

# Hidalgo County Head Start Program

## Policy Council Regular Agenda

**DATE:** April 21, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Discussion/Approval of Hidalgo County Head Start Program Self-Assessment Results

**RATIONALE/NEED:** The purpose is to collect and analyze data and information from a variety of sources within the program to determine if management systems and program services are being implemented and are working effectively. Management systems (program governance, record-keeping and reporting, ongoing monitoring, self-assessment, human resources, and fiscal management) ensure well-managed programs, with integrated systems, meet standards for high quality as they create nurturing child development environments, enhance child outcomes, and promote positive parent-child interactions. The Self-Assessment was conducted March 4, 2021 through March 26, 2021.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Administration recommends approval.

**COST:** N/A

**RELATED INFORMATION INCLUDES:** Hidalgo County Head Start Program Self-Assessment Results

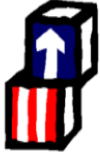
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**INITIATED BY:** Nora S. Munoz, Assistant Director for Programmatic Services

**REVIEWED BY:** Teresa Flores, Executive Director

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S APPROVAL:** 





# Hidalgo County Head Start Program 2021 Annual Self-Assessment Final Report

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program (HCHSP) will complete the 2020-2021 school year and begin the 2021-2022 academic year dealing with the challenges the COVID19 pandemic imposed on our children, families and staff. During the most crucial times, HCHSP was forced to operate under a Shelter-at-Home order that was extended twice by the County Judge. The program nevertheless, remained focused on its goals and objectives. We were able to accomplish the desired objectives and outcomes that support the efforts and dedication of staff and parents, as home, became the new Head Start classroom.



HCHSP employees immediately began contacting parents and assuring them that we were still here and getting ready for them to come back. We developed a hybrid instruction plan in classroom and virtual, tailoring to parents' needs. Staff then began delivering educational packets to each child, and teachers were provided with laptops to follow up and provide the educational lessons in coordination with the delivered packets. We used the CARES funds to purchase tablets and

software for the children and also to redesign our classrooms with protective barriers for each child in order to ensure adequate social distancing safety requirements. Staff also began preparing bulk meals packets consisting of 5 meals which included breakfast, snacks and lunch. These meals were made ready, at the Head Start centers for pick up, or delivered to the parents at home, depending on the parent's preference.

Moving forward HCHSP reassessed and reexamined its processes to make certain that services will be delivered with the same high purpose and intent.

The Self-Assessment will outline the data collected on key program highlights and procedures developed to continue to provide high quality Head Start services to our children and families.

The HCHSP conducts an annual Self-Assessment as per Head Start Performance Standards which state *"A Program must effectively oversee progress towards program goals on an ongoing basis and **annually** must conduct a **self-assessment** that uses program data including aggregated child assessment data, and professional development and parent and family engagement data as appropriate, to evaluate the program's progress towards meeting goals...compliance with program performance standards through-out the program year, and the effectiveness of the professional development and family engagement systems in promoting school readiness"*. **Subpart J 1302.102(b)(2)(i)(ii)(iii)**

In consultation with the Policy Council and the Hidalgo County Commissioner's Court, HCHSP carries out the self-assessment with the assistance of a team composed of staff, parents and volunteers.

## **Purpose:**

The purpose of the Self-Assessment is to collect and analyze data and information from a variety of sources within the program to determine if management systems and program services are being implemented and are working effectively. Management systems (program governance, record-keeping and reporting, ongoing monitoring, self-assessment, human resources, and fiscal management) ensure well-managed programs, with integrated systems, meet standards for high quality as they create nurturing child development environments, enhance child outcomes, and promote positive parent-child interactions.

HCHSP's commitment to deliver quality services to children and families in Hidalgo County is demonstrated through ongoing training, coaching practices, and the establishment of monitoring protocols and procedures in accordance to Head Start Standards. Additionally, the purpose of the Self-Assessment is to identify program strengths and to determine areas that may be in need of improvement. This will enable the program to deliver the best possible services to children and families. Each aspect of the program is carefully examined and the outcomes are analyzed. Key insights from the Annual Self-Assessment will help us 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.

## **HCHSP Program Goals:**

- **To promote professional workforce development for employees and parents**
- **To increase parental engagement in their child's educational activities, specifically in the areas of literacy and social emotional development**
- **To promote health and safety of staff, children and families**
- **To sustain the School Readiness Partnership Model (SRPM) with all school districts in our service area**

## **Methodology:**

The Annual Self-Assessment provides the program with the means to regularly assess the management systems and program operations in order to continually strengthen the services delivered to children and families.

HCHSP conducted its Annual Self-Assessment on March 4, 2021 through March 26, 2021. A virtual training for the Self-Assessment Team was conducted on March 3, 2021. The following is the composition of the Self-Assessment teams:

### ***Fiscal:***

Elma Carrera, Chief Financial Officer  
Ambrosio Tovar, Procurement Director  
Angelica Salinas, Procurement Assistant  
Elizabeth Cortina, Assistant CFO

### ***Nutrition:***

Gilbert Silva, Nutrition Director  
Yadira Garcia, Nutrition Coordinator  
Aurora Figueroa, Nutrition Coordinator

### ***Child Health & Safety:***

Carlota Amezquita, MSN Health Services Director  
Maria Martinez, LVN  
Paulita Gonzales, LVN  
Yesenia Quintanilla, RN

### ***Special Services (Disabilities):***

Edna Snider, Special Services Director  
Sonia Balderas, Special Services Coord.  
Mirna Gonzalez, Special Services Coord.

### ***Child Development:***

Connie Casas, Administrator for Education  
Karina Larios, Education Area Director  
Hector Guerra, Education Area Director  
Nadia De Leon, Education Area Director  
Zahydee Hernandez, Education Coordinator  
Cidelia Montegudo, Education Coordinator  
Karen L. Brouwen, Education Coordinator

### ***ERSEA/Family & Community:***

Elvira Segura, Family Services Director  
Ramiro Silva, Community Partnerships Director  
Ana Villaurrutia, Family Services Coordinator  
Debra Gamboa, Family Services Coordinator  
Irma Garza Acuna, Family Services Coord.  
Hermelinda Corona, Comm. Part. Coord.

### ***Administration:***

Teresa Flores, Executive Director  
Edmundo Garcia, Assistant Program Director  
Nora S Munoz, Assistant Program Director  
David Guel, Administrator for Human Resources  
Azucena Saenz, Compliance Director

### ***Transportation/Field Operations:***

Oscar Palacios, Field Operations Director  
Nick Castillo, Field Operations Manager  
Oliver Solis, Transportation Coordinator

### ***Mental Health:***

Melissa Gallegos, Mental Health Director  
Elizabeth Abad, Mental Health Counselor

**Parent Participation:** This year, in order to provide parents a more viable option to engage in the self-assessment process because of COVID-19 protocols, the staff developed a Self-Assessment Survey which was conducted via the internet. HCHSP was able to utilize **myheadstart** software to formulate and forward a questionnaire to Head Start parents via email.

