



# LUZERNE COUNTY HEAD START INC.

## 2019 - 2020 Annual Report to the Community

Serving pregnant women, children birth to age 5, and their families in Luzerne and Wyoming Counties



## Message from Leadership: Finding Hope in the Face of a Pandemic

The Head Start community has always known we are much stronger when we act together. This past year has been one of many successes, and one of many challenges. Despite the ongoing public health crisis we face, Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. (LCHS) remains committed to its mission: To enhance the quality of life for low income children and their families in Luzerne and Wyoming Counties.

At the start of the 2019-2020 school year, an increase in state funding allowed LCHS to serve an additional 72 children in our community. We opened a new classroom in the Kistler Elementary school in the Wilkes-Barre Area School District and added a third Head Start classroom on the campus of Luzerne County Community College. For the first time in several years, we expanded our presence to the Crestwood School District and later opened a new center with one Head Start classroom at the Dallas United Methodist Church. We added a third support person to each of our Head Start classrooms and focused on trauma-informed training for all staff. We worked to install new safety measures in our buildings and continued to develop relationships with key community partners in order to help our children and their families be successful. The progress we made is truly inspiring, and we are so proud of our staff for the tireless work they have done.

The spring of 2020 brought a set of challenges we have never experienced. In mid-March, LCHS was forced to close its doors for the first time in its 55 years of existence and transition to distance learning in order to protect the health and safety of our children, families and our staff as the COVID-19 virus spread throughout our community. But, our hardworking staff rose to the occasion, taking learning from the classroom to the computer in just two weeks. Since then, we've adopted new methods and protocols to help our families and their children get the services they need. As we navigate through these new and unexpected challenges brought on by COVID-19, we continue to stay connected to our children and their families. Despite the changes we've made, we remain committed to our core mission: To coalesce, inspire, and support the Head Start field as a leader in early childhood development and education.

As we begin another year of helping young children and their families grow and thrive in a supportive and nurturing environment, we are taking extra precautions to ensure everyone remains safe. As we move toward reopening our doors, we are committed to providing the services young children need for their early development. LCHS believes that every child, regardless of their circumstances at birth; has the ability to reach their full potential. We are, and always have been in this together, and it is our privilege to continue to bring the Head Start model to life.

Sincerely,



Dr. Frances G. Langan  
President, Board of Directors



Lynn Evans Biga  
Executive Director



## LCHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### President

Dr. Frances G. Langan, *Keystone College*

### Vice President

George Rable, *Benco Dental*

### Treasurer

Gary Williams, *Community Representative*

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David Kowalek, *Community Representative*  
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Mainet Mejia-Arroyo, *Community Representative*

Phyllis Mundy, *Former State Representative*

Lori Nocito, *Leadership Wilkes-Barre*

Terri Ooms, *The Institute for Public Policy and Economic Development*

Attorney Joseph Sileo, *McNees Wallace & Nurick*

Lisa Stashik, *Navient*

Mike Tomalis, *Fran Tomalis & Son, Inc.*

## LCHS SENIOR STAFF

Lynn Evans Biga, *Executive Director*

Beth White, *Assistant Executive Director*

Travis Black, *Director of Finance*

Dawn Smith, *Director of Operations*

Kelly Chamberlain, *Director of Education*



# CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WE SERVE

**Funded Enrollment**



- Early Head Start Infants, Toddlers and Pregnant Women
  - United Way Early Head Start Infants, Toddlers
  - Head Start Children\*
  - Pre-K Counts Children\*
- \*includes 71 children in blended classrooms



HEAD START/PRE-K COUNTS SITES

**23**

EARLY HEAD START SITES

**5**



HEAD START/PRE-K COUNTS CLASSROOMS

**59**



HEAD START CHILDREN WHO RECEIVE TRANSPORTATION

**498**



PREGNANT MOTHERS

**22**



MEALS SERVED

**206,101**

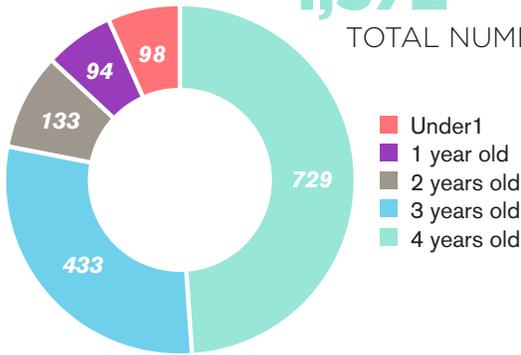
## DEMOGRAPHICS

(numbers represent those served in the Early Head Start, Head Start and Pre-K Counts programs)

\*PLEASE NOTE: Due to the ongoing public health crisis and stoppage of services on Mar. 13 2020, these numbers were last calculated in Feb. 2020.

