

Executive Summary

Wisconsin Head Start State Collaboration Office Needs Assessment Report: 2008-2009 Survey Results

The purpose of the Wisconsin Head Start State Collaboration Office (WHSSCO) is “to facilitate collaboration among Head Start agencies (including Early Head Start agencies) and entities that carry out activities designed to benefit low-income children from birth to school entry, and their families.”¹ This work is accomplished through building connections between Head Start² and a variety of key partners, as well as through strategic involvement in state planning efforts. The WHSSCO and its Advisory Committee works closely with the Wisconsin Head Start Association (WHSA) as well as a variety of state departments, associations, organizations, and individuals in order to enhance the ability of Wisconsin’s Head Start children to enter school healthy and ready to learn.

In order to fulfill federal requirements, the WHSSCO must perform an annual assessment of Head Start and Early Head Start program needs related to collaboration with community agencies³. The overall purpose of conducting this needs assessment report is to assist grantees in identifying challenges they may be experiencing in building successful partnerships to support the delivery of quality education and comprehensive services to children and families. Results of this needs assessment will inform the activities of the annually-revised strategic plan for the WHSSCO⁴ as well as a variety of other state-level initiatives.

Methodology & Survey Instrument

Through a collaborative effort with the WHSSCO Collaboration Advisory Committee, the WHSSCO, housed in the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, and the Wisconsin Head Start Association (WHSA) began drafting the needs assessment in August, 2008. The planners adapted a national template which was developed by a national work group of HSSCO directors for use with Wisconsin Head Start and Early

¹ Head Start Act of 2007, U.S.C. 9837b Sec. 642B(a)(2)(A).

² Head Start is meant to include all Wisconsin grantees – namely, Head Start, Early Head Start, Tribal, and Migrant/ Seasonal Head Start grantees.

³ Head Start Act of 2007, 42 U.S.C. 9837b Sec. 642B(a)(4)(A)(i-ii).

⁴ Head Start Act of 2007, 42 U.S.C. 9837b Sec. 642B(a)(4)(B).

Head Start grantees. The majority of items of the HSSCO template were adopted with minimal modification. Wisconsin focused the needs assessment survey items on the eight federal priority areas, as well as two additional areas important in Wisconsin:

1. Health Services
2. Services for Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness
3. Family and Child Assistance (Welfare)
4. Child Care
5. Family Literacy
6. Services for Children with Disabilities
7. Community Services
8. Education (4K Partnerships with Local Education Agencies)
9. Head Start Transition and Alignment with K-12
10. Professional Development

For each of the ten priority areas, respondents answered three sets of questions. The first set asked respondents to rate the extent of their involvement with various service providers/organizations over the past 12 months:

- *No Working Relationship*: You have little or no contact with each other (i.e.; you do not: make/receive referrals, work together on projects/activities, share information, etc.)
- *Cooperation*: You exchange information. This includes making and receiving referrals, even when you serve the same families.
- *Coordination*: You work together on projects or activities. Examples: parents from the service providers' agency are invited to your parent education night; the service provider offers health screenings for the children at your site.
- *Collaboration*: You share resources and/or may even have written agreements. Examples: co-funded staff or building costs; joint grant funding for a new initiative; an active MOU on transition, etc.
- *Not Applicable*: This category does not apply to your program.
- *Not Available*: This category does not exist in my service area.

The second set asked respondents to indicate the level of difficulty their program had had engaging in each of a variety of activities and partnerships within the past 12 months. The following scale of difficulty was provided:

- Not at All Difficult
- Somewhat Difficult
- Difficult
- Extremely Difficult
- Not Applicable
- Not Available

Finally, each priority area included three open-ended questions which provided respondents with the opportunity to document any remaining challenges; to document what is working well in their program; and to address the cultural and linguistic appropriateness of services to the children and families they serve.

Wisconsin chose to use a web-based online survey method of distributing, collecting and analyzing the needs assessment data because of the efficiency and ease of data analysis. Survey Monkey.com⁵ was the online tool utilized, and a web link to the survey was sent to all Wisconsin Head Start programs via email communication.

