of early learning investments. Programs from across the state engaged with lawmakers, while children's artwork was proudly displayed in the Capitol Rotunda, symbolizing the impact of Head Start on families and communities.



PUBLIC AWARENESS

Children are our most valuable resource.
— John F. Kennedy —

In October, Head Start programs nationwide celebrate the continued legacy of the Head Start program that empowers children and families through education, health, and social services. As part of that effort, Orange County Head Start received a Proclamation from Mayor Jerry L. Demings and six County Commissioners recognizing Head Start Awareness Month.



Orange County Mayor Jerry L. Demings pictured with Orange County Head Start Staff and Commissioner Nicole Wilson (D-1), Commissioner Christine Moore (D-2), Commissioner Mayra Urbie (D-3), Commissioner Maribel Gomez Cordero (D-4), Commissioner Kelly Martinez Semrad (D-5), and Commissioner Mike Scott (D-6).

CONGRESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The beautiful thing about learning is that nobody can take it away.
— B.B. King —

Throughout the year, we have worked to strengthen relationships with federal lawmakers. Florida representatives participated in NHSA's Hill visits during Fall and Winter Leadership Institutes, ensuring Florida's priorities were heard at the national level. In addition, we encouraged grantees to invite Members of Congress to district site visits during their annual recess, providing a firsthand look at Head Start's impact through classroom engagement, staff stories, and parent testimonies.

These local and national efforts combined to keep Head Start visible and influential in the policymaking process.



THE FHSA DASHBOARD

Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud.
— Maya Angelou —

At the Fall Leadership Training event, FHSA proudly unveiled its new FHSA Dashboard, a powerful tool designed to advance our advocacy efforts across the state.

The dashboard brings to life FHSA’s mission of creating safe, healthy, nurturing environments for all children in Florida by providing clear, accessible data on the needs and impact of Head Start programs. Users can explore key areas such as:

- Access to early childhood programs
- Cost of care for families
- Family services provided through Head Start
- Workforce development that supports educators and staff

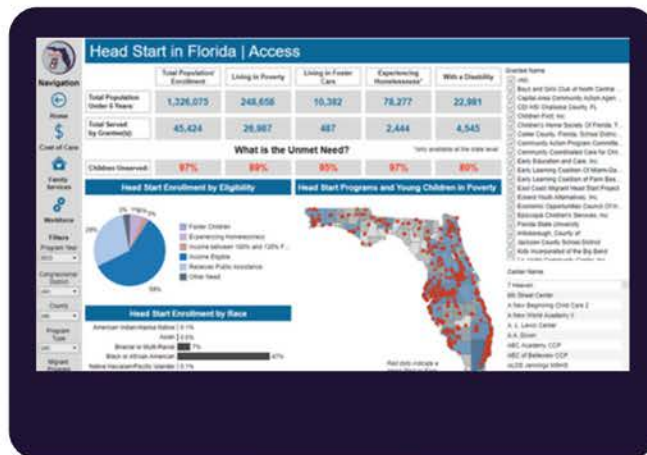
Since its launch, the FHSA Dashboard has been used to inform legislative meetings, advocacy presentations, and social media campaigns that highlight both the critical role of Head Start programs and the ongoing need to secure funding for the future.

By equipping decision-makers and stakeholders with clear, localized data, the dashboard strengthens FHSA's leadership in early childhood advocacy and underscores the importance of effective, affordable child care programs across Florida.

