

2020 - 2021 Annual Report to the Community

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



Annual Report 2020-2021: Message from Leadership

"Everything starts with relationships where people feel valued, safe and secure."

As the impact of the global pandemic continues to be felt across our communities, kindness and compassion have never been more important. This past year was one full of challenges and changes in education with school closures, remote learning, resource disparities and racial inequities at the forefront. Despite the temporary changes we made, Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. (LCHS) remained focused on our vision: children growing and thriving in a supportive, nurturing environment of parents, family, neighborhood, and community where they and their families have options and opportunities for optimum growth, development and learning.

The start of the 2020-2021 program year began with full remote learning and virtual home visits. Our reopening committee which included representatives from the community, members from LCHS's Board of Directors and LCHS staff, worked together in order to safely and effectively get our children back into the classrooms. Following the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine and decrease of cases in the community, LCHS successfully opened 24 of its 59 classrooms for in-person learning in the spring of 2021. The tremendous effort it took to get children back into the classrooms safely during the pandemic was teamwork that could not have been accomplished without the cooperation and dedication of our hard-working staff.

Everything starts with relationships where people feel valued, safe and secure. This past program year, our team of educators formed lasting bonds and relationships with children and their families in their virtual classrooms. They rose to new challenges that required innovative solutions. Families connected with their children's teachers and classroom staff in ways they have never done before. Teamwork and idea sharing among staff helped resolve problems that arose in a new and uncertain virtual teaching world. LCHS leaders found opportunities to make lasting changes that would not have been discovered prior to the onset of COVID-19. Despite the virtual learning, masking, cleaning, sanitizing, safety protocols and closing and opening of classrooms, we discovered that young children are remarkably resilient. As elementary education teacher, Sherri Spelic, wrote "Their eyes are open for miracles when all we see is destruction."

The COVID-19 virus has changed the way people live and work. Despite the effects the global pandemic has had on our community, LCHS continues to provide high-quality early learning services, paired with comprehensive health and social services, to those families most in need. As we begin a new program year, LCHS will continue to prioritize the health and safety of our children, families and staff as we move toward a full in-person model of learning. As leaders in early childhood education we believe that every child, regardless of their circumstances at birth, has the ability to reach their full potential. It is our privilege to continue to bring the Head Start model to life in Luzerne and Wyoming Counties. Together, we are moving forward. We hope you will join us for another year on this remarkable journey.

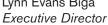
Sincerely,

George Rable

President, Board of Directors

Reme a Pello









LCHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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

202

212

1,222



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 funded classrooms

HEAD START/PRE-K COUNTS CLASSROOMS



EARLY HEAD START SITES



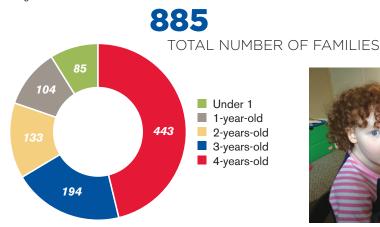
PREGNANT MOTHERS



DEMOGRAPHICS

(numbers represent those served in the Early Head Start and Head Start programs)

*PLEASE NOTE: The figures below do not reflect full enrollment in LCHS's Head Start program. Preschool classrooms (3 & 4-year-old children) were at reduced capacity for the 2020-2021 program year due to COVID-19 mitigation measures.





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 2021 Indicators Report developed by The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development states that about 25.7% of eligible 3 & 4-year-old children were enrolled in a high quality Pre-K program in Luzerne County. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, 32.2% of children in Luzerne County and 15% 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

CHILDREN WITH DIAGNOSED DISABILITIES

FOSTER CHILDREN

FAMILIES RECEIVING PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

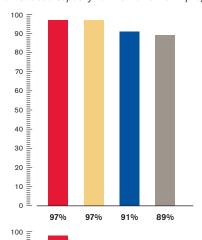
DUAL-LANGUAGE LEARNERS

290



HEALTH AND DENTAL OUTCOMES

*PLEASE NOTE: The figures below do not reflect full enrollment in LCHS's Head Start program. Preschool classrooms (3 & 4-year-old children) were at reduced capacity for the 2020-2021 program year due to COVID-19 mitigation measures.



94%

98%

75%

63%

HEAD START

By the end of the 2020 - 2021 program year

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

* Due to pandemic-related issues, many children fell behind on routine immunizations and regular dental checkups. During the 2020-2021 program year, LCHS was unable to schedule on-site lead and dental screenings for children.