The data collected is summarized as follows:

- When asked to rate the Program regarding health, education, nutrition and social services, 97.1 % of respondents were “very satisfied or satisfied”.
- 98.7 % of respondents rated the Program “very good or good”, when asked to evaluate the Program’s performance during the pandemic.
- During the pandemic parents were given a choice on how to receive educational instruction for their children, “48% chose in-classroom instructions, 44.6% received online instructions, while 7.4% elected to receive hybrid instructions, partially in-classroom and partially online.
- 69.8 % of parents felt that their children were more successful with in-classroom instruction.
- Only 82.9% of the respondents have internet service at home
- All respondents were willing to become engaged with Head Start as a volunteer by either
  1. Participating in center committees (39.7%)
  2. Supporting family literacy (50.3%)
  3. Assisting in classrooms (44.6%)
  4. Participating in parental curriculum (29.9%)
  5. Working with Head Start employees (33.2%)
  6. Committed to work with Center Managers (56.7%)
- 98% of respondents rated the communications with their child’s teacher as “very good or good”.
- 90% of respondents felt that Head Start is preparing their children for public school either “very well or well”.
- 89.4% of respondents rated our nutritional meals as “very good or good”.
- 99% of respondents rate our communication with them on their child’s health status as “Very Good or Good”
- When given a choice of preferred communication method regarding Head Start activities a larger percent of respondents (79.5%) elected “Texting” first”, their second choice (71.5%) was via telephone, third choice (46%) preferred email, while 31.4 % preferred either the Programs’ newsletter or website as their 4<sup>th</sup> choice.

The staff extends its appreciation to all those parents who participated in our survey.

**HCHSP'S plan** for this year's Self-Assessment included the analysis of data collected by myHeadStart family tracking software.

In addition to the analysis of data, the Self-Assessment team reviewed two files from every center (selected at random) for Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance (ERSEA) compliance; A Playground Checklist per area (selected at random) was conducted; A Bus Route Monitoring Report was submitted for every bus providing transportation services; And, one-hundred and twenty (120) personnel files were reviewed for compliance.

## **Key Insights:**

### **Fiscal/Procurement:**

The staff developed forms to document leave time taken due to COVID (COVID LEAVE REQUEST FORM) currently utilized by the Finance and Human Resources Departments. The form identified the following:

- Employee Name
- Employee ID#
- Position
- Effective Date
- Anticipated Return Date
- Return to Work Date
- Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL)
- Expanded Family & Medical Leave Application
- Employee Qualifying Reasons 1-6
- Fiscal Approval
- Human Resources Approval

The staff created a Payroll Leave Code for COVID Leave to track the number of hours an employee has taken for COVID.

Newly In-Kind forms were developed and used by the school district staff to document the daily number hours of instruction they provide to Head Start Children.

Time and Attendance records were revised for all employees to complete and submit to the Finance Department used for payroll processing.

The Fiscal Department made certain that all of the Program's fiscal responsibilities were met. Communication with vendors continued via telephone, email and text. Bank transfers to meet

financial obligations and all payroll activities continued without interruptions. A computer laptop was assigned to staff in case of mandatory shutdown.

**Strengths/Areas where the Program is working well:**

- Easily track the number of hours taken by an employee due to COVID Leave utilizing the MIP Payroll Processing Module
- Easily track the return to work date for an employee out on COVID Leave
- Continue to meet the non-Federal match requirements during the pandemic
- Processed payroll accordingly in a timely manner in spite of the pandemic
- Strength in autonomy and contactless business transactions were proven feasible with all vendors/suppliers

**ERSEA/Family and Community Partnerships:**

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program developed a “Work Safe Plan” to provide a healthy, safe, and comfortable work environment for all Head Start staff. The Plan included protocols and procedures based on recommendations by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Office of Head Start, the Texas Department of Health, the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Minimum Standards for Child Care Services and Program staff. The plan highlighted safe procedures for communicating with parents, for dropping-off and picking-up children, curbside services for meals and for distribution of educational packets for at-home instruction.

Center staff assisted parents with email set-up and the process of logging in for virtual instruction. Staff encouraged families to apply for wi-fi hot spots and devices through the Community Services Agency to assist with virtual instruction.

During the pandemic, many families faced crisis situations that required referral services. The Support Services staff utilized email, texts and phone calls to assist the families in acquiring the needed service. Follow up with families occurred to ensure services were acquired. The Head Start Community Resource Directory was provided to each family to make them aware of agencies out in the community and the services they provide.

Recruitment practices occur year round, adhering to safety and social distancing practices. Every center has a recruitment schedule. Daily recruitment consists of distributing flyers out in the community, posting flyers at area businesses, connecting with parents via telephone and Facebook, myHeadStart pre-application queue and Head Start web page.

Due to the pandemic, the option of virtual and in-person instruction was made available to families. Staff encouraged students to attend in-person by emphasizing the safety practices being utilized at

the center (i.e. masks, handwashing, desk barriers, social distancing) as a way of reassuring parents that staff/student safety was priority. Parents were made aware of teacher/student classroom ratios. There was much flexibility allowed in regards to drop-off time and schedule. Staff promoted transportation services that are available. Those families that were not able to bring their child to the center were encouraged to log-in for virtual instruction on a daily basis; they received daily reminders. Staff promoted the program by providing virtual tour of center to give parents a visual of where their child would be throughout the day.

Support Services staff conducted Family Partnership Agreements (FPA) via telephone and by communicating during meal distribution and curbside drop-off/pick-up. Information/data was entered into myHeadStart. An FPA tracking log is kept for all children. Staff offers continuous follow-up to ensure that the needs of families are being met.

Some of the Independent School Districts and Program partners provided devices to the children for virtual instruction (Chrome books, tablets). The Community Services Agency also assisted families in need by providing Wal-Mart gift cards to be used for food, gas, and needed household items. The CSA also provided utility assistance, and rent/mortgage financial assistance. The Food Bank of Hidalgo County provided food to needy families. Ashley Pediatric provided mobile clinics to assist with health physicals for Head Start children. FEMA provided rent assistance. VITA provided free income tax preparation services. Habitat for Humanity provided home repairs for some Head Start families. HEB provided free books for children to read.

**Strengths/Areas where the Program is working well:**

- Overall, center staff was very impressed on how the Family Services department was able to provide guidance to Support Service Staff and allow for a smooth transition with changes due to the pandemic. Services to Head Start families continued uninterrupted throughout this time. The adjustments and modifications made to the application process helped to continue with the enrollment process.

**Recommendations:**

- Design the application information on myHeadStart to coincide with the hard copy of the application and continue to promote a paperless application process. Work on additional Head Start exposure on social media and other outlets. Develop a pool of wait-lists and share amongst the centers to ensure that the Program maximizes the funded enrollment slots.

## **Child Health & Safety:**

The Health Department participated in the creation of the Work Safe Plan in order to continue to serve the children and families during the pandemic. We were able to establish processes that safeguarded our staff, children and families while services continued with as little interruption as possible. In collaboration with our Mental Health Department and Region VI Training and Technical Assistance personnel we developed an “Employee Wellness Plan” that addresses the importance of mental and psychological health.

The following are the protocols that were put in place to ensure the safety of staff, children, and families during the pandemic:

- The use and guidance of the Hidalgo County Head Start Work Safe Plan
- Training from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension; special consideration for Infection Control during COVID-19 training
- Policy and procedures for sanitation/infection (Performance Standards 1304.22 (a) (1)-(4))
- Performance Standards for communicable diseases and illness (Performance Standards 1304.22 (b) (1)(2))
- Followed the CDC guidelines.
- Temperature checks for staff and children before entering the class room
- Implemented COVID-19 questionnaire
- All children and staff were required to use facial coverings
- Promoted social distancing (6 feet)
- Required frequent handwashing (20 seconds)
- Required constant sanitation and disinfecting of classrooms and centers daily, throughout the day.
- No visitors were allowed at the center.
- No congregation among staff assigned to drop off and pick up areas for children (curbside).
- Only two (2) children were seated per table with plexi glass in between them in the classrooms
- Visors with shields were provided by the public school, disability department, and health department as needed
- Children were provided their own materials/supplies/books to avoid sharing
- Children were served their meals to avoid self-serving
- Centers housed inside school campuses also abided by their policies and regulations.

