



**Union County Community Action Agency
Head Start/Early Head Start
Annual Report**

Union County Community Action, Inc.
Head Start/Early Head Start Annual Report
2008 – 2009

Head Start/Early Head Start Program

Serving: Anson, Richmond, and Union Counties in North Carolina

Jenny McGuirt Executive Director/Director of Children & Family Services

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PHILOSOPHY

At Union County Community action agency we believe that children are our greatest resource. Their growth and development are of utmost importance. Families who are empowered will have the most significant impact on their children and community.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Union County Community Action, Inc. Head Start Program is to:

Provide quality, comprehensive, and child development services to eligible children, including children with disabilities, in Anson, Richmond, and Union Counties.

Provide training, education, resources, and referrals that will assist parents in becoming self-sufficient.

Provide training and/or education opportunities to assist staff in their professional growth.

Advocate and intervene on behalf of children and families.

U.C.C.A., Inc. Head Start/Early Head Start provides quality experiences for children and families through trained staff in conjunction with other agencies who provide specialized services.

OBJECTIVE OF UCCA

Our goal at UCCA, INC is to enhance the social-emotional, physical, and academic development of North Carolina children from zero to five, through leadership, resources and professional development to our families we provide high-quality early childhood programs in a comprehensive and collaborative system. Union County pursues this goal throughout the state, by preparing children and families to succeed by acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the Preschool Learning Expectations

UCCA Head Start/Early Head Start program continues to make significant strides in 2008-2009, through intense professional development in a broad range of topics related to best practices and fiscal accountability in early childhood. There has been measurable progress throughout the three counties in the areas of program quality, measuring and assessing progress, and fiscal accountability and integrity. In addition UCCA was able to utilize the guidance definition outlined in the McKinley Vento Act, to provide services to more homeless families.

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Fiscal Accountability and Integrity

In the 2008-2009 school years, the approved projected budget for the Head Start/Early Head Start program totaled over \$3,844,495 million with an average per-pupil allocation of \$7,132.65 for students served in the Head Start/Early Head Start programs. Fiscal accountability is first and foremost a priority within our accounting department. Audits conducted within the agency show that we are committed to providing the highest quality service to our children and families with funds provided by the Office of ACF. In addition to the funds provided by the Office of ACF, UCCA continually strives to form fiscal collaborations with other resources to enhance our ability, and provide quality services to our children. During the 2008 – 2009 Fiscal year we applied for several new grants through ACF and other agencies. We were awarded a Program Improvement grant which will allow us to purchase new buses as well as make some major repairs to our facilities. We also were approved for an Early Head Start expansion that will allow us to serve an additional 90 infants and toddlers.

Monitoring Program Quality - the Continuous Improvement Cycle

High-quality education depends on a continuous improvement cycle. This cycle consists of gathering and analyzing evidence about program progress, making plans for improvement, and implementing those plans. The process then begins again with another assessment of each program component. UCCA uses this continuous improvement cycle by measuring overall growth toward achieving full enrollment in our program that will allow children in Union, Anson and Richmond counties school districts to enter kindergarten with the skills necessary to succeed in school and in life. UCCA does this by using our yearly self-assessment and measuring progress within our agency. We also monitor program quality by analyzing and planning, professional development, and technical assistance to our staff, children and families monthly.

Measuring and Assessing Progress, Analyzing and Planning

Managers, content area specialist and site managers measure and assess progress of continued quality improvement by conducting classroom observations in all classrooms continuously to measure progress in improving program quality by using the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) and Infant Toddlers Environmental Rating Scale-revised (ITERS-R) which is designed to assess programs for children of preschool through kindergarten age, 2½ through 5., and center-based child care programs for infants and toddlers up to 30 months of age. Classroom teachers also have support by using PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) a social and emotional learning curriculum for children in grades K-6, and the Brigance testing system which is comprehensive and an on-going assessment, record-keeping and instructional planning system for skills from birth through five. UCCA has also initiated I Am Moving, I Am Learning curriculum in our Head Start/Early Head Start classrooms which reinforces the importance of the mind-body connection and the relationship between physical fitness and early learning. The project provides us with strategies and resources for infusing quality physical movement and healthy nutrition choices within our familiar curriculum approaches and daily classroom routines. The research-based project is designed to support implementation of the Head Start Performance Standards and Child Outcomes Framework by enhancing existing classroom practices