Survey Results

A detailed review and analysis of the data responses for each priority area is presented in ten separate sections of the full report, along with highlights for each priority area. Each section includes:

Quantitative tables charting:

1. **Extent of involvement** with providers/organizations
2. **Level of difficulty** with tasks/activities

Qualitative themes and percentages for open -ended responses:

3. **Cultural and linguistic appropriateness** of services
4. **Other issues** related to providing services
5. Efforts that are **working well** to address the needs of children and families

Summary of the quantitative and qualitative results:

6. **Highlights** of priority area

This Executive Summary, on the other hand, focuses on the highlights in each priority area and provides a summary of the findings, trends, and recommendations.

Highlights of Quantitative and Qualitative Needs Assessment Results

Priority 1: Health Services in Wisconsin

The greatest level of involvement with service providers/organizations was found in collaborative relationships with:

- Public health services (55%)

⁵ <http://www.surveymonkey.com/>

- WIC (53%)
- Other nutrition services (47%)

No working relationship was reported with:

- Parent health education providers (25%)

The greatest program strengths reported include:

- Strong relationships with community partners (39%)
- Interagency agreements/contracts with providers (26%)

In addition, respondents reported it was *not at all difficult* to work with the following activities and partnerships:

- Linking children to medical homes (63%)
- Getting children and families enrolled in Badger Care Plus (53%)
- Exchanging information on roles and resources with medical, dental, and other providers/organizations regarding health care (59%)
- Getting full representation and active commitment on your Health Advisory Committee (53%)

Reported challenges included:

- Obtaining comprehensive oral health care (66%)
- Linking children to dental homes that serve young children (84%)

Clarifying Comments:

- The high levels of collaboration reported with WIC and Public Health Services reflect the fact that these are long-standing, publicly funded resources that partner with Head Start programs to help meet the federal health performance standards in a timely manner. In addition, the federal MOU between Head Start and WIC has strengthened the development of these partnerships.
- Reported extreme difficulty in linking children to dental homes and obtaining comprehensive oral health care reflects the ongoing statewide shortage of dental service providers willing to work with Medicare/Medicaid clients.
- Mental health services for young children are an emerging priority in Wisconsin. Not surprisingly, results of this survey indicate that obtaining mental health screening is less difficult than obtaining local mental health treatment for young children.

Priority 2: Services for Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness in Wisconsin

Greatest level of involvement with service provider/organizations:

- Majority of respondents have a *cooperative* relationship with services to children and families experiencing homelessness.

The greatest program strengths reported include:

- Strong relationships with community partners (44%)
- Knowledgeable and compassionate staff provides services (36%)
- Bilingual/bicultural staff provides services (31%)

In addition, respondents reported it was *not at all difficult* to work with the following activities and partnerships:

- Allowing families of homeless children to enroll in and attend Head Start while required documents are obtained within a reasonable time frame (71%)
- Implementing policies and procedures to ensure that homeless children are identified and prioritized for enrollment (68%)

Reported challenges included:

- Lack of transportation between shelter and services (26%)

Clarifying Comments:

- Results reflect the concentrated, collaborative efforts involving the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WDPI) representatives for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (EHCY, the HSSCO, and the Wisconsin Head Start Association. EHCY representatives also serve on the WHSSCO Advisory Committee.
- Provisions for meeting applicable McKinney-Vento requirements were written into the Head Start Act of 2007, which has focused greater attention on this issue.
- Coordination of transportation between programs and shelters may reflect shelter locations outside of a Head Start program's service area or distance from the nearest center; in addition, community partners may have limited capacity to assist with transporting children (i.e., public schools and/or child care centers)

Priority 3: Family and Child Assistance (Welfare) in Wisconsin

Greatest level of involvement with service providers/organizations:

- The majority of respondents have a *cooperative* relationship with welfare services
- 42% of respondents reported a *collaborative* relationship with Community Action Agencies/Programs⁶.