**1,372**

TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES



## SCHOOL DISTRICTS SERVED

- Crestwood
- Dallas
- Greater Nanticoke Area
- Hanover Area
- Hazleton Area
- Lake-Lehman
- Pittston Area
- Tunkhannock Area
- Wilkes-Barre Area
- Wyoming Valley West
- Wyoming Area

The 2020 Indicators Report developed by The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development states that about 24% of eligible 3 & 4 year old children were enrolled in a high quality Pre-K program in Luzerne County. According to the Office of Child Development and Early Learning's most recent Reach and Risk Assessment, 31% of children in Luzerne County and 17% of children in Wyoming County under the age of 5 are living in economically high risk families with incomes at or below 100% of the federal poverty guidelines.

FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

**69**

FAMILIES RECEIVING PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

CHILDREN WITH DIAGNOSED DISABILITIES

**221**



FOSTER CHILDREN

**64**

**286**

SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

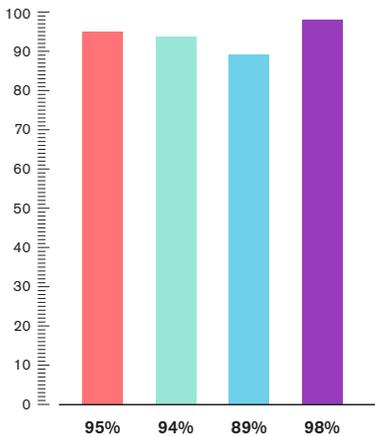
**804**

DUAL-LANGUAGE LEARNERS

**328**

# HEALTH AND DENTAL OUTCOMES

\*PLEASE NOTE: Due to the ongoing public health crisis and stoppage of services on Mar. 13 2020, these numbers were last calculated in Feb. 2020.



## HEAD START

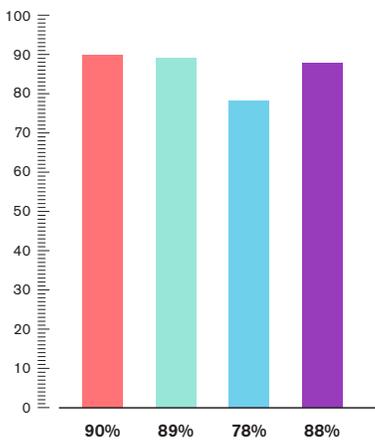
By the end of the 2019 – 2020 program year  
(\*end of program year considered Feb. 2020)

- Children with health insurance
- Children with a medical home
- Children with a dental home
- Children up-to-date on immunizations



HEAD START CHILDREN WHO RECEIVED LEAD SCREENINGS

# 723



## EARLY HEAD START

By the end of the 2019 – 2020 program year  
(\*end of program year considered Feb. 2020)

- Children with health insurance
  - Children with a medical home
  - Children with a dental home
  - Children up-to-date on immunizations
- \* Children under age 1, or before the eruption of their first tooth, are not required to have a dental home*



## ADDRESSING SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND THE OPIOID CRISIS AT LCHS

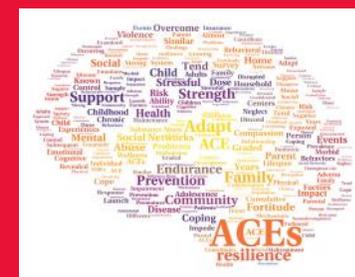
For the first time, LCHS began its use of the Substance Use Disorder (SUD) tool. The tool is a questionnaire that was developed to identify and assist families who are at risk of substance abuse. Every family is asked to complete the questionnaire at the beginning of the program year.



- In the Head Start program, the SUD tool was presented to 776 families. Of those families, 663 had no risk, 18 received services, 1 was referred for services and 94 declined to complete the test.
- In the Early Head Start program, the SUD tool was presented to 85 families. Of those families, 74 had no risk, 4 received services, 1 was referred for services and 6 declined to complete the test.

