

Providing
HIGH QUALITY
early childhood
education and
family services
SINCE
1965



60 YEARS *of* RESULTS

HEAD START | *Since 1965*

ANNUAL REPORT to the Community 2024-2025

www.lcheadstart.org

570-829-6231

800-551-5829

**SERVING EXPECTING PARENTS, CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO AGE 5, AND THEIR FAMILIES
IN LUZERNE AND WYOMING COUNTIES**

As proven leaders in early childhood education and family development, Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for low-income children and families in Luzerne and Wyoming counties. Our knowledgeable and caring staff accomplish our mission by providing early care and education for expecting parents and children from birth to 5 years old, emphasizing healthy outcomes and school readiness, promoting family self-sufficiency, and partnering with individuals, school districts, and our community.



From Our **LEADERSHIP TEAM:**

This year, we proudly celebrated six decades of excellence — not only as part of a national movement, but as a story rooted in our own community. When President Lyndon B. Johnson launched Project Head Start in 1964 as part of his War on Poverty, few could have predicted the lasting impact it would have. For us, that vision took shape in the lives of local children stepping into their first classrooms and in families who found hope, support and opportunity through Head Start. Over the years, we've grown alongside our community, expanding services, building partnerships and preparing generations of children for success in school and in life. As we mark 60 years, we celebrate more than a program; we honor the stories of resilience, learning and growth that continue to inspire our work every day.

Head Start officially launched in 1965 as an eight-week summer program, reaching more than 560,000 low-income children and families across the country. From the start, it was designed to meet children's emotional, social, health, nutritional and educational needs — setting a new standard for comprehensive early childhood support. Since then, Head Start programs have led the way in breaking the generational cycle of poverty, serving more than 38 million children and families nationwide. Throughout this journey, our local program has been a proud leader in that mission. What began in 1965 with just 90 children and families has grown to serve more than 1,000 expecting parents and children from birth to age 5 each year. For 60 years, we've had the honor of preparing children for success, while standing alongside families as they build brighter futures. This milestone is more than just a number — it's a celebration of the impact Head Start has made in our community and across the nation. Together, we've created a legacy of hope, opportunity and transformation that will continue for generations to come.

This past year has been a truly inspiring chapter for our program. Every challenge we faced became a stepping stone for growth, innovation and renewed purpose. We discovered that what defines us is not the hurdles along the way, but the strength, resilience and creativity with which we overcome them. Through it all, our unwavering focus has been on giving our children and families the foundation they need to thrive. Our commitment is to lift them higher by opening doors of opportunity. With hearts full of dedication, we continue to dream bigger, seeking new opportunities, building partnerships that strengthen communities, supporting and celebrating our incredible staff and expanding our reach so that even more families can share in the promise of Head Start. Together we are creating brighter beginnings and stronger futures.

We are deeply grateful to our families and the community for the support you continue to show. We often say that we cannot do this work alone, and it's true. Every child's smile, every family's success and every step forward is made possible because of the care, commitment and partnership from our families and the community. We are truly grateful to each of you for your role in carrying out the Head Start mission.

Sincerely,



Stacey A. Kile

Stacey Kile
President, Board of Directors



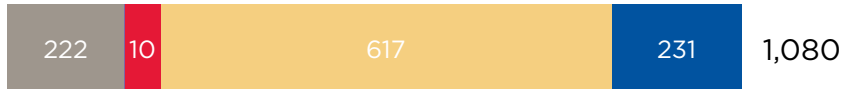
Beth White

Beth White
Executive Director



Children & Families **WE SERVE:**

Funded Enrollment



- Early Head Start infants, toddlers and pregnant women
 - United Way Early Head Start infants and toddlers
 - Head Start children*
 - Pre-K Counts children*
- *includes 105 children in blended funded classrooms*