Findings are reported yearly and have shown that throughout the years of the UCCA, Inc Head Start/Early Head Start program, overall quality has increased. UCCA, Inc uses the results gathered to plan future professional development activities that address areas of need for staff, children and families.

(See PIR section B questions 5 thru 6)

Education (Classroom Quality)

UCCA, Head Start director, managers, specialists and site managers conduct regular observations of all Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms with an emphasis on improving classroom quality through the implementation of the Creative Curriculum which is used in all classrooms within the agency. Curriculum implementation tools and structured observation instruments provide the depth of information needed to plan appropriately for children and professional development and technical assistance for staff that will bring about the necessary improvements.

UCCA uses the results of the classroom observations, curriculum reports, and other data to develop detailed professional development plans which are also submitted to the Head Start director and managers on a monthly basis. Teachers use on-going formative child assessments to inform instruction in their classrooms. Teachers then use this information to adapt and individualize interactions for specific children and to adjust activities on a class-wide basis.

Examples of Professional Development and Other Technical Assistance

UCCA uses results of all of the data collection efforts to design effective technical assistance for individual staff and to determine appropriate topics for professional development throughout the agency. The following are some examples of professional development activities from the 2008-2009 program years:

- Regular meetings for early childhood managers, specialist, case managers and site managers that included workshop components on numerous topics, as well as general technical assistance on program administration.
- Through pre-service and In-service trainings UCCA is able to insure that all staff receives the necessary content area trainings. In first aid, CPR, IMIL (I am Moving I am Learning), playground safety, sanitation and asthma basics just to name a few.
- UCCA Head Start managers and content area specialists also attended state wide cluster trainings which keep us abreast of updates in areas such as Family Community Partnerships, ERSEA, Health, Nutrition, Disabilities, Early Head Start, and H1N1 information in addition to Family services and incarcerated mothers.
- Teachers' and assistant teacher's received training on topics such as observation, assessments and lesson planning. In addition trainings were provided on Head Start performance standards to all staff.

- UCCA has also looked at improving adult- child interaction's by sending two Head Start managers and one site manger to CLASS (**Classroom Assessment Scoring System**) training, where all three have become certified. CLASS is a system for observing and assessing the quality of interactions between teachers and students in the classroom. The CLASS measures instructional and social interactions proven to contribute to student's academic achievements and social competencies.
- UCCA took the opportunity to also send three Head Start Managers, one site manager and one teacher to I Am Moving, I Am Learning training which introduces local Head Start programs to the science of obesity prevention, and arms them with state-of-the-art resources and best practices for addressing the growing child obesity epidemic in an intentional and purposeful manner. The participating Head Start staff attended a two and a half day intensive training program, with follow-up support provided by the Region IV Head Start Technical Assistance System
- Professional development training was provided to staff during in-service training to share goals and fine-tune job functions by Western Kentucky TA Network.
- Management and content area specialists have also attended trainings on CACFP (Child Adult Care Food Program), ERSEA (Eligibility Recruitment Selection Enrollment and Attendance), RIF (Reading Is Fundamental) and Fiscal Accountability and Reporting.
- The technology specialist attended a new presentation on using Child Plus software to enhance data collection for the program

