



Okaloosa County Head Start

Strategic Plan 2008-2010

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Strategic Planning Process facilitated by J Walker Enterprises

Board of Directors approval 1/30/2008

Policy Council Approval 2/26/2008



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1. A Message from the Head Start/Early Head Start Director

As the Executive Director of Okaloosa County Head Start/Early Head Start, it is my belief that every child has the right to have a **positive head start**. It is my belief that positive early childhood experiences lay the foundation for future learning. As adults, it is our responsibility to ensure that children are not deprived of a positive head start due of circumstances such as economics, health or environmental restrictions. It is also our responsibility to make sure that children are provided opportunities to reach their potential.

At Okaloosa County Head Start/Early Head Start, we will provide reliable and responsive comprehensive services to children and families. We will exemplify professionalism and integrity as we work to empower

our children, families and staff as they exercise their right to develop their personal growth that advances them towards a high quality of life.

Our strategic plan embraces our organizational desire for excellence and outlines how we, systematically and strategically, will become a national program of excellence. We will work collaboratively with our community partners to improve through education the lives of our children, families and staff. We are committed to recruiting, developing and retaining skilled early care and education professionals who have the passion and dedication to working towards the goal of **Excellency**.

It is my belief that **“anything the mind can conceive and believe it can achieve.”** We see Okaloosa Head Start/Early Head Start becoming a **“Program of Excellence”**. Therefore, we know that we will achieve the goal.



2. Head Start/Early Head Start Program Overview

Okaloosa County Comprehensive Head Start Child Development began in Okaloosa County in 1967 as a summer program. The program was originally managed by the Community Action Program (CAP). The CAP Agency closed its doors in 1976, which left the Head Start program without a sponsor. At that time, a group of concerned parents and community leaders applied to the federal government to become the sponsor of Okaloosa Head Start. In 1977, Okaloosa County Comprehensive Head Start Child Development, Inc. was established. The Early Head Start grant was awarded in September 1998. The program serves 260 Head Start and 64 Early Head Start children and families.

Okaloosa County Head Start/Early Head Start has eight centers. The centers are made available through ongoing partnerships between the agency and community and governmental agencies. The following locations and partners make the Head Start Program possible:

- McGriff Street Center (100 Head Start/16 Early Head Start children) partnered with the City of Fort Walton Beach for the facility and Okaloosa County for maintenance.
- Chester Pruitt Center (20 Head Start children) partnered with the City of Fort Walton Beach Parks and Recreation department.
- Niceville Center (40 Head Start children) partnered with the Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church.
- Edney Center (60 Head Start/16 Early Head Start children) partnered with Okaloosa County for land use.
- Kennedy EHS Center (16 children), Lakeview EHS Center (16) and Bay Street Head Start Center (20 Children) partnered with the Crestview Housing Authority.
- Laura Hill Center (17 Head Start children) partnered with the City of Laura Hill

Okaloosa County Head Start participates in the state funded Voluntary Pre-kindergarten Program. The VPK program is designed to prepare four-year-olds for kindergarten and to help build the foundation for positive educational outcomes. The VPK program serves Head Start eligible children who turn four on or before September 1. The VPK option extends the children's day by three hours. Children participating in the Head Start/VPK Program are scheduled from 8:00a.m. to 5:00p.m. VPK is offered at three locations, Edney Street (one class of 18 students), Niceville (one class of 18 students) and McGriff (two classes servicing 36 children). The VPK program pays for 540 hour of instructional time per school year.

Okaloosa County Head Start/Early Head Start employs over 85 staff that ensures comprehensive services, such as early care and education, health services, mental health services, dental services and nutrition, are provided to the children and families.

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3. Target Population

Okaloosa County Head Start/Early Head Start is a federally funded program targeted to serve at risk children and families. Families must meet set income eligibility guidelines. Children under the foster care system or those receiving SSI, TANF or children in a homeless status are automatically eligible for the program. Ten percent of the OCHS funded enrollment opportunities are targeted to serve children with disabilities regardless of their severity. In addition, the agency can allow ten percent of its families enrolled to be over the income guidelines.

4a. Mission

Okaloosa Head Start is committed to empowerment of the diversity of children, families and staff through the support of our community for personal growth and development that will lead to a successful future.

4b. Vision

Okaloosa Head Start is and will be the leader in early childhood development through exemplary passion and commitment from its staff. Okaloosa Head Start provides cutting edge services and support for our families, children and our community.

4c. Guiding Principles

We believe ...