HEAD START CHILDREN WHO RECEIVED LEAD SCREENINGS

375





EARLY HEAD START

By the end of the 2020 - 2021 program year

- Children with health insurance
- Children with a medical home
- Children with a dental home
 - * Children under age 1, or before the eruption of their first tooth, are not required to have a dental home
- Children up-to-date on immunizations
 - * Due to pandemic-related issues, many children fell behind on routine immunizations and regular dental checkups. During the 2020-2021 program year, LCHS was unable to schedule on-site dental screenings for children.

ADDRESSING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES & STAFF

Head Start and Early Head Start (EHS) programs play a vital role in supporting the mental health and social and emotional wellness of children, families and staff. LCHS contracted with two mental health professionals during the 2020-2021 program year to help fulfill the needs of children, their families and employees.



90

80

70

60

50

40

30

20

10

Kiesinger, Ph.D. Christine Kiesinger, Ph.D., is the owner and founder of CEK Communication. Dr. Kiesinger provided LCHS employees with mental health and

coping tools during the COVID-19 pandemic. She addressed a number of topics during her sessions including exemplary leadership through crisis, change and transition, best practices for managing remote work, the role of social support in workplace wellbeing, effective communication practices in virtual settings and work-life integration during stressful times. Dr. Kiesinger was also available to support individual employee's mental health needs and the needs of Head Start/EHS parents and their children.



Lori Losen

Lori Losen, LPC, and Registered Play Therapist™ is the owner of Compass Professional Counselors, LLC and a licensed professional counselor. She

specializes in working with children, adolescents and families and also serves as LCHS's Registered Play Therapist™. Throughout the program year, Lori conducted weekly virtual sessions with Head Start/EHS families. The series was named "Lunch with Lori" and addressed a number of issues families might experience with their children. These sessions also gave families opportunities to ask questions about their children.

LCHS IS A TRAUMA INFORMED WORKFORCE:

There are many adverse childhood experiences that can cause significant stress in young children and their families. Traumainformed care (TIC) involves a wide variety of approaches to working with children who are exposed to such traumatic events or conditions. In 2019, Luzerne County Head Start began training staff in best TIC practices. Employees educated in TIC use a train-the-trainer approach to teach new staff these practices. Incorporating TIC into early childhood education can increase the chances that young children who experience trauma can recover, thrive and succeed in school and later in life.



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.

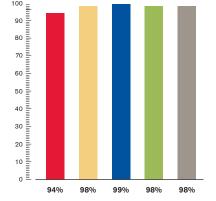
The graphs on this page represent the percentage of children meeting or exceeding the age-appropriate skills from fall of 2020 to spring of 2021.

EARLY HEAD START CHILDREN 0 TO 3-YEARS-OLD

HELP Domain Outcomes by the end of the 2020-2021 program year

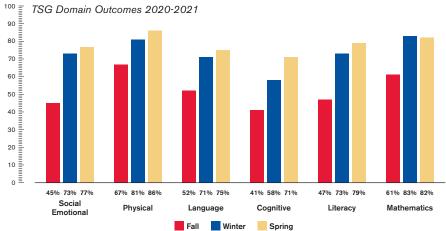
- Language and Literacy Skills 94%
- Approaches to Learning 98%
- Physical Development and Health 99%
- Cognitive and General Knowledge 98%
- Social and Emotional Development 98%

***Due to COVID-19, EHS home visits were done virtually for the 2020-2021 program year. The lack of in-person observations and reliance on virtual interactions/parent feedback presented a number of challenges for LCHS's family educators.



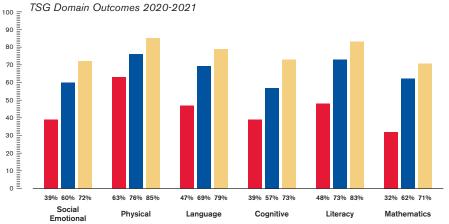


HEAD START/HSSAP CHILDREN 3-YEARS-OLD





HEAD START/HSSAP CHILDREN 4-YEARS-OLD



Winter

Spring





PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



"BE STRONG FAMILIES": PARENT CAFÉ PROGRAMS OFFERED AT LCHS

Luzerne County Head Start (LCHS) began its Parent Café program as a way to build lasting connections and establish a safe and supportive environment for parents or caregivers of the children we serve. The program is offered through "Be Strong Families," a nonprofit organization that works to nurture the spirit of family, promote well-being and prevent violence. The Parent Café program is a

nationally recognized peer-to-peer learning process to keep children safe and families strong. Parent Cafés are physically and emotionally safe spaces where parents and caregivers talk about the challenges and victories that go along with raising a family. Participants explore their strengths, learn about Protective Factors™, and create strategies from their own wisdom and experiences to help strengthen their families. The Parent Café program falls in line with LCHS's vision, which supports



children growing and thriving in a nurturing environment of parents, family, neighborhood, and community where they and their families have options and opportunities for optimum growth, development, and learning.

