



## Interoffice Memorandum

June 1, 2022

### AGENDA ITEM

TO: Mayor Jerry L. Demings  
-AND-  
County Commissioners

THRU: Dr. Tracy Salem, Interim Deputy Director  
Community and Family Services Department

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Tracy Salem".

FROM: Sonya L. Hill, Manager  
Head Start Division  
**Contact: Sonya L. Hill, (407) 836-7409**  
**Sandra Moore, (407) 836-8913**

SUBJECT: Consent Agenda Item – June 21, 2022  
Orange County Head Start Self-Assessment Report 2022

The Head Start Division requests Board approval of the Orange County Head Start 2022 Self-Assessment. An annual self-assessment is required to evaluate progress toward meeting goals, compliance with program performance standards throughout the program year, and the effectiveness of the professional development and family engagement systems in promoting school readiness, as mandated by the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 and Head Start Program Performance Standard 1302.102(b)(2)(i-ii).

The Self-Assessment was completed with Head Start employees and external partners on May 25, 2022. The results have been reviewed with the management team and the Head Start Policy Council. The Policy Council approved the Self-Assessment at its Policy Council Special Call meeting on June 1, 2022.

**ACTION REQUESTED: Approval of the Orange County Head Start Self-Assessment Report 2022.**

SLH/smm:jamh

Attachment

# SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2022

Key insights from the annual self-assessment conducted to evaluate progress toward goals, compliance with regulatory requirements and the effective of the program's professional development and family engagement systems in promoting school readiness.

**ORANGE COUNTY HEAD START**

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# I. Introduction

## Program Description

Orange County Head Start (OCHS) is a long-standing program, operating since Head Start's inception in 1965. OCHS operates center-based program services and is funded to serve 1,536 pre-school age children in twenty-two locations throughout Orange County. These geographically dispersed centers are located in county and city owned facilities and on local public-school campuses. Through a formal partnership agreement with the Early Learning Coalition of Orange County, OCHS also provides Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) services to eligible children and families.

## Program Goals

Orange County Head Start's program goals and school readiness goals are:

Program Goals	School Readiness Goals
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Professional Development:</b> Become a learning organization in which staff engages in continuous improvement to reach their potential and improve children and family outcomes.</li> <li>2. <b>Staff Retention:</b> Create an environment that supports staff retention and reduces turnover.</li> <li>3. <b>Physical Health &amp; Mental Wellness:</b> Enhance the physical health and mental wellness of staff, children and families by developing a comprehensive wellness approach.</li> <li>4. <b>Technology:</b> Design and build a technology infrastructure that will provide students, families and staff with access to resources and education to increase children's</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Approaches to Learning:</b> Children will show interest in and curiosity about the world around them. Child will use imagination in play &amp; interactions with others.</li> <li>2. <b>Social &amp; Emotional Development:</b> Children will engage in and maintain positive relationships and interactions. Children will use basic problem-solving skills to resolve conflicts.</li> <li>3. <b>Perceptual, Motor &amp; Physical Development:</b> Children will demonstrate personal safety practice routines. Children will demonstrate increasing control, strength &amp; coordination of small &amp; large muscles.</li> <li>4. <b>Language &amp; Literacy:</b> Children will be able to identify basic concepts of literacy, including phonological awareness, print</li> </ol>

achievement of the skills needed to thrive in a globally connected world.	concepts, alphabet knowledge, and build early reading and writing skills.
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Program Goals	School Readiness Goals
	5. <b>Mathematic Development:</b> Children recognizes number of objects in a small set. Child understands addition as adding to and understands subtraction as taken away from.

## Context for Self-Assessment

In compliance with Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302.102(b)(2), the Self-Assessment is completed once annually to evaluate the program’s progress toward meeting goals, compliance with regulatory requirements, and the effectiveness of professional development and family engagement systems in promoting school readiness.

The management team held an initial meeting to discuss this year’s self-assessment process and the focus areas that would be reviewed by the team. Each manager reviewed program data for their assigned areas to suggest topics for the self-assessment. In addition, the team reviewed last year’s self-assessment report and lessons learned to determine if there were any significant recommendations to consider for this year’s process. One of the key recommendations was to return to meeting in person for the self-assessment. With thoughtful consideration for the health and safety of individuals participating, the management team agrees to host the self-assessment in person this year, which was the first time in two years; since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Timeframe:

January 2022

- Self-Assessment Kick-Off meeting

#### February 2022

- Self-Assessment Plan approved by Policy Council

#### March 2022

- Submit Self-Assessment Plan for Approval to Governing Body
- Orientation for team leaders

#### April 2022

- Self-Assessment

#### May 2022

- Complete Final Self-Assessment Report
- Develop Program Improvement Plan

#### June 2022

- SA Report & Program Improvement Plan approved by Policy Council and Governing Body
- SA Report and Program Improvement Plan submitted to Regional Office

## II. Methodology

### Design and Team Members

A mix of stakeholders, including Head Start management, staff, Policy Council and community partners came together for one day to complete the self-assessment. The Self-Assessment team was divided into small groups of 7 - 8 individuals and assigned a topic to review. A team leader and content expert were assigned to each group to guide them through the analysis and discussion of the data provided.

