



EXTENSION



HEAD START

MSU Extension Head Start-Early Head Start Programs

Annual Report to the Community



2020-2021

We are excited to share the results of our program services as a fully operational program, as this report includes the first year of Early Head Start Services. We continue to be fully committed to providing high quality services to the children and families within our Harrison County communities. Through the dedication of our staff, partners and Board of Directors, our vision is to build a program that is a model of excellence for our early care and education peers throughout the nation. Our program is designed to help children and their parents make an easier transition from daycare and preschool to kindergarten and combines local partnerships with research-based education methods to serve children at this most critical stage of life. This report includes baseline measures and we look forward to the completion of a full year to determine the true impact of the systems we have put in place in year two. This report is a reflection of a transitional year where we moved back and forth from virtual to in-person services due to the continued effects of COVID. As we move to a new normal post-pandemic, we look forward to continued growth in our children and families, our staff and our communities.

We continue to focus on building a lasting foundation for the program to ensure long-term success, including hiring and training of quality staff, acquisition of facilities, development of partnerships and refinement of Head Start administrative systems. Our numbers are reflective of hybrid services throughout the year as cases spiked and waned, making it necessary to be nimble in the way we provided services. Our work is impossible to do in isolation. Our partners include local school districts—Gulfport School District and Biloxi Public School District—as well as Moore Community House and Shine Early Learning. In addition, we are fortunate to have numerous health, mental health and social services partnerships that allow us to meet the needs of our children and families in a holistic manner.

COVID continues to cast a shadow over our nation, but we are encouraged by a future where children can freely learn together and families can gather without fear of exposure. One of the lessons we have learned by this experience is how resilient children are and how innovative we can be when faced with limited options. We have also learned how important mental health and wellness is for all of us to be truly healthy and happy – connection and community are important for all ages. We are committed to providing environments where children feel, explore and experience while guided by staff who are also supported fully. It truly takes all of us to make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable children and families. We are committed to unlocking the amazing potential of our next generation through our services and sowing into our staff so they can develop to their highest ability. The threads throughout our program are made up of many colors, textures and sizes – but the result is a beautiful tapestry.



Dr. Louise E. Davis

Executive Director



Jamila B. Taylor

Director, Head Start and EHS

About us

Mission

MSU-Extension Head Start strives to promote optimal development of each child and his/her family through positive learning experiences and high-quality service

Vision

The MSU-Extension Service provides research-based information, educational programs, and technology transfer focused on issues and needs of the people of Mississippi, enabling them to make informed decisions about their economic, social and cultural well-being.

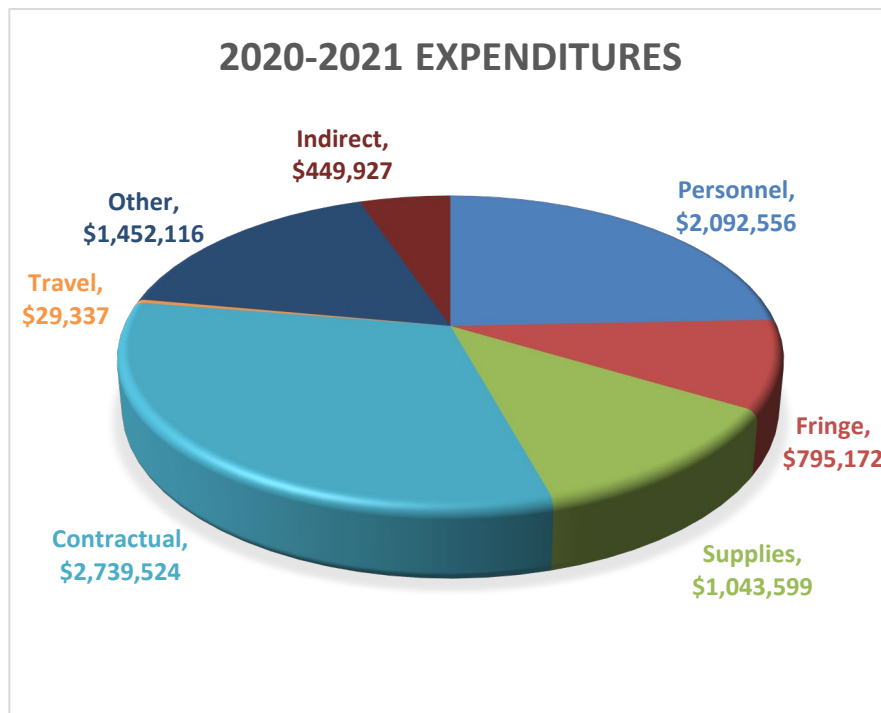
Mississippi State University - Extension (MSU-ES) serves children and families in Harrison County, located in the Gulf of southern Mississippi. Our organization has been a singular beacon for quality early childhood education in the state. Over the last decade, MSU-ES has been tasked with operating the Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network, administering the state's QRIS and providing a network of quality improvement supports for early childhood providers, culminating in the \$15M/year Early Years Network grant. There is no meaningful ECE initiative in the state in which MSU-ES has not played a leadership role. We expanded our capacity into new territory by entering the Head Start/Early Head Start world on August 1, 2019 for Harrison County, Mississippi.