PARENT VOICES

"This experience helped me to learn that I need to be more present when my family is speaking to me."

"The program helped me to understand that if I am not okay, I am unable to support my family or others."

"Stories other Head Start families shared helped to give me perspective and strength. The program emotionally changed me; I felt very close to those I was engaged with."

"The Parent Café made me realize I need to become a better listener to help meet the needs of my children and my family."

LITTLE LEARNERS LIVE HERE!



If you look closely, you may have noticed Luzerne County Head Start yard signs popping up around the community. Families with children enrolled in the program were given the signs with the words "Little Learner" written on them. The signs were created to get the word out about the Head Start program and to help families and their children feel connected with others during the COVID-19 pandemic.

DIVERSITY TRAINING AT LCHS

In order to better understand the diverse population LCHS serves, the agency began its diversity and inclusion training series with Care Based Leadership during the 2020-2021 program year. Care Based Leadership supports organizations by providing inclusion and diversity training, cultural analysis, and other relevant talent development. Jessica Spradley, co-founder and Vice President of Learning and Development, led a series of virtual sessions that focused on diversity, inclusion and equity. All LCHS employees were required to attend these sessions. The goal of the trainings was to help staff understand the importance of equity and diversity in the workplace.

LCHS POLICY COUNCIL

LCHS believes a parent is a child's first and most important teacher. 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.

2020-2021 Chairperson: Chelby Glenn, Head Start Parent



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.

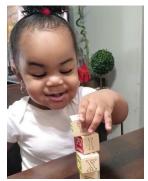
MOUs

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





OF CHILDREN WHO TRANSITIONED FROM EARLY HEAD START TO HEAD START

OF CHILDREN WHO TRANSITIONED FROM EARLY HEAD START TO ANOTHER EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

OF CHILDREN WHO DID NOT ENTER ANOTHER EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM



SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAM PREPARES HEAD START STUDENTS FOR KINDERGARTEN

Following the 2020-2021 program year, LCHS offered a summer learning experience for 60 students transitioning from Head Start to kindergarten. Under normal circumstances, Navient and LCHS traditionally partner to offer Jump Start, a summer program to help 30 children going into the Head Start program get a "jump start" into their education. Since Head Start children did not get as much time in the classroom this year due to COVID-19, this summer's learning opportunity was instead given to upcoming kindergarten children to better prepare them for school. Six classrooms with 10 children in each attended LCHS's





Wilkes-Barre Head Start center for four weeks in July. The extra instructional time allowed these students to better prepare for the start of kindergarten in the fall of 2021. The summer session was made possible by funds received from the American Recovery Act. LCHS plans to resume its Jump Start program in the summer of 2022.



SUPPORT AND DISTANCE LEARNING DURING THE PANDEMIC

MAINTAINING EARLY EDUCATION SERVICES THROUGH AT-HOME LEARNING

LCHS began the 2020-2021 program year with virtual

learning in all 59 Head Start classrooms. In order to best meet the needs of children and families, classroom teachers and family workers delivered at-home learning kits and food vouchers/ grocery bags to help support families and their children. These materials allowed children to participate in classroom projects while learning at home, and also gave families extra sources of food for their children. LCHS also purchased several dozen Chromebooks with federal funding that were part of the agency's Chromebook loaner program. The computers

were signed out by families





enrolled in the program if they did not have the technology for their child to participate in Head Start virtual services.

BACK TO CLASS! RETURN TO IN-PERSON LEARNING AT HEAD START

One year after the pandemic halted classroom learning, LCHS re-opened 24 of its 59 classrooms for in-person

preschool services in March of 2021. Classrooms had been closed for in-person learning since March of 2020, with the exception of two sites in Wyoming County, which opened for a brief period in November before closing again due to increasing COVID-19 cases. The agency's reopening committee, made up of individuals in the community, LCHS Board of Directors members, and staff



played a key role in the success of bringing children back into the classrooms in the spring of 2021. LCHS



will reopen all of its centers for inperson services for the 2021-2022 program year. The health and safety of our children, their families and our staff remains top priority as we move toward reinstating classroom learning.