Using a strength-based approach, the Self-Assessment team analyzed program data to determine the performance of the program in key areas of focus.

### Topics

The topics included the following:

- Human Resources – Staff retention

- Staff Wellness – Supporting the wellness of the Head Start workforce
- Fiscal – Use of COVID relief funds
- School Readiness – Supporting teachers in promoting school readiness
- Family Engagement – Family partnership process

## Data Sources

The team looked at multiple sources of data, including staff surveys, financial reports, human resource reports, goal action plans and progress, child assessment data, family outcomes and staff training records.

## III. Self-Assessment Results

The results of the Self-Assessment will be used to develop a plan for continuous improvement with the objective being to strengthen program quality and ensure sustained progress toward goals and objectives. Below are the key insights from the team along with the recommendations categorized as progress toward a goal, a systemic issue or innovation.

### Key Insights

#### **Human Resources System**

There were several discoveries in Human Resources with regard to the hiring process, compensation, engagement and training. In terms of the hiring and onboarding process, it currently takes a considerable amount of time for a candidate to be vetted by the Orange County Human Resources Department and cleared for the necessary background and credential requirements. Currently there is only one representative from Human Resources that is assigned to recruitment for all of the divisions in the Community and Family Services Department. Another key insight identified is that at the time of application, candidates are often unaware of the potential locations for placement if hired.

The governing body; the Mayor and Board of County Commissioners, has recently implemented some monetary incentives to aid in the recruitment for qualified individuals to fill vacancies. These incentives include: a sign-on bonus, a referral bonus and longevity pay. The OHS wage comparability study determined that the Program is competitive with the market to attract future employees and retain the current workforce. However, some staff, primarily teachers, do not receive a paycheck for all 12 months of the year. Instead these staff are compensated approximately 10 months out of the year.

The Program is currently in the process of implementing employee incentives to enhance the appeal of the program to future applicants, but there isn't a recognition program that promotes recognition and retention of current staff. Recognition from senior management seems to be limited to email communication. Other forms of communication, such as in person or through the use of social media are currently not emphasized or used regularly.

### **Staff Wellness**

The physical health and mental wellness of staff is one of the goals the Program seeks to achieve within this five-year grant period. The Program is currently working on developing a comprehensive wellness approach that expands on the County's existing wellness program. The Self-Assessment revealed that the Program has a foundation that it is building upon to create a culture of wellness. Data is being collected; however, it is limited being that this is the first year of implementation. Input from staff is being utilized to assist in developing wellness activities and events initiated by the Program. However, there currently isn't a monitoring tool with measures to track progress or performance.

### **Fiscal Management**

The fiscal area was reviewed to identify how COVID-19 relief funds were used over the past two years and to identify some additional opportunities for using the remaining American Rescue Plan funds. Several accomplishments were identified; including the use of relief funds to promote health and safety and distance learning. Zono machines, Microshield 360 and PPE were purchased to better ensure that staff and children would



have a healthy and safe environment to learn. The Program has been able to continue to use relief funds to ensure these materials and equipment remain available. COVID relief funds were also used to boost the use of technology by the program. Devices, such as laptops, Swivl machines, and iPads were purchased to ensure staff could teach remotely and that children who needed a device for learning at home would be able to receive one on loan.

Although there were several accomplishments with regards to purchases made, there were also a few challenges. Mainly stemming from program areas not being accountable for spending in their respective areas and red tape from the governing body causing the approval process for spending the funds to be lengthy and arduous. Currently, access to funds will end in less than one year and the Program will need to determine how to continue funding for materials and equipment purchased with COVID relief funds. Lastly, supply and demand has also posed a concern for ensuring supplies, materials and equipment are readily available.

### **School Readiness**

Several discoveries in regard to children outcomes, enrollment and attendance and teachers' work load and compensation were made by the team. Children outcomes have been consistently lower than over the past years compared to outcome scores prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was also discovered that over the past two years, enrollment and attendance has been low as well.

With regard to staff work load, teaching staff are required to plan lessons for the children on a bi-weekly basis using the High Scope curriculum and several supplemental curriculums (i.e. Nemours Bright Start, Sanford Harmony, and DLM). Lesson plan documentation must also include monthly activities for five service areas. In addition to lesson planning, teachers are required to complete trainings for professional development. Survey results from the teaching staff revealed staff feel they have too many trainings in addition to completing their regular job duties. Turnover reports show a higher than normal number of resignations for teaching staff over the past two years.

## **Family Engagement Systems**

A review of the Family Needs Assessment (FNA) tool determined that it is effective in identifying parent needs. The current process is to complete the FNA two times per year; however, the program may want to explore whether completing two assessments is best practice for having the greatest impact on addressing family needs or if it would be more beneficial to complete the assessment three times per year to truly reveal how much of families' needs were met.