The program has not had a federal monitoring in the past year, but in the latest review from May 4, 2020 to May 8, 2020, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) found our program to be in **good standing with no areas of concern, non-compliance or deficiency**. The Focus Area One (FA1) monitoring review of our Head Start and Early Head Start programs consisted of interviewing content area and leadership staff, Board and Policy Council members as well as policy and procedure review. The review team also identified several areas of strength, including the use of various program data to monitor compliance and staff performance to inform continuous improvement in all service areas; the leveraged support and expertise of board members in assisting with the implementation of the goals and objectives related to identifying community resources for parents and helping to improve children's transition to kindergarten.

Financial Overview

Total 2020-2021 federal, state and local funding \$ 8,602,231	Head Start		Early Head Start
	Base	\$4,790,685.00	\$1,147,652.00
	Carry forward	\$282,205.00	\$70,551.00
	American Rescue Plan	\$619,952.00	\$206,651.00
	In-Kind	\$1,197,675.00	\$286,860.00
Total Funding	\$6,890,517.00	\$1,711,714.00	

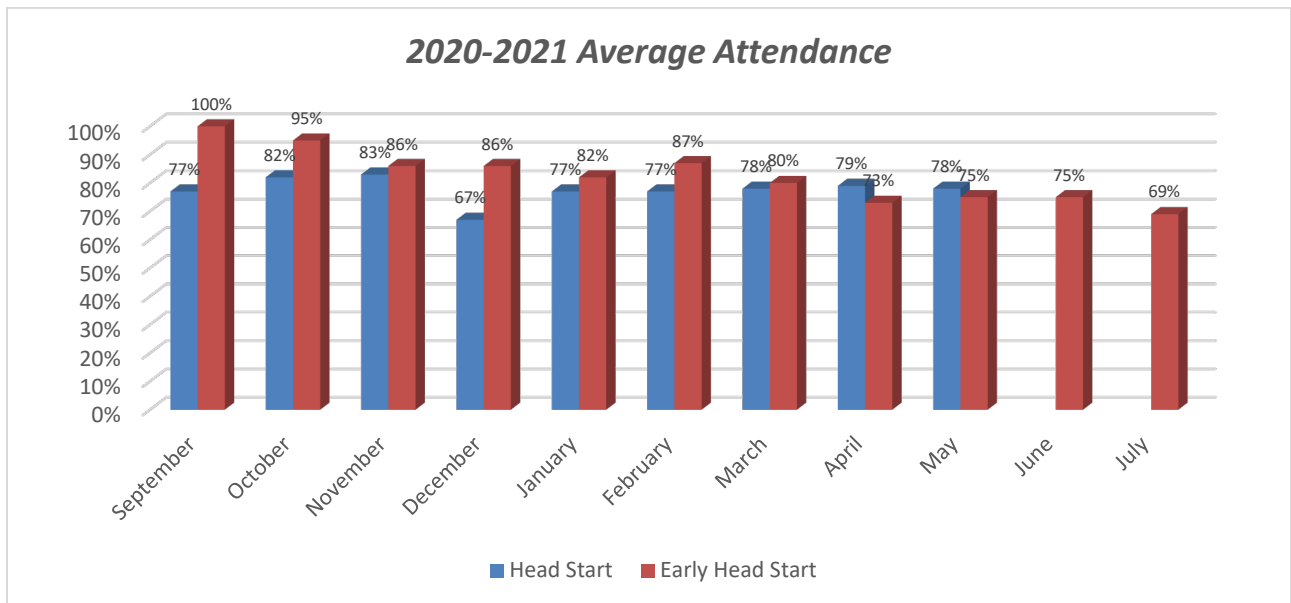


Although we have completed our audit for our program year services, we have yet to receive the official report. However, we administer more than \$60 million in total funding across all programs with all of the finance, grant accounting and compliance measures in place for ensuring the maintenance of fiduciary and financial responsibility for all activities. Reviews of other MSU early childhood programs have consistently reflected the strength of our financial accountability systems.

2020-2021 Head Start Budget				
	Head Start	Early Head Start	Non-Federal	Total
Personnel	\$ 2,018,781.00	\$ 32,965.00	\$ 40,810.00	\$ 2,092,556.00
Fringe	\$ 767,137.00	\$ 12,527.00	\$ 15,508.00	\$ 795,172.00
Travel	\$ 26,857.00	\$ 2,480.00	\$ -	\$ 29,337.00
Supplies	\$ 830,348.00	\$ 213,251.00	\$ -	\$ 1,043,599.00
Contractual	\$ 1,605,644.00	\$ 1,133,880.00	\$ -	\$ 2,739,524.00
Other	\$ 29,531.00	\$ -	\$ 1,422,585.00	\$ 1,452,116.00
Indirect	\$ 414,545.00	\$ 29,750.00	\$ 5,632.00	\$ 449,927.00
Total Budget				\$ 8,602,231.00

Snapshot of participants served

