

Greater East Texas Community Action Program Head Start

Fact Sheet

What is Head Start?

Head Start is a national federally funded program which provides comprehensive child developmental services for America's low-income, pre-school children and social services for their families. It is a program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutrition, socio-emotional development, physical, mental health and other services to enrolled children and families.

What is GETCAP Head Start?

The foundation of GETCAP Head Start rests on four basic principles:

Child Development – A child can benefit most from a comprehensive, interdisciplinary program to foster normal development and address concerns. Parents are the most important teachers of their children and GETCAP Head Start strives to include parents in all phases of their child's development.

Family Development - GETCAP Head Start is committed to assisting children and families in strengthening parent-child relationships. Outreach and training activities assist parents in increasing their parenting skills and knowledge of parent development. The well-being of children is inextricably linked to the well-being of the entire family.

Staff Development – GETCAP Head Start staff development is an on-going process, designed to help build relationships among staff and to assist staff in acquiring or increasing the knowledge and skills needed to fulfill their job responsibilities. Staff receives variety of training and attends local, state, regional and national trainings pertaining to Head Start service delivery.

Community Development - Community relationship building is an essential component of GETCAP Head Start. Partnerships with other agencies and organizations in the community are crucial to meeting family needs. Community development helps families to perceive of themselves as a valuable part of their community and to assist them with believing they can contribute to their neighborhoods.

The Impact of Head Start

Head Start has played a major role in focusing the attention of the Nation on the importance of early childhood development, especially in the first five years of life. The program has had a dramatic impact on child development and childcare services; on the expansion of State and local activities for children; and on the range and quality of services offered to young children and their families.

Head Start programs have led in efforts to improve the cognitive abilities of young children. The outreach and training efforts of Head Start programs have helped provide parents with the knowledge and service they need to build a better life for their children. Direct involvement of parent in program planning and policy-making has given families a primary role in the development of their children.

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Objectives and Benefits of GETCAP Head Start

- Relationships with families, which includes frequent interaction, follow-up, and establishing mutual trust between staff and families.
- Opportunities and support growth for parents, so that they can identify their own strengths, needs and interests, and find their own solutions.
- Support for parents as they identify and meet their own goals, nurture the development of their children in the context of their family and culture, and advocate for communities that are supportive of children and families of all cultures.
- Community partnerships that increase family/child access to needed resources and services
- Environments where children and families can learn and thrive.
- Participation in classes and workshops on child development to allow parents to learn about the needs of their children and about educational activities that can take place at home.
- A planned program of experiences and activities that support and enhance the parent's role as the principle influence and primary teacher in their child's education and development.
- A program that embraces diversity and focuses on people in the children's world today, as well as historically, while emphasis is placed on similarities of people, rather than on their differences.
- A variety of learning experiences for children that foster intellectual, social, and emotional growth.
- A safe, nurturing, engaging, enjoyable, and secure learning environment for children, in order to help them gain the awareness, skills, and confidence necessary to succeed in their present environment and to deal with later responsibilities in school and in life.
- Commitment to wellness by promoting and maintaining each child's optimum health with comprehensive health services to assist the child with physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development.
- Education of parents so they can make healthy choices for themselves and their children.
- Commitment to work with families of children with significant disabilities, so they receive the comprehensive services they need to meet their child's developmental, health, and social needs.
- Opportunities to play and learn in age appropriate settings that are conducive to learning and growth.
- Assessment of developmental, physical, social, emotional, and nutritional needs for children, including children with special needs.