

action pact

Head Start

2022-2023 Annual Report



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AGENCY MISSION

Our mission is big. We strive to create equal opportunity by prioritizing progress over programs.

We strive to create equal opportunity by prioritizing progress over programs. To succeed, our staff of nearly 400 have to work as one team moving toward a common goal. This requires strong, diverse, and passionate leaders.

OUR PACT

We draw strength from our past and focus our energy on an even stronger future. With action pact's help, our communities will be full of neighbors who can support their families, boost their education, and have a meaningful impact.

Board Chairman:	Leonard Burse
Vice Chairman:	Synita Mathis
Treasurer:	Cathy Benton
Secretary:	Gloria Paulk

Board Members: Board Members: Rose Bailey, Cathy Benton, Ethelyn Creech, Michael Garvin, Walter C. Gibson, Michael-Angelo James, Bobby Kennedy, Marcus McCray, Dawn Youngblood Garcia, Linda McDuffie, Dr. Kim Morgan, Anthony Simmons, Tina Smith, Jo Ann Strickland, James A. Thomas, Sr., and Clarence Washington.
Ex-Officio Member: James Gandy

Together we can solve setbacks.

America was built on the promise that every family should have an opportunity for success.

Action pact is committed to this promise.

The Head Start Goal Statement

Action pact's Head Start/Early Head Start Program will provide quality teaching and learning environments to meet the developmental needs of all children to ensure future educational success. To accomplish this goal, all Head Start Learning Centers will meet or exceed the requirements of the Federal Head Start Program Standards and maintain Quality Rating Standards.

The School Readiness mission of action pact Head Start/Early Head Start is to partner with families and communities to work together to plan, coordinate, and improve services for all children. Head Start/Early Head Start provides all eligible children opportunities to participate in early childhood programs that enable them to enter school with the skills, behaviors, and family support necessary for them to progress and succeed. Action pact also enhances the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services.

action pact

SAY GOODBYE TO JUST GETTING BY.....



A Message from the Head Start Director

Action pact's Head Start program continues to thrive. The Head Start program provides 900 infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families, with high-quality, comprehensive services which include: education, health, nutrition, mental health, disabilities, family engagement, male involvement, school readiness, and transition. Ensuring the safety and supervision of the children we serve is top priority. We welcome our parents, extended families, community leaders, and partners to visit one of our Head Start centers, become a volunteer, and make a difference in the life of a child.



**Georgia Dept
of Early Care
and Learning**
BRIGHT FROM THE START



OFFICE OF HEAD START

An Office of the Administration for Children & Families

Public and Private Funds Received/Budgetary Expenditures

Action pact Head Start received funds from the Department of Health and Human Services- Administration for Children and Families on November 3, 2022.

Below is the Non-Competing Continuation Funding received funding amounts that were received. The first portion of the funds were received on November 03, 2022, and the balance of the funds was received on February 27, 2023.

Regular Budget			
	Head Start	Early Head Start	Total
Program Operations	\$6,277,328	\$4,890,123	\$11,167,451
T/TA	\$71,720	\$72,350	\$144,070
Non-Federal Share	\$1,587,264	\$1,240,616	\$2,827,880
Total	\$7,936,312	\$6,203,089	\$14,139,401

The Head Start program also received a Carryover of funds to reprogram unobligated Head Start operation funds of \$305,855 from Fiscal Year 2022. The funds were used to purchase additional classroom and playground equipment. The Carryover funds were received on December 12, 2022.

The Head Start program submitted a COLA and Quality Improvement grant application on March 31, 2023 in the amount of \$914,478. If the application is approved, all Head Start and Early Head Start staff will receive a 5.6% COLA increase and additional floaters will be hired with the Quality Improvement funding. The funds have not yet been received.

A Change of Scope Conversion application was submitted on April 18, 2023. If the conversion is approved, 137 Head Start slots will convert to 72 Early Head Start slots in Appling, Bacon, and Ware counties. The Early Head Start waitlist continues to rise and the Head Start waitlist continues to decline. Early Head Start had 199 children on the waitlist at the end of the program year and Head Start only had 67. Start up funds in the amount of \$414,000 for the new Early Head Start classrooms were requested. The funds have not yet been received.

Ware and Coffee Head Start have a total of four Pre-K classrooms. Three at Ware and one at Coffee. Action Pact received \$369,942.80 from the Department of Early Care and Learning. The payments totaling \$369,942.80 were received once per month from August 2022 through May of 2023.

Action Pact has received as of June 5, 2023, \$541,686.65 in funds from the Department of Early Care and Learning for Child and Adult Care Food Program. These funds are used to provide meals to the Early Head Start and Head Start children.

Proposed Budget for the FY 2024

Action pact plans to apply for annual funding from the Department of Health and Human Services-Administration for Children and Families. The funds will be utilized for program operations to serve 652 Head Start children and 248 Early Head Start children from November 1, 2023-October 31, 2024. Training and technical assistance funds will be applied to train staff, the governing board, and the policy council.

The table reflects the proposed amounts that will be applied for:

Funding Type	Head Start	Early Head Start
Program Operations	\$6,813,387	\$5,268,542
Training and Technical Assistance	\$71,720	\$72,350
Total Funding	\$12,225,999	

In addition, action pact is applying for a non-federal share waiver in the amount of \$550,000 and a one-time supplemental grant in the amount of 206,305 to replace the roof at Ware Head Start, the largest Head Start center, in the Head Start program. A conversion grant was also submitted to convert 9 Head Start classrooms to 9 Early Head Start classrooms in Appling, Bacon, and Ware counties. These grants have not been approved as of July 7, 2023 but, have been submitted to the Office of Head Start. If the conversion is approved, action pact would serve 515 Head Start children and 399 Early Head Start children.

Action pact will also apply for \$369,942.80 from the Department of Early Care and Learning. The funds will be used to serve 40 Pre-K children in Ware and Coffee Counties from August 2023 to May of 2024.

Action pact plans to apply for CACFP funds to provide meals for the Head Start and Early Head Start children during the 2023-2024 program year. The funding amount requested ranges from \$600,00-\$900,000 depending on food cost at the time of the application.

