



**HIGHER  
HORIZONS**

Head Start & Early Head Start  
Over 60 Years of Service

# Head Start & Early Head Program

## 2020 Annual Report



**Mission Statement:** Higher Horizons provides quality early childhood development and family services to low-income families to support and empower children, families and staff as they grow to their fullest potential through education, information, resources and advocacy. We offer consistent and comprehensive services that support the core elements of Head Start. We believe that everyone has gifts and talents to offer within our diverse community. We are committed to delivering these services with pride and excellence.





**In March 2020**, it became clear how completely our world would be turned upside down. After mounting global concern about a deadly new respiratory illness originating in China, the Novel Coronavirus, as we initially referred to it, established a firm foothold in the US and the country was soon in a nearly complete lockdown. A year later, more than 500,000 lives have been lost in the US, more than 2.5 million people have died worldwide.

Throughout 2020, Higher Horizons Head Start and Early Head Start program continued to provide comprehensive services to the neediest children and families in the Bailey's Crossroads/Falls Church communities of Fairfax County, VA. I share a deep sense of gratitude for everyone who sacrificed for the common good over the past year. We were fortunate as Higher Horizons continued to pay ALL employee throughout the year and that was a critical factor in mitigating the fiscal crisis, recognizing their valuable work, and ensuring that staff would be in place when services resume. To the extent possible, staff were expected to support ongoing services to enrolled Head Start children and families. Head Start staff were able to address families' immediate stressors related to food, rent support, or healthcare. Staff organized a wide range of distributions to families with food and health and safety supply deliveries, diaper distributions, education supplies and iPad's. By offering compassion, connection, and care, staff were able to decrease parental stress during this period.

Higher Horizons staff were able to use online video platforms to share program information and plan for meeting Head Start child and family needs. Education staff provided virtual education services. Virtual learning approaches were individualized for each family's situation. Every family was impacted by the current crisis differently. The goal at Higher Horizons was to support families by staying in touch. We made sure each family received consistent outreach and communications through phone calls, video chats, texts, emails, or other mediums. Head Start staff provided information on community supports as adversity increased during this time. Staff were able to assist families with navigating community supports to relieve some of their stress.

Sometimes it takes a dramatic event for people and organizations to appreciate who they are and what they are capable of. Many thanks to the Board of Directors and the Head Start Policy Council for their ongoing support and guidance throughout this year. The Higher Horizons' team gained confidence in their ability to collaborate and develop solutions, with a sense of urgency. The lesson for us all was to not be afraid to challenge ourselves — we might just discover strengths that we did not realize we have.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Cornish, Executive Director



## About Head Start & Early Head Start

Head Start is a national child development program for preschool children that provides services to promote optimal academic, social and emotional development for income-eligible families. Created in 1965 as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's *War on Poverty*, Head Start is the most successful, longest operating, national school readiness program in the United States. It is a child-centered, family-focused comprehensive and community-based human development program with the goal of supporting children and families in becoming productive citizens. Head Start provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition, dental, mental health, social services and parent involvement opportunities to children and their families and has contributed to the enhancement and productivity of communities across the country.

The Head Start program serves pre-school children, ages three to five years in center- and home-based environments. A primary focus of the Head Start program is the development and enhancement of school readiness skills for preschool children.

The Early Head Start program serves pregnant women and their children, birth to three years of age. It provides guidance, information and direct services to foster the healthy development of children and their families during the most formidable years. The mission of Early Head Start is to promote healthy pre-natal outcomes for pregnant women, enhance the development of very young children and promote the healthy functioning of families. Like Head Start, Early Head Start focuses on quality services, prevention, parental involvement and inclusion.

We encourage you to visit the Office of Head Start website at <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/> for additional information and resources about Head Start and Early Head Start programs.