- Children are the Priority of the Okaloosa Head Start/ Early Head Start Program.
- In the personal growth and development of children and families.
- In letting children express their individuality by teaching them to respect themselves and others.
- That children should be given the tools to maximize their learning potential.
- The philosophy that student improvement begins with teacher improvement.
- In seeking new ideas and innovations to the Head Start program by Board members, Policy Council members, Community members and Staff members.
- In advocating for public policy for the future of our children.
- That all children, families and staff deserve to be respected.
- In children receiving proper nutrition and health and dental care.
- In making a difference in the lives of our children, families and staff.
- That individuals that benefit from the Head Start program should give back to the program.
- In early identification and intervention of common risk factors for children and families.
- That open and honest communication is the key to success.
- That all staff should have the opportunity to be trained and advance within the program.
- In empowering the people around us.

5. Listing of Department Programs and Services

I. Education Services

- a. Creative Curriculum (Head Start and Early Head Start) (developmentally appropriate curriculum)
- b. Degreed teachers (minimum of Associate of Arts)
- c. Galileo – individualization, development and recording for Early Head Start/Head Start
- d. Regular in-service training for staff
- e. Collaboration with the School District (LEA) and Part C Early Steps to ensure children are assessed and provide appropriate therapy
- f. Voluntarily Pre-Kindergarten Program (eligible four-year olds)
- g. Assessment for 3 to 5 year olds is Acuscreen and for 0 to 3 year olds is Ages and Stages questionnaire
- h. Mentoring program for teaching staff

II. Health Services

- a. Screenings for vision, hearing and speech
- b. Developmental screening and all ESPDT requirements
- c. Evaluation and treatment (if needed)
- d. Preventive dental education
- e. Dental examination
- f. Dental treatment
- g. Transportation to dental provider
- h. Assist with resources and referrals
- i. Assist with KidCare and Medicaid
- j. Development and maintenance of a solid Health Advisory Committee

III. Nutrition

- a. Nutritional education for parents and staff
- b. Breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack each day
- c. Family style meals
- d. Menus developed in accordance to USDA guidelines

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- e. Licensed, contracted dietician
- f. Growth assessments/Wellness Plans

IV. Mental Health

- a. Licensed mental health consultant provides confidential services including crisis counseling, individual and family counseling and filial play therapy
- b. Positive safe environments
- c. Classroom and individual observations
- d. Training for teaching staff
- e. Developed resiliency factors for children
- f. Okaloosa County Head Start Wellness Program

V. Disabilities

- a. Comprehensive evaluation and Individual Education Plan (3 to 5) or Individual Family Support Plan (0 to 3) developed by a team of professional diagnosticians and parents
- b. Therapy and prescriptive services that are provided on site
- c. Special Quest - coordinates providers of infants and toddlers with disabilities in Okaloosa County
- d. Specialized lesson plans for children with an active IEP or IFSP

VI. Transition

- a. Transition plans for children moving from Early Head Start to Head Start and plans for children moving from Head Start into the public school system
- b. Public school visits

VII. Transportation

- a. Transportation is provided in limited areas of the county
- b. Transportation is provided to all children to and from dental appointments and field trips

VIII. Child Outcomes

- a. Children are observed and ongoing assessment continues throughout the child's enrollment
- b. Galileo – individualization, development and recording for Early Head Start/Head Start

- c. FHSA - “A Portrait of our Head Start Children’s Outcomes”

IX. Parent Resource Center

- a. McGriff Street Parent Resource library - computer room, materials and books for children and parents

X. Parent Involvement (opportunity to become active members of the program)

- a. Parent Volunteer Program
- b. Parent Committees
- c. Policy Council
- d. Board of Directors
- e. Curriculum Committee (planning activities)
- f. Health Services Advisory Committee
- g. Parent training opportunities (partnering with community agencies, i.e. GED Literacy/Even Start training program, life skills training, food service training, employment skills training and child development training)

XI. Community Partnerships

- a. Northwest Florida State College/Head Start Music Program
- b. Okaloosa Reads
- c. Kiwanis Club: Priority One Children Program (Niceville & Fort Walton Beach)
- d. Northwest Florida State College Nursing Program
- e. Jobs Plus
- f. Emerald Coast Marine Institute
- g. Okaloosa County Book Mobile
- h. Okaloosa County Health Department
- i. Sacred Heart Hospital (Early Steps)
- j. Okaloosa School District
- k. Okaloosa Walton Child Care Services
- l. Choctaw High School ROTC
- m. Toys for Tots/Board of Realtors
- n. University of West Florida

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- o. Okaloosa Walton Early Learning Coalition
- p. Christian Automotive
- q. Okaloosa County coordinated transportation services
- r. Families Count (healthy families)
- s. Okaloosa County YMCA programs

6. External Trends that Serve to Predict Organizational Direction (Community Assessment, Political Trends)

The trends and external factors listed below impact Okaloosa County Head Start programs and have contributed to the development of our strategic goals and objectives.