MSU is funded to serve 488 Head Start and 64 Early Head Start for a total of 552 children. In the first year of funding, we focused on a phased in opening approach which resulted in 2020-2021 being our first year of full participation. We were able to serve our first infants and toddlers in July 2020. Early Head Start is a year-round program while Head Start follows a typical school year calendar with no children served during the summer months. The pandemic had an impact on our ability to be fully enrolled, an issue that impacted programs across the country. In recognition of the enrollment challenges related to the pandemic, the Head Start Bureau paused the requirement of maintaining full enrollment, but in future years, we will be expected to maintain full enrollment with an average attendance of 85% per month.



The following chart shows the number of children and families who were served in each of our centers during the 20-21 program year. In addition, the total numbers/percentages of children with physical and dental exams for each category are listed by center.

Location	Children Served	Families Served	Physical Exams	%	Dental Exams	%
East Biloxi Elementary	64	62	58	90%	59	92%
Gaston Point	49	47	32	65%	39	80%
Dr. Gilbert Mason	54	51	50	93%	53	98%
Gulfport Partnership	67	67	50	75%	53	79%
Total Head Start	234	227	190	81%	204	87%
Linda Lyons (EHS)	66	49	53	80%	49	74%



We estimate there are 2,875 income-eligible Early Head Start infants and toddlers and 1,812 income eligible Head Start children in Harrison County. At full capacity (64 EHS and 488 HS), we would serve 2% of the eligible Early Head Start population and 27% of the Head Start population in our service area. During the pandemic, Head Start suspended regulations regarding health and dental requirements due to several factors including difficulty in scheduling and keeping appointments and overflow of patients at local health care facilities. Toothbrushing in classrooms, previously a Head Start Performance Standard, has been paused. The Head Start Bureau recognized the limitations communities were facing due to an overburdened health care profession. Staff worked with families to identify chronic health care needs and to deliver necessary developmental and

health screenings, but resources were extremely limited. As the pandemic subsides, we anticipate these numbers to increase substantially and remain closer to 100% in subsequent years.

Parent Involvement

While COVID magnified the importance of parent involvement in a child's development like never before, this program year presented new challenges as our program moved through in-person to virtual to hybrid services. Our staff worked to build on the strengths developed the prior year to continue to provide structure and some fun activities in a home and virtual setting so young children could continue to develop necessary skills while being switched between service options.