No working relationship was reported with:

⁶ Eight of the 38 Wisconsin Head Start grantees (21%) are administered by Community Action Agencies. Since there are a total of 16 CAA's in the state, it can also be said that 50% of the state's CAAs are Head Start grantees.

- Workforce development boards (36%)

The greatest program strengths reported include:

- Strong relationships with community partners (60%)

In addition, respondents reported it was *not at all difficult* to work with the following activities and partnerships:

- Implementing policies and procedures to ensure that children in the child welfare system are prioritized for enrollment (74%)
- Exchanging information on roles and resources with other service providers regarding family and child assistance (welfare) services (55%)
- Working together to target recruitment to families receiving W-2, food stamps, employment and training, and related support services (47%)

Reported challenges included:

- Lack of affordable child care and resources (60%)
- Getting involved in state level planning and policy development (48% difficult/extremely difficult)

Clarifying Comments:

- As mandated reporters, all Head Start programs are engaged with child protective service agencies (hence, no respondent reported having no working relationship with CPS agencies). Similarly, all Head Start programs work with county human services agencies due to income levels of families receiving services (again, no respondents reported having no working relationship with county human service agencies).
- Efforts have been made this year to engage state representatives of foster/adoptive care in planning meetings and presentations to Head Start programs. This is reflected in the high level of cooperative involvement selected by 73% of Head Start respondents. Note: This is also a priority area in the Governor's Kids First Initiative⁷.
- When families feel the pressure of a slowing economy, children suffer. Historically, when the economy shifts downward, there has been a corresponding increase in child abuse and neglect. Childhelp, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention and treatment of child abuse, reports an eight to 10 percent increase in calls to child abuse hotlines since July 2008⁸.
- Children who fall into poverty during a recession fare worse far into adulthood than their peers who avoided it altogether. Specifically, children who are forced into poverty earn less, achieve lower levels of education, and are less likely to be gainfully employed over their lifetimes than those who

⁷ Doyle, J. (2004). *KidsFirst: The Governor's Plan to Invest in Wisconsin's Future*. WDOA, Madison, WI.

⁸ W. C. Bell, *End Child Poverty, Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity*, May 2009.

avoided poverty. In addition, these children are more likely to be in poor health as adults⁹.

Priority 4: Child Care in Wisconsin

Greatest level of involvement with service provider/organizations:

- Majority of respondents have a *cooperative* relationship with child care services

No working relationship was reported with:

- State agency for Child Care Development Block Grant (33%)

The greatest program strengths reported include:

- Head Start agencies that are licensed child care providers (67%)
- Strong working relationships and/or collaboration with community partners (40%)

Reported challenges included:

- Securing adequate resources to serve all children in the Head Start program in need of child care (53% difficult/extremely difficult)
- Barriers that persist with providing full working-day child care services:
 - Lack of access to additional funding sources (90%)
 - Cost to provide full working-day services is too great (62%)
 - Parents' lack of transportation options (59%)
 - Parent/program scheduling conflicts (59%)
 - Staffing (55%)
 - Inability to provide full-day, full-year Head Start program (52%)

Clarifying Comments:

- The fact that the most difficult areas for Head Start agencies are to align policies and practices with other child care providers (40%) and to secure adequate resources to serve all children in the Head Start program in need of child care (33%) may reflect the difficulty or availability of child care subsidy funds to support full-day services.
- In rural communities in Wisconsin the supply of regulated child care is disproportionately met through family child care providers. The ratios, daily routines, and transportation policies of regulated family child care providers make formal partnerships to provide full working-day-child care difficult.

⁹ M. Linden, *Turning Point: The Long Term Effects of Recession-Induced Child Poverty*, First Focus, May 2009.

- Spanish-speaking and Hmong-speaking regulated child care providers tend toward family rather than group child care providers in both urban and rural communities. While the same structural barriers exist for non-English speaking families as with other family providers in partnering with Head Start programs, the results are even more challenging for non-English speaking families who want their children to have access to child care services in their primary language.