Staff collection of data ensured compliance with the 45 and 90 day deadline:

- Reviewed children's records on myHeadStart periodically
- Requested medical information with release of medical information consent signed by parents
- Called, faxed, emailed, and picked up documentation from doctors' offices, emails and screenshots of exams from parents
- Completed health care pay source for uninsured children – Performance Standard 1304.20 (c) (5)
- Parent notices were provided physically, reminders by telephone/virtual calls, text, and emails advising them of Head Start health requirements
- Home visits and drive-thru were done to pick-up and deliver information/notices/food
- Communication with parents was made during the distribution of meals
- Support from LVN Health Coordinators, Lead RN, and Health Services director was above and beyond requirements

Staff ensured that immunizations were current and in compliance according to standards:

- Frequent monitoring was implemented through myHeadStart.com and my health workbook for missing information
- Secured immunization record from the parents as well as downloading them from ImmTrac2 registry
- Called clinics, doctors' offices and County Health Department for missing vaccines and referred families accordingly for vaccines
- Provided parent notices for children missing immunizations through curbside and emails
- Recorded and documented accordingly in child's folder.

Staff ensured that all children have a medical home:

- During the enrollment process the medical provider form was filled out by the parents, if no medical home was identified, parents were referred to the local clinics and dental offices
- Staff generated reports every 2 weeks to monitor for missing information
- Staff maintained constant communication with the parents until information is obtained

Staff worked with the community partners to provide health/medical services to children and families:

- Families were provided a copy of the Head Start Resource Directory and were provided guidance on how to use it
- Informed parents during recruitment process about services available in the community according to their needs

- Maintained communication with parents, medical providers, health departments and community clinics (El Milagro Clinic, Hope Clinic, Nuestra Clinica Del Valle)
- Generated telephone calls to providers to ensure that children and families obtained necessary services and fulfilled Head Start requirements.

Staff continued to ensure medication administration procedures were being implemented:

- Staff participated in a Child Health and Safety Pilot program with Regional Office staff to strengthen protocols in particular the administration of medication to ensure a full proof strategy that minimizes errors and omissions
- Staff followed health procedures and medication administration, performance standards 1304.22 (c)(1-6), 1304.22 (2)(i), 1304.51 (b)(g)(h), and 1308.18 (d)(1)(2)
- Staff was trained three (3) times a year to ensure all proper documentation is updated and in place
- Communicated with parents to ensure all proper documentation has been submitted as well as medication needed to be administered
- Center staff secured approval of medication and plan by Health Department before administering any medication
- Staff met with parents through curbside to sign consents and explain medication administration process
- All medication administration forms and consents were filled out by trained staff and signed by parent(s) before administering medication to children:
  - Medication authorization form
  - Medication administration agreement
  - Individual Daily Medication Log for each child

**Strengths/Areas where the Program is working well:**

- TECHNOLOGY + COMMUNICATION = GREAT RESULTS
- Staff became familiar with the use of proper technology for great communication with parents, medical providers, and administration staff
- Staff has received appropriate training to follow health procedures in different situations
- Implemented CDC guidelines and followed protocol. Staff, parents and children followed guidelines and have adapted well to COVID situation
- Curbside pickup and drop off worked well and maintain a rapid flow
- Center managers have managed to keep children information updated. They have been working above and beyond to meet deadlines in every department
- Center staff has collaborated to maintain unity working as a team to keep our children safe

**Recommendations:**

- Continue using technology
- Continue with safety protocols
- Keep procedures for curbside pick-up and drop-off
- Maintain staffings with parents either virtual or face time to keep good communication
- Maintain all centers well-staffed with support assistants to keep a more productive work environment.

## **Early Childhood Development:**

*“The Hidalgo County Local Health Authority issued an order that all public and private schools, from grades pre-kindergarten through grade 12, will not re-open for in-campus instruction until after September 27, 2020.” As per the order, instruction may be provided through virtual, remote, or distance learning only.*

During the 2020-2021 program year, the Program used the flexibility provided by the Office of Head Start to deliver education and child development services in-person, virtually or a combination of both, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We individualized the educational services based on the needs of children and families, including service delivery mechanism (in-person or virtual).

## **Procedures for At-Home Instruction: Responding to COVID-19- Aug-Sept 2020**

The Procedures for At-Home Instruction: Responding to COVID-19 was presented by the Education Department to all staff, including ISD teachers at Annual Training and included the following:

- Lesson Planning and development of Instructional Packets for At-Home Instruction
- Planned activities for 4 weeks of virtual instruction
- Dissemination and delivery of Instructional Packets, At-Home Daily Practice Folder and materials
- Virtual Daily Schedule
- Virtual At-Home Instruction for Families without internet connectivity/electronic devices
- Required documentation
- Co-teaching with ISD teachers
- Adjusting to ISD requirements

A care packet consisting of crayons, glue, scissors, pencils, construction and writing paper was prepared and provided to all children prior to their first day of virtual instruction. Additionally, the At-Home Daily Practice Folders were created and provided to all children in English and Spanish to reinforce basic skills at home. Care packets and At-Home Daily Practice Folders were distributed by center staff via curbside.

Parents were surveyed to select a choice on the instructional format of their preference for school year 2020-2021. The following chart depicts the instructional format and the amount of HCHSP children receiving services:

Instructional Format				
	In-Person	Virtual	Half-Day (AM or PM)	Hybrid
# of Children	1379	1635	40	628

As the Program prepared to open the centers for Head Start families, the Education Department developed a plan defining the steps for the re-opening of the classrooms. Based on Parent Survey results, instructional guidelines were provided for in-person and virtual instruction. CDC guidelines and other specific protocols were established to avoid congregation of children/ staff during the instructional day. Professional development was provided to all staff including ISD teachers to ensure adherence of guidelines and protocols in the classrooms.

**Lesson Plan and Daily Schedule Procedures for In-person and Virtual Instruction- Sept 2020-present**

- **Physical Environment**

- ✓ Classroom Design was modify to enforce social distancing in the classroom
- ✓ Ten 4ft tables and plexi-glass partitions were purchased per classroom to accommodate 2 children per table
- ✓ Children were given the opportunity to choose where to seat and are frequently encouraged to remain in their seat
- ✓ Only four Learning Centers with two children allowed in each
- ✓ Mats were purchased to replace cots to facilitate sanitation procedures and to ensure required distancing
- ✓ Children are placed strategically head to toe during rest time in order to further reduce the potential for viral spread

- **Classroom Materials and Tablets**

- ✓ A set of books and other supplies were provided for individual use
- ✓ Materials and manipulatives at the learning centers are sanitized after each use
- ✓ Social Distancing Greetings Chart was provided to all classrooms
- ✓ Ten tablets per classroom were provided and are sanitized after each use

- **Classroom Daily Schedule of Activities**

- ✓ Full day, AM and PM Daily Schedules
- ✓ Children have assigned seats except when guided to take restroom breaks, wash hands, Learning Centers or physical activities
- ✓ Whole group instruction
- ✓ Small group instruction using tablets

### **CLASS: Responding to COVID-19**

This year due to COVID-19 the Fall and Spring CLASS observations were not conducted face-to-face. The # of CLASS reliable personnel decreased by 2 people and the number of reliable mentor coaches decreased by 5. The reason for that decline was due to the absence of training, therefore there was no testing for those people that needed to complete the process to be reliable. CLASS dimensions and indicators impacted by COVID-19 were presented by the Education Department to all staff, including ISD teachers at our Annual Training and included the following:

#### **Emotional Support**

- Facial expressions evident through teacher and children's eyes, eyebrows, temples and cheekbones
- Use photos to share positive emotions
- Convey celebratory gestures
- Asking appropriate questions and having authentic conversations to determine children's feelings

#### **Classroom Organization**

- Redirections that involve hand signals or gestures
- Pointers or picture cards
- Personal set of hands on materials available for each child

#### **Instructional Support**

- Create non-physical products, such as making up stories
- Acknowledging difficult to hear comments by asking children to repeat themselves
- Providing children with the words they need to process and communicate their experiences/feeling of the pandemic

### **Coordination of services with local ISDs**

HCHSP is in partnership with ten local school districts to implement an Early Childhood Program utilizing the best early childhood teaching practices. Both HCHSP and ISDs planned and

collaborated for in-person and virtual instruction, shared resources and intensified services to meet the needs of our children and families during the pandemic.