### Quote from a Home-Based & Center-Based Family:

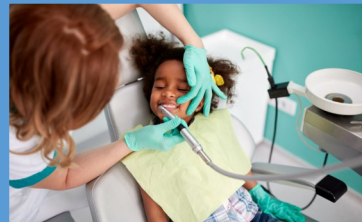
*"By the means of this letter, we Adela Ayala and Milton Medina notify that the student Jozef Alexander of Galaxy class leaves the Higher Horizons center to be able to enjoy summer vacation with his grandmother and to practice sports. At the same time, we express our deep gratitude to all the personnel of Higher Horizons for the beautiful experience, wisdom and affection that Jozef and we have received from you these two years for having made the center a second home."*

## Enrollment Data & Health Outcomes

For more than 50 years, the national Head Start program has devoted its resources to support the optimal growth and development of young children and their families, with the understanding that the support would help create and maintain stronger, more vibrant communities. In times of economic hardships, growing demands on families, and a smaller resource base for community growth, the services that Head Start delivers have become more valuable. Head Start brings benefits that adds value to the lives of children, parents and communities. Through better educated young people, families are strengthened to a new level of self-sufficiency, and transformed communities benefit from increased employment, a higher salary basis and more engaged citizens. Head Start proves itself to be an added value to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The tables below illustrate Enrollment Data and Health Outcomes at Higher Horizons for 2019.

<b>2020 ENROLLMENT</b>	Head Start Fairfax County Delegate	Early Head Start Fairfax County Delegate	Local Head Start Fairfax County Delegate	Early Head Start 7 Corners Grantee
Funded Enrollment Center-Based	88	16	84	40
Funded Enrollment Home-Based	-	36	-	36
Number of Children Served	100	69	96	85
Number of Preg- nant Women Served	-	8	-	4
Percentage of Eligible Children Served	100%	100%	100%	100%



<b>2020 HEALTH OUTCOMES</b>	Head Start Fairfax County Delegate	Early Head Start Fairfax County Delegate	Local Head Start Fairfax County Delegate	Early Head Start 7 Corners Grantee
Percentage of enrolled children who are up-to-date on a schedule of age appropriate preventive care and primary health care.	96%	97%	89%	90%
Percentage of enrolled children up-to-date on immunizations or have received all immunizations possible at this point in time.	87%	86%	92%	91%
Percentage of enrolled children with accessible, continuous care provided by a dentist.	99%	80%	85%	84%

## Health Services

In 2020, the date for Higher Horizons children who received health screenings are as follows:

<b>EHS</b>	<b>Dental Exams</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>EHS</b>	<b>Physical Exams</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>HS</b>	<b>Dental Exams</b>	<b>49%</b>
<b>HS</b>	<b>Physical Exams</b>	<b>37%</b>

COVID-19 played a huge role in children and families not being able to visit medical providers and dentists for most of the 2020 year.



## Health Services Advisory Committee

Community partners, the Board of Directors Liaison, and Head Start/Early Head Start parents attended the Higher Horizons first quarter Health Services Advisory Committee meeting and were supported by staff. The role of the HSAC is to participate in planning, operations, provide resources, and evaluations of health services at Higher Horizons. The committee also assists the program in meeting its goal of establishing community partnerships and developing collaborative relationships and agreements with community agencies and other organizations.