Head Start/Pre-K Counts sites **17**
Early Head Start sites **5**



Head Start/Pre-K Counts classrooms **48**



Head Start children who received transportation **197**



Pregnant women **19**



Meals served **157,352**
EHS snacks served **295**

SCHOOL DISTRICTS SERVED

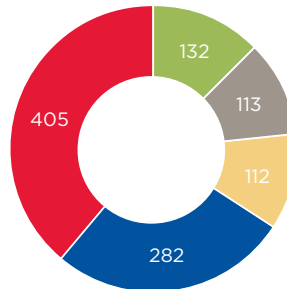
Crestwood
Dallas
Greater Nanticoke Area
Hanover Area
Hazleton Area
Lake-Lehman
Pittston Area
Tunkhannock Area
Wilkes-Barre Area
Wyoming Area
Wyoming Valley West

DEMOGRAPHICS

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

Total Number of Families **974**

- Under 1
- 1-year-old
- 2-years-old
- 3-years-old
- 4-years-old



AVERAGE MONTHLY ENROLLMENT

(as a percentage of funded enrollment)

Head Start - **96.4%** Early Head Start - **95.83%**
Program - **96.12%**

23/24 **24/25**

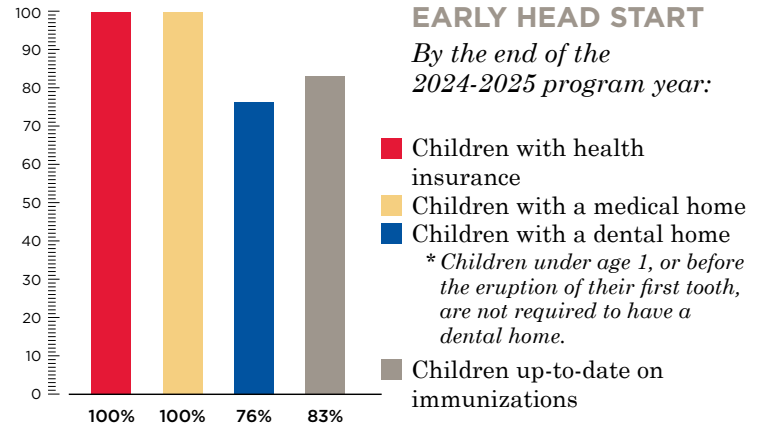
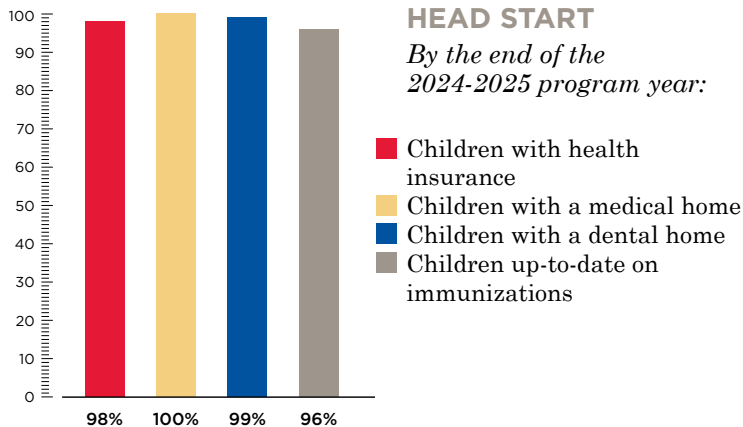
Children experiencing homelessness	65	63
Foster children	25	15
Families receiving public assistance	707	879
Children with diagnosed disabilities	197	201
Single-parent families	517	546
Dual-language learners	417	474



*According to the most recent data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, 31.9% of children in Luzerne County and 10.9% of children in Wyoming County from birth to age 5 were living at or below 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL) in 2023. Statewide, 17.1% of children from birth to age 5 were living at or below 100% of the FPL. Data also shows that in the 2024-2025 school year, 47.9% of children ages 3 to 4 living at or below 300% of the FPL in Luzerne County had access to publicly funded, high-quality pre-k in PA, while 29.6% of this population in Wyoming County had access. Statewide, 44% of children ages 3 to 4 living at or below 300% of the FPL had access to high-quality pre-k programs. High-quality pre-k programs include PA Pre-K Counts, Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program and Child Care Works enrollments in Keystone STARS 3 and 4, Head Start, and school district pre-k.