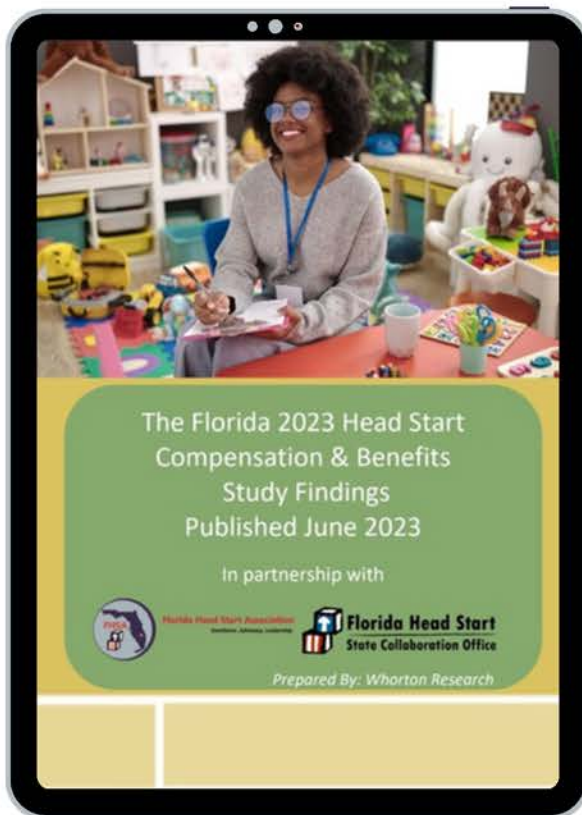
Did You Know?

Florida's Head Start
network spans
700+ sites across
63 counties.

Scan this QR code
to explore each
program's impact
on the Florida Head
Start Dashboard.



COMPENSATION & BENEFITS STUDY



In June 2023, FHSA, in partnership with the Florida Head Start Collaboration Office and Whorton Research, released the *Florida Head Start Compensation & Benefits Study*. This comprehensive review provides a critical snapshot of staffing, wages, benefits, and workforce trends across Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Florida.

The study serves as an important tool in advocacy, helping FHSA and its members demonstrate the realities of workforce recruitment and retention. With credible statewide data, FHSA is better positioned to make the case for sustainable funding, competitive compensation, and strong workforce supports that ensure children and families continue to receive high-quality services.

While the full report is available **exclusively** to our members, its findings are being used to inform policy discussions, legislative priorities, and workforce development strategies statewide.

This effort reinforces our commitment to supporting our members and strengthening Florida's early childhood education system for its most vulnerable children.



LEADERSHIP & COMMITMENT

Commitment is an act, not a word.
— Jean-Paul Sartre —

Leadership Development

FHSA continues to elevate leaders within the Head Start community. Members participated in national training opportunities, advocacy fellowships, and policy conversations to strengthen their ability to lead at local, state, and federal levels.



Proper sanitation techniques



Commitment to Child Safety

Child safety remained at the forefront of our advocacy. In partnership with the Office of Head Start, FHSA promoted the "Building a Culture of Safety" campaign, resharing resources and webinars designed to strengthen active supervision and ensure that every Head Start program remains a trusted and safe environment for children. Additionally, we updated national guidelines for the Head Start Program Performance Standards, ensuring that members were prepared to implement new workforce and quality provisions that directly impact the safety and well-being of children.



TRAINING EVENTS

The 2024 Leadership Training and Awards Luncheon Modules I - II was held on January 28 - February 2, 2024, and Module III was held on March 25 - 27, 2024, in Jacksonville, FL. The following attendees earned the Social Skills Competency-Based Training (SSCBT) family service worker credentials through Tennessee State University:

- Gloribel Acevedo, *Orange County Head Start*
- Bloncile Blackwell, *Children's Home Society of Florida - Brevard*
- Shawntay Davis, *Orange County Head Start*
- Jessica Galeba, *CCPS - Baker Center*
- Tabatha Hayes, *Lutheran Services Florida*
- Sean King, *Orange County Head Start*
- Bryn Krehbiel, *Orange County Head Start*
- Deirdre Mercer, *Eckerd Youth Alternatives*
- Rolange Moise, *Our Child Care Inc. DBA Our Little Ones Learning Center*
- Jimmy Noisette, *Our Child Care, Inc. DBA Our Little Ones Learning Center*
- Lazara Otano-Hernandez, *Eckerd Youth Alternatives*
- Shaniqua Peters, *Eckerd Youth Alternatives*
- Veronica Simpson, *Economic Opportunities Council of Indian River County, Inc.*
- Guerdy St.Victor, *Eckerd Youth Alternatives*
- Jatna Suazo, *Lutheran Services of Florida Head Start/Early Head Start*
- Sherica Sutherland, *Hillsborough County BOCC - Head Start*
- Daniella Terry, *Eckerd Youth Alternatives*
- Monisha Williams, *Eckerd Youth Alternatives*
- Markeisha Youmans, *Economic Opportunities Council of Indian River, Inc.*

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT

Website

FY 2023 - 2024

23K

NEW VISITORS

Tangible results showing how far our reach and influence have grown.