Priority 5: Family Literacy Services in Wisconsin

The greatest level of involvement with service providers/organizations was found in collaborative relationships with:

- Public/private sources that receive book donations or funding for books (43%)
- Reading Readiness programs (30%)

No working relationship was reported with:

- School libraries (43%)
- Museums (30%)

The greatest program strengths reported include:

- Literacy activities are provided and encouraged (60%)

In addition, respondents reported it was *not at all difficult* to work with the following activities and partnerships:

- Incorporating family literacy into Head Start program policies and practices (75%)
- Exchanging information with other providers/organizations regarding roles and resources related to family literacy (68%)
- Establishing linkages/partnerships with literacy program providers (54%)

Reported challenges included:

- Limited resource to provide services (43%)

Clarifying Comments:

- Collaboration with private/public sources at 43% reflects the successful grant writing and effective brokering by Head Start grantees for literacy resources.
- The fact that 75% of respondents reported it *not at all difficult* to incorporate family literacy into program policies and practices may be reflect the ACF/OHS federal priority and regional goal to assure that Head Start programs be trained in SPARC (Strengthening Partnerships and Resources in Communities), a family literacy model.

- Preservation of native tribal languages are critical to Wisconsin's Tribal program cultural heritage.

Priority 6: Services for Children with Disabilities in Wisconsin

The greatest level of involvement with service providers/organizations was found in collaborative relationships with:

- Local public school special education services (82%)
- Birth to Three services (68%)
- Program Support Teachers (50%)
- State-funded programs for children with disabilities and their families (36%)

The greatest program strengths reported include:

- Strong relationships with community partners (56%)

In addition, respondents reported it was *not at all difficult* to work with the following activities and partnerships:

- Having staff attend IFSP or IEP meetings (77%)
- Referral for early childhood special education services to be provided in the Head Start program (68%)
- Coordinating services with Birth to Three providers (68%)
- Establishing local MOUs (61%)
- Coordinating services with early childhood special education providers (61%)
- Implementing local MOUs (57%)
- Sharing information on children (assessments, outcomes, etc.) with other providers/organizations regarding services for children with disabilities and their families (57%)
- Obtaining timely evaluations of children (57%)
- Referral for Birth to Three services to be provided in the Head Start program (54%)
- Providing information and education related to the cultural/spiritual beliefs of families of a child with disabilities (50%)

Reported challenges included:

- Limited resources (31%)

Clarifying Comments:

The high level of collaboration and lack of difficulty working together among Head Start, special education, and Birth to Three partners may be related to several factors:

- All of these partners have legal requirements to provide services to children with disabilities. While Head Start Performance Standards address Head Start's responsibilities, federal and state laws dictate school and county

responsibilities. Support for this partnership is also provided by disability coordinators in local Head Start programs and by CESA program support teachers.

- For over twenty years, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and Head Start technical assistance systems have worked to build partnerships among local schools and Head Start grantees to assure children with disabilities receive services as appropriate to their needs. DPI also utilizes IDEA preschool discretionary grants to promote this relationship.
- A state level MOU supports these local partnerships, as do Head Start regulations that require Head Start programs to have local agreements with schools related to services to children with disabilities.

Priority 7: Community Services in Wisconsin

The greatest level of involvement with service providers/organizations was found in collaborative relationships with:

- Local agencies providing child abuse/neglect prevention services (36%)
- Other public resources geared toward prevention/intervention (39%)

The greatest program strengths reported include:

- Strong relationships with community partners (75%)

In addition, respondents reported it was *not at all difficult* to work with the following activities and partnerships:

- Exchanging information on roles and resources with other providers/organizations regarding community service (75%)
- Establishing linkages/partnerships with local agencies providing food assistance services (75%)
- Obtaining in-kind community services for the children/families in the Head Start program (64%)
- Establishing linkages/partnerships with local agencies providing job education/training services (64%)
- Partnering with other service providers on outreach activities for eligible families (61%)
- Establishing linkages/partnerships with community agencies or local public resources regarding prevention/treatment services (57%)
- Sharing information on children/families served jointly by Head Start and other agencies regarding prevention/treatment services (57%)