Services

Preparing Children for Kindergarten/Family Participation

As children enter the UCCA's, Head Start program a home visit is conducted with the family. During the discussion phase of the visit the staff explains the Head Start program, curriculum and the importance of family involvement. Throughout the families participation with the Head Start program children and families are kept abreast of what is or will be expected of a child as they enter Kindergarten. With the consent of the parent, UCCA, forwards information for children entering kindergarten to the child's new school. In addition, classroom staff begins transition activities early in the year to ease the child's entry into kindergarten. The staff invites Kindergarten teachers and parent representatives from the local school system to come and speak to the families at parent meetings, toward the end of the year. Teaching staff schedule a tour of a local kindergarten class for those Head Start children who will be transitioning. Like Head Start, Early Head Start shares the approach of developing solid learning skills at a young age. These cognitive and behavioral skills play a vital role as young children begin to grow up. With our youngest participants only six weeks old, we are dedicated to extending the UCCA'S brand of

quality educational childcare to infants and toddlers. The Early Head Start program provides quality child care, educational and recreational services to infants and toddlers between the ages of 6 weeks up to 3 years. Our Creative Curriculum tool for Early Head Start includes an outdoor learning environment, dramatic play, music, books, puzzles and art and all the components you would find in a Head Start classroom. These activities help promote interest among are infants and toddlers in the activities planned for them by our teaching staff. We also actively engage parents to participate in their child's education and recognize the importance of regular attendance to the foundation of their child's educational career. Many of the children who complete the Early Head Start program at UCCA transition to our Head Start preschool program. (See PIR section C question 26)

Classroom

In the classroom the teaching staff ensures that the curriculum and the classroom environment are both developmentally and age appropriate in order to meet each child on his/her developmental level. Focus is concentrated on meeting the needs of each child as they move through the developmental continuum. Each teacher establishes a positive relationship with the children in the classroom fostering and mentoring the development of good social and emotional skills. Opportunities to learn academic skills, such as literacy and numeracy skills, are present in all classrooms and assist the child in preparation for advancement to the kindergarten classroom. (See PIR section C question 28 thru 31)

Parent Involvement

UCCA, Inc Head Start fosters the role of parents as the primary educators and nurturers, of their children. Therefore, UCCA works in close partnership with parents to assist them in developing and utilizing individual and family strengths in order to successfully meet personal and family objectives. Parents are encouraged to become involved in all aspects of the program, from participation in children's activities to direct involvement in policy and program decisions. This assists our parents in becoming advocates for their children.

Head Start/early Head Start services are also family-centered, following the tenets that children develop in the context of their family and culture and that parents are respected as the primary educators and nurturers of their children. Head Start offers family members opportunities and support for growth and change, believing that people can identify their own strengths, needs, and interests and are capable of finding solutions.

Family Partnerships

Partnerships between Head Start and its families are important to the overall success of the program. Each center has a case manager or managers that serve to support families as their child's first teacher and to support parents as adult learners. They will make visits and contact parents to discuss goals, strengths, and other supports. Family Service Workers work with community members to locate resources that support family development. Learning opportunities are offered to parents throughout the year based on family interests and performance standards.

(See PIR section C question 40)

Male Involvement

UCCA, Inc Head Start believes that men are an important part of children's lives. We are committed to engaging fathers, grandfathers, and other male figures in meaningful activities that affect their children. Head Start strives for a holistic approach to parenting and parent involvement. We understand the importance of the involvement of fathers/father figures in the lives of their children. The staff at UCCA, encourages father /father figures to be involved in all aspects of our program, including, the classroom, home visits, parent/teacher conferences, parent meetings, parent committees, and Policy Council. During program year 2008-2009 UCCA provided a fatherhood Program to fathers and father figures to enhance male involvement through a small grant we received through North Carolina's Division of Social Services. Due to cuts in state funding this program was discontinued in April, 2009.