County Numbers	EHS Classrooms	EHS Funded Slots	HS Classrooms	HS Funded Slots
Appling	2	16	2	34
Atkinson	3	24	2	34
Bacon	3	24	3	53
Brantley	1	8	2	32
Candler	3	24	1	17
Charlton	2	16	2	34
Clinch	2	16	1	16
Coffee	2	16	4	74
Jeff Davis	0	0	2	36
Pierce	1	8	3	54
Toombs	2	16	2	54
Ware	10	80	14	235
Totals	31	248	40	652

Below is the monthly enrollment for the 2022-2023 program year and the percentage of eligible children served. Full enrollment for Head Start is 652 and full enrollment for Early Head Start is 248.

Month	Head Start Enrollment	Percentage of Head Start Funded Enrollment	Early Head Start Enrollment	Percentage of Early Head Start Funded Enrollment
Aug 2022	470	72%	215	87%
Sep 2022	503	77%	220	89%
Oct 2022	534	82%	231	93%
Nov 2022	532	82%	232	94%
Dec 2022	528	81%	229	92%
Jan 2023	563	86%	241	97%
Feb 2023	565	87%	241	97%
Mar 2023	568	87%	247	99%
Apr 2023	566	87%	248	100%
May 2023	566	87%	248	100%

Results of the Most Recent Review/Financial Audit

Financial Audit

The annual agency audit was conducted by McNair, McLemore, Middlebrooks, & Company. The agency audit report is available online at the Federal Audit Clearinghouse, facweb.census.gov. For the Year End October 31, 2022, McNair, McLemore, Middlebrooks, & Company conducted an agency audit and the Head Start program was audited. On April 28, 2023, the auditors issued an unmodified opinion with no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies identified.

Federal Review

From January 23, 2023, to January 25, 2023, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted a Focus Area One (FA1) monitoring review of Action Pact, Inc. Head Start and Early Head Start programs. There were no areas of concern, no areas of noncompliance, and no deficiencies.

Percentage of Enrolled Children that received Medical and Dental Exams

HEALTH SERVICES (Head Start)				
Health insurance - children				
	(1) # of children at enrollment	(1) % of children at enrollment	(2) # of children at end of enrollment	(2) % of children at end of enrollment
C.1 Number of all children with health insurance	602	92.05%	602	92.05%
a. Number enrolled in Medicaid and/or CHIP	585	89.45%	585	89.45%
b. Number enrolled in state-only funded insurance (for example, medically indigent insurance), private insurance, or other health insurance	17	2.6%	17	2.6%
C.2 Number of children with no health insurance	52	7.95%	52	7.95%

Accessible health care - children				
	(1) # of children at enrollment	(1) % of children at enrollment	(2) # of children at end of enrollment	(2) % of children at end of enrollment
C.5 Number of children with an ongoing source of continuous, accessible health care provided by a health care professional that maintains the child's ongoing health record and is not primarily a source of emergency or urgent care	346	52.91%	339	51.83%
Accessible dental care – children				
	(1) # of children at enrollment	(1) % of children at enrollment	(2) # of children at end of enrollment	(2) % of children at end of enrollment

C.16 Number of children with continuous, accessible dental care provided by an oral health care professional which includes access to preventive care and dental treatment	253	38.69%	491	75.08%
Preschool dental services (HS and Migrant programs)				
	# of children at end of enrollment	% of children at end of enrollment		
C.17 Number of children who received preventive care during the program year	256	39.14%		
C.18 Number of all children, including those enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP, who have completed a professional dental examination during the program year	491	75.08%		
a. Of these, the number of children diagnosed as needing dental treatment during the program year - at end of enrollment	10	2.04%		
1. Of these, the number of children who have received or are receiving dental treatment - at end of enrollment	6	60%		
Health insurance - children				
HEALTH SERVICES (Early Head Start)	(1) # of children at enrollment	(1) % of children at enrollment	(2) # of children at end of enrollment	(2) % of children at end of enrollment
C.1 Number of all children with health insurance	243	93.1%	243	93.1%
a. Number enrolled in Medicaid and/or CHIP	240	91.95%	240	91.95%
b. Number enrolled in state-only funded insurance (for example, medically indigent insurance), private insurance, or other health insurance	3	1.15%	3	1.15%
C.2 Number of children with no health insurance	18	6.9%	18	6.9%
Accessible health care - children				
	(1) # of children at enrollment	(1) % of children at enrollment	(2) # of children at end of enrollment	(2) % of children at end of enrollment
C.5 Number of children with an ongoing source of continuous, accessible health care provided by a health care professional that maintains the child's ongoing health record and is not primarily a source of emergency or urgent care	147	56.32%	157	60.15%
a. Of these, the number of children that have accessible health care through a federally qualified Health Center, Indian Health Service, Tribal and/or Urban Indian Health Program facility	0	0%	0	0%

Accessible dental care – children				
	(1) # of children at enrollment	(1) % of children at enrollment	(2) # of children at end of enrollment	(2) % of children at end of enrollment
C.16 Number of children with continuous, accessible dental care provided by an oral health care professional which includes access to preventive care and dental treatment	63	24.14%	63	24.14%
Infant and toddler preventive dental services (EHS and Migrant programs)				
			# of children at end of enrollment	% of children at end of enrollment
C.19 Number of all children who are up to date according to the dental periodicity schedule in the relevant state's EPSDT schedule			74	28.35%

Program Operation

The program operates a full year, full day, center-based option in which the children attend the program 6.25 hours per day. Pre-K children attend for an extended stay from 7:45 a.m. - 2:45 p.m. Center calendars are based on the local public school board calendars. The Early Head Start Program also operates a center-based program and children attend for additional weeks during the summer months. We offered a longer day for Early Head Start this year which will be more helpful for our teen parents and will continue this schedule in the upcoming year. Action pact operates **31** Early Head Start classrooms and **40** Head Start classrooms. There are **16** Head Start/Early Head Start centers in **12** counties and one Head Start administration office located in Waycross.