Reported challenges included:

- Limited resources and services (44%)
- Limited bilingual bicultural services (44%)

Clarifying Comments:

- The fact that half of all respondents reported cooperation with law enforcement agencies reflects the growing interest by law enforcement in championing increased investments in early childhood (e.g. Fight Crime, Invest in Kids), as well as the increased interest in neighborhood-based law enforcement services.
- The finding that 39% of respondents reported a collaborative relationship with family resource centers reflects the depth of resources allocated by Head Start programs to promote healthy family development.
- The fact that 29% of respondents reported no working relationship with paternity registration agencies reflects the reality that paternity establishment is administered at the state level. Note: At the county level, it is a financial factor considered in determining TANF eligibility.
- Child support services, while also state- administered, are operated locally by counties (where a number of child support agencies tend to be co-located within county human service facilities).
- Head Start programs are required to operate on 80% federal funding and a 20% community match. Without outside funding and in-kind support, Head Start programs, therefore, cannot fulfill these requirements for community support.

Priority 8: Education: 4K Partnerships with Local Education Agencies in Wisconsin

The greatest level of involvement with service providers/organizations was found in collaborative relationships with:

- Establishing MOUs with the local entity responsible for managing publicly funded 4K (32%)

The greatest program strengths reported include:

- One in eight participants reported development of MOUs with local school districts offering 4K as being at the level of collaboration.
- Strong relationships between each agency's staff (40%)
- Collaborative services and sharing resources (33%)

In addition, respondents reported it was *not at all difficult* to work with the following activities and partnerships:

- Selection priorities for eligible children to be served by programs (60.0%)
- Service areas (60.0%)
- Public information dissemination and access to programs for families contacting the Head Start program or any of the preschool programs (53.8%)
- Communications and parent outreach for smooth transitions to kindergarten as required in paragraphs 3 and 6 of section 642(a) of the Head Start Act of 2007 (48.0%)

Reported challenges included:

- LEA's differing levels of commitment to establish and implement MOUs. (64%).
- Provision of additional services to meet the needs of working parents (32%)

Clarifying Comments:

- Although the federal requirement for MOUs between Head Start and local school districts offering 4K is new one (with the first agreements due in December 2008), one-third of the programs defined their involvement with 4K as collaborative. Since 4K is not offered in every school district, however, it is not surprising that 7% of respondents reported no working relationship.
- Despite the newness of the MOU requirement, respondents reported relative ease of meeting this requirement.

Priority 9: Head Start Transition and Alignment with K-12 in Wisconsin

The greatest level of involvement with service providers/organizations was found in collaborative relationships with:

- Relationship with LEAs regarding transitioning from Head Start to kindergarten (43%).

The greatest program strengths reported include:

- Strong relationships and collaboration among community partners (45%)

In addition, respondents reported it was *not at all difficult* to work with the following activities and partnerships:

- Aligning Head Start curricula with Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) (82)%
- Coordination with LEAs to implement systematic procedures for transferring Head Start program records to school (59%)
- Partnering with LEAs and parents to assist individual children/families to transition to school, including review of portfolio/records (48%)
- Exchanging information with LEAs on roles, resources, and regulations (48%)

Reported challenges included:

- Transitions between programs are challenging (30%)

In addition, tasks reported as being *most difficult* included joint staff training (42%) and aligning curricula and assessment practices (35%).

Clarifying Comments:

- LEA and Head Start relationships supporting transition of Head Start children into kindergarten are reported as collaborative by 43% of respondents, reflecting the importance of this process in the Head Start Performance Standards.

- Since the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) were based in part on the Head Start Performance Standards, it is not surprising that 82% of respondents find no difficulty aligning the two, and that no respondent reported this task to be extremely difficult.