Health & Dental OUTCOMES:



CHILDREN WHO RECEIVED LEAD SCREENINGS

99%

OF HEAD START ENROLLMENT

97%

OF EARLY HEAD START ENROLLMENT

**CHILDREN UNDER 9 MONTHS OLD ARE NOT REQUIRED TO BE SCREENED FOR LEAD.*



STAFF RECHARGE AT WELLNESS DAY

Our children and families need to be well to do well, and the same is true for our staff. We continued our investment in the health and wellness of our workforce by hosting a Wellness Day at Keystone College. The retreat brought together staff from all service areas for a day of rest and relaxation. Individuals from LCHS and Keystone led a range of activities focused on movement, mindfulness and creativity, giving our staff tools to manage stress and center themselves physically and mentally. We recognize that being in a helping profession, while rewarding and fulfilling, can demand a lot from the heart and result in stress, burnout and vicarious trauma. Opportunities like the Wellness Day help us ensure our staff can show up to work as their best selves and provide the community's children and families with the compassion and care they deserve.

HEALTH & WELLNESS FAIRS PROVIDE SCREENINGS AND RESOURCES

We hosted summer Health & Wellness Fairs in Wilkes-Barre and Hazleton to get a head start on children's required health screenings. Thanks to our community partners, we were able to offer a wealth of resources for families that covered everything from health, dental and nutrition education to social support services. Families also had the opportunity to tour a preschool classroom and a school bus.



COMMITTEE STRENGTHENS FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

The LCHS Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee assists in the planning, operation and evaluation of our health services program and seeks input on best practices or research-based health initiatives from staff, families and community partners. Our agency takes a holistic approach to health and wellness by focusing on the mental, social, emotional and physical development of each child. Though we have always emphasized mental health in our program, we formally added "Mental Health" to the committee's name to meet updated requirements from the Head Start Program Performance Standards.



Screening, Assessment & Child OUTCOMES:

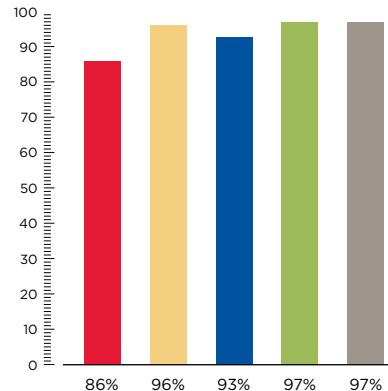
LCHS is committed to supporting children and families with school readiness, self-sufficiency, and success in life. Our program provides children with comprehensive health, nutrition, and other family support services, as well as a developmentally appropriate early childhood education.

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.

EARLY HEAD START CHILDREN 0 TO 3-YEARS-OLD

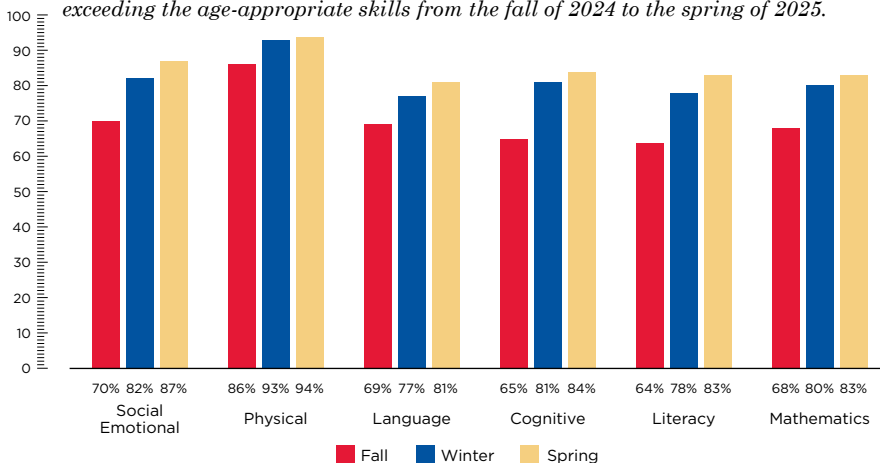
This graph represents the gains demonstrated by Early Head Start children who were assessed for at least two terms (six months) during the 2024-2025 program year.