Staff of the Year

Congratulations to all those individuals who were selected in their categories for Staff of the year. Action pact Head Start has the best staff.

Position	Name of Staff Person
Teacher	Audrey Browning
Teacher Assistant	Tameshia Shaw
Family Advocate	Charlie Peacock
Coach	Latresa Washington
Custodian	Paula Padgett
Nutrition Staff	Mary Ellen Smith
Floater	Likisha Smith
Interventionist	Jamie Jordan
Center Coordinator	Victoria West
Specialist of The Year	Denise McGauley
Overall Staff of The Year	Charlie Peacock

Program Planning

Each year, the management team, program staff, Policy Council and Governing Board review and update the Head Start program’s short and long-term goals to ensure that the best quality services are being provided to the children and families we serve. Goals for the 2022-2023 Program Year are as follows:

<u>Short Term Goals:</u>	<u>Long Term Goals:</u>
Strive for zero supervision or safety incidents	Add multi-purpose rooms at each center that doesn't currently have one
Maintain Quality Rating at all centers	
Strive for at least 1,500 volunteers in EHS, HS, and Pre-K combined	
Have at least 30% of families in a family partnership	
Conduct CLASS observations on all EHS classrooms at least once per program year	
CLASS Certify all Center Coordinators	
25% of Head Start & Pre-K classrooms will have all greens on CLASS observations	
Full enrollment in Early Head Start and Head Start for the program year	
Meet the required in-kind goal	
Maintain a waitlist for Early Head Start of at least 150 and a waitlist of at least 75 for Head Start	
Less than 10% of Head Start staff turnover	
Fill open positions within 2 weeks or less	

STARS Program Action pact is committed to building leaders. The STARS program was developed in-house and strategically trains and equips future leaders by helping them develop and hone their leadership skills, in addition to exploring and gaining hands-on experience in each of the agency’s departments. To date, more than 30 Head Start staff have successfully completed the year-long STARS program, with several being promoted into positions of increased responsibility within the agency. During the 2022-2023 program year, Latresa Washington, Coach, and Valisa Clark, Early Head Start teacher, participated in the STARS program led by Dr. Shelli Tyre.

Quality Rated

During the 2022-2023 school year, **action pact’s** 16 sites continued the Quality Rated process with several centers starting the re-assessment process. Centers going through Quality Rating received additional monies through the Department of Early Care and Learning. These funds enabled the program to purchase additional items for the classrooms to help ensure they met the materials requirements of Quality Rating. Additional funds were also received for on-line training with the Branaugh Group.

Below are the current levels of our centers. Seven centers had their reassessment: Appling, Atkinson at Willacoochee, Brantley, Charlton, Coffee, Hazzard Hill, Pierce, and Ware. We are awaiting the results for Coffee, Pierce and Ware. Four centers are scheduled to be reassessed during the 2023-2024 program year. The program is sponsored by the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL).

Appling	3 Stars
Atkinson – Pearson	2 Stars
Atkinson – Willacoochee	3 Stars
Bacon Northside	3 Stars
Bacon Southside	2 Stars
Bacon at ABC	2 Stars
Brantley HS	2 Stars
Candler	3 Stars
Charlton	3 Stars – increase from 1 star
Clinch	2 Stars
Coffee	2 Stars – pending reassessment results
Hazzard EHS	3 Stars – increase from 2 stars
Jeff Davis	3 Stars
Pierce	3 Stars – pending reassessment results
Toombs	2 Stars
Ware	2 Stars – pending reassessment results

COVID

COVID cases continued to drop during the 2022-2023 school year. Staff that were exposed during the school year did not have to quarantine unless they were displaying symptoms. Exposed staff were required to wear a mask while at work and around others following Center of Disease Control Guidance. Considering mask are not age appropriate for Early Head Start and Head Start children, children that tested positive for COVID and those that were exposed to COVID had to quarantine according to the Center of Disease control guidance.

Playground fencing was added to the playgrounds to create additional play spaces to allow children to meet their required amount of outdoor time without mixing groups of children. Children and staff slowly started having mixed group activities throughout the program year.

The Head Start program created a COVID Mitigation Policy. Following is the Mitigation Policy that was approved by the Policy Council and Health Services Advisory Committee:

To reduce or lower the spread of COVID-19, Action Pact Head Start and Early Head Start sites and staff will follow the current recommendations of our local health departments, the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Georgia Department of Public Health (GADPH). Our COVID-19 risk reduction strategies will be scaled up or down based on the impacts or risks of COVID-19 in the community. This policy allows classrooms to remain open, to promote safe in-person learning while reducing the spread of COVID-19.

To prepare for illness, Action Pact will:

1. Monitor COVID-19 community levels utilizing CDC COVID tracking data. Action Pact will use this information to monitor our area community level to adjust mask use, to implement isolation and quarantine protocols. Staff, parents, and community partners will be informed of implementation of elected COVID strategies.
2. Identify reliable sources of information such as the local public health department and GADPH
3. Develop a communication plan to notify families, staff, Child Care Licensing, and local public health officials of outbreaks, exposures, site closures etc.
4. Educate staff and families about COVID-19 risk reduction strategies, for example: hand washing, staying home if you are sick, coughing or sneezing into your sleeve, masking, up to-date COVID-19 vaccination, healthy air and ventilation, and annual flu vaccination.
5. Encourage families to consider their options for backup childcare in case of illness or site closure.
6. Keep supplies on hand, for example: soap, paper towels, tissues, toilet paper, masks, COVID-19 tests, and cleaning and disinfecting products.
7. Plan for staff absences.

To respond to illness, Action Pact will:

1. Require families and staff to notify the program of confirmed COVID-19 cases.
2. Report outbreaks to the local public health department.
3. Consult with the local public health department about how to prioritize COVID-19 risk reduction strategies (for example, masks for staff and children 2 years of age and older, portable air filters).
4. Conduct daily health checks at the time of check-in, prior to the child's parent/guardian leaving.
5. Have a designated location in the classroom for a cot that is away from play areas but still actively supervised by staff where an ill child may safely wait and rest until being picked up.