EARLY HEAD START BEGINS HYBRID APPROACH TO HOME VISITING PROGRAM

Home visits are a vital component of the Early Head Start (EHS) program experience at LCHS. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, LCHS's EHS program transitioned to virtual visits with families. Though staff was equipped with the tools and creative practices they needed to engage with families through phone and/or video visits, in-person interaction is often more effective for families with infants and toddlers. To address this issue, in the spring of 2021, LCHS developed a hybrid home-visiting model, which gave families the option to conduct their home visits outdoors, weather permitting. Though not possible for all families, those who have been able to take part in "porch visits" or outdoor, in-person,





home visits have reported great success. Staff at LCHS has said the porch visits have allowed them to build stronger relationships and better bonds with both the children and their families, LCHS will reinstate traditional home visits as part of our Early Head Start

program during the 2021-2022 program year. The health and safety of our children, their families and our staff remains top priority as we resume home visiting services.

SHINING A LIGHT ON HEAD START STAFF: LISA MALARKEY

Several employees were recognized for their commitment to LCHS as we transitioned from virtual learning back



to in-person services. Lisa Malarkey, who serves as LCHS's Human Resources Manager, was recognized by staff for her hard work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lisa does an amazing job in her position. We appreciate all of her hard work and the help and assistance she has provided throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Lisa's expertise and

knowledge in HR has helped staff navigate uncertain times and we are grateful to have her as part of the LCHS team. Thank you to Lisa Malarkey for her ongoing efforts to support and encourage our staff and to help our agency continue to be successful in helping children and their families most in need in our community.



HEAD START HIGHLIGHTS 2020-2021





CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR STAFF

Staff Honored Virtually for Years of Service

LCHS made the difficult decision to again cancel its alumni scholarship luncheon due to COVID-19. The in-person gathering 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. In order to honor our staff's accomplishments, employees who celebrated a milestone year of service received embroidered LCHS pullover shirts and were honored with a special presentation during a virtual Zoom ceremony. LCHS's 2021 **Outstanding Community Partners** were also recognized during this ceremony. Each community member or organization that was recognized for their significant contribution to our program had the opportunity to speak virtually and was presented with a special gift created by Head Start children. The 2021 virtual recognition ceremony for LCHS's staff and Outstanding Community Partners took place on the 56th anniversary of Head Start's founding.



Head Start Alumni Receive Scholarships at Meet & Greet **Event**

Each year former Head Start students graduating from high school and moving on to post-secondary education have the opportunity to apply for an LCHS scholarship. Traditionally, these awards are presented to students during LCHS's annual alumni scholarship luncheon. This year, LCHS held a special meet and greet event where the 2021 student scholarship winners had the opportunity to meet with their scholarship sponsors. The event was held outdoors at LCHS's Wilkes-Barre Head Start center. Thanks to the support of our community, LCHS was able to provide 14 high school seniors from eight school districts in Luzerne County with scholarships totaling \$18,000. To date, Head Start alumni have been awarded \$293,250. The scholarships are funded through private sponsors including local businesses, organizations & community leaders.





LCHS Holds 2nd Annual Walk for Wellness

In order to promote the physical and mental health and wellness of staff, LCHS's wellness committee held its second annual Walk for Wellness event. Employees were allowed to leave work early and were encouraged to get outdoors and walk of Head Start. They were asked to take and submit photos of their walk. All staff members who participated names were randomly pulled and each of the winners received a \$25 Amazon gift card. Everyone also received a bag of LCHS goodies ahead of the walk. 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.







HEAD START HIGHLIGHTS 2020-2021



Head Start Heroes Purchase Books To Promote Children's Literacv

The Junior Leadership Wilkes-Barre (JLWB) Class of 2021 raised money to purchase books for children at Luzerne County Head Start as part of their "Head Start Heroes" community impact project. Students from JLWB took part in several virtual book readings to Head Start children in March and April of 2021. In May, the group hosted a drive-in movie theater night at the Garden Drive In in Hunlock Creek. Admission was \$7 per person and the movies shown were "Spiderman Homecoming" and "Wonder Woman." The group raised approximately \$1,300 from raffle basket ticket sales and donation jars. The money was used to purchase approximately 300 children's books for boys and girls at LCHS. JLWB is a transformative personal and professional leadership development program that is made up of students who are juniors in high school from school districts across Luzerne County.