- Language and Communication – 86%
- Approaches to Learning – 96%
- Perceptual, Motor and Physical Development – 93%
- Cognition – 97%
- Social and Emotional Development – 97%



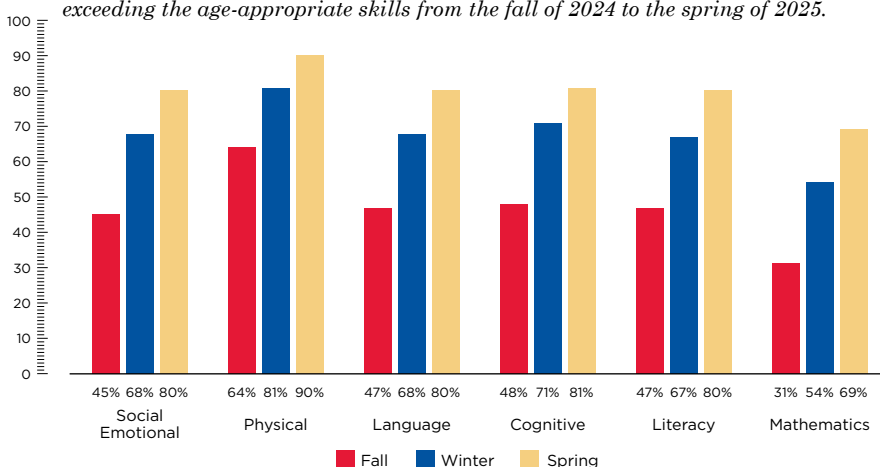
HEAD START/HSSAP CHILDREN 3-YEARS-OLD

This graph represents the percentage of Head Start children meeting or exceeding the age-appropriate skills from the fall of 2024 to the spring of 2025.



HEAD START/HSSAP CHILDREN 4-YEARS-OLD

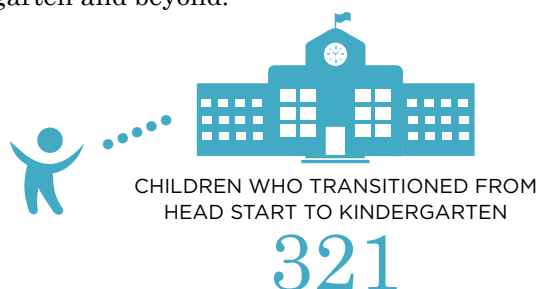
This graph represents the percentage of Head Start children meeting or exceeding the age-appropriate skills from the fall of 2024 to the spring of 2025.



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.

We have 13 Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with school districts in Luzerne and Wyoming counties. 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.



Children who aged out of Early Head Start 36

Children who transitioned from Early Head Start to Head Start 26

Children who transitioned from Early Head Start to another early childhood program 7

Children who did not enter another early childhood program 3

LCHS RECEIVES INPUT FROM COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS



We held a stakeholder meeting with representation from our staff, board, parents and community partners to identify our strengths and areas of growth. We thank everyone who joined us and value their feedback. We will utilize the information gained as we move forward.

STUDENTS GET A 'JUMP START'

We partnered with the United Way of Wyoming Valley to offer Jump Start, a summer learning experience meant to give 3- and 4-year-old children early access to Head Start. Established in 1999, Jump Start acts as a supplemental session for children who were identified as having a high need for services and would benefit from extra time in the classroom. This year, 22 children participated in the program before officially beginning Head Start in the fall. Parents had opportunities to get involved through family engagement activities. United Way, which also funds a caseload of 10 children in our Wilkes-Barre Early Head Start program, will continue sponsoring Jump Start in 2026.



Head Start **HIGHLIGHTS** 2024-2025:



60 YEARS OF RESULTS

Our Anniversary & Scholarship Luncheon was especially meaningful this year as we celebrated 60 years of Head Start. Along with awarding scholarships to Head Start alumni, we recognized our staff for years of service and presented awards to our community partners. We were pleased to welcome special guests, including State Rep. Brenda Pugh and staff from the offices of Congressman Rob Bresnahan, State Sens. Marty Flynn and Dave Argall, and State Reps. Dane Watro and Alec Ryncavage. Geisinger was the Diamond sponsor.