6. Require staff and children to stay home if they have signs of illness (for example, sore throat, fever, cough, body aches).
7. Require COVID-19 testing for children and staff with COVID-19 symptoms before returning to the program.
8. Review cleaning and disinfecting procedures with staff.
9. Communicate with staff and families about the extent of illness in our program and any changes that may need to be made to our usual routine.

Health

Finding medical and dental homes for children continues to be a priority of action pact as providers continue to reduce taking new patients and reducing some of the services that were previously provided. Because of action pact's proactive COVID 19 interventions the number of cases for the year greatly decreased. Actionpact had a slight increase in the number of onsite incidents for the school year. This will be addressed with additional training on active supervision. The form used to report incidents was revised to capture more information. There was also a revision to the "No head lice policy" to reduce the number of student exclusions because of head lice.

Our Family Advocates continue to assist families that lack insurance or a provider source and educate parents on upcoming changes to Medicaid now that we are in post COVID times. Action pact continues to seek partner agencies to assist with valuable hearing and vision screening. Action pact had discontinued tooth brushing this school year because of the high risk of COVID. Tooth brushing will be reimplemented in the upcoming school year. Action pact continues our partnership with South Georgia State College Nursing program to assist our sites with our yearly growth and weight assessments. Because of decreased student enrollment at South Georgia State College (SGSC), action pact is seeking to partner also with Coastal Pines Technical College to help with our sites that SGSC can't cover. Action pact staff continue to keep the Health and Safety of our children and staff a top priority of our program.

Monitoring and Self-Assessment

Self-Assessment training was held on March 1, 2023. During the training, the Head Start Director shared the self-assessment tool with the Head Start administrative team. The Head Start Director assigned each administrative staff a section of the self-assessment monitoring tool to complete as well as requested each component specialist to conduct interviews with staff. The self-assessment was conducted from March 15 – April 28, 2023. The self-assessment reports from each component area were submitted to the Training Specialist and the summary and findings report and submitted to the Head Start Director on May 24, 2023. The information in this report is a summary of the Head Start program strengths and opportunities for improvement.

The self-assessment summary is reviewed with the Policy Council and the Governing Board. The Governing Board and Policy Council have the opportunity to ask questions regarding the findings and share any input for improvements during meetings.

All centers were monitored twice during the year by Bright from the Start State Licensing. Each center was monitored extensively by the Head Start Administrative Team and the Center Coordinators at least monthly. Additionally, the Head Start program's Pre-K classrooms were monitored by Bright from the Start Pre-K and the Head Start program was monitored by the Bright from the Start CACFP (Child & Adult Food Program).

Facilities

All of the older playground structures have been replaced with new play structures. All playgrounds now have equipment that is ADA compliant.

At most centers, we have added a locking system for the main entry doors to enhance security. To enter the centers, someone must unlock the system or have an assigned code to enter. Also with this system, we can immediately add or remove someone from having access. This can be done by accessing the computerized program for this system.

The Early Head Start in Brantley County has been moved to the same facility our Head Start center is at in Brantley County. We have built a playground for the Early Head Start at this same site.

On our outdoor playgrounds, we have divided some playgrounds to help with accountability of the children. It also gives our program more outdoor play areas. By doing this, we are able to allow more children to be on the playgrounds at the same time.

We have purchased storage buildings for some of the centers to help alleviate the lack of storage areas at our centers. We do plan on purchasing a few more buildings in the coming months.

We have installed more shade shelters on our playgrounds. Now, all our playground areas have some type of appropriate shade.

Farm to Early Childhood

We continue to embrace the "Farm to ECE" movement and have increased gardening and taste testing activities at the centers. The Family Farm Share, in collaboration with Georgia Organics, has continued and we were able to add Pierce County during the program year. Plans are to continue to grow this program and to add Bacon County next year. This program offers a low-cost, high-quality access point to fresh local food. Grant funds are used to reduce food insecurity for children ages birth to 5 and their families. This pilot program has been so successful that Georgia Organics is looking to partner with other Head Start programs in the state.

Ware County Head Start Center now has a satsuma orchard. Georgia Organics donated the six trees and members from WayGreen and our staff planted them. The center is looking forward to their first crop next year and children are enjoying watering the trees and checking on their progress.



Our Appling County Head Start Center was the recipient of a Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) Mini Grant through the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning's Nutrition Services Division. The center conducted numerous taste testing activities and were able to purchase materials to use in these activities. The children were able to assist in the preparation of some of the recipes and enjoyed trying new foods. They even ate kale pesto! We are looking forward to expanding our farm to Early Childhood Education program during the upcoming year.



Parenting Curriculum

The Performance Standards requires programs to have a parenting curriculum for parents. We chose Ready Rosie again this year. Ready Rosie is a research-based curriculum that builds on parents' knowledge. It uses video and mobile technology to allow schools and families to work together to promote school readiness. Ready Rosie has over 1,000 "modeled moments" videos in English and Spanish. These videos are delivered to families by text, email, or app and are available to families 24/7. Ready Rosie provides programs with the means to reach all families and to customize and individualize as needed.

What To Do When You're Having A Baby

We were excited to have our annual "What to Do When You're Having a Baby" workshop/baby shower for expectant families this year in person. We held two cluster workshops, one in Ware County and one in Appling County. We provided the guidebook with the same title and a goody bag of baby

items donated by community partners plus diapers and wipes to the expectant moms. Southeast Health District provided training on breastfeeding and Ware Co. families had demonstrations on what to do for toddler and infant choking situations.

Family Services

The 2022-2023 school year the Family Advocates transitioned back to in-person applications. Families that needed to complete an application over the phone were accommodated. Our enrollment numbers slowly increased through the 2022-2023 school year from 470 to 566 in Head Start and from 215 to 248 in Early Head Start. During the months of April and May, we met full enrollment in the Early Head Start program. Head Start did not meet full enrollment. Due to staff shortages, four Head Start classrooms remained closed. All four classrooms were in Ware County. Currently Ware County has nine teacher vacancies in Head Start and seven Early Head Start teacher vacancies.