## LCHS STAFF BEGINS TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE TRAINING

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic experiences that occur in childhood. In order to help staff learn the importance of trauma-informed care, LCHS partnered with Lakeside Global Institute near Philadelphia. During the 2019-2020 school year, staff attended several in-person meetings and trainings alongside mental health professionals that helped them to develop the skills they need to properly handle some of the traumatic situations many of our children and their families face. These opportunities have allowed LCHS



staff to obtain the skills they need to better support those who experience trauma.

# SCREENING, ASSESSMENT AND CHILD OUTCOMES

LCHS is committed to supporting children and families with school readiness, self-sufficiency and success in life. Our program provides children with comprehensive health, nutrition, and other family support services, as well as a developmentally appropriate early childhood education.

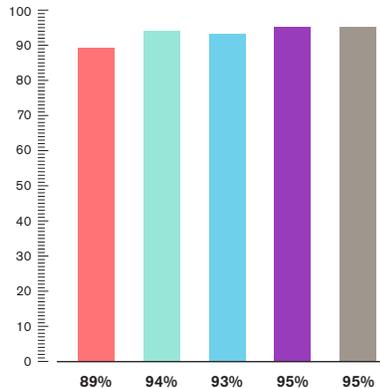
LCHS uses Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) as the assessment tool for our Head Start program and Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP) as the assessment tool for our Early Head Start program. Both tools support the goals and objectives of the curriculums we use in our early learning programs.

The graphs on this page represent the percentage of children meeting or exceeding the age-appropriate skills from fall of 2019 to spring of 2020. \*PLEASE NOTE: Early Head Start child outcomes were not calculated for the spring of 2020 due to the closure of LCHS facilities amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

## EARLY HEAD START CHILDREN 0 TO 3-YEARS-OLD

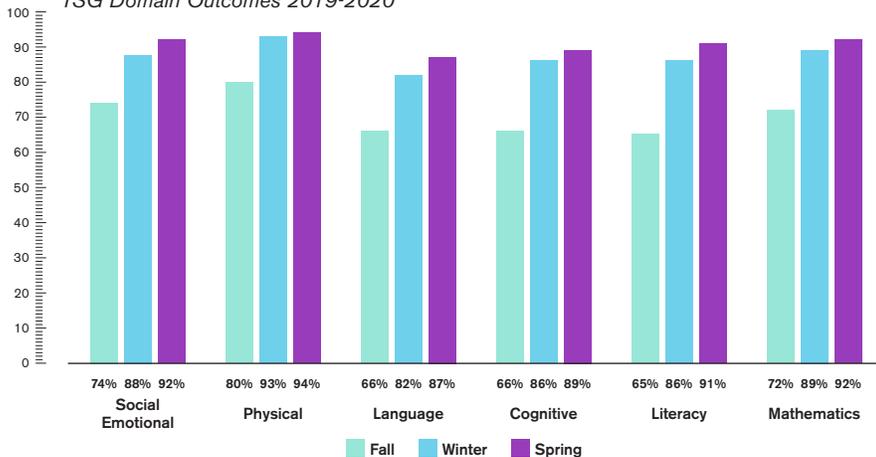
HELP Domain Outcomes by the end of the 2019-2020 program year  
(\*end of program year considered Feb. 2020)

- Language and Literacy Skills – 89%
- Approaches to Learning – 94%
- Physical Development and Health – 93%
- Cognitive and General Knowledge – 95%
- Social and Emotional Development – 95%