Below is a timeline of the different start dates for each of the collaborating districts, including contingency plans for delivery of instruction and roles and responsibilities of each staff member:

- **August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020- Monte Alto ISD**
  - ✓ Modified Virtual Lesson Plan from Frog St.
  - ✓ Virtual at Home Learning Instructional Packet- 4 weeks
  
- **August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020- McAllen ISD**
  - ✓ Frog St. Lesson Plan Theme 1
  - ✓ HCHSP/ISD created instructional packet
  
- **August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020- Edinburg, Edcouch, Hidalgo, Mercedes, Weslaco ISD**
  - ✓ Frog St. Lesson Plan Theme 1
  - ✓ HCHSP/ISD created instructional packet
  
- **September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020- La Joya, Mission and PSJA ISD**
  - ✓ Frog St. Lesson Plan Theme 1
  - ✓ HCHSP/ISD created instructional packet

The lesson plans and packets addressed the areas of Language and Literacy, Phonemic Awareness, Story of the Week, Listening & Comprehension, Mathematics, and Social and Emotional development. Center managers and classroom staff made copies of the instructional packets available for children receiving instruction from home. A curbside service to pick up packets was available at all centers.

During this period of time HCHSP collaborated with the partnering school districts and created the *District Virtual Instructional Guidelines*, *HCHSP/ISD In-Person Instructional Guidelines* and *HCHSP/ISD Virtual Instructional Guidelines* addressing the responsibilities of each staff member involved in the delivery of instruction. A *Teacher Tracking Log* was used for documentation of services.

In order to achieve the above, ISDs provided electronic devices for children at home, materials for the classrooms and hot spots for those families struggling with internet connectivity.

## **Use of technology for delivery of instruction**

The staff purchased 2,000 tablets to be distributed among classrooms with the purpose of supporting language, literacy and math instruction. Tablets were also utilized during learning centers and for small group instruction (rotations). Additionally, HCHSP purchased Ignite by Hatch, a digital learning program offering 203 play-based curricular experiences that engage, instruct, and provide opportunities for individualization and assessment of children in the 7 domains of development. This platform facilitates lesson planning and helps ensure children receive the instruction they need to meet readiness goals. Ignite by Hatch is also a platform used to connect classroom learning to home and offer parents the opportunity to create accounts to support learning from home.

- Each classroom received 10 tablets
- 3,690 Ignite by Hatch licenses purchased
- Professional Development on Ignite by Hatch was provided to all staff, including ISD teachers

Collaborating ISD's also supported learning by using Smartboards, Promethean Boards, computer labs, online instructional programs Dr. Mike, Imagine Learning, Smarty Ants, and IStation. Projectors to connect classrooms to home learning were also provided by some districts in addition to the utilization of web-based classrooms such as Google Classrooms, See Saw and Classroom Dojo. Other sources of communication like Google Meet, Zoom and other similar applications were also utilized by classroom staff to communicate with parents.

## **Assessments**

This year the Circle Progress Monitoring (CPM) Waves 1 and 2 were not administered to the children. The CPM is a technology driven tool that assesses children's progress throughout the school year. It requires a face-to-face or virtual format via a computer, tablet, or laptop. After a healthy discussion with the education department, administrative staff, the school districts, and the feedback from the parent and teacher surveys the decision was made not to administer the CPM.

## **Practice-Based Coaching (PBC)**

The staff implemented a researched-based coordinated coaching strategy for all classroom staff to assist in enhancing the teaching skills for effective practices. The Education Department developed a Coaching Plan which consists of implementing the Practice-Based Coaching Program as recommended by the Office of Head Start. HCHSP is implementing the following two different coaching formats:

- Expert Coaches- Provide intensive coaching
  - ✓ Requires a Bachelor degree

- ✓ Training on PBC
- ✓ Adequate experience in adult learning, effective early childhood practices
- ✓ Knowledgeable in data analysis
- Peer Coach- Assist assigned peer coachee at their center
  - ✓ Associate Degree in Early Childhood
  - ✓ Training on PBC
  - ✓ Adequate experience in adult learning, effective early childhood practices
  - ✓ Knowledgeable in data analysis

Currently the Education Department consist of 3 Area Directors and 3 Coordinators that meet the qualifications of expert coaches, as required by Head Start Performance Standard 1302.92 (c). Experts coaches provide intensive coaching to teachers prioritized based on CLASS data and date of hire. The Education Department staff has currently identified 31 teachers as priority 1, 2 or 3 and is providing intensive coaching and support using PBC based on their individual needs. Teachers are being identified using the following criteria:

Priority	Criteria	Professional Development	Person in charge
Priority 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ CLASS score <math>\leq 3</math> in 3 or more dimensions</li> <li>✓ New teachers</li> </ul>	PBC intensive coaching Plan of Action	Area Director Education Coordinator
Priority 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ CLASS score <math>\leq 4</math> in 3 or more dimensions</li> </ul>	PBC intensive coaching Plan of Action	Area Director Education Coordinator
Priority 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ In need of additional support</li> </ul>	PBC Plan of Action	Peer Mentor Coaches

Furthermore, a criterion is also in place for the selection process of peer mentor coaches at the centers. Peer coaches form an elite group of teachers that serve as lead teachers at their centers and provide support using PBC to peers identified as priority 3. Currently the HCHSP has identified 31 peer coaches providing support to 31 coachees.

**Strengths/Areas where the Program is working well:**

It is without a doubt that the last twelve months have affirmed that the biggest strength the Education Department possesses is the commitment, integrity and reliability generated from within its own staff members. These great attributes contributed to the successful partnership our program

has established and maintained with ten local school districts. The Education Department in collaboration with school district liaisons worked diligently to maintain a continuance of instructional services in a variety of formats to meet the needs of all Head Start families during the pandemic. The adoption of technology was crucial to the success the instructional services. Additionally, care packets were put together to support families in our community that were forced to receive home instruction during the lock down. Daily Schedules and Curriculum implementation were also modified by the teachers to make the instructional day more inclusive for parents as children received virtual instruction. The extension of services during the month of June also provided an opportunity for our Head Start children to continue to thrive in their education. Consequently, as the staff welcomed children back into the Head Start classrooms, the Education Department developed a series of Contingency Plans to ensure services were always available for families, even in those cases in which classrooms were impacted by Covid-19.