Parent & Family Engagement

At action pact, we recognize that parents are their child's first and most important teachers. Parents play an integral part in the program and serve on center parent committees, Policy Council, Health Services Advisory Committee, and the ERSEA Committee. They also assist the program with center activities, program curriculum planning, self-assessment, and volunteer in the classrooms and at the centers. Parents were able to return to the centers again after two years of COVID restrictions. Parent training was geared toward the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework and the seven Family Outcomes areas. Topics included: Becoming a Leader — elections were held for parent officers and Policy Council members, Car Seat Safety, Adult Learning Opportunities, Parenting Tips, Managing Stress, Literacy, Service Center Resources, Challenging Behavior, Budgeting, Child Abuse Prevention, Fire Safety, Child Safety, Enrollment/Re-enrollment, Transitioning and Kindergarten Readiness, Health Dept. information, and Healthy Lifestyles. Parents often receive texts and/or emails containing parent resources or information. Additional specialized training opportunities, such as "What to do when you're having a baby" guidebooks for expectant families were provided, IEP (Individual Education Plan) virtual workshops, and "Food Talk: Better U" classes - provided by UGA Extension. e We continued to provide home safety items this year, such as outlet covers and cabinet locks.

Health Services Advisory Committee

The Head Start program has an active Health Services Advisory Committee that meets three times a year: February, May, and September. Members have included: an audiologist, representatives from our local Health Department and Southeast Health District, Babies Can't Wait, Children's Medical Services, Children First, Family Connection directors, CMO representatives, and representatives from other community agencies or related businesses. Parents and family members are also encouraged to attend the meetings. There is a brief training at the meetings on a health topic, then program staff discuss successes and challenges that they are working on concerning health, nutrition, disabilities, and mental health components. Advice from the HSAC is often requested from staff to help with different matters. Community updates and parent comments/questions are also part of each meeting. Our Health Specialist is a retired Chief Epidemiologist with Public Health which adds valuable insight to our committee.

Policy Council

Head Start grantees must ensure they have an established Policy Council and a well-functioning governing body which shares the responsibility for the oversight of the program while following the Performance Standards. Program governance in Head Start is a shared responsibility. Board members and Policy Council members are critical to the success of our program. The Policy Council also shares responsibility with the management team to ensure there are effective systems, policies and procedures that strengthen the program's quality. Their role helps the management team deliver high quality services to the children and families. The Policy Council is responsible for reviewing and approving the Head Start budget, personnel hiring/terminations, grant applications, procedure changes, monthly financial statements and credit card expenditures, and other important items. Parent Policy Council members serve as a link between parents and the Parent Committee. By reporting back to their center's Parent Committee, they help the parents they represent better understand the role and functioning of the Policy Council and keep them updated on what is going on within the program. Currently, action pact's Head Start Policy Council consists of twenty-one member slots: fourteen parent representative slots and seven community representative slots. There is a Head Start parent representative and alternate slot for each of our twelve-county service area. There are additionally two at-large Early Head Start slots available. Members may serve for up to a maximum of five years on the Policy Council.

Education

This is a critical time in our enrollees' lives to develop patterns that will help our children succeed in school and in life. It is important that action pact Head Start/Early Head Start creates an environment that children can learn through exploration, play, and active involvement with their environment.

All areas of development (approaches to learning, social and emotional development, language and literacy, cognition, perceptual, motor, and physical development) are important and interrelated. We have activities that include all areas of development and allow for individual differences in children with special needs and dual language learners. We keep our parents informed of their child's development and promote their active participation in our program. We provide ongoing support and education to families to assist them in their role as their child's first teacher.

Curriculum

Action pact Head Start/Early Head Start uses Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos, as well as the 6th edition of Creative Curriculum for Preschool. In using Creative Curriculum, teachers are provided with the content and tools needed to encourage and support every type of learner. The studies provided in the curriculum tap into children's natural curiosity, resulting in a learning environment that is both fun and intentional. The topics of study are flexible allowing teachers to incorporate many of the typical themes that are used in preschools. The children guide the direction of the studies and the length of the study. Using the newest editions also means more knowledge, more resources, and more opportunities for learning.

In an effort to ensure staff are utilizing the curriculum, the Education Specialist completes a fidelity of the curriculum checklist. These checklists are completed in each classroom yearly. The Daily Resources that are identified are instructional tools that feature expanded and detailed guidance for providing intentional, responsive care and teaching during routines and learning experiences for very young

children. Because of routines and experiences that build each day, and the responsive care and teaching provided during these times, children are enabled to develop a secure attachment with important people in their lives and gain confidence in themselves as learners.

Both curriculums, The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos and the Creative Curriculum for Preschool supply our staff with a solid foundation. These foundations consist of volumes that provide theory, research, and best practices for responsive teachers. The resources are both research-based and research-proven.

The supportive curriculum solutions are used by staff, helping them to provide children with developmentally appropriate programs that support active learning and promote progress in all developmental areas. This curriculum has helped us to create a high-learning environment that enables every child to become a creative, confident thinker. We are also planning on implanting “curriculum boxes” for centers/classrooms that need additional materials to enhance their “studies.”

Monitoring

As directed in the Head Start Performance Standards, our Head Start/Early Head Start Programs utilize on-going monitoring to measure program performance, identify areas of concern, make immediate program corrections, and generate reports. Head Start Specialists and Center Coordinators use the Monitoring Checklist to observe classrooms. The Education Specialist monitors the fidelity of the curriculum, and the CLASS Coordinator completes CLASS observations. We also use the ITERS and ECERS tools to monitor. These tools are used when preparing for Quality Rating. Center Coordinators routinely monitor the classrooms at their site.

Classroom files are also monitored, and the classrooms are checked for the fidelity of the curriculum as well as for appropriate teacher-child interactions. These checks help ensure that the classroom has a relaxed and cheerful environment, intentional teaching is taking place, materials are prepared in advance, and that activities are designed to meet specific objectives for individual children.