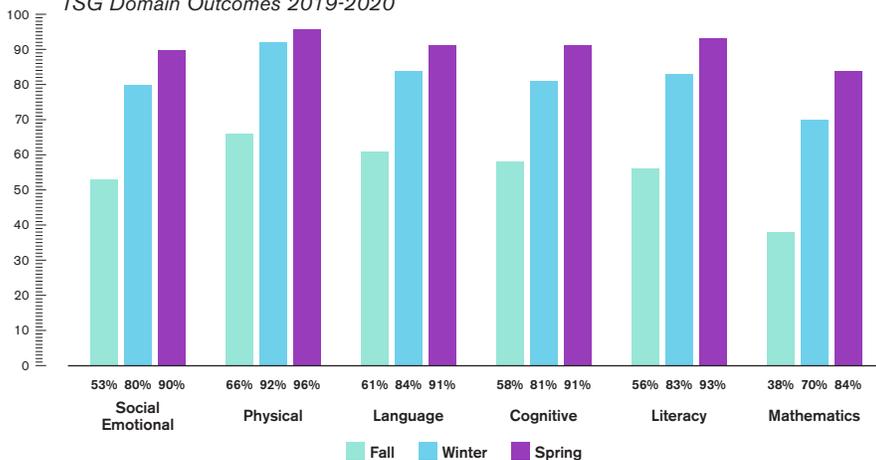
## HEAD START/HSSAP CHILDREN 3-YEARS-OLD

TSG Domain Outcomes 2019-2020



## HEAD START/HSSAP CHILDREN 4-YEARS-OLD

TSG Domain Outcomes 2019-2020



## PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

### SERIES OF PARENTING CLASSES OFFERED TO FAMILIES AT LCHS



Head Start/Early Head Start families take part in parenting classes at LCHS

Luzerne County Head Start believes that a parent is a child's first and most important teacher. To promote the relationship between parents/caregivers and their children, LCHS held a series of parenting classes called "Understanding Children." The six-session series of classes took place at LCHS's Head Start center in Wilkes-Barre and was funded through The Luzerne-Wyoming Counties System of Care grant, which is held by Luzerne-Wyoming Counties Mental Health and Developmental Services. Trained mental health professionals from Lakeside Global Institute, a company based in the Philadelphia area, taught parents how to focus on better understanding their children's behaviors, interactions and needs. Families also had the opportunity to talk with other families about their experiences with parenting.

*"It was nice to be in a group setting with other parents – a lot of times you feel like you are alone and don't know where to go with your children."*

*- Head Start mom, Jennifer*

### LCHS POLICY COUNCIL

Families are encouraged to be part of Head Start & Early Head Start program planning. Policy Council members are elected each year and meet monthly. Those involved participate in meetings and provide feedback on the services we provide. Members can be currently enrolled parents, as well as community members.

**Chairperson** Jennifer Truchon

**Assistant Chairperson** Chelby Glenn

**Secretary** Ben Ulitchney

**Treasurer** Renee Schneider

*"I learned a lot about patience – and how a child thinks, whereas I used to get upset when my son would have a temper tantrum – these classes helped me to learn to be a better communicator and understand his feelings."*

*- Head Start dad, Ben*

*"The classes were especially helpful to me as a grandparent because the rules have changed so much from when I raised my kids. They helped me to understand a lot of things I didn't know about parenting."*

*- Head Start grandma, Tricia*



# TRANSITION

Preschool children make the transition into kindergarten more successfully when their schools and families prepare together, and when their preschool and kindergarten teachers connect. LCHS has a system in place to help children transition from one program to the next. This includes the transition from Early Head Start to Head Start and Head Start to kindergarten.

## MOUs

Luzerne County Head Start has 13 Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with school districts in the two counties we serve. These signed agreements recognize the importance of facilitating a process between school districts and LCHS, which allows children to successfully transfer from our program to kindergarten and beyond.

- Bear Creek Community Charter
- Dallas
- Greater Nanticoke Area
- Hanover Area
- Hazleton Area
- Lake-Lehman
- Northwest Area
- Crestwood
- Pittston Area
- Tunkhannock Area
- Wilkes-Barre Area
- Wyoming Valley West
- Wyoming Area

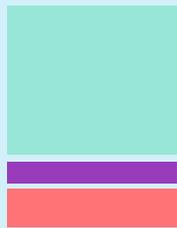


# OF CHILDREN WHO TRANSITIONED FROM HEAD START TO KINDERGARTEN

# 556

# OF CHILDREN WHO AGED OUT OF EARLY HEAD START

# 87



# 68

# OF CHILDREN WHO TRANSITIONED FROM EARLY HEAD START TO HEAD START

# 7

# OF CHILDREN WHO TRANSITIONED FROM EARLY HEAD START TO ANOTHER CHILD CARE PROGRAM

# 12

# OF CHILDREN WHO DID NOT ENTER ANOTHER EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM



## SUMMER LEARNING EXPERIENCE GOES VIRTUAL

Navient and LCHS partnered to offer Jump Start, a summer learning experience to help 30 three and four-year-old children get a “jump start” to their early education. The summer program was held virtually this year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fifteen children in two separate Google classrooms logged on virtually for the four-week program. Each week, teachers connected with families to make sure their needs were

met. They also dropped off school supplies at the children’s homes so the children had everything they needed to learn. Staff held live sessions with their students and created video lessons that demonstrated a learning activity children were asked to complete. The children who participate in Jump Start attend Head Start the following program year.