- Community Partners
- Community Assessment
- Political Trends
- Head Start Reauthorization

7. Internal Trends that Serve to Predict Organizational Direction (Self-Assessment and Program Improvement Plan; most recent Federal Review; most recent Refunding Application and Training/Technical Assistance Plan; most recent Program Information Report; SWOT Analysis; Agency's Strategic Plan; Short term and Long-term Goals per Content Area and Support Departments in Head Start/Early Head Start)

The trends and internal factors listed below impact Okaloosa County Head Start and have contributed to the development of our strategic goals and objectives.

- Organizational By-Laws
- Self Assessment
- PIP
- Federal Review
- Refunding Application
- Training and Technical Assistance Plan
- Agency Strategic Plan
- Long and Short term goals per content area which include HR and Finance
- Child Outcome Data

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STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT WORK PLAN

The Strategic Alignment Work Plan outlines the steps to ensure successful accomplishment of each strategic goal. Each goal includes the (A) Strategic Outcomes; (B) Strategic Objectives; (C) Potential Success Inhibitors; (D) Critical Success Inhibitors; (E) Timelines; (F) People Accountable. The definitions of (A) through (F) are listed below.

A. Strategic Outcomes = What we want to accomplish

B. Strategic Objectives = What we need to do to accomplish

C. Potential Success Inhibitors = Things that could stand in our way

D. Critical Success Factors = Things that we must make happen to accomplish our strategic outcomes

E. Timelines = Time allowable to ensure the success of our strategic outcomes

F. People Accountable = Individuals responsible for ensuring the completion of the strategic outcomes

8. Strategic Goals and Objectives

I. Bilingual Competency

A. Strategic Outcome:

To assist all staff in being able to provide services to children and families in their primary language.

B. Strategic Objective:

1. Identify location of bilingual families.
2. Train staff in our family's primary language (Spanish).
3. Allow staff to check out Rossetta Stone.
4. Provide materials in all centers that are in our customer's primary language.
5. Collaborate with community resources to provide interpreters for families and staff.
6. Bilingual presentation in November.

C. Potential Success Inhibitors:

1. Lack of cultural awareness (staff and families)
2. Available training time
3. Qualified instructors in the community

D. Critical Success Factors:

1. Locate qualified instructors
2. Create continuous cultural awareness
3. Schedule group training times
4. Purchase additional Rossetta Stone software
5. Heavily recruit bilingual volunteers and staff in the community.
6. Incentives for volunteers and staff.

E. Timelines:

1. Development of the Bilingual Committee with representation from each center (does not need to be in a managerial or supervisory role) beginning March 2008.
 - Develop guidelines for participation and class frequency.
 - Select a class location.
 - Ensure all technology needs have been met.
2. Training sessions to begin in September 2008.
3. Administrative Team introduces Bilingual Committee and its concepts - January 2008.
 - Introduction
 - Hand-off
 - Explain the role for managerial oversight

F. People Accountable:

Administrative Team

Bilingual Committee

All OCHS staff

Parents

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Volunteers
Policy Council
Board of Directors

II. Disabilities and Mental Health Competency

A. Strategic Outcome:

To establish full inclusive settings for children with challenging behaviors and children with disabilities regardless of severity.

B. Strategic Objective:

1. Comprehensive recruiting effort designed to ensure children with disabilities are identified and recruited into OCHS regardless of severity.
2. Train staff in creating safe and inviting environments for children with disabilities regardless of severity.
3. Create understanding and compassion for atypically developing children regardless of severity.
4. Increase knowledge of teacher's role in the IEP/IFSP process and implementation.
5. Improve parent participation in the development of classroom activities.
6. Increased collaboration with LEA and Part C.

C. Potential Success Inhibitors:

1. Timely identification of children with suspected or diagnosed disabilities regardless of their severity.
2. Lack of sensitivity for families with children with disabilities and challenging behaviors.
3. Parents denial of the true nature of her child's disability.

D. Critical Success Factors:

1. Schedule regular communication meetings with LEA, Part C and Mental Health Consultant.
2. Ongoing training in incorporating IEP/IFSPs into the Daily Lesson Plan and strategies for handling challenging situations.
3. Teachers, FSS and Managers will meet to discuss the specific needs of each diagnosed child prior to enrollment.
4. FSS will partner with parents to ensure successful entry into the program or school year.
6. Schedule monthly meetings between Teachers and FSS.