### **Recommendations:**

- Continue implementing daily schedule, routines, cognitive transitions and lesson plans with fidelity
- Intentional planning and delivery of instruction must occur daily by the Head Start Staff and District Teacher
- A plan to replace or replenish instructional materials needs to be in place
- Use CIRCLE Progress Monitoring group reports to plan for instruction and individualization
- Train center managers and teachers on CLI Engage Platform and Parent Portal
- Implement Language of the Day with fidelity to provide support for DLL
- Continue providing teachers and classroom staff with positive behavior strategies to identify and support children with mental health and social and emotional needs
- Train and provide support to all interim teachers by center managers

### **Child Nutrition:**

The Child Nutrition department staff provided meals to enrolled children who were attending virtual and curbside. At the beginning of school year 2020-2021, curbside warms meals were provided on a daily basis. Parents would receive breakfast, lunch, and PM snack daily. Using the following waivers:

- Non-congregate meal service

- Alternative mealtimes
- No child present/Parent pick-up

After seeing meal participation decrease, a program-wide survey showed parents were not coming to pick up meals due to several obstacles: lack of transportation, working during time of meal distribution, school districts provided meals closer to home, etc.

Changes were made to overcome these obstacles. To continue providing nutrition services to enrolled children, the Child Nutrition Department staff implemented a once-weekly **multiple frozen/shelf-stable home delivery meal distribution system** in early November 2020. This allowed for each enrolled child who was 100% virtual to receive frozen and shelf-stable meals for the week. This included 5 breakfasts, 5 lunches, and 5 snacks.

The Child Nutrition Department staff continued to provide nutritional meals to children in compliance with the Texas Department of Agriculture regulations by providing **onsite, curbside, and multiple frozen/shelf-stable home-delivered meals** to supports our children's dietary needs.

Onsite, the staff served all food components in the minimum quantities specified in the meal patterns to comply with program regulations. In addition, the Child Nutrition Department staff has implemented a plan to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and ensure children, staff, and family safety. For example, the children were not allowed to practice family-style meal service at this time; meals are provided in individual portions and delivered by staff wearing face masks; staff and children must wash their hands before and after eating; staff and children were not allowed to share or touch each other's food; and staff must clean and disinfect dishes, trays, chairs, and tables after meals to reduce the risk of COVID–19 during CACFP meal service. The Child Nutrition Department staff continues to monitor updated guidelines and information posted at <https://covid19.ca.gov>.

The Child Nutrition Department staff distributed the following onsite, curbside, and Multiple & Frozen/Shelf-stable Home-delivered Meals:

Month/Year	Onsite Meals	Curbside, Frozen/Shelf-Stable Home-delivered Meals	Multiple Home-	Total Meals
August 2020	0	3,099		3,099
September 2020	3,8330	2,698		41,028
October 2020	42,797	15,940		58,737

Total meals= 102,864 /3month/4.33 =7,919 weekly # of meals

Month/Year	Onsite Meals	Curbside, Frozen/Shelf-Stable Home-delivered Meals	Multiple Home-	Total Meals
November 2020	34,901	49,719		84,620
December 2020	29,336	61,580		90,916
January 2021	38,019	54,294		92,313
February 2021	35,826	58,546		94,372

Total meals = 362,221/4month/4.33 = 20,913 weekly # of meals

Average number of weekly meals since August 2020 = **14,416 weekly meals**

**Key words:**

*Onsite meals- Meals served and consumed onsite.*

*Non-congregate Curbside meals- Are meals distributed for off-site consumption and are considered a COVID-19 flexibility allowed under the USDA nationwide waivers for curbside meals.*

*Multiple Frozen/Shelf-Stable/Home-delivered Meals- Are meals for multiple meal distribution and are also considered a COVID-19 flexibility allowed under the USDA nationwide waivers for curbside/home delivered meals.*

The Child Nutrition Department staff identified **146 special diets** and implemented 146 special diets. Due to withdrawals, temporary medical conditions, and prescription updates, we discontinued 28 special diets. Special diet modifications were also accommodated for those children who are 100% virtual and would like to pick up a curbside meal.

**Strengths/Areas where the Program is working well:**

- Kitchen staff’s ability to prepare multiple frozen/shelf stable meals weekly in advance in addition to preparing onsite meals
- Kitchen staff’s ability to forecast meal distribution by collection information from each center daily.
- Child Nutrition’s Administrative staff’s ability to multi-task and adapt to different situations.
- Team work

## **Recommendations:**

- Train center staff to assist in inputting meal documented on H1535 onto my Head Start. This will greatly shorten the amount of time in submitting the monthly meal claim. The administrative staff will validate all information provided prior to submission via TX-UNPS.
- Provide additional training for center custodians on milk orders and meal time distribution. Milk documentation for 1530's – milk varies by centers (half pints, half-gallons, and gallons)
- Have center managers review daily kitchen self-inspection checklist with custodial staff thoroughly on a monthly basis to maintain compliance.
- Train center staff on Custodian duties and responsibilities to avoid issues when custodians are absent.

## **Special Services:**

Due to the on-going pandemic the Office of Head Start (OHS) allowed programs to report 10% of the actual enrollment toward the mandate for Program Year 2020-2021. On January 29, 2021, which was the reporting day for the Hidalgo County Head Start Program, the actual enrollment was 3054 the 10% quota was listed at 338 children identified through IDEA; thus, the mandate was met. Currently the HCHSP has 380 children identified through IDEA.

The Head Start staff ensured the mandate was met in various ways such as:

- Encouraged the parents to return their children for the 2020-2021 Program Year, and advised them that safety protocols were in place.
- The staff called parents who dropped their children from the Program in the Spring of 2020, due to the pandemic, to have them enroll their children for the 2020-2021 school year.
- Staff called parents, of enrolled children in the Early Childhood Intervention/Early Head Start programs, to complete the application process for Head Start. Most of the ECI/EHS children had already undergone the evaluations by their third birthday.
- New referrals were generated due to Parent/Teacher concerns.
- Staff continued to recruit new children on a daily basis.
- Staff held conversations with parents who were reluctant to have their child evaluated and possibly labeled and assured them of the individualized instruction the child would receive if qualified.
- Staff had conversations with the Local Education Agency (LEA) Special Education staff who may be evaluating possible recruits for the Program.
- Special Education staff (LEA) called the Program staff to let them know when they were evaluating a child who would meet eligibility for Special Education and may also meet the Head Start guidelines for enrollment.

- Parents were given a choice to have child receive instruction in person or virtually. More children are now receiving instruction in person at centers.
- Staff encouraged the parents of children who attend special classes (PPCD) for half day to then attend Head Start the other half of the day, giving them more instructional opportunities.
- Special Services department staff worked closely with the center staff and the LEA's and ensured IEP paperwork was in place, and that services were being provided.

By far, the most important modification made by the Program was to give parents the choice to either have their child receive instruction in person at the center or virtually from their home. This has allowed the parents the time they needed to learn more about the safety issues surrounding the COVID-19 virus and what the Program has done to protect children and staff. Each month more and more parents were sending their children back to the center which allowed them to return to routine and structure. This assisted the children as they continued their educational journey.