SAVE THE DATE

for our 61st Anniversary Luncheon
Monday, May 18, 2026, at Mohegan Pennsylvania.



SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED TO HEAD START ALUMNI

Now in its 39th year, the LCHS Alumni Scholarship Program – funded by businesses, organizations and individuals in the community – honors the achievements of former Head Start students set to graduate from high school and continue their education. We awarded \$25,500 in scholarships to 16 students at this year's luncheon, bringing the total to \$380,950 since the program's inception.

OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY PARTNERS RECOGNIZED

The Outstanding Community Partner Award acknowledges those who have made significant contributions to our agency. At this year's luncheon, we honored four partners: Cathy Connors from the Pennsylvania Traffic Injury Prevention Project, Nanticoke City Fire Department, Pride Mobility Products and Pennsylvania State Police - Troop P.



Head Start **HIGHLIGHTS** 2024-2025:



At the luncheon, Suzanne received a citation from Rep. Brenda Pugh.

PROGRAM MANAGER MARKS 40 YEARS OF SERVICE

We recognized Suzanne Christian, Early Head Start program manager, for 40 years of service. Suzanne's commitment to Head Start began in 1982 when she enrolled her son, Eric, at LCHS. She was an active volunteer and served as chairperson of our Policy Council, in addition to participating in our Advisory Committees and her center's Parent Committee. She continued volunteering at LCHS after her son went to kindergarten.

Her dedication to Head Start showed, and she became a parent involvement worker at LCHS in 1985. She has worked in several positions and now oversees our Wilkes-Barre and Tunkhannock EHS programs. Suzanne was also the 2017 recipient of the Pennsylvania Head Start Association's Francine Bunch Memorial Staff Award for her contributions to Head Start.

"What has inspired me to continue this remarkable journey is being a part of our families' stories and the joy of celebrating their achievements," she said. "Each day brings a sense of fulfillment, whether it be a 'good morning' smile from a child en route to a classroom, watching an infant react to its image in a mirror, the pride a parent has when a child reaches a milestone and realizing they had a part in that progress, or encountering a former parent who will give you a hug, sharing the success of their now adult child, crediting Head Start."

CENTER RENAMED TO HONOR LONGTIME EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



State Rep. Eddie Day Pashinski presented Lynn with a citation at the ceremony.

We held a ceremony to dedicate our Beekman Street Center in Wilkes-Barre to Lynn Evans Biga, who retired as executive director of LCHS in 2024. Lynn helped shape the future of countless children and families throughout her 46-year career at LCHS, first as a teacher, then as education coordinator, and finally, as executive director for 35 years. Under her leadership in 1994, LCHS purchased the Beekman Street Center, making it the first Head Start program in Region III to buy its own building. So, it's only fitting for that building to now bear her name.

Parent, Family & Community **ENGAGEMENT:**

TEAMING UP WITH PNC ON EARLY LITERACY

Thanks to a \$9,760 grant from the PNC Foundation, we organized a series of book fairs meant to help children build up their home libraries. We held 16 book fairs and distributed more than 1,800 books. Parents and PNC volunteers also participated. We provided families with educational resources on the importance of keeping books in the home and reading with their children. Local libraries offered information on how to sign up for a library card, while the United Way helped families register for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.



FORK OVER LOVE FEEDS HEAD START FAMILIES

We worked closely with Fork Over Love, a nonprofit that partners with local restaurants to feed neighbors in need. Fork Over Love volunteers hosted 19 takeout meal distributions between our Edwardsville, Dodson and Luzerne County Community College - Nanticoke centers for a total of 1,720 meals served. Fork Over Love also handed out 600 meals between our Health & Wellness Fairs in Wilkes-Barre and Hazleton.

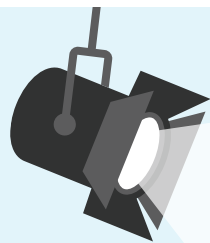


FAMILIES LEARN CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUES

We utilize the Conscious Discipline social-emotional curriculum in the classroom and during home visits. We continued our efforts to educate parents so they can take advantage of these valuable techniques at home. Staff hosted Conscious Discipline workshops across our service area throughout the school year, including open houses to give families an introduction to the curriculum and follow-up sessions to build on their knowledge and practices.