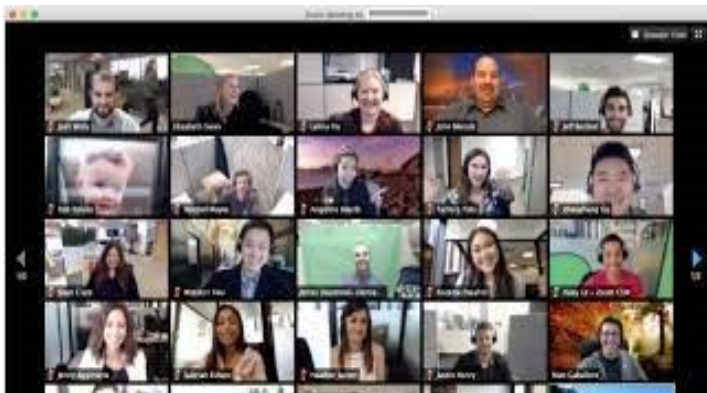
## Parent Curriculum

Higher Horizons is excited about using Ready Rosie, our parent curriculum for a third program year. In a year with many external challenges, Higher Horizons has shown a commitment to family engagement and school/home partnerships-ReadyRosie® user growth has steadily increased and teachers have been sending playlists, and parents are commenting on the videos. Over 70 % of our families are registered and actively using ReadyRosie® application, which consist of learning tools and workshops to engage children and parents. ReadyRosie® is an evidence-informed and research-based family engagement and early learning resource. ReadyRosie® is a free application for parents to download on their personal cell phone device. It is also an early education tool that helps families, schools and communities across the nation deepen and scale their family engagement efforts. Our tools leverage the power of video modeling, family workshops, professional development opportunities and mobile technology to build powerful partnerships between families and educators- resulting in Ready families, Ready educators, Ready children. Every week, teachers will use ReadyRosie® in creative, efficient and effective new ways. ReadyRosie® provides teachers with ready-made daily communication tools and online or live professional learning. Higher Horizons will continue to monitor the outcomes to family engagement and educational learning through meaningful data and tracking.

## PARENT EDUCATION & TRAINING

Higher Horizons encourages the role of parents as their child's first teacher in their learning. Staff build relationships with families that support positive parent-child interactions to ensure their emotional and social well-being. Higher Horizons has held several virtual parent education and training activities this year, including:

- \*Monthly Parent Meetings
- \*Baby Showers for Pregnant Women in the Early Head Start Program
- \*Holiday Toy Drive
- \*Parent-Teacher Conferences
- \*Car Seat Safety Workshop



## Family Services

The 2020 school year was conducted in a virtual form from March 16, 2020 until April 19, 2021. On April 19, 2021 Higher Horizons opened Monday thru Thursday for in-person learning on site. Each child was given an iPad to continue their educational learning. Higher Horizons are very proud of our four Family Engagement Advocates. Each Family Engagement Advocate has a caseload between 20-40 children each. Each Family Engagement makes daily to weekly contact via phone, email, text or virtual on zoom with the families on their caseload. As well through Parent Connect Call. The Parent Connect Call served as increasing our responsibility by addressing topics families care about most, maintaining engagement with all families by offering monthly communication sessions in English and Spanish and Strengthening trust by welcoming transparent and frequent conversations. The goal of the Parent Connect is to stay connected and provide emotional support for all families.

Head Start believes in partnering with families to provide and connect them with current and relevant services within our community. During the pandemic Higher Horizons conducted diaper and wipes distribution on site for families in need. Also, Higher Horizons partnered with Salvation Army to conduct a food distribution on site for families in need. In addition, Higher Horizons conducted food distribution for families on site during the pandemic as well as delivered lunches to families twice a week via Higher Horizons bus transportation. Lastly, Higher Horizons has partnered with other Community Partners in the community such as: Legal Services, Neighborhood Health, etc.

Higher Horizons is thrilled to announce a fourth program year of partnering with George Mason University for a bachelor's or master's degree Social Work intern. The intern will complete a full school year interning with Higher Horizons. The Social Work intern receives a caseload of four to five families that they serve while they are completing their internship with Higher Horizons. The Social Work intern is integrated with the Family Engagement Advocate as well as the agency's daily operations. The Social Work intern has weekly supervision with the Family Resource Manager and participates in all things related to the Family Services department.

We value how diverse our staff, children and families are making sure we provide a culturally and linguistically Head Start program. The services provided are designed to strengthen families, as well as provide a core foundation for family's success. For example, The Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework (PFCE) is the Head Start road map for progress in achieving outcomes that leads to positive and continuing change for the Head Start families. The PFCE is a research-based method that Family Engagement Advocates across the world use to promote parent and family engagement with children's learning and development through the school year. Family Engagement Advocates work with their families to develop and individualized Family Partnership Plan (FPP) as early as enrollment, which incorporates attainable family goals.



## Education Performance & Growth Report by Checkpoints



Higher Horizons Head Start and Early Head Start is a year-round program. Three “checkpoints” are usually conducted annually — one each in the fall, winter and spring. The first checkpoint period in the fall is from the first day of school to the middle of November. During this period, children begin to learn about the school, their classrooms, teachers and classmates. Children begin to understand and follow the daily schedule. Teachers observe and learn about the children while they are in class; they also make observations about children’s interests, personalities, challenges, cultures and families. Teachers also make observations and document children’s social interactions during daily activities. These observations are used as documentation to help finalize levels for each development area at each checkpoint season. The scores generated from the check-points represents the children’s initial developmental stages.