Facebook

FY 2023 - 2024

10K

TOTAL CONTENT VIEWS

A milestone in our strategy to elevate Head Start's voice.

Instagram

FY 2023 - 2024

272%

INCREASE IN REACH

A reflection of how our messaging continues to reach and move more people.

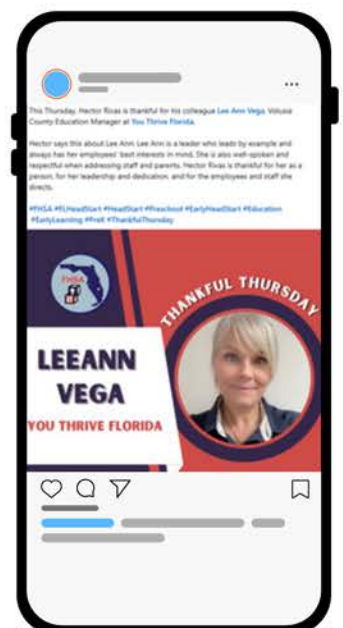
LinkedIn

FY 2023 - 2024

20.7%

AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT RATE

A sign of our momentum and widening impact with our target audience.



AWARDS PROGRAM

Don't let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do..
— John R. Wooden —

Each year, FHSA partners with the Region IV Head Start Association (RIVHSA) and the National Head Start Association (NHSA) to celebrate the extraordinary contributions of Head Start and Early Head Start employees, parents, alumni, volunteers, and community partners whose dedication keeps programs strong and families thriving. At our Annual Awards Luncheon, held during the Leadership Training in Cape Coral, FHSA proudly honored eight state award winners and three national finalists. Of these, four state recipients and all three national finalists advanced to the regional level—and two of our finalists went on to earn national recognition from NHSA.

Parent of the Year
Krystle Dominguez
Mid-Florida Community Services

Father of the Year
Darnellion Brown
Orange County Board of
Commission - Orange County
Head Start

Beating the Odds
Leah Jones
Children's First, Inc.*

Administrator of the Year
Dr. Marie Riestra-Quintero
Miami-Dade Community Action
& Human Services Department

Beating the Odds
Leah Jones
Children's First, Inc.*

Teacher of the Year
Zaida Rojas
Children's Home Society, Orlando

Staff of the Year
Alisa Thorton
The Agricultural and Labor
Program, Inc.*

Support Staff of the Year
Bryan Ward
Episcopal Children's Services*

Achievement Award
Jane Shaw
Children First, Inc.*

Corporate Award
PNC Bank*

Scholarship Head Start Staff Award
LaShawn'te Lee
Children First, Inc.

The NHSA State Finalists

Edward Ziglar Innovation Award
School Board Brevard County**

**Sargent Shriver Excellence
in Community Service Award**
Jean Managini
Mid-Florida Community Services, Inc.*

Aubrey Puckett Memorial Award
Kathleen Sullivan
Children First, Inc.**

Vanessa Rich Leadership Award
Andrea Fraizer
Hillsborough County Board of
Commissioners

