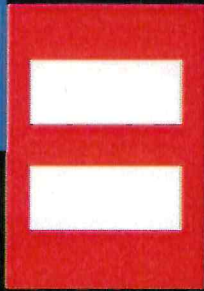


# Program of Excellence



# HIDALGO COUNTY HEAD START PROGRAM

Head Start...where the learning begins and success follows.



NATIONAL HEAD START ASSOCIATION'S

**Program of  
Excellence  
Award**





## Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

**Richard F. Cortez**  
*County Judge*

**David L. Fuentes**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 1*

**Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 2*

**Everardo "Ever" Villarreal**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 3*

**Ellie Torres**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 4*

**OFFICE OF  
COUNTY JUDGE  
RICHARD F. CORTEZ**

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## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thursday, September 11, 2025

### **Hidalgo County Head Start Program Receives National Program of Excellence Award and Accreditation**

**EDINBURG** – The Hidalgo County Head Start Program has been awarded the prestigious Program of Excellence (POE) Award and Accreditation by the National Head Start Association (NHSA). This recognition, valid for a five-year term, is one of the highest honors bestowed upon Head Start programs nationwide.

Accreditation is granted to programs that demonstrate the highest standards in program management, service delivery, and commitment to continuous improvement. By achieving this designation, Hidalgo County Head Start has shown its dedication to providing high-quality, comprehensive services that support the development and well-being of young children and their families.

Out of approximately 1,600 Head Start programs across the United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands, only 12 programs are selected annually for this distinguished recognition. Remarkably, Hidalgo County Head Start is the first Texas program to receive the POE Award in nearly 20 years.

"We are incredibly honored and humbled to receive the Program of Excellence Award," said Hidalgo County Head Start Program Executive Director Irma Peña. "Our motivation for excellence comes from the children and families we are privileged to serve. We remain committed to upholding the highest standards of quality and will continue to strive for excellence well beyond the term of this accreditation."

The five-year accreditation follows a rigorous peer-review process, during which programs must demonstrate their ability to deliver measurable, accountable, and high-quality services across all areas of operation.

"We could not be more proud of our Head Start team for earning this distinguished recognition," said Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez. "This award reflects their unwavering dedication to the children and families of Hidalgo County. To be one of only 12 programs in the nation, and the first in Texas in nearly two decades, is a remarkable achievement that highlights the impact and quality of services Head Start provides to our community every day."

Hidalgo County Head Start provides a full range of services — including education, disability support, health, nutrition, mental health, and family services — to children from birth to age five. For more than 40 years, the program has evolved through the use of evidence-based practices and innovative teaching methods, creating safe, nurturing environments that foster physical, emotional, social, and intellectual growth in young children.

To learn more about the Hidalgo County Head Start Program, [click here](#).

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*Hidalgo County is home to one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. We provide health and justice to the over 800,000 residents of our county. We strive to be accessible and responsive to our citizens by providing excellent public service through the values of leadership, transparency, fairness, collaboration, respect and fiscal responsibility. Follow our social media feed at [www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/followus](http://www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/followus)*