# SUPPORT AND DISTANCE LEARNING DURING A PANDEMIC

## EDUCATION SHIFTS FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE COMPUTER

In the spring of 2020, LCHS was forced to physically close its doors to children and their families due to the COVID-19 virus. Early childhood services then transitioned to virtual learning. LCHS was awarded a federal grant through the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) Act in the amount of \$707,440 to fund these at-home services.



## SHINING A LIGHT ON HEAD START STAFF: NURSE EVA

Several employees were recognized for their commitment to LCHS, our students and their families as we transitioned from in-person services to virtual learning. “Nurse Eva” who serves as regional nurse at LCHS’s Mehoopany, Tunkhannock, Back Mountain and Westmoreland centers was recognized by her co-workers for going above and beyond to do safety and health activities for students. As the pandemic unfolded, she recorded videos while playing her guitar, used actual playground equipment for safety lessons, and continuously provided the staff and children with motivation throughout the virtual learning process. LCHS would like to thank Nurse Eva, and all healthcare workers who selflessly cared for those in our community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.



## CALL FOR HELP ANSWERED

Early Head Start (EHS) mom, Keisha, had fallen into some hard times during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her husband had to quarantine for one month and was unable to work, leaving the family with one income. Meanwhile, Keisha’s two-year-old daughter, Harmony was in need of a pair of new children’s eyeglasses. The loss of income made it impossible for Keisha to purchase new glasses for Harmony. Keisha told her EHS family educator about Harmony’s need and that she could not afford the expense. With the help of EHS

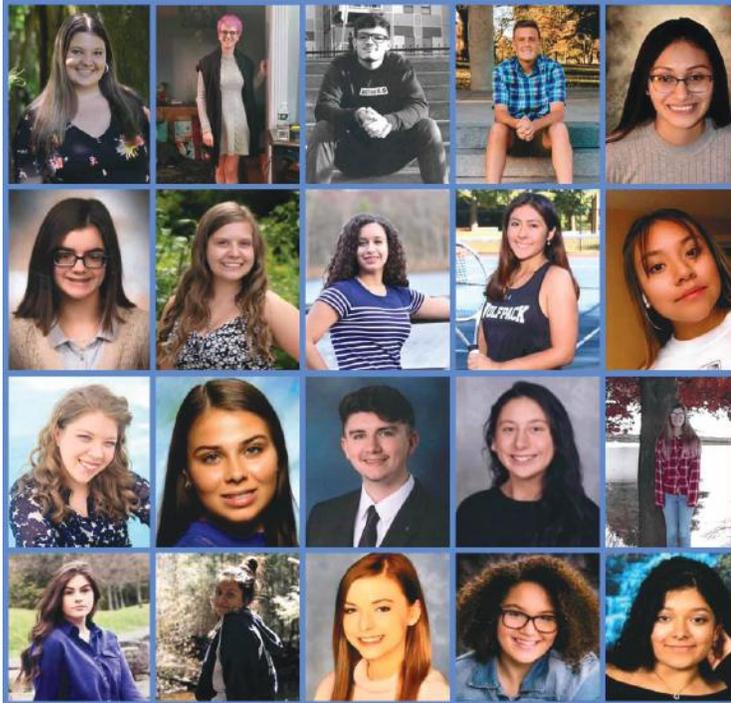


and optometrist, Dr. Alan Frank, Kingston, Harmony received the eyeglasses she needed. Keisha says she is very thankful that her call for help for Harmony was answered.