Modifications made by the staff:

- The ISD's gave the children an e-mail address in order to log on for instruction.
- Some Special Education Departments issued tablets for the children to use for their Speech Therapy sessions.
- Special Education staff was provided with a safe and clean environment to service/evaluate children.
- Head Start staff called the parents to remind them to log children on for therapy sessions.
- Head Start staff assisted the children who were in attendance at the centers to log on for their therapy session, supervised them during the session and at times assisted with the activity.
- Children with at home instruction and had connectivity issues, were encouraged to come to the center for their therapy session.
- The Speech Pathologist also sent home a packet of activities for the six-week period.
- Speech Pathologists consulted with the parents on the child's progress via phone or e-mail.
- Classrooms were set up to accommodate the safety measures put in place due to COVID-19 restrictions, such as 6ft distancing, dividers between children and individual desk top boxes for the child's materials and books.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program continued to work collaboratively through Memorandums of Understanding with the Local Education Agencies Special Education Departments to establish strong working relationships ensuring that the needs of the special children were met. This collaboration included:

- Virtual trainings on the referral process for Head Start Support Staff were held with the LEA's Special Education Departments, this allowed staff an understanding of what is involved in the process in order to convey the information to parents.

- Head Start staff coordinated with the Special Education Staff to complete screenings and evaluations at the centers or virtually at child's home.
- The Special Education staff continued to invite the Head Start staff to participate in Virtual ARD meetings.
- Some Special Education Departments provided an extra tablet for the Head Start children to use at the center to log on for their therapy session.
- The Head Start Teacher continued to reinforce the child's IEP objectives.

**Strengths/Areas where the Program is working well:**

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program staff, children, and families have endured more than ever due to the COVID-19 pandemic which closed the Program down last school year for 2 ½ months prior to summer break. The 2020-2021 Program year has seen more and more children return to the centers due in part to the Program adopting a Work Safe Plan outlining how the Program intended to protect staff and children at the centers. Parents were more aware of how COVID was spread and what they need to do to be proactive and take care of their children. Parents realized how important attending Head Start is to building the foundation for their child to be successful as they continue on to Kindergarten.

The Head Start staff showed courage on a daily basis and ensured that they as well as the children in attendance were protected; the staff talked to the children about COVID and what they needed to do to stay healthy and safe. The children and staff followed safety practices such as how to wash their hands for 20 seconds, and the importance of not sharing any of their materials during this time. The staff also demonstrated the proper use of facial covering and continuously encouraged the children to wear their masks. It was due to the daily repetition of these skills that the illness was kept low and more children have returned to in-person learning at the center.

The Disability Classroom Assistants were utilized to help where the center was short staffed due to an illness or possible exposure to the virus. They assisted the teacher with the lessons and activities.

The LEA's Special Education departments issued tablets to the Speech Impaired children at the centers so they could log on with the Therapist, this ensured that services were being provided.

Some School Districts have allowed their Therapists to provide face to face service at centers while adhering to the Work Safe Plan protocols.

Diapering supplies were sent home to our virtual learners whose families have been affected by COVID.

Some therapists sent home packets of activities to the children who were having connectivity issues and also communicated with the parent's on child's progress.

The most important strength is the daily communication our staff had with the parents of our special needs children, whether they were virtual at home or attending in person. The engagement

provided parents a feeling of assurance that the staff made things as normal as possible despite all the restrictions that were being placed upon the Program and staff.

## **Mental Health Services:**

### **Supporting Your Child’s Mental Health as they return to School- August 2020**

The COVID-19 Pandemic brought upon major disruptions to our daily lives especially the children who have been affected tremendously by these changes. While the return to school for some children seemed exciting, for others it was a time of uncertainty feeling anxious and frightened of the unknown. Parents were provided with social stories and a pamphlet with tips on how to encourage and support their children in addressing emotions that they may be feeling with going back to school.

### **Health and Safety- August- Ongoing**

The Mental Health Department staff continued to assist center staff in meeting with parents who may be reluctant in sending their children for in-class instruction. Mental Health Counselors discussed and explained the protocols and procedures based on recommendations by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Office of Head Start, the Texas Department of Health, The Texas Education Agency, and the Minimum Standards for Child Care Services. We encouraged parents to visit our website and watch a video on “Preparing for Children to Return Safely during COVID - 19”. This video was offered in English and Spanish. It allowed the parents an opportunity to see what the dynamics of our center and classroom were all about.

### **Trauma Informed Approach Questionnaire- August 2020**

The COVID-19 pandemic increased the exposure of children and families to trauma, stress, and substance abuse disorders. The Mental Health staff played a vital role in supporting the social, emotional and mental health of children, families and staff. A Trauma Informed Approach Questionnaire was developed in order to assess, support and increase awareness related to trauma stress and anxiety as a result of COVID-19 Pandemic.

Mental Health services were available for Head Start children and their families. A referral system was in place for families needing services.

### **Annual Staff Development- August 2020**

Annual Mental Health Professional Development Training was provided to all Head Start staff on topics such as: social emotional skills, trauma informed approaches and resiliency. All sessions were conducted virtually.

The Mental Health Counselor prepared and provided Pre Service/Yearly Training to all program staff with resourceful information about Health and Wellbeing related to COVID-19. Training was provided in the following topics:

- Hidalgo County Head Start Wellness Program: Addressing Dramatic Impact COVID -19
- Responsive Care Giving and Attachment: Building Positive Relationships during COVID-19 Pandemic
- Screening and Identifying Children Due To COVID-19
- Effective Self-Care Strategies for Stress Management

### **Hidalgo County Head Start Program Wellness Program- August 2020**

The Hidalgo County Head Start Wellness Program Mission and Vision was introduced to all program employees during the Annual Staff Development. In collaboration with the Hidalgo County Grantee Board, our employees can now participate and enjoy the many benefits that are offered:

- Employee Assistance Program
- Wellness Support Group
- Hidalgo Fit Newsletter
- Wellness Virtual Fitness Classes and Trainings
- Wellness Screenings
- COVID 19 Resources-
- Telephone and Telemedicine

Through the County Wellness Program, our employees benefit with different opportunities and programs depending on their individual needs. These programs were offered by the county free of charge. Webinars were also made available to all employees in order to bring upon awareness on health and positive emotional well-being.

### **Trauma Informed Approaches- September- Ongoing**

It is important that all Head Start Program staff be emotionally aware, engaged and present as they work with children. Trauma, depression and stress can impact productivity, increase absences and have a range of negative impacts on our physical and emotional well-being. It is important that our program use a Trauma-Informed Approach to serve the needs of our children, staff and families. Training, support and guidance continues to be provided to address COVID-19 related trauma.

The Mental Health Department was restructured to include a Mental Health Director and two Mental Health Coordinators to expand services to children, families and staff.

#### **Region IV Mental Health Roundtable- December 2020**

To further enhance services to staff, children and families during these unprecedented times, the Mental Health Department participated in the Region VI Mental Health Roundtable: Trauma Informed Approaches network group. The purpose of the Mental Health Roundtable was to follow up on what the grantees have produced and accomplished, support the grantees in implementing their proposals and expected outcomes, and shares their best practices.

#### **Hidalgo County Head Start Program Wellness Program- December 2020**

The Hidalgo County Wellness Program made available a Virtual Wellness Health Fair. All employees were encouraged to participate in these events.

The Hidalgo County Wellness Program provided all employees with a Health Fair bag which included incentives in appreciation for their commitment to stay healthy and providing a safe and nurturing environment for our children.

#### **DECA Assessment- January 2021**

During this unprecedented time, Devereux recognized that many programs were using video/remote technology to support children and families. These remote observations can be valuable to support families and children but are not sufficient for teachers to complete DECA ratings on children. As a result, Devereux allowed some flexibility to the administration of the DECA assessment. DECA administration was scheduled to begin on Monday, January 11, 2021. Classroom staff was instructed to administer DECA only to those children who attended in person instruction. The child was to be observed by the teacher for a minimum of three weeks and must have spent a minimum of 2-3 hours a day for 2-3 days a week in the classroom. For those children who were attending virtually or phone call instruction, a Trauma Informed Questionnaire was used to screen and identify.