E. Timelines:

1. Monthly meetings between Teachers, FSS and SLP.
2. Teachers will review educational goals monthly to develop lesson plans.
3. Placement meetings between ECE Managers and Disability/MH Specialist for the purpose of timely and appropriate classroom placement.
4. Create Multidisciplinary Team Meeting calendar.
5. Train on Disability Policies and Procedures during Pre-Service in August

F. People Accountable:

ECE Manager
MH/Disabilities Specialist
FCP Manager
FSS

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Center Directors
Teaching Staff
LEA
Part C
Consultants

III. Diversity Competency

A. Strategic Outcome:

To create an environment of total inclusion with respect to human diversity.

B. Strategic Objective:

1. Increase cultural sensitivity and awareness with respect to human diversity on behalf of both staff and families.
2. Implement comprehensive case management for each family served by OCHS.

C. Potential Success Inhibitors:

1. Lack of sensitivity and awareness with regard to human diversity.

D. Critical Success Factors:

1. Establish OCHS agency's philosophy of inclusion as it relates to human diversity.
 - Embracing human diversity allows for continuous open communication and daily demonstration of organizational teamwork.
 - Embracing diversity empowers the people around us.

E. Timelines:

1. Pre-Service or annual training regarding cultural sensitivity.
2. Ongoing training for staff specifically in regards to respect for children.

F. People Accountable:

Administrative Team
Center Directors
OCHS staff

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IV. Technology Competency

A. Strategic Outcome:

All staff will become proficient in using all hardware and software needed to meet the Head Start Program Performance Standards and OCHS Policies and Procedures.

B. Strategic Objective:

1. Provide agency-wide ongoing training in technology.
2. Update all hardware to support current software.
3. Train parents on accessing Galileo and their children developmental progress.
4. Train teachers to use children's software and incorporate into daily lesson plan.

C. Potential Success Inhibitors:

1. Current skill sets of staff.

D. Critical Success Factors:

1. Establish a Technology Plan.
2. Assessment of staff skill sets.
3. Establish a Technology Committee

E. Timelines:

1. Establish a Technology Committee by March 2008

F. People Accountable:

Administrative Team
Bay Networking
Technology Committee

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V. Branding of Okaloosa County Head Start

A. Strategic Outcomes

To increase public awareness of OCHS through radio, OCHS website; public television stations, billboards and newspapers as well as by participating in local parades, city festivals and other outreach events.

B. Strategic Objectives

1. Financial support in the form of in-kind resources
2. Financial support through the program budget
3. Establish a public relations committee to include staff, parents, and friends of OCHS and community partners.
4. Identify appropriate events
5. Develop calendar of events that agency will participate in
6. Ensure marketing materials are available for each event
7. Network with Panhandle programs, local AEYC and FHSA

C. Potential Success Inhibitors

1. Appropriate planning for event coverage

D. Critical Success Factors

1. Contact the Daily News (countywide newspaper); Crestview Bulletin; Bay Beacon to discuss advertising and articles about the program
2. Contact Cox Cable, Local PBS, Ft. Walton Business Channel; School District Education Channel to develop plan that would include OCHS into their broadcasting programs.
3. Contact the City of Ft. Walton Beach to solicit donate billboard space
4. Contact Lamar Billboards to solicit donate/reduce rate billboard space
5. Contact local radio stations to advertise or participate in spots of various programs.
6. Identify and contract with webmaster

E. Timelines (time allowable to ensure the success of our strategic outcomes)

1. Establish public relations committee
2. Identify and contract with webmaster

F. People Accountable

Board of Directors

Executive Director

Management Team

Public Relations Committee (Parents, Staff, and friends of OCHS and Community Partners)

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VI. Influencing Public Policy

A. Strategic Outcomes

1. To continually create an environment of public awareness at the local, state and national levels for the purpose of ensuring total inclusion and programmatic influence for children and families in the OCHS.

B. Strategic Objectives

1. To create a committee comprised of staff, parents and community partners for the purpose of continually discussing strategies for identifying, understanding and addressing ECE issues.
2. To create an awareness in local businesses of the plight of low-income children and families in the OCHS.
3. To establish media influence to facilitate the creation of awareness of ECE public policy locally, regionally and nationally.
4. To create a voice through private citizens, businesses and interest groups to be heard by local governmental associations such as National League of Cities, National Governors Association, National Conference of State Legislators, National Association of Counties and the US Conference of Leaders.

C. Potential Success Inhibitors

1. No unified ECE voice
2. Lack of common interest by collaborative partners
3. Competition for funding by other ECE organizations

D. Critical Success Factors

1. Creation of a Lobbying Committee to carry forward OCHS' agenda
2. Creation of collaborative common interest group
3. Formation of a base of ECEs for the purpose of securing local, state and national grants, thus increasing the economic base for all in OCHS region.