## LCHS TAKES PART IN NHSA’S “COVID-19: DESTINATION REOPENING PLAYBOOK”

Leaders from LCHS took part in the National Head Start Association’s (NHSA) task force that created the “COVID-19: Destination Reopening Playbook.” Dawn Smith, director of operations at LCHS, and Deb Siglin, health specialist, were among 43 individuals from across the country that helped put together the publication. The document aims to help Head Start agencies nationwide safely come back into service during the COVID-19 pandemic, so children and their families can get the services they need to be successful in their early development. Following the release of the national playbook, LCHS put together its own COVID-19 task force, which is made up of individuals in our agency and community who help provide guidelines toward LCHS’s reopening plan.

# HEAD START HIGHLIGHTS 2019-2020



## **Alumni Luncheon Canceled; Scholarships Still Awarded**

For the first time since it began in 1987, LCHS made the difficult decision to cancel its 2020 alumni scholarship luncheon due to COVID-19. The event celebrates the opportunities Head Start and Early Head Start provides to our community's most vulnerable children and their families. It also recognizes our hard-working staff for their years of dedication and honors former Head Start students with scholarship awards. Thanks to the support of our community, LCHS was still able to provide scholarships to Head Start alumni who plan to pursue post-secondary educations. Twenty high school seniors from eight school districts in Luzerne and Wyoming Counties were awarded scholarships totaling \$18,500 as part of the LCHS Alumni Scholarship program. To date, LCHS alumni have been awarded \$275,250. The scholarships are funded through private sponsors, such as local businesses, organizations and community leaders.

## **PA's Second Lady Visits Head Start, Promotes Participation in 2020 Census**

Gisele Fetterman, PA's Second Lady, paid a visit to children at LCHS's Beekman Street center in Wilkes-Barre as part of her visit to northeast PA to promote participation in the 2020 census. Ms. Fetterman stopped by the Head Start center to spend some time with the preschool children in classroom #18, where she read the book, "Everybody's Somewhere" by Cornelia Spelman. She left the book for the children to add to their classroom library.



## **Head Start Honored with Healthy Workplace Award**

LCHS was the recipient of the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce's 2019 Healthy Workplace Award. The Healthy Workplace Award is presented to a business or businesses in Luzerne County that promotes health and wellness within its organization. Over the past year, LCHS's health and wellness committee worked diligently toward promoting health and wellness initiatives in the workplace. Additionally, LCHS's employee wellness program allows all employees the option to receive flu shots, blood pressure checks and bone density tests. LCHS was one of four organizations in Luzerne County to receive the award.



# HEAD START HIGHLIGHTS 2019-2020



## ***Increased Funding Allows for Additional 72 Head Start Children***

An increase in state funding allowed LCHS to provide services for an additional 72 children during the 2019-2020 program year. For the first time in several years, LCHS expanded its presence to the Crestwood School District, where our agency opened a Pre-K Counts classroom at Fairview Elementary school. LCHS also opened a Pre-K Counts classroom at Kistler Elementary school in the Wilkes-Barre Area School District. Additionally, our agency added a third Head Start classroom on the campus of Luzerne County Community College. Later in the year, we opened a Head Start classroom in the Back Mountain region at Dallas United Methodist Church.

## ***Inaugural “Walk For Wellness” Goes Virtual***

In order to promote health and wellness of staff, LCHS’s wellness committee planned to hold its inaugural “Walk for Wellness” event on June 5 at Kirby Park in Wilkes-Barre. The event was put together as a way for LCHS employees to take a break from their regular job responsibilities and enjoy some time outdoors with co-workers. Activities, snacks and wellness giveaways were all planned to be part of the event. In May of 2020, LCHS decided to turn the event into a virtual walk for wellness due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff was encouraged to go for a walk, send photos and submit a form that logged their distance. The photos were posted on LCHS’s Facebook page as a way to share their results with co-workers and the community.



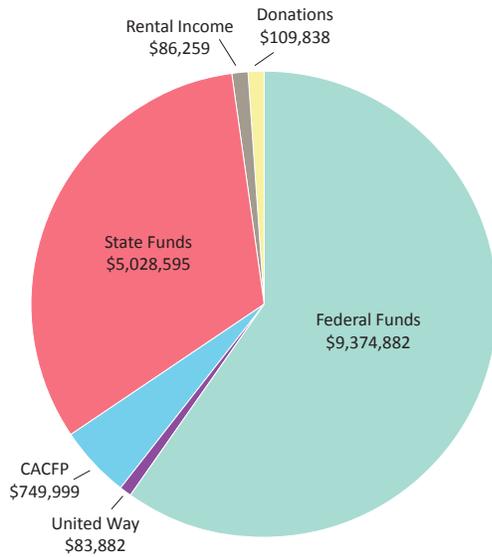
## ***Grant Secures Funds to Teach Behavior Management Strategies in the Classroom***