However, there were some exceptions to the rule, if classroom staff observed a child exhibiting challenging behaviors in the classroom prior to January 11, 2021, they were asked to begin the Mental Health Process by administering the DECA and advising the Mental Health Department to begin the referral process.

#### **Strengths/Areas where the Program is working well:**

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the physical health as well as mental health adversely. COVID-19 brought about a complex array of factors (uncertainty, social isolation, and parental angst) that had an impact on the mental health of children and their families. Children had many worries

related to the consequences of COVID-19 such as whether they will see their friends and relatives, go to school or get sick. It is often difficult for parents to calm their children's anxieties because of the uncertainty in their lives. The challenges facing parents may interfere with their usual ability to address their children's emotional needs. The Hidalgo County Head Start Program faced many challenges along the way but working together as a team we turned challenges into strengths. The first program strength was the initiative to establish a Mental Health Department. Due to the supplemental funds from the Office of Head Start we were able to create and structure the Mental Health Department. Two additional counselors were allocated to provide services, crisis response and interventions to support and identify the needs of our Head Start children, families and staff. A second program strength has been the collaboration between departments and having a shared vision of each other's role during this unprecedented time, thus helping us meet the needs of our community. A third program strength was that as we cultivated a sense of understanding of the impact COVID-19 had on our Head Start families, we adopted a Trauma Informed Approach to screen and make proper referrals for mental health services.

### **Recommendations:**

The Hidalgo County Head Start Mental Health Department will continue to support employees, children and families as we deliver services to improve the quality of life in our community due to the impact of COVID-19. The Mental Health Department is committed to the well-being of children, families and staff during these difficult times. It is important that our staff feel emotionally stable, supported, and encouraged; and by doing so we have continued to stress the importance of an open door policy, open lines of communication between staff and immediate supervisors, respect their time, provide guidance and reassurance and encourage staff to practice self-care. The Mental Health Department is committed to supporting Hidalgo County Head Start employees in the successful implementation of resilience resources that promote the healthy social and emotional development of children. We will continue to monitor and modify our practices as needed:

- Continue monitoring DECA assessment to meet and prioritize children's needs
- Continue implementing and training on Trauma-Informed Care Approaches
- Continue integrating knowledge about Trauma-Informed Approaches into our policies, practices, and procedures.
- Continue to implement an employee wellness program that promotes self-care, healthy coping techniques, and trauma-informed approaches.

## Transportation and Field Operations:

The Field Operations/Transportation Department staff followed the Program’s “Work Safe Plan” and ACF’s IM-HS-20-04 in maintain safety protocols while still providing services to families. Additionally, we continued to maintain and completed scheduled improvements and repairs to all facilities and playgrounds.

The following transportation safety protocols were instituted:

- When possible, stayed at least 6 feet from other people.
- Ensured the use of cloth face coverings and hand hygiene supplies.
- Conducted a health check of all children and staff before they board the vehicle. Did not transport individuals with a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or above or who show other signs of illness. Did not transport individuals who have been in close contact (within 6 feet) of someone who has tested positive for, or is showing symptoms of, COVID-19. Trained and equipped bus drivers and bus aides to use a non-contact thermometer.
- Positioned children as far apart as possible, preferably 6 feet apart, with one child per bench and no consecutive rows. If children are coming from the same home, they may sit together. If possible, ensure children sit 6 feet away from the vehicle operator.
- Rerouted or staggered bus runs, as needed, to keep group size small and minimize potential exposure between children.
- Kept class groups together on bus runs to minimize potential exposure between different groups of children.
- Disinfected buses after each route

In the Field Operations area the department purchased special equipment to disinfect classrooms when COVID symptoms were suspected by classroom staff. A special operations team was formed and trained on how to properly use protective gear and spray the disinfectant when needed. In addition we were able to address issues in our facilities and playgrounds.

- All classrooms were furnished with age appropriate tables and chairs for safe social distancing
- We designed and manufactured our own protective barriers to provide the appropriate social distancing between children in all our classrooms
- 12 playgrounds were refurbished with rubber mulch, which is healthier and safe for the children



**Strengths:**

All buses were equipped with all required safety items. The bus driver secured copies of each child's Application for Transportation, Consent for Transportation form, Child's Safety Restrained Agreement, Sign-in/out Roster and list of authorized persons to release the child.

All bus routes are done within the (1) hour route requirement. All drivers adhered to program policies, procedures and state traffic laws.

**Recommendations:**

The staff will continue to work on replacing the wooden mulch with rubber mulch in the remaining playgrounds.

The staff will replace the old and torn canopies that still remain in the playgrounds.

**Administration:**

The Administration staff maintained open communication via emails, phone calls, zoom and go to meetings with the Grantee Board, Policy Council, staff, parents and community partners. This assisted in ensuring that delivery of services had little to no interruptions.

The Human Resources department staff assisted in the development of the "Work Safe Plan" to provide a healthy, safe, and comfortable work environment for all Head Start staff. The Plan included protocols and procedures based on recommendations by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Office of Head Start, the Texas Department of Health, the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Regulation Division and Program staff. All Head Start center-level employees completed the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Special Considerations for Infection Control During COVID-19 Training and Acknowledgement Required by the Texas Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Regulation Division. This training was to ensure that all staff was ready to adhere to the guidelines provided in the course as they can help prevent the spread of the novel Coronavirus that causes COVID-19. We aimed to promote risk reduction strategies and ensured that we had adequate supplies to maintain a safe and healthy environment. Staff was required to submit their certificates to the Staff Development Coordinator. During Annual Training, the Human Resources Department staff presented the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Guidelines to all employees entitled to take leave related to COVID-19 if the employee was unable to work, including unable to telework, because of COVID-19 related reasons.

The Human Resources Department staff employed a Health and Safety Coordinator to provide leadership and guidance in the implementation of the Hidalgo County Head Start Program's Work Safe Plan to ensure the health, safety and security of children, their parents, employees and approved visitors participating in Program activities and functions. The Health and Safety

Coordinator has been following the rules and regulations of the Center for Disease Control, Hidalgo County, Texas Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Regulation Division and the Office of Head Start requirements in the operation and performance of functions of the Program. All program employees were required to complete a daily COVID-19 Health Screening Checklist with their site supervisor before obtaining permission to access and remain in any Head Start facility and indicated if he/she had any new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19. The employee continued to submit the completed checklists to the Human Resources Department. The Health and Safety Coordinator assisted the Human Resources staff in contacting the employees and families when a communicable disease case had been identified in the Program that impacted specific staff and/or children enrolled and their families. The Human Resources Department staff continued to monitor the reporting of COVID-19 cases and followed established protocols to identify, treat, and allow staff/children to return to work/class. As new COVID-19 information became available such as; updated CDC guidelines and protocols, testing sites, vaccination availability, etc., the Human Resources department staff notified all Head Start employees.

To follow CDC guidelines, the Human Resources Department staff established a new process for posting vacancies, conducting interviews, and organizing Pre-Service training for new employees during the pandemic. Vacancies were identified when an official letter of resignation was submitted, reviewed, and approved for posting by the Executive Director. Vacancies were posted via the Hidalgo County NEOGOV Insight Database. Applicants completed an application online as well as attached any necessary documentation. Submissions of qualified applicants were reviewed by the Human Resources Department staff for completion. A list of qualified applicants was reviewed by the Department Director/Supervisor and Assistant Director for interview scheduling. Due to the pandemic, all interviews were conducted virtually to limit in-person contact. Therefore, the department purchased a GoToMeeting account to be able to setup virtual interviews. The Human Resources staff created web links and emailed them to each qualified candidate with their interview date and time, as well as to the interviewing committee. The recommended candidates were submitted for approval by the Executive Director and Policy Council. Once approved, the Human Resources Department staff initiated a background check, finger printing, and a drug test for each selected candidate.