Parent, Family & Community **ENGAGEMENT:**



FATHERHOOD IN ACTION

When fathers are active partners in their children's learning and development, everyone benefits. LCHS participated in the Million Fathers March, a nationwide event in which fathers, father figures and male role models demonstrate their commitment to their children's education by escorting them to school. We also offered Dad Cafes this year under the theme "Adding Parenting Tools to Your Bag." Overall, 284 fathers and father figures were involved in child development experiences, while 46 participated in parenting education workshops, 159 took part in family assessments and 162 engaged in the family goal-setting process. We also had one involved in Head Start program governance.

LCHS POLICY COUNCIL

Parents are a child's first and most important teacher. Parents have the opportunity to participate in Head Start and Early Head Start planning by joining the Policy Council, which acts as a link between our leadership and the families we serve. Members are elected each year and include parents of currently enrolled Head Start children and interested community members. Those involved participate in meetings and provide feedback on our services.

2024-2025 Chairperson: Adrienne Maxwell



READ ACROSS AMERICA BRINGS IN SPECIAL GUESTS

We welcomed special guests for Read Across America Week, including State Rep. Dane Watro and State Sen. Dave Argall at the Carson Street Center in Hazleton. Launched in 1998 by the National Education Association, Read Across America is the nation's largest celebration of literacy. We're grateful to our storytime guests for setting a positive example as lifelong readers.



Parent, Family & Community **ENGAGEMENT:**



UPGRADE AND SUPPORT PROJECTS PLANNED

We secured funding to carry out several projects. LCHS was a benefactor of the John C. Kistler Golf for Life Tournament held in memory of Head Start teacher Megan Dever's father. We received a \$15,000 donation from the tournament via the Luzerne Foundation for a natural outdoor play space at our Carson Street Center. We were also thrilled to be awarded \$10,000 from the Luzerne Foundation's Spring Nonprofit Forum to start a food and toiletries pantry at our Lynn Evans Biga Center. Additionally, the M&T Bank Charitable Foundation granted us \$5,000 to provide bags of toiletries, comfort items and other essentials to families experiencing homelessness and children in foster care.



STAFF GRADUATE FROM LEADERSHIP NORTHEAST

We would like to congratulate our staff members, Yekaterina Chinikaylo and Suzanne O'Gorman, for graduating from Leadership Northeast. Yekaterina, an early childhood education specialist in our central office, completed the Core program. Suzanne, a teacher at our Lynn Evans Biga Center, went through the Impact: Leadership in Education program. Both cohorts visited LCHS to learn about our mission and spend time in our classrooms. Our Executive Director Beth White and Assistant Executive Director Dawn Smith also graduated from the Executive program. More than 20 of our staff have participated in Leadership Northeast programs.



EARLY HEAD START PROGRAM EXPANDS

A boost in annual federal funding allowed us to extend the reach of our Early Head Start home visiting program for expecting parents and children from birth to age 3. With this award, we increased funded enrollment for EHS by 50 children, bringing the total to 232. This includes 222 federal slots and 10 slots funded by the United Way. We were excited for the opportunity to create pathways to success for even more children and families.



Head Start Work is **HEART WORK:**

COMMUNITY LEADER STILL REMEMBERS HEAD START IMPACT



Jessica Suda Baab never hesitates to share her Head Start story.

“Whenever anyone mentions Head Start, I burst with joy and enthusiastically proclaim my love for the program and how it changed my life,” she said. “I truly don’t think I would be where I am today without it.”

Jessica attended LCHS from 1990 to 1992, first in Mountain Top, then in Nanticoke.

“My mom was single-handedly raising my three older brothers and me while working full time, advocating for my oldest brother who was struggling with the challenging gift of dyslexia, and navigating a difficult divorce from my father who was battling alcoholism,” she said. “While there was no shortage of love in our home, my mom knew that the encouraging support and structure from an early learning center would have a great influence on me both emotionally and educationally.”