Priority 10: Professional Development in Wisconsin

The greatest level of involvement with service providers/organizations was found in collaborative relationships with:

- Office of Head Start T and TA Network (57%)
- Other TA support (i.e. R&R network, regional coaches) (39%)
- Wisconsin Head Start Association (44%)

No working relationship was reported with:

- On-line course/programs (40%)

The greatest program strengths reported include:

- Professional development focused on staff needs (35%)
- Collaboration with technical and tribal colleges to offer courses (35%)

In addition, respondents reported it was *not at all difficult* to work with the following activities and partnerships:

- Accessing early childhood education degree programs in the community (52%)

Reported challenges included:

- Limited resources/services and funding (57%)
- Limited bilingual professional development opportunities (31%)

Clarifying Comments:

- Although the Office of Head Start requires Head Start programs to work with the Head Start Training and Technical Assistance network, the high level of collaboration (57%) with Head Start T&TA consultants is remarkable considering the frequency and extent of recent changes in this system.
- The fact that 40% of respondents reported no working relationship with online classes reflects the current shortage of online options in early childhood education degree programs.
- The need for additional bilingual professional development opportunities is also reflected by this data.

Trends and Recommendations

Trends regarding level of involvement Head Start agencies have with providers/organizations

The greatest level of involvement is a **collaborative relationship**, in which resources are shared and there may be formal, written agreements (e.g. co-funded staff or building costs; joint funding for a new initiative; an active MOU on transition, etc.). In seven of

the ten priority areas at least one third of Head Start grantees have collaborative relationships with providers/organizations.

Providers/organizations with which at least one-third of respondents indicated that their Head Start agencies have a collaborative relationship		
% of Respondents	Provider/Organization	Priority Area
82%	A. Local public school special education services	Children with Disabilities and Their Families
68%	B. Birth to three services	Children with Disabilities and Their Families
57%	E. Office of Head Start T & TA Network	Professional Development
53%	F. WIC (Women, Infants, Children)	Health Services
50%	H. Program support teacher (CESAs and school districts)	Children with Disabilities and Their Families
47%	G. Other nutrition services (extension programs, university projects, etc)	Health Services
44%	J. Wisconsin Head Start Association	Professional Development
43%	A. Relationship with LEAs regarding transition from Head Start to Kindergarten	Education – Head Start Transition and Alignment with K-12
43%	I. Public/private sources that provide book donations or funding for books	Family Literacy Services
42%	G. Community Action Agencies/Programs	Family/Child Assistance (Welfare)
39%	F. Other T & TA networks (regional, state)	Professional Development
39%	J. Other public (city, county, state) resources geared toward prevention/intervention (e.g. CAP agencies, Family Resource Centers, etc.)	Community Services
36%	C. State-funded programs for children with disabilities and their families (i.e. developmental services agencies, etc.)	Children with Disabilities and Their Families
36%	D. Local agencies providing child abuse/neglect prevention services	Community Services

At least one-third of the respondents have **no working relationship** with providers in only three priority areas:

- Family Literacy Services: School libraries (43%)
- Professional Development: On-line courses/programs (39%)
- Family/Child Assistance (Welfare): Workforce development boards (36%)

Trends regarding level of difficulty with tasks involving the content areas

There are six priority areas in which the at least one third of respondents indicated that an activity or task has been **difficult or extremely difficult**:

Tasks (among all the priority areas) that at least one-third of respondents indicated are difficult or extremely difficult .		
% of Respondents	Provider/Organization	Key Activity Area
72%	H. Linking children to dental homes that serve young children	Health Services
66%	K: Obtaining comprehensive oral health care	Health Services
53%	F. Securing adequate resources to serve all children in your program in need of child care	Child Care
45%	F. Workforce development boards	Family/Child Assistance (Welfare)
44%	G. Finding local mental health treatment for children	Health Services
44%	L. Assisting families to get transportation to appointments	Health Services
43%	E. Aligning policies and practices with other child care service providers	Child Care
42%	P. Organizing and participating in joint training, including transition-related training for school staff and Head Start staff	Head Start Transition and Alignment with K-12
39%	I. Assisting families in accessing high-quality child care services (i.e. rural versus urban)	Child Care
36%	G. Provision of additional services to meet the needs of working parents, as applicable	Education – 4K Partnerships with LEAs
34%	J. Assisting parents to communicate effectively with medical/dental providers	Health Services
33%	H. Bilingual professional development opportunities	Professional Development