Due to the pandemic, the delivery of New Employee Pre-Service Orientation Training was also modified. New employees were asked to drive by the Administration/Human Resources Department to pick up a Pre-Service Training Packet and submit any necessary documentation. Each visitor was required to complete a COVID-19 Health Screening Checklist at the front door as well as have their temperature checked for possible signs of COVID-19. New employees were provided virtual training sessions to acquire the Human Resources Orientation Training, Minimum Standards & Emergency Preparedness Plan Training, Program Services Training, Education Services Training, and the Work Safe Plan Training. All acknowledged policies and procedures, evaluations, and other required documents were dropped off at the Administration/Human Resources Department when training was completed. All center-level new hires completed the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Special Considerations for Infection Control During COVID-19 Training and Acknowledgement Required by the Texas Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Regulation Division before reporting to their work site.

In order to ensure that the required professional development hours were provided to staff during the pandemic, the Human Resources Department staff had to make many modifications to the delivery of training to all staff. To prepare for Annual Training during the pandemic, the Human Resources Department staff, worked closely with the Management Information Systems Department (MIS) staff to prepare and coordinate virtual training for all staff. The Human Resources Department staff provided the MIS Department staff a report of total staff by location in order for them to setup TV screens, Projectors, Speakers, and other equipment necessary to deliver the training virtually. Training was conducted via GotoMeeting using 1 TV screen setup in each center classroom/administration office with no more than 10 employees per setup at six feet apart, to practice social distancing. Staff also worked with all other departments to organize and deliver all Power Point handouts, sign in sheets, questionnaires, evaluations, and COVID-19 Health Screening Checklists to all centers prior to training. The Human Resources Department staff created Annual Training Instructions for all staff to follow during professional development training. The instructions listed accommodations needed to be addressed prior to the first day of Annual Training such as testing the setup/internet connections. The instructions also included daily procedures that staff needed to implement during training days such as; complying with the mouth and nose covering, administering temperature checks, completing the daily COVID-19 health screening checklist, signing in to their assigned classroom, distributing training materials, following rules such as; no congregation in hallways, offices, or lounge areas, disinfecting all areas at the beginning and end of each day, and submitting all completed sign in sheets to the Staff Development Coordinator at the end of each training day. At random, the Human Resources Department viewed the live surveillance footage to ensure staff was following instructions and protocols.

The Human Resources Department staff recorded all training sessions to conduct Annual Training make-up sessions for Head Start staff and District employees throughout the program year to minimize in-person gatherings. The Staff Development Coordinator created several Annual Training schedules to accommodate all District staff calendars. Training certificates were sent to staff after they completed the required trainings.

Due to the pandemic, all new teachers were required to complete the Beginning Teachers Series online through the ECLKC website.

**Strengths/Areas where the Program is working well:**

One of the strengths for the Human Resources Department during the pandemic was the communication system. The Human Resources staff organized and provided information to all HCHSP employees regarding the return to work and the re-opening of our classrooms/centers and other work areas. The Human Resources staff was able to communicate with all staff through mail, email, and virtual meetings and ensured that they were provided organized instructions on how to return to work safely by following all CDC guidelines and protocols. All Annual Training preparations were completed in a timely manner. Although it was our first time delivering virtual training, the staff did an excellent job in guiding all field and administration staff through the process. All HCHSP employees received the required professional development training hours and successfully participated virtually through the entire process.

The Human Resources Department staff continued to work well in utilizing and being familiar with documents required by Hidalgo County Head Start Policies and Procedures, Civil Service Rules, and by the Texas Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Regulation Division. Beginning January 2020, the Human Resources Department staff initiated the implementation of the M.I.P. Human Resources Module. This allowed for all current data available in ABRA HR to be transferred and made accessible via one HR Module. The Human Resources staff began inputting data and scanning all required documents to the new program. Other areas that continue to work well for the department are the numerous employee status reports being utilized to determine a variety of H.R. needs. The reports are as follows: Drug Testing Reports, Finger Printing and Background Checks, Tuberculosis Testing, Health Appraisal, First Aid/CPR, List of Probationary Employees, Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Report, Workers Comp. Report, New Hire Employee Report, Sick Leave Pool, Report for Policy Council, Personnel Status Report, Employee Evaluation(s) Report, Public Information Report, Employee Vacancy Report, Staff Appreciation Award(s), Screening of Potential Employee(s) Report, Termination Folders Report, Disciplinary Action Reports, Driver(s) License Report, Employee Resignation Reports, Parent List Reporting, Partnership Reports, PIR Reporting, Employee Benefits Reporting, Resignation Report, Partnership Report, Exit Interview Reports, and Employee Pension Reports.

Our Sample Size included 120 personnel files which were monitored and selected randomly. Eight (8) staff members assisted in completing this year's self-assessment initiative. There were relatively few corrections made to record files and these were generally items that were easily replaced and properly documented. In no instance was there any error in an employee file that would be a deficiency. As required by the Texas Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Regulation Division, all Care Givers hold a current First Aid and CPR Certification. Current ISD teachers will be provided this certification opportunity as they return to in-person instruction when decided by their District.



## Hidalgo County Head Start Program 2021 Self-Assessment

### Program Goals and Objectives

Area	Program Goal 1: To promote workforce professional development for employees and parents																														
<b>Admin Education Family Services</b>	<p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. To support CLASS and increase CLASS scores and CLI Engage scores</li> <li>B. To implement and expand the coaching plan</li> <li>C. To increase the number of class reliable staff using internal trainers</li> <li>D. To recruit and hire more qualified parents as HS employees</li> </ul>																														
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## Hidalgo County Head Start Program 2021 Self-Assessment

### Program Goals and Objectives

Area	Program Goal 2: To increase parental engagement in their child's educational activities, specifically in the areas of literacy and social emotional development																				
<p><b>Family Services</b> <b>Education</b> <b>Finance</b></p>	<p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. To train parents to read to their children &amp; assist in distance learning</li> <li>B. To assist parents with internet services and establish email accounts</li> <li>C. To promote social emotional activities at home</li> <li>D. To secure partners that provide age appropriate books</li> </ul>																				
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**Hidalgo County Head Start Program**  
**2021 Self-Assessment**

**Program Goals and Objectives**

Area	<u>Program Goal 3: To promote the health and safety of staff, children and families</u>														
<b>Health</b>	<p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. To conduct trainings on diabetes and drug abuse and communicable diseases and CDC Guidelines</li> <li>B. To arrange for health screenings</li> <li>C. To organize support groups and referrals for parents</li> <li>D. To establish a wellness plan for staff and address traumatic impact of pandemic</li> </ul>														
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## Hidalgo County Head Start Program 2021 Self-Assessment

### Program Goals and Objectives

Area	<u>Program Goal 4: To sustain the School Readiness Partnership Model (SRPM) with all school districts in our service area</u>														
<b>Administration Education</b>	<p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. To address the goals of the school readiness plan</li> <li>B. To plan and explore opportunities for school districts to provide transportation, classroom space and supplies that include electronic equipment and internet services</li> <li>C. To secure community partners to fund internet services for families who cannot afford it.</li> </ul>														
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