The encouragement Jessica received from her teacher fueled her to be creative, kind and curious. She credits Head Start with providing a foundation for her educational pursuits.

“My mother was relieved and proud to see my potential recognized during a difficult time,” Jessica said. “My transition to kindergarten was a seamless one, and that was all because of Head Start.”

Jessica later graduated from Crestwood High School and earned her bachelor’s degree in theatre from West Chester University. She worked for KISS Theatre Company (Kids Innovating Stage & Sound) in Wilkes-Barre, eventually becoming its executive director. Today, Jessica is the philanthropic services coordinator at the Luzerne Foundation. She lives in Mountain Top with her husband, Kevin, and their son, Brody.

She remains grateful to Head Start for its meaningful and lifelong impact.

“I thought everyone attended Head Start. It did not occur to me until much later in my life that my family had to meet specific criteria to attend,” she said. “Head Start provided the equity to allow me to succeed alongside my fellow peers. I am most thankful for the friendships, encouragement, educational structure and the relief and support it provided my mom during a difficult time.”

(Shared with family’s permission.)

EARLY HEAD START A LAUNCHPAD FOR SCHOOL READINESS



Samantha has watched her son, Joseph, grow and develop in incredible ways during their Early Head Start experience.

Along the way, Samantha has gained confidence as a parent, as the home visiting program emphasizes her role as Joseph’s first and most important teacher.

“I would most definitely recommend Early Head Start to all the new moms and dads out there,” she said. “This program has shown me what a good parent is and having that special bond with your child.”

Samantha enrolled in Edwardsville EHS when Joseph was 1 month old because she wanted him to begin learning as soon as possible. Over the last three years, they have developed a close bond with their family educator, Jess, during weekly home visits. Samantha and Joseph have also been regulars at socializations with other families in the program.

“From the start of home visits, he developed a lot of different skills, from learning how to crawl to learning how to walk and eventually how to talk,” Samantha said. “At socializations, Joseph has made so many new friends, along with new bonds with the educators.”

These experiences have prepared Joseph for his transition to a Head Start classroom. Samantha is confident that her son is ready for school, and she looks forward to seeing him continue to thrive. For Jess, it was meaningful to arrange Joseph’s classroom visit and reflect on how far he has come.

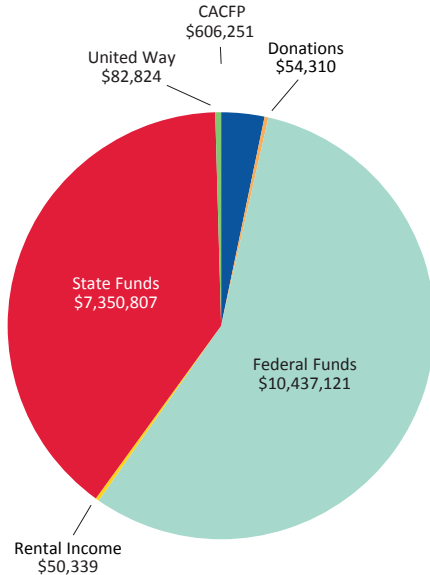
“I have watched Joseph hit all of his milestones: sitting up, crawling, pulling himself up to stand, taking his first steps, saying his first words and now on the path to transition to a Head Start classroom,” Jess said. “I am very proud to be his family educator and cannot wait to hear all the great accomplishments he will make in the classroom.”

(Shared with family’s permission.)

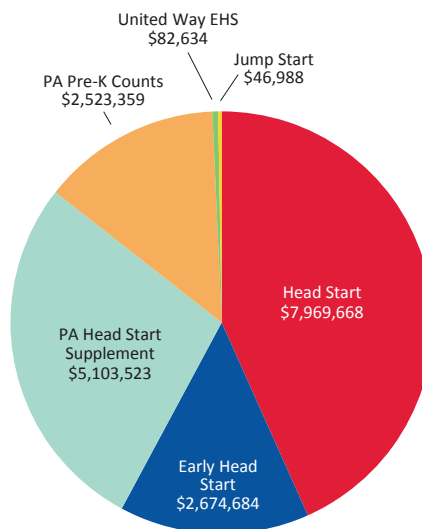
Budget & FINANCIALS:

Results of the 2024 financial audit of Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. reported no findings or material weaknesses.