Our relationships with parent begin as soon as we take an application for a child, when we discuss parent's hopes and dreams for their child. We set the stage for the importance of the parent's involvement in their child's educational journey. When the child is accepted into the program, we hold a parent orientation where we discuss what parents can expect from us and how they can be an essential part of the program. Because of our focus on child health, we also talk to the



family about partnerships we have with community health experts, such as The Vision Center, South Mississippi Smiles and the Coastal Family Health Clinic who provide on-site services for children as necessary.

We were able to resume in-person parent training activities during the year and utilized a combination of staff led and partner led opportunities. Healthy eating was a focus with sessions on “Nutrition and Picky Eaters” and “Healthy Food Tasting/New Healthy Choices” both facilitated by Happy Healthy Mississippi, “Sleeping Habits and Healthy Eating” and “How to Read a Food Label” by Autumn Benson, our Nutrition Consultant. In addition, program staff facilitated sessions on “Healthy Breakfast Choices”, “MyPlate (food group choices/portion sizes)”, “Responsive Feeding” and “Healthy Eating Habits” to encourage families to make healthy eating choices. Other parent training opportunities included:

- Early Childhood Inclusion
- Pedestrian Safety
- Wellness/Coping with Stress during the Holidays
- Parenting: The Most Important Job You Will Ever Have!
- The Importance of Literacy.

Parents are encouraged to volunteer with the program in a number of ways, including taking leadership opportunities in the program through their center’s Parent Committee or our program’s Policy Council. The representatives on Policy Council have an important say in how we operate – specifically through input on curriculum, activities, budgets, grant application and hiring of staff. The skills learned through Policy Council can be instrumental in building confidence, as well as giving participants real life job skills that are easily transferred to the workplace.

Our efforts to prepare children for Kindergarten

Everything we do with the children in the MSU Extension Service Head Start program is help them to be ready to be successful in the school setting – from classroom practices and



experiences to training for parents. Our ultimate goal is to leverage community partnerships and research-based methods to establish a strong program that serves children at their youngest and most vulnerable stage in life so that they experience optimal outcomes.

We strive to create a seamless experience at each transition (from home to Early Head Start, from Early Head Start to Head Start and from Head Start to the local school system) so that the child has a good experience and can

be comfortable in the new educational setting. Our Head Start brings high-quality, early-

childhood educational experiences in a fun atmosphere, laying a strong foundation for school success. In addition, we take a holistic approach in working with children and families, taking care to ensure they are physically and mentally healthy, have well balanced diets and opportunities for home learning environments that are extensions of the classroom.



Throughout the year, we used topical opportunities to expand children’s learning experiences. For example, many of our centers utilized outdoor gardens as an extension of the classroom to focus on long-term learning opportunities in science. Children were able to watch their plants through the life cycle as the weather and seasons changed. Teaching staff used multiple modalities to teach children in a variety of settings – indoor, outdoor, meal time and transitions. Throughout the year, teachers were able to individualize as each child required and build upon skills and abilities as children grew and learned. As children approached the end of the school year, teachers started to transition to specific skills children need to be successful in the school setting. In addition to preparing children, we also prepared parents by sharing what parents can expect when their child enters into the local school setting. We provide assistance with the transition including talking to parents about how to advocate for their child once the child enters the local school system and provide opportunities for the parent to ask questions regarding the new setting.

We learned lessons during the pandemic about how to be more creative in the ways we prepared children, with more emphasis being placed on how to extend the classroom into the home environment. Even though we have returned to in-person services, we have continued to utilize some of those practices, especially in our partnerships with parents as their child's first and best teacher. In addition, the intensified health and safety practices have continued so we can provide the best environment for our children to remain healthy and in-person. Staff have been trained extensively in health and safety protocols and classrooms are monitored on a regular basis to ensure healthy habits are being followed at all times. We are diligent in frequent hand-washing and use every opportunity to dialogue with children on how to remain healthy. Children have adapted to constant mask-wearing and teaching staff have learned how to be expressive even with part of the face covered. Language development is even more important when non-verbal cues are more difficult to decipher, so teaching staff have been more aware of language choices and experiences.