The safety of each classroom is monitored monthly. Any safety concerns are addressed immediately and are designed to meet specific objectives for individual children. The safety of each classroom is monitored monthly.

Screenings

All enrollees are required to be screened within 45 days of enrollment. Ages and Stages is the screening tool used for our Early Head Start enrollees younger than 3 years of age and is completed by the parent. The DIAL-4 (Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning) is conducted by trained staff and used for Head Start enrollees ages 3 to 5. Early Head Start children who turn 3 years old during the year are additionally screened with the DIAL-4 tool once transitioned into a Head Start classroom. Our program met the 45-day deadline as required. These screenings help us identify children who need further diagnostic assessment.

Assessments

Assessments document and reflect children's growth and learning. This information is in turn, used to intentionally plan instruction. Teaching Strategies Gold is the assessment tool used by both Early Head Start and Head Start to record and access observations online and allows teaching staff to enter observation data to track each individual child's progress throughout the year. Child assessment reports are shared with parents three times per year following each assessment period. Center Coordinators review with each teaching team the results of each quarterly assessment, as well as the site and program results. In addition, data is shared with each partnering school system.

For the 2022-2023 spring assessment report the following domains had the highest percentage in Below, Meeting, and Exceeding. In the Below category, Literacy and Math tied at 20%, for Meeting, Cognitive had 71% and for Exceeding, Physical had 16%. With this being the final assessment period for the 2022-2023 school year, most of our enrollees have met or exceeded in all areas. The demographics for the current assessment period included 52% male and 48% female with preschool 3 years of age having the largest percentage of enrollees exceeding or expectations.

Relationships with LEA's

We continue ongoing communication with local schools to exchange information about children as we both share an interest in children's school readiness. At the end of each assessment period, information is shared with partnering school systems so that we mutually work to prepare children for the next phase of their education. LEA's also have input in the adoption of our school readiness goals. We also have a Transition/Disabilities Agreement with our LEA's.

School Readiness

Action pact Head Start collects, analyzes, and aggregates school readiness data during the year to track individual child progress, as well as the program's overall achievement of its school readiness goals. Goals are reviewed and updated as needed to strengthen identified areas of weakness. Each site has a School Readiness committee that is selected each year made up of parents, staff, and school system staff which offer input and suggestions in the selection of school readiness goals. Each child receives individualized instruction based on his/her strengths and needs. The curriculum is evidence-based and specifically designed to help children develop in the areas of language and literacy, problem-solving skills, and learning how to socialize and interact with others. Children are provided with the opportunity to participate in activities that support math, science, art, drama, language, and culture. Our goal is for our children to leave action pact Head Start prepared for kindergarten, excited about learning, confident in their own abilities and ready to succeed.

Enrollees in action pact Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms showed continuous growth during the 2022-23 school year. Based on documentation for each of the eight designated goals, the data suggests that enrollees will be better prepared for the next step in their educational process having been a part of our Head Start and Early Head Start programs. As we continue to offer the children of our communities a positive start to their education, we expect the effects to be long lasting. Enrollees in our Head Start program had a greater percentage of enrollees meeting/exceeding program expectations in our School Readiness Goals.

Transition

Transition Plans were completed on enrollees entering Head Start and kindergarten. Enrollees' files were transferred to the schools where they would transition. Parental consent was obtained prior to the

transfer. Parents were encouraged to continue to prepare their child for the transition throughout the summer months. This can be done by reading books about kindergarten/preschool, visiting the school they will be attending, attending the school's Open House, setting up playdates with some of their future classmates, encouraging their child to discuss their fears, having the child write a story with their parents about what his or her first day at kindergarten/preschool will be like. We want to ensure the parents display a happy, excited mood about the transition so that the child will look forward to the big day. Transition Agreements are signed yearly by the Head Start program and the local Boards of Education.

We have well planned transition services for enrollees transitioning to Head Start and for those children transitioning to kindergarten. These services begin at 2 years 6 months for the Early Head Start enrollees as well as offering services to those children transitioning to Pre-K and kindergarten. These services are in place to make the transition into and out of our program easier for our children and families. Our staff and families partner together to share information and plan supportive transition practices. Together they create transition plans that help with each child's adjustment to their new learning environment and make it a positive experience.

Transitioning into Head Start: Introduction to the program (how to get answers, daily schedule); Inform parents of open-door policy; How family members can be engaged in their child's learning (volunteering, doing home activities); Provide a program calendar (identifies events and parent opportunities); and Provide Get Ready for Preschool A starter kit for You and Your Child which includes: Helping Your Preschooler Learn (at home activities); Learn about You, Your Child and Preschool; Time for Preschool (activities for parents to do with their children); and a Handout on Families as Advocates and Leaders.

All Head Start enrollees transitioning from Head Start to kindergarten talk about the transition, watch videos, and read books about going to kindergarten. Through the videos, children and families get to see how a typical day unfolds. In one such video "Ready, Set, Go! All Set for School," children and parents even get a view of a kindergarten room.

From the video entitled, "From the Children's Perspective", it explains how the transition to kindergarten looks through the eyes of a child. For those children transitioning out of Head Start/Early Head Start, our staff provides support through transition in the following ways:

1. Promote successful changes in their daily schedule and routines
2. Provide positive transition experiences
3. Provide staff that help children feel safe and trust adults
4. Include parents in the transition process
5. Listen to the family's perspective and are responsive to their concerns, worries and questions
6. Provide information on kindergarten (Open House, Registration, etc.)
7. Provide resources on transitioning

8. Create a clear transition plan with families

9. Promote independence

10. Promote cooperation

11. Provide transition packets

Transition packets are distributed prior to the closing of school. The transition packets include resources for parents with transitioning children which includes the following: Stickers; Calendar with activities to use to countdown to the big day; A starting school activities book; Learn About You, Your Child and school; Helping Your Preschooler Learn! and Your Child's Education – You Can Make a Difference.

We also offered Kindergarten Kick Start for our enrollee's entering kindergarten. This is a two-week program that helps our enrollees that might need extra assistance in preparation for their transition to kindergarten.