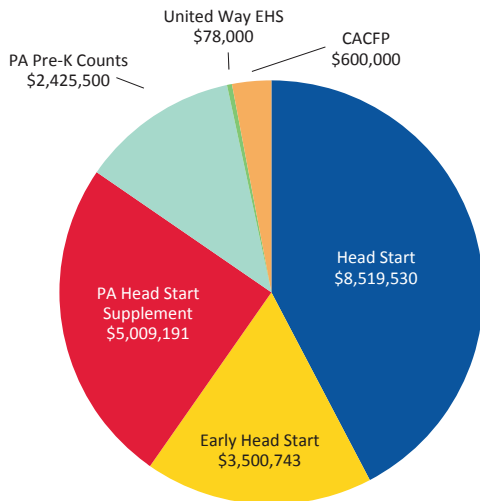
2024 FUNDING SOURCES



2024 EXPENSES BY PROGRAM



2025 PROJECTED BUDGET BY PROGRAM



ACCOUNTABILITY

Our most recent monitoring report in May 2025 determined LCHS was in full compliance with all federal regulations.



ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- 2024 administrative costs were \$1,443,089, or 14.03% of total expenses.
- LCHS has a cost sharing of 25% of our federal funds awarded. In 2024, that share was \$3,030,517.
- Transportation costs were \$613,505 for transporting 197 children in the 2024-2025 school year.



LCHS LEADERSHIP:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Stacey Kile, *Geisinger Health Plan*
Vice President: Andrea L. Caladie, CPA, *Baker Tilly*
Treasurer: Angela Mariotti, *PNC Financial Services*
Secretary: Phyllis Mundy, *Former State Representative*

Ahmad Ali – *Greater Wyoming Valley Chamber of Commerce*
Lori Cooper – *Wilkes University*
Phil Gelso, Esquire – *Law Offices of Philip Gelso*
Carl Goeringer Jr. – *Century 21 Smith Hourigan Group*
Frances G. Langan – *Keystone College*
Chris Langley – *Allied Services*
Mainet Mejia-Arroyo – *Community Representative*
Teri Ooms – *The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development*
George Rable – *Benco Dental*
Jennifer Schweizer-Cebrick – *Little Tykes Learning Center*
Mike Tomalis – *Fran Tomalis & Son, Inc.*

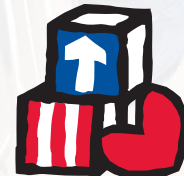
EXECUTIVE STAFF

Beth White, *Executive Director*
Dawn Smith, *Assistant Executive Director*
Maureen Zaboski, *Director of Finance*
Kelly Chamberlain, *Director of Early Childhood Education*
Miriam Bakewell, *Director of Operations*
Brittany Shoemaker, *Director of Early Head Start*
Sharon Dougherty, *Director of Family Strengthening/
Community Engagement*
Lisa Malarkey, *Director of Human Resources*



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

We would like to acknowledge outgoing board member Cynthia Feng for her time with our agency. Thank you for your dedication to the children and families of LCHS.



LEADERSHIP CHANGES AT LCHS



Following the retirement of longtime Executive Director Lynn Evans Biga, Beth White stepped up from her role as assistant executive director to lead the agency. Dawn Smith was promoted from

director of operations to take over as assistant director. Beth and Dawn are both passionate advocates of the Head Start mission, and we wish them success in their new roles.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ATTENDS UCLA PROGRAM

Assistant Executive Director Dawn Smith completed the



University of California - Los Angeles Head Start Management Fellows Program. Hosted at the UCLA Anderson School of Management, the program provides a unique opportunity for Head Start executives to participate in a 12-day intensive leadership and

management development training session. Dawn was the third LCHS administrator to participate in the program.



23 Beekman Street | Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702

2024-2025

annual report **TO THE COMMUNITY**

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



United Way
of Wyoming Valley



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Visit www.lcheadstart.org to learn more about the comprehensive services we provide to children and their families.