Several discoveries were made with regard to the follow up process on family needs and goals. A review of ChildPlus Reports revealed that documentation to provide evidence of follow up with families were either not present, entered incorrectly or did not appear to include the parent's input/feedback. The tools and strategies provided to staff to instruct them on when and how to document follow up were determined to be sufficient; however, due to the lack of documentation in the system. It appears staff are not using the tools provided to ensure follow up is documented accurately and within the timeframes required. Holding staff accountable to the process and timelines was an area identified for improvement. The program will have to explore options for better ensuring timely follow up with families. Although there isn't an alert system in ChildPlus to remind staff to follow up with families, there is a feature, called the To Do List, that could be used to assist staff with timely follow up.

## Recommendations

### **Human Resources –**

Recommendations for human resources were pertaining to making progress toward program goals, addressing systemic issues and innovations. The recommendations are as follows:

- Hire an internal HR person for Head Start to help facilitate hiring and the on-boarding process. (Innovation)
- Include site vacancies in the job posting. (Innovation)

- Allow flexibility for staff to choose their compensation schedule (i.e. pay spread over 10 months or 12 months). (Innovation)
- Market the County's pay incentives (i.e. sign in bonus/referral bonus/longevity bonus). (Progress)
- Develop a more robust employee recognition program, such as social media spotlights, personal visits by Division Manager and Mgmt., more recognition events, hand written notes or survey staff on how they would like to be recognized. (Progress)
- Consider a merit program. For example, give employee time off, extra breaks or meals with a supervisor. (Innovation)
- Recognize staff for the year; acknowledge staff concerns quarterly; host listening sessions with neutral staff; survey staff asking for solutions (Innovation)
- Continue with Trauma Smart (Progress)
- Create and recognize Master Teachers (Progress)
- Implement a mentoring system where new staff are paired up with seasoned staff and can job shadow (Innovation)

### **Staff Wellness –**

Recommendations for the staff wellness initiative were all pertaining to making progress toward the Program's wellness goal. The recommendations are as follows:

- Develop and implement a Standard Operating Procedure to define the process of the staff wellness program.
- Create a monitoring tool across all units and program wide.
- Create a method for reporting and tracking data as it relates to the staff wellness program.
- Allocate funds that support the goals and action steps in the staff wellness program.

- Create a structured staff recognition process.
- Create a staff wellness directory of all information in one place; Orange County Government and Head Start services. (Online & Hard Copies)

### **Fiscal Management –**

Recommendations were pertaining to making progress toward program goals and innovations. The recommendations are as follows:

- Mental Health and wellbeing of our families - Establish a 6-month pilot program to refer families to counseling paid by grant funds. See if families would utilize the program and if outcomes are positive. If so, add to regular grant for future. (Progress)
- Low cost to no cost - Considering funding will end in a year, the program needs to strengthen and establish partnerships to increase services moving into the future. (Progress)
- Love/Crisis Kits - Use funding to create kits designed to support families in crisis entering the Head Start Program. This includes - Homelessness, Foster Care, Refugee, Divorce, Death etc. Kits can be created and stored at the warehouse for now and future use. Information, counseling and support supplies. (Innovation)
- Develop an incentive program using PIR outcomes and individual unit goals. Incentives should be based around needs and current projects (i.e. hand-held devices for teaching or Center with best outcomes will receive a Summer remodel). (Progress)
- Retreat for families and staff - Create events that welcomes community with one another. Promote unity with parents through community events, such as field trips, workshops or park events. (Progress/Innovation)

### **School Readiness –**

Recommendations for school readiness were pertaining to making progress toward school readiness goals and innovations. The recommendations are as follows:

- Put together a task force to look at job re-classification and determine if pay structure aligns with job duties. (Innovation)
- Implement a fully integrated curriculum system. Evaluate two or three different systems and spend one year investigating the new system, to include vetting or buy in by teaching staff. For example, use High Scope and all the associated assessment parts, such as the Child Observation Record (COR) that is aligned with the Key Development Indicators (KDI) or purchase "Surface Go" (iPad) to support the integrated systems. (Progress/Innovation)
- Hire more coaches so that ALL teachers; new teachers and teachers who have been here a long time, receive intensive coaching. This is because some of the veteran teachers influence the new teachers and it's not always the best teaching practices. (Innovation)
- Eliminate long pre-service trainings and make it 1-2 days. More trainings should be done in smaller groups. (Progress)
- Video tape teachers and have them self-evaluate and discuss what they see. This would help to create a critical reflective practice. It would strengthen teacher's responsibility over their work and increases control and ownership of their professional development. (Progress)
- Provide quarterly incentive for teachers who mentor others. (Innovation)
- Increase the Substitute pool to address vacancies. (Progress)
- Prepopulate the lesson plan with all "required activities". (Innovation)
- Teachers complete and submit data twice per month and (every other Thursday) Data collection is ongoing-pictures/notes/videos/ parent input. (Innovation)

**Family Engagement –**

Recommendations for the family engagement system were all pertaining to making progress toward program goals. The recommendations are as follows:

- Establish a timeline of when documentation should take place.
- Utilize the To-Do List in ChildPlus to ensure staff are more effective at managing their time.
- Provide more trainings for staff on topics such as: smart goal development, soap notes, motivation and accountability.