We also have a Transition/Disabilities Agreement with our LEAs. All agreements have been completed and returned for the 22-23 school year.

CLASS

The agency's CLASS Coordinator maintains current reliability in the Infant, Toddler and PreK CLASS tools. She also maintains CLASS Trainer credentials in both the Toddler and the PreK CLASS tools. Coaches and Center Coordinators have also received CLASS Reliability training.

During the 2022-2023 school year, Head Start classrooms were monitored using the CLASS Pre-K Infant and Toddler tool. CLASS results were separated into three colors indicating the level of support needed. Red indicates the greatest level of support needed, while yellow indicates improvements are being made. Green indicates the staff are successfully carrying out the dimension indicators.

Based upon review and discussion of CLASS, our program's areas of strength were identified as:

- CLASS training for all new classroom staff
- Extensive "Coach" training
- Individualized coaching
- Coaching successes evidenced in CLASS scores
- Use of Crosswalk of NCQTL In-Service Suites with the CLASS
- In-house CLASS trainer
- Recognition of staff that scored all greens in CLASS

While we continue to celebrate coaching successes, we also continue to strive to grow the continuous process of improvement. Our system, in place for training new staff as they come on board, gives staff an overview of CLASS and how it should be evidenced in the classroom. Our professional development includes periodic training and observation opportunities for new staff as they become more familiar with CLASS. For example, new staff receive a training session on CLASS during Orientation to introduce the tool and the Agency's expectations. In addition, CLASS data was analyzed, and a coaching plan developed for classrooms to begin in the fall. With these systems in place, we expect continued improvement in our CLASS scores and more importantly, improved teacher-child interactions throughout our program.

Coaches

In accordance with Performance Standards relating to Coaching, action pact has five individuals employed as coaches. Each Coach has a minimum of a baccalaureate degree in Early Childhood or a related field, which is the requirement for this position. Coaches have been trained in Practice Based Coaching and all have received their CLASS reliability in the Pre-K tool. All sites have a coach assigned to them which we feel has contributed to the improvement of action pact CLASS scores.

Teachers are provided one-on-one coaching and mentoring so that new training lessons are incorporated into daily routines and teaching. Through a consistent, systemic, and guided approach, coaches present feedback in a supportive and non-judgmental manner that engages each teacher. Working together, the coach and the teacher develop an individualized plan which results in enhanced classroom interactions and classroom environments. The coach and the teaching staff being coached create shared goals and prepare an action plan for achieving them. Focused observations are based on the action plan. The coach provides support for the teacher's growth and development through reflection and feedback. Through this collaborative partnership our teachers are provided support, rapport and trust, choices, ongoing communication, and support successes. Coaches and the CLASS Coordinator provided training throughout the year. The following topics were included: Creative Curriculum, CLASS, TSG, ECERS, and ITERS. These training courses are also offered as part of the new staff orientation.

Nutrition

We are excited to have received word that the Coffee County Head Start center has been awarded a CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) grant which will include a fully functional kitchen. Once that work is completed, we will be able to prepare and serve food instead of contracting with the Board of Education. Our Clinch County facility has a fully functional "food truck" and staff can cook on site for that center.

Mental Health

For teachers and parents, it's important to provide social and emotional support to students during these most challenging times because it directly impacts their learning. Action pact Head Start and Early Head Start maintains a culture of caring. Above all, children are empowered and provided with a sense of belonging. When children feel confident, they also develop a measure of resiliency that helps them navigate an unprecedented, disruptive time like this. The agency has a Mental Health Specialist and a Licensed Professional Counselor on staff. Both Mental Health staff members work to support the staff, children, and families in the Head Start program.

In addition to the Mental Health Specialist and LPC on staff, Head Start and Early Head Start have implemented the use of Behavior Interventionists to assist the children who need one on one help with

inappropriate or aggressive behaviors. The Behavior Interventionists are located strategically throughout our service area centers. The placement of the Behavior Interventionists depends on which child needs one on one help at the moment.

Action pact Head Start, and Early Head Start's Licensed Professional Counselor provides services to enrollees, families, and staff. All of our Head Start and Early Head Start sites are contacted frequently throughout the month by her and she is on-call for them in case an emergency or need arises to visit that center to provide services. Open, fluid communication is ongoing between our staff and counselor throughout the school year.

Mental Health is promoted in all components to ensure the children's overall health and well-being. Our counselor completes the referral process upon the parents' consent with an assessment of the referred child. She collaborates with the teaching staff to provide individualized strategies and techniques to help struggling children adapt to the classroom environment. Along with the strategies and techniques in the classrooms, the counselor can provide parents with similar strategies and techniques to ensure consistency in the classroom and home environments.

Regarding the Mental Health aspect of the program, the Second Step Curriculum and Conscious Discipline techniques are used to assist with non-violent problem solving. The Second Step Curriculum uses role playing and puppets to help the children learn how to socialize with others and manage their own emotions. The Conscious Discipline Program teaches our children how to breathe and describe their feelings to regulate their own emotions, and this includes encouraging a designated safe place area in the classroom when needed.

The DESSERTS mental health event involves working with all our staff. DESSERTS stands for STRESSED when spelled backwards. During our training on ways to relieve stress we offer some sweets and treats for our staff with a calm, inviting atmosphere to enjoy and learn ways to decompress at the end of the day. Along with the DESSERTS training, the Mental Health Specialist sends out the monthly Mental Health TID-BIT to families with resources and information on Mental Health issues affecting people today.

Exceptional Children's Week

Each year Georgia celebrates Exceptional Children's Week which is a time to celebrate the accomplishments of exceptional children. Action pact Head Start takes great pride in celebrating this milestone along with the rest of the state and the Council for Exceptional Children. Centers plan special activities to highlight the work the program does with children who have special needs as well as recognizing teaching teams for the extraordinary work they do.

Maria Moore and Dixie Dunnigan from Bacon County Head Start and Beverly Harris and Kenyatta Shivers were recognized for their extra efforts in educating all children, including exceptional children. The winning teaching staff structure their classrooms to help all the children with special needs learn and participate in the many activities during the day. The teachers work hard to celebrate the strengths and differences of each child, and their classroom is a happy, well organized, and productive place.