HEAD START GRANTEE MEMBERS

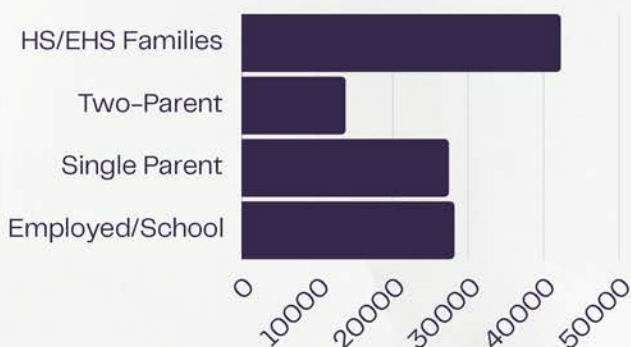
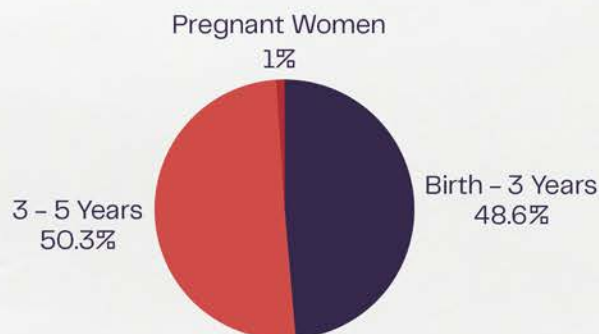
- Agricultural and Labor Program, Inc. Head Start/Early Head Start
- Broward County School Board Head Start/Early Head Start
- Capital Area Community Action Agency, Inc.
- Charlotte County Public Schools Head Start/Early Head Start
- Children First Inc. Head Start/Early Head Start
- Children's Home Society of Florida
- Children's Home Society of Florida - Brevard
- Children's Home Society of Florida - Orlando
- Community Coordinated Care for Children, Inc. (4C)
- Early Education and Care, Inc. Head Start/Early Head Start
- Early Learning Coalition Miami-Dade/Monroe County
- Early Learning Coalition of Palm Beach County, Inc.
- East Coast Migrant Head Start Project - Eastern Region
- Economic Opportunities Council of Indian River Inc.
- Episcopal Children's Services Head Start/Early Head Start
- FSU Early Head Start Program
- Gadsden County School District Head Start
- Hillsborough County Head Start/Early Head Start Program
- Hillsborough County Public Schools Head Start Program
- Jackson County Early Childhood Program
- Kids Academy Inc.
- Kids Incorporated of the Big Bend
- Lee County Public School Board Head Start/Early Head Start
- Leisure City Head Start
- LSF Children & Head Start Services
- Lutheran Services Florida - P.E.P.P.I Head Start
- Lutheran Services Florida Early Head Start- Child Care Partnership
- Lutheran Services Florida Head Start - Duval County
- Lutheran Services Florida Health System
- Lutheran Services Florida Palm Beach Children and Head Start Services
- Lutheran Services of Florida Head Start/Early Head Start
- Martin County School District Head Start
- Miami-Dade Community Action and Human Services Department
- Monroe County Public Schools Head Start
- North Florida Child Development, Inc.
- Orange County Head Start
- Pasco County Head Start
- Redlands Christian Migrant Association
- Santa Rosa School Board Head Start/Early Head Start
- School Board of Brevard County Head Start
- School Board of Polk County
- St. Johns County School District Head Start
- Step-Up Suncoast, Inc.
- Suwannee Valley 4 C's Head Start/Early Head Start
- The School Board of Miami-Dade County
- The School District of Palm Beach County Early Childhood
- Tri-County Community Council, Inc. Head Start/Early Head Start
- You Thrive Florida

Florida Head Start Program Quick Facts

This data is representative of the 2023 Performance Information Report (PIR) from the Office of Head Start for the state of Florida.

STATEWIDE IMPACT

In 2023, Head Start programs served **45,592** children and pregnant women throughout Florida, providing **42,743** families with valuable resources.



Head Start Family Profile

Head Start parents receive support for personal and family goal-setting and guidance on creating a stable and healthy home environment.



Head Start Helps Fuel Florida's Economy

Head Start's federal funding added **\$492,802,267** to Florida's economy.



Florida Head Start Association
Excellence. Advocacy. Leadership.

Florida Head Start Association

111 N. Gadsden Street, Ste. 200
Tallahassee, FL 32301

www.flheadstart.org



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