(See PIR section C question 43)

IN-KIND DONATIONS

Head Start needs the support of each child's family and members of the community in order to operate each year. The federal grant only funds 80 percent of the Head Start program; the remaining 20 percent is obtained locally through "In-Kind." In-Kind is parent and community participation in the form of donated time, services, or supplies. Families and other community members have multiple opportunities to participate and contribute towards meeting our In-Kind goal. They can:

- Work at home with their child on home activities provided by the center
- Help your child transition at drop off and pick up times
- Attend parent meetings / serve as an officer
- Serve on Policy Council
- Serve on the Health Advisory Committee
- Help with the program Self Assessment
- Serve as a bus aide
- Be a field trip chaperone
- Answer phones or other office duties
- Help with parent information boards
- Help in the kitchen
- Classroom helper
- Other positions needed in the center

(See Volunteer Activity PIR question B 2)

Any person who volunteers on a regular basis (one or more times every week), will be required to have a background screening and a TB test in addition to the background screening.

HEALTH/NUTRITION

Ensuring that children are healthy and well nourished is an important part of the Head Start Program. UCCA has a licensed nutritionist who oversees the planning of menus and nutrition evaluations which are done as children enter the program. The nutritionist also meets with parents of children who may have eating disorders or ongoing health problems as needed. The nutritionist also provides a wide range of topics which are discussed at monthly parent meetings. UCCA has established great working relationships with all three health departments in our

service areas which assist our Health/Nutrition content area specialist with height's and weights. In Union and Anson county's UCCA has been able to provide dental screenings for all of our children at the centers through collaboration with a local dentist. The Health Advisory Committee meets on a quarterly basis to brainstorm and discuss updates in the Health Services content area across each county.

(See Health/Nutrition Report from PIR Section C)

MENTAL HEALTH/DISABILITIES

Children with disabilities are mainstreamed into the program and receive the full range of developmental services. The mental health team works closely with staff and parents to meet the mental health needs of children and families. The following services are available:

Screening:

A social-emotional screening tool (Ages and Stages, Brigance) is completed for each child within 45 days of enrollment.

(See PIR Section C Questions 28 and 29)

Observation/Consultation:

With parental/guardian permission, individual child observations are done by a Head Start employed mental health professional when there are mental health concerns. Consultation is available to parents, teachers, family advocates, and any other staff working with children.

The mental health team also does classroom-wide observation and consultation. This provides additional screening and identification of children with mental health needs. Additionally, teachers receive support and strategies on how to address individual and classroom-wide mental health issues.

Collaboration:

The collaboration team meets regularly to insure children with mental health and/or behavioral issues are addressed in a concise and professional manner. The team includes specialists/consultants in the areas of mental health, education, disabilities, and early intervention. Teaching staff and/or managers attend to discuss specific children.

Referral:

The mental health team provides referrals to children and families in need of counseling. Our collaborating agencies have experience with the mental health needs of young children and their families

(See Mental Health/ Disabilities Report from PIR Section C Questions 20 thru 25)

Next Year ...

The Continuous Improvement Cycle of Union County Community Action, Inc guides much of the work for the Head Start/Early Head Start Early Childhood Education program. This is based on data collected from our self assessment and community assessment. Union County Community Action is looking ahead to the following goals for 2009-2010:

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Obtain new buses to insure we provide safe, efficient and high quality transportation for the children we serve.

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Early Head Start expansion, to increase services for pregnant women and children in all three counties.

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Improve teacher-child interactions. (2 Managers and 1 site manager attended CLASS training and became certified).

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Expand and fine-tune early childhood assessment practices.

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Expand and reach more rural areas where services are desperately needed by providing home-based of Early Head Start program option for families who qualify.

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Increase inclusion of children with disabilities and improve inclusion practices.

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Improve the use of the Preschool Intervention and Referral teams in UCCA, Inc school districts.

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Continue to help to lower the childhood obesity rate by continuing to implement IMIL. (5 staff persons have become official trainers for I am Moving I am Learning).

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Improve transition from Preschool to kindergarten by planning for kindergarten transition, while including regulations, guidelines and best practices of all agencies involved.