These winning staff members are team players and help each other by maintaining the routine for all the children in the classroom. The winners get to pick a yearly Training Conference to go with the Disabilities Specialist concerning the subjects of inclusion or disabilities.



Disabilities

As the restrictions regarding COVID turn from isolation to in-person services at schools, Local Education Agencies and private providers are stepping back into the school environment. Meetings concerning IEPs/IFSPs continue to happen both virtually and in person. Families were given access to the Disabilities Specialist via in person, phone calls, email and virtually if needed. The Special News Flash and Mental Health Tidbit newsletters were sent out to families via email and sent home with students from in-person teaching classrooms. The resources sent home included COVID-related answers to questions and guidance on how to stay safe and healthy as new variants of the virus continue to develop.

Children with special needs encompassed over 10% of the funded and current enrollment for the 2022-2023 program year. In the area of special needs, the Head Start and Early Head Start programs provided services for 124 Head Start children and Early Head Start children. Some of the services provided to the children with special needs included the least restrictive environment and inclusive classrooms. Every classroom, along with the inclusion classrooms, were provided materials that were sensitive to the needs of the disabilities of each individual child. Equipment and learning devices were in place to promote learning and inclusion in the classrooms.

We have a strong relationship with our local Lead Education Agencies such as the Board of Education staff, the Babies Can't Wait program staff and the local private providers such as Speech Language Pathologists. The local Board of Education staff in each of our counties also worked with the Head Start staffing in our inclusion classrooms, providing one-on-one interaction with the children and collaboration with the Head Start teachers. At our Head Start/Early Head Start programs, services available included Speech/Language; Pre-school Intervention; Vision Impairment; Physical Therapy; Hearing Impairment; Mental Health Services; the Special News Flash newsletter and Mental Health Tidbits with the Babies Can't Wait staff working with our children under three years old with special needs. Newsletters for the families served under the local board of education of each county and the

Babies Can't Wait program were sent out to staff for parents in order to provide information on various disabilities and local/national resources.

Training was accomplished on a one-on-one basis, with the parent's receiving information in the newsletters. The Disabilities Specialist met with parents one-on-one to answer any questions or concerns they had with the services involved in an IEP or IFSP document or the process in doing so. Many of the parents were given resources for support groups and programs to which many joined to find needed services or resources. Training by Parent to Parent of Georgia took place this year. Children diagnosed with special needs for the 2022-2023 school year are noted below. All these children either had a current Individualized Education Plan or Individualized Family Service Plan in place and accounted for 15.58 % of the program's Current Enrollment and 13.90% of the program's Funded Enrollment.

Children diagnosed with special needs: May 2023

Head Start: 90; Early Head Start: 34; Total –124= Current Enrollment =15.58%; Funded Enrollment=13.90%

Category	Head Start	Early Head Start
Vision Impairment	0	0
Hearing/Deafness	1	0
Deaf/Blind	0	0
Emotional disturbance	0	0
Autism	2	0
Health Impairment	0	1
Traumatic Brain Injury	0	0
Learning Disability	2	1
Orthopedic Impairment	0	0
Speech/Language	28	8
Developmental Delay	6	10
Intellectual Disabilities (Formerly known as Mental Retardation)	0	0
Non-Categorized – Other	0	2
Multiple Disabilities	51	12
Total	90	34

Federal Review

From January 23, 2023, to January 25, 2023, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted a Focus Area One (FA1) monitoring review of Action Pact, Inc. Head Start and Early Head Start programs. There were no areas of concern, no areas of noncompliance, and no deficiencies.

Emergent & Family Literacy

Emergent and Family Literacy continues to be a priority at Head Start. Programs and special events such as the Pajama (P.J.) Reading Party, National Play Doh Day, Read Across America, JumpStart Read for the Record, Georgia Read Aloud Day, and others were held. Family Reading Nights were held at many of the centers and a new event, Family Holiday Craft Night was added.



Several of our centers have local groups continue to fund their participation in the First Foundation for Childhood Literacy. The program received a matching Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) grant and children were able to choose a book to take home.

Parents are encouraged to complete their high school education, and family advocate staff refer families to their local adult education centers.

Professional Development

Action pact Head Start continues -to be very proactive in the area of staff development and training. The program has a DECAL (Department of Early Care and Learning) approved trainer, one CLASS certified trainer (Pre-School and Toddler); two American Heart Association CPR and First Aid trainers; one certified Family Development Credential trainer; one nationally certified playground inspector; and one Darkness to Light instructor. Staff have also been able to take advantage of several online state-approved trainings. The program's Training Specialist has presented training at state and regional conferences as well as to other Head Start and child-care programs and is able to offer in-person trainings to staff.

Staff members are able to take advantage of DECAL incentives and scholarship funds which are available to assist them in attending college and advancing their professional development. Changes to the incentive/ scholarship program have included the eligibility of all Head Start Centers as well as the *Awards for Early Educators Program*, which is a limited time program intended to encourage individuals who pursue higher credentials and degrees. The program awards a single bonus at each level to eligible applicants who earn a CDA, TCC, ECE Diploma, AA, BA or MA degree. A number

of staff have been able to take advantage of this program. In addition, DECAL has also increased the number of payments to eligible staff and has increased the minimum amount earned which has allowed additional staff to be eligible. The Training Specialist contacts staff members informing them that they may be eligible for this DECAL program and assists them with the application process.

All action pact Head Start teachers have an AA degree or higher and meet the Federal mandate or have a waiver in place as well as an professional developoment plan in place. Professional development plans are completed by staff and reviewed by the Head Start Director, Assistant Head Start Director and Training Specialist, and training scheduled as needed.

We have continued to enhance and improve the onboarding training for new staff including intensive training in Teaching Strategies, Safety and Supervision, and Anecdotal, just to name a few. We are continuing to look at way to improve professional development. Staff also are mentored by seasoned staff and observe for approximately two weeks prior to being assigned to a classroom.