After the initial checkpoint data gathered from *Teaching Strategies GOLD®*, and moving forward to know children’s strengths and weaknesses, teachers set educational goals for each child. These goals are implemented in weekly, individual lesson plans and daily activities to assist children in reaching new developmental levels. After each checkpoint, teachers obtain new data from *Teaching Strategies GOLD®* according to the observation notes, and they set up new goals for the next reporting period. The data is generated from *Teaching Strategies®* using the *Widely Held Expectation Snapshot* reporting tool.



Higher Horizons has partnered with Wolf Trap to offer three Family Engagement virtual sessions for Head Start and Early Head Start families. Parent involvement was vital in making sure that the children participated and enjoyed themselves. Two of our Home Visitors have also hosted two Socialization sessions each, one being *Financial Literacy* and the other *Yoga*.

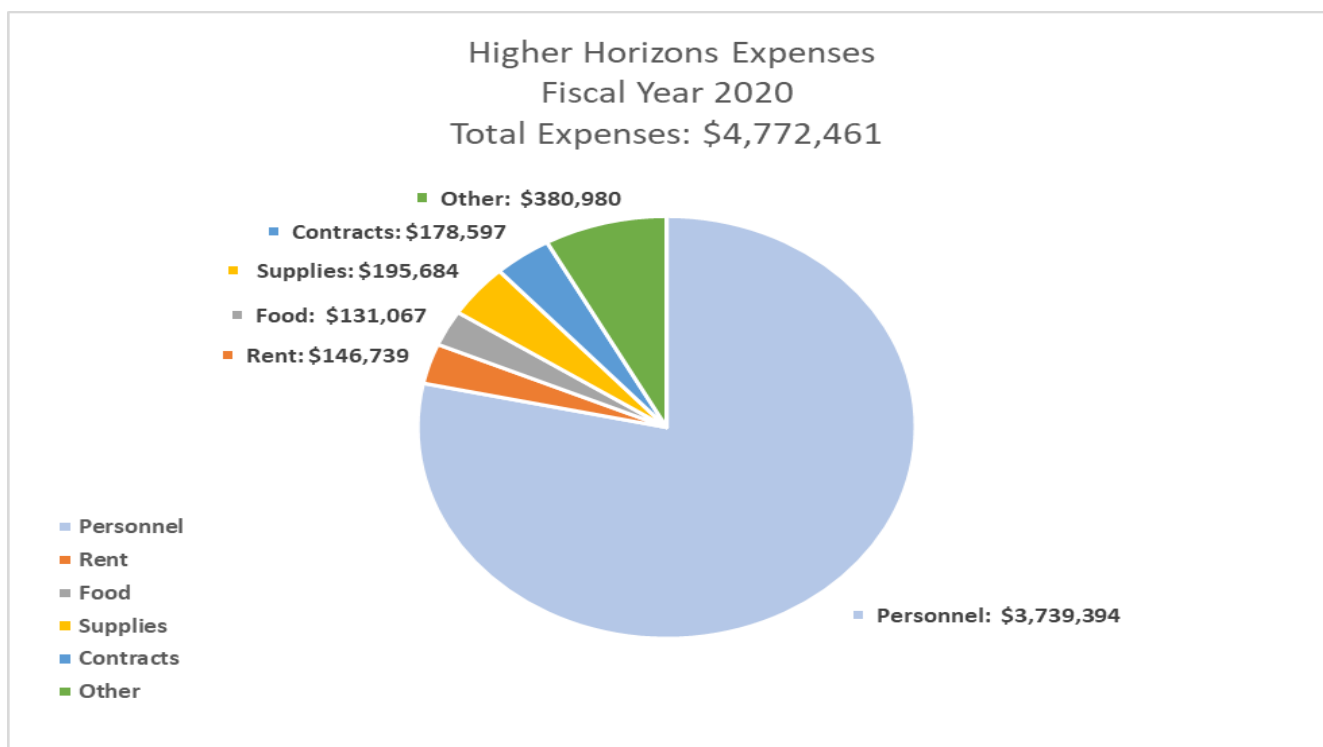
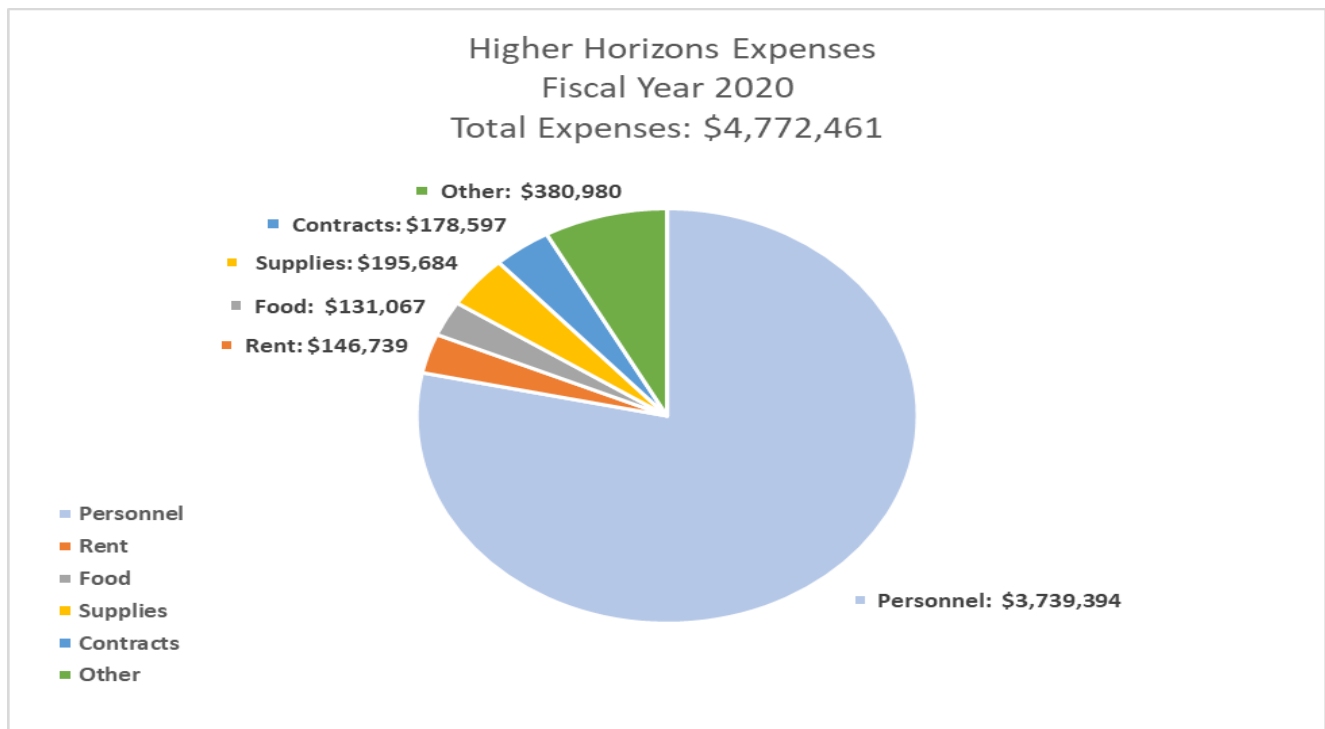