Trends regarding the cultural and linguistically appropriateness of services in Wisconsin Head Start programs

Across the ten priority areas, respondents reported varying degrees of difficulty in providing bilingual and bicultural services. Many rural communities have little exposure to other cultures and languages, with limited or no access to bilingual/bicultural services. In other areas of the state, the majority of family services staff are bilingual, there are bilingual counselors in schools, and bilingual child welfare workers. In addition to the challenges of providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services to children and families, there is also a need for more bilingual trainers, interpreters, and culturally and linguistically appropriate degree programs for Head Start staff.

Trends regarding other issues for providing services to children and families in Wisconsin Head Start Program:

Respondents' answers to other issues for providing services presented several key themes including:

- Limited bilingual/bicultural services available
- Limited resources to provide services
- Lack of affordable child care or securing adequate resources to serve all children in need of child care
- Provision of additional services to meet the needs of working parents

Trends regarding what is working well for providing services to children and families in Wisconsin Head Start programs.

Respondents' answers to what is working well for providing services presented several key themes including:

- Strong collaborative relationships with community partners
- Knowledgeable and compassionate staff working together to provide services
- Collaborative services and sharing resources
- Head Start agencies that are licensed child care providers
- Literacy activities are provided and encouraged
- Collaborative development of MOUs with local school districts offering 4K

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the WHSSCO Needs Assessment. Note that “Head Start” is meant to include all Wisconsin grantees – Head Start, Early Head Start, Tribal, and Migrant/Seasonal Head Start.

- Facilitate technical assistance and professional development to increase statewide access to oral health and prevention services and to mental health treatment services for young children.
- Support the involvement of Head Start at the community, regional, and state levels in the Strengthening Families initiative linking child abuse and prevention with early childhood programs and services.
- Identify resources and best practices to support Head Start programs in reducing the barriers to providing full working-day child care services for all children in need of child care.
- Provide technical assistance and professional development to support Head Start partnerships with local family literacy programs and services, including Title I, libraries (public and school), museums, etc.
- Facilitate partnerships between Head Start programs and local school districts in support of community approaches to serving 4-year-olds.
- Support the organization of joint training and cross-system professional development opportunities for Head Start and local school district staff, as well as other providers of early childhood comprehensive services.
- Support the development of online courses and degree programs for Head Start staff, the transfer of credits between institutions of higher education, strategies to increase staff release time to attend professional development, and bilingual professional development opportunities.
- Identify additional opportunities for Head Start representatives to serve on policy/planning committees that address early childhood issues at the community, regional, and state levels.

Future Considerations for the Wisconsin Head Start State Collaboration Office

The Wisconsin HSSCO Director and the Executive Director of WHSA worked closely to plan and implement the Wisconsin Head Start Needs Assessment data collection process. This partnership continued through the data analysis process as both offices worked with the author to summarize and interpret the findings to produce this report.

The Wisconsin Needs Assessment results provide many recommendations and considerations for Head Start grantees in Wisconsin. Some of the activities that can address the report findings and recommendations will be provided by the Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Network, the WHSA, the State Collaboration Office, and other partners.

Below are some goals that the WHSSCO is considering for inclusion in the next five-year strategic plan.

- Goal 1** Support the work of the Governor’s Early Childhood Advisory Council in development of a state-wide, comprehensive early childhood system.

- Goal 2** Facilitate and strengthen working relationships among Head Start and key partners in order to better meet the needs of low-income children and families.

- Goal 3** Strengthen linkages among local Head Start programs and state initiatives/policies.

- Goal 4** Support the creation of a comprehensive, coordinated state-wide system of early childhood professional development, including online and culturally/linguistically appropriate options.

- Goal 5** Work with a team of community, state, and national partners to increase access to comprehensive oral health services by Head Start children and families.