E. Timelines

1. Creation of oversight committee for the purpose of establishing applicable timelines and identification of collaborative partners by April, 2008

F. People Accountable

Administrative Team
Center Directors
OCHS staff
Community partners

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VII. Creating Unrestricted Income

A. Strategic Outcomes

To increase financial stability of OCHS by procuring unrestricted funds for the program.

B. Strategic Objectives

1. Use of internet and other resources to find grants
2. Secure those grants to enhance and provide opportunities for children, families and staff
3. Creation of endowment opportunities for OCHS
4. Community and individual contributions
5. Formation of a scholarship program for Head Start children

C. Potential Success Inhibitors

1. Lack of grant writing expertise
2. Not being familiar with what grants are out there
3. Compiling all the information that is needed for the grants in a timely manner
4. Community partners willingness to share information
5. Finding contributors and benefactors

D. Critical Success Factors

1. Must have knowledge of where to find the grants
2. Must have someone with grant writing experience
3. Will need help from community partners
4. Information will need to be submitted in a timely manner
5. Soliciting the assistance of community partners and consultants
6. Creation of sound eligibility criteria for scholarship program

E. Timelines

1. Whatever the specific timelines are within the grant itself
2. Receive contributions annually from endowments and community giving programs
3. Designate times and dates for functions and fundraisers

F. People Accountable

Board of Directors
Executive Director
Management Team
Grant Writer

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VIII. Creation of a High Performing, Comprehensive, ECE Program

A. Strategic Outcomes

1. Okaloosa Head Start Program achieves the designation of NHSA's 'Program of Excellence'

B. Strategic Objectives

1. Knowledge and understanding of the NHSA's 'Program of Excellence' criteria and indicators
2. Creation of a committee to facilitate internal assessment utilizing the 77 indicators from NHSA's 'Program of Excellence'.
3. Create a work plan designating the steps and timelines to achieve the designation

C. Potential Success Inhibitors

1. Budgetary planning for application fee
2. Focused, committed and consistent participation by staff and management

D. Critical Success Factors

1. To create a culture of excellence throughout the organization
2. To create collaborative awareness of OCHS and its programs with families and community partners
3. Ensure a planning structure that facilitates allowable time for successful implementation and outcomes

E. Timelines

Create Committee by April, 2008

F. People Accountable

Executive Director
All Staff

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IX. Strategic Planning Methodology

Okaloosa County Head Start/Early Head Start views strategic planning as an opportunity to involve all Staff, Policy Council and Community Partners as well as an opportunity to strengthen communication and unify the program around the creation of strategic goals & objectives and a strategic alignment work plan. Strategic planning enables Okaloosa County Head Start/Early Head Start to:

- Revise the program mission and create strategic goals and objectives
- Provide a foundation from which progress can be measured
- Be in full compliance with all Head Start Program Performance Standards
- Define the purpose of the program and define priorities
- Organize the many tasks, duties and responsibilities of the program
- Provide leadership
- Provide a clear focus for the program, ensuring that everyone's time and energy go towards achieving the program's strategic goals and objectives
- Align the budget and training plan with the strategic goals and objectives
- Establish additional successful collaborative community partnerships
- Develop a sense of empowerment and ownership
- Unify the Staff, Policy Council and Board in the building of a common vision

Our strategic planning methodology draws upon the following components:

- Strategic planning, led by a Strategic Planning Consultant with the Head Start Director and Management Team
- Input from the Staff, Policy Council and Community Partners

The strategic planning sessions include:

- Review of what is involved in strategic planning as well as the benefits of strategic planning
- An exercise entitled "Establishing Legacies"
- An exercise entitled "Temperament Intelligences"
- Review/revision of program's mission statement
- Review and analysis of the following documents: Community Assessment, Self-Assessment and Program Improvement Plan, most recent Federal Review, Refunding Application and Training/Technical Assistance plan, most recent Program Information Report and Head Start Short-term and Long-term goals
- Creation of program's strategic goals
- Creation of Strategic Alignment Work Plan (includes strategic goals, objectives, actions, timelines, staff responsible, resources/support needed and indicators of success)
- Implementation of the Strategic Alignment Work Plan program-wide
- Distribution of and communication of the strategic plan to major stakeholders
- Ongoing monitoring of the strategic plan
- Reporting of progress of strategic goals and objectives of the strategic plan to major stakeholders

The strategic plan is used as a living and working document throughout all daily activities of the program. The strategic plan is aligned with the program's operational plan, content area written plans and work plans. The strategic plan will be formally reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

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