### EMERGENT KINDERGARTENERS

Since Higher Horizons returned to on-site services in April 2021, our classroom staff have focused on getting the Emergent Kindergarteners acclimated to their daily schedules, classroom rules, and hallway etiquette. They have also focused on teaching them to communicate needs, engaged them in cooperative play, and encouraged them to share things that happened the day before. The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening, also known as *PALS®*, has aided the teachers in planning small groups, as well as individualizations to aid Emergent Kindergarteners in sharpening their letter identification skills, phonological awareness and their ability to write.



## 2020 Revenue Funding & Expenditures



### **Summary of OHS Federal Review Findings-Grantee & Delegate Programs**

The grantee at Higher Horizons Early Head Start at Seven Corners met the conditions established in the Head Start Program Performance Standards Designation Renewal System, and Higher Horizons received a five-year funding award in 2018.

There were no findings when the virtual A-133 federal audit was conducted in November 2020.

There have been quarterly, virtual monitoring visits for service areas by the Fairfax County Office for Children and Neighborhood and Community Services, bi-annual virtual licensing inspections from the Department of Social Services, and random reviews by the Board of Directors. Higher Horizons has been in compliance with Head Start Program Performance Standards, Virginia Child Care Licensing Regulations, federal and state laws, and other policy requirements.