A grant from the Moses Taylor Foundation in Scranton helped LCHS to begin a pilot program to help solve behavioral issues among children in our classrooms. Teacher-Child Interaction Therapy Universal (TCIT-U) is a method used to improve disruptive behavior in the early childhood classroom. Mental health consultants from an Illinois-based company along with a licensed counselor from the Children’s Service Center in Wilkes-Barre worked with education specialists at LCHS, who then trained teachers. During this pilot project, the TCIT-U method was applied in eight classrooms. As the training progressed, educators observed classroom relationships become stronger between children and teachers, teachers and classroom staff, and between Head Start children.

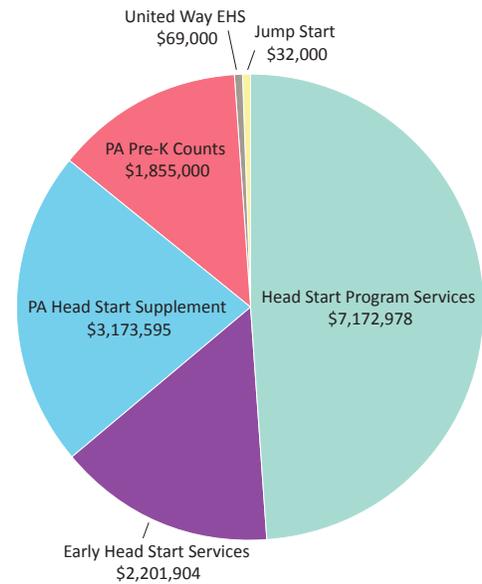
# LUZERNE COUNTY HEAD START BUDGET & FINANCIALS

Results of the 2018 financial audit of Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. reported no findings or material weaknesses.

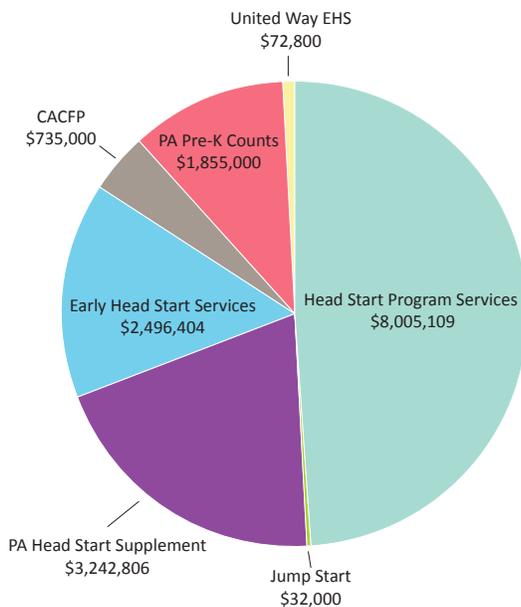
## 2019 FUNDING SOURCES



## 2019 EXPENSES BY PROGRAM



## 2020 PROJECTED BUDGET BY PROGRAM



## ACCOUNTABILITY

Luzerne County Head Start's most recent monitoring report dated December 10, 2019 finds our program in full compliance with all federal regulations.

## ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL INFORMATION

2019 Administrative costs were \$2,180,868 or 12.4% of total expenses

2019 Transportation costs were \$863,564, transporting 500+ children

LCHS has a minimum cost sharing of 20% of our federal funds awarded; in 2019 that share was \$2,357,835

**2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

[www.lcheadstart.org](http://www.lcheadstart.org)

[www.facebook.com/luzernecountyheadstart](https://www.facebook.com/luzernecountyheadstart)

[www.instagram.com/luzernecountyheadstart](https://www.instagram.com/luzernecountyheadstart)

Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. is an equal opportunity employer.

**“Moving Families Forward”**



**“Moving Families Forward”**

**“Moving Families Forward”**

**570-829-6231 • 800-551-5829**

Visit [www.lcheadstart.org](http://www.lcheadstart.org) to learn more about the comprehensive services we provide to children and their families.