Farm to ECE: Summer Farmers Markets at LCHS

LCHS held a series of outdoor weekly summer farmers markets in July of 2021. The markets were made possible by a "Farm to Early Childhood Education" grant funded by the Pennsylvania Head Start Association. A grocery tote of fresh fruits and vegetables from Rowland's Pennsylvania Produce was provided free of charge to Head Start/Early Head Start families who participated in summer services at LCHS's Wilkes-Barre center. Several community agencies were also in attendance to provide information about services available to families. Farm to ECE is a group of activities and strategies that offers increased access to healthy, local foods, gardening opportunities and foodbased learning activities. The funding is meant to increase early learning programs' ability to implement farm to ECE strategies that help meet the needs of children and families during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional famers markets will take place in the fall of 2021.



Sleeve Up for Head Start

The "Sleeve Up for Head Start" campaign encourages members of the Head Start community to learn about the COVID-19 vaccine, identify and address vaccine hesitancy with empathy and cultural understanding, and share personal experiences around receiving the vaccine. Luzerne County Head Start has actively participated in the campaign. Members of LCHS's administrative team worked diligently with community leaders to connect staff with vaccination opportunities. Information about vaccine clinics offered through partner organizations including Geisinger, the Luzerne Intermediate Unit, the Wilkes-Barre Department of Health and the Wright Center for Community Health was made available to all employees. In the spring of 2021, LCHS held its own vaccine clinic at its central office location in Wilkes-Barre, All staff and Head Start/Early Head Start parents or family members over the age of 18 were able to register and get the vaccine. In order to reward and encourage vaccination among staff, LCHS also offers a \$150 incentive to all employees who show proof of vaccination. This incentive is meant to encourage staff to get the vaccine in order to protect themselves and the children they work with.





LCHS Presents First-Ever Bold Leadership Award



During the 2020-2021 program year, LCHS presented the inaugural "Bold Leadership" award to Director of Operations, Dawn Smith. The award is meant to recognize a staff person who demonstrates initiative, serves as an outstanding role model, and inspires others to work collaboratively and creatively, while serving as a champion for the children and families LCHS serves. Dawn was presented with the award for her outstanding

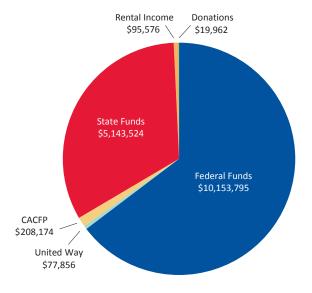
efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. She served as the head of LCHS's reopening committee and spent countless hours with employees, families, health officials and members from our community to develop a plan to safely bring Head Start children back to the classroom. Her tenacious character, hard work and determination are true testaments to the success of LCHS during the COVID-19



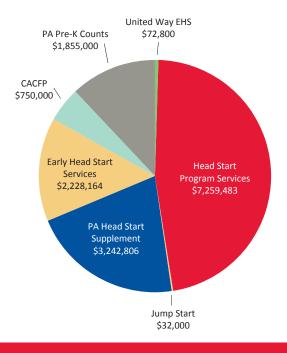
LUZERNE COUNTY HEAD START BUDGET & FINANCIALS

Results of the 2020 financial audit of Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. reported no findings or material weaknesses.

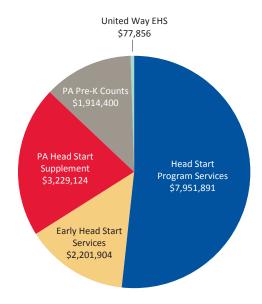
2020 FUNDING SOURCES



2021 PROJECTED BUDGET BY PROGRAM



2020 EXPENSES 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

2020 Administrative costs were \$2,299,199 or 12.5% of total expenses

LCHS has a minimum cost sharing of 20% of our federal funds awarded; in 2020 that share was \$2,538,500

*Due to Covid-19, Jump Start programming did not take place during the 2020-2021 program year.





2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT

www.lcheadstart.org



www.facebook.com/luzernecountyheadstart



www.instagram.com/luzernecountyheadstart

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

"Moving Families Forward"









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