

Rocky Mountain Development Council, Inc.
Head Start Program
Annual Report to the Public
Program Year September 12, 2008 through May 22, 2009

(RMDC Head Start's 90 day closeout report was due to the Head Start Regional Office July 31, 2009. Please note that Head Start's grant year is May 1 through April 30. The program data in this report follows the Program Year listed above and will be referred to as PY09. The financial data in this report follows the grant year which will be referred to as GY09.)

RMDC Head Start Vision Statement

*To be a leading child and family development center
working with Head Start families and community partners
in Lewis and Clark, Broadwater, and Jefferson counties,
to promote healthy life choices
and develop skills necessary for academic and social success.*

RMDC Head Start Mission Statement

*To be a supportive and safe learning environment for children and families
by enhancing their sense of belonging and self worth
while encouraging them to reach their highest potential.*

Introduction

Head Start is a comprehensive early childhood development program that serves children ages three and four and their families. Ninety percent of all the children who attend Head Start must meet income guidelines that are provided yearly to programs by the Administration for Children and Families.

Rocky Mountain Development Council, Inc. (RMDC) is the grantee agency for the Head Start Program that currently serves Helena and East Helena in Lewis & Clark County, Townsend in Broadwater County, and Whitehall in Jefferson County. RMDC has been the grantee agency for the Head Start Program in the tri-county area since 1967. RMDC Head Start is funded to serve 248 children and must maintain this funded enrollment in accordance with federal regulations; 16 children are funded to be served in Broadwater County, 16 in Jefferson County, and 216 in Lewis and Clark County. (The Program is not to over-enroll its funded number; this means there should not be more than 248 children enrolled in the Program on any given day.)

Head Start must submit its grant application each year to the Regional Office in Denver. The grant is due 90 days prior to the beginning of the new grant year (GY) so for RMDC Head Start that means our grant must be in Denver by the end of January of each year. The grant is written in compliance with instructions from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

Explanation of Finances

Public Funds: Head Start is a federally funded program receiving its federal dollars via the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start (OHS). It is federal tax dollars that provide the Head Start program. The federal funding comes to the local grantee and does not come through the State. The federal money the program receives is prescribed as is the number of children to serve. In Grant Year (GY) May 1, 2008 through April 30, 2009, RMDC Head Start received (and budgeted) \$1,882,027 in continuation grant funds to provide Head Start services to 248 children. This grant amount is the same amount as the previous year.

Head Start is allowed to seek reimbursement from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) via the State's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) for meals served to Head Start children. For GY09, RMDC Head Start budgeted \$100,000 in reimbursement monies but actually received \$104,844.01 from

CACFP. This PY is the second year we saw an increase in revenue due to a change in USDA policy allowing ALL children enrolled in Head Start to be categorized as “free” which then provides the highest level of meal reimbursement to the program. RMDC Head Start remains dependent on USDA (CACFP) funds to provide high quality nutrition to its children.

RMDC Head Start also has the ability to access other sources of “public” revenue. Because all eight Head Start sites are licensed under the State of Montana Quality Assurance Bureau, Child Care Licensing, the Program can seek childcare reimbursement fees through the Best Beginnings Scholarship Program. Parents actually must do the paperwork to qualify for the Best Beginnings Program; they must be working and meet income guidelines. If parents qualify, and their child is enrolled in RMDC Head Start, then the Program can “bill” Best Beginnings for the time the child is in Head Start. In this past Program Year we budgeted an anticipated \$40,000 in childcare fee revenue and actually received \$43,352.50. Again, we are truly dependent on this additional source of funding to operate our Head Start Program.

Rocky Mountain Development Council, Inc. receives a Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) via the State Department of Commerce for approximately \$200,000 each year. For the past three years Head Start received CSBG monies to close out its grant because Head Start revenue didn’t cover program costs. (Head Start has been flat-funded since 2002. The local Program made substantial changes to reduce costs such as lessening the number of days of operation, decreasing the availability of bus transportation to families, and reducing a classroom.) For GY09, CSBG funds in the amount of \$72,212 were budgeted and \$25,770.34 was actually required at grant year end. (For GY08, CSBG funds in the amount of \$54,063 were budgeted and \$47,792.42 was actually required at grant year end.)

Private Funds: RMDC Head Start has several sources of private funding to supplement its public money. One source is United Way and RMDC Head Start is very proud to be a United Way agency. In GY09 United Way funds were budgeted at \$3,609.20 and by the end of the GY we had actually received \$3,995.51. United Way funds during GY09 were used to support Creative Curriculum classroom materials.

Other sources of private funds are:

- “Pay for Ride” (East Helena): The East Helena Public Schools (EHPS) provides a bus for Head Start (which is then sub-leased to the City of Helena, our transportation contractor). There are many younger children who live *within* the three (3) mile limit in the catchments area EHPS serves. These children are not eligible for school transportation and so may ride the bus at a monthly cost to their family. In GY09 we budgeted \$5,000 of revenue for the “Pay to Ride” service and actually received \$5,965.25.
- Cash Donations: Cash donations for GY09 were budgeted at \$150 based on the previous year’s information. The Program recorded \$150 in un-restricted cash donations in GY09.
- Use of Head Start Space:
 - Townsend – RMDC Head Start entered into an agreement with Townsend Public Schools to lease its Head Start space to the School during the afternoons for their special education preschool. The cost was determined to be half of the costs of operating the building which amounted to \$600 per month; therefore Head Start garnered \$6,000 from the arrangement. It was agreed by both parties to extend the agreement for another year and that was the plan heading into Program Year 10.
 - Helena – Space at Head Start’s Neighborhood Center site is often used by others for meetings and/or childcare. The Program did not budget any amount in this category but received \$4,140 during last PY.
- Restricted Private Funds:
 - Montana Community Foundation – this restricted fund is to be used for unmet medical and dental needs of Head Start children, to support the Motherread/Fatheread classes for Head Start families, and to send home a new book with each enrolled child each month. This grant was given to Head Start in 2006 and has carried over as a restricted fund since that time. In GY09 there remained \$3,704.04 in the MCF restricted fund. The fund started PY09 with \$8,470.43; this meant that \$4,766.39 had been spent from this restricted account in PY09 on the restricted areas stated above.

- VISTA – this restricted fund is used to support the RMDC Head Start Program’s VISTA volunteer. This restricted fund was set up using Eggstravaganza fundraising monies. (VISTA cannot be supported with the Head Start Program’s federal dollars.)
- A local group, Friends of Head Start, coordinated and carried out the annual RMDC Head Start fundraiser, Extravaganza – formerly called “Eggstravaganza”. The Friends of Head Start committed \$10,000 to the Program for the following school year to help purchase Creative Curriculum classroom supplies and laptops for teachers to use for CreativeCurriculum.net, a web-based tracking system for observation and assessment documentation on children enrolled in their classroom. The Friends of Head Start also committed to paying the cost of cc.net after the first year which will be approximately \$4,500.

Non-Federal Share (or as we also call it, “In-kind”): For every dollar Head Start spends it must have a match of 25 cents – this includes every public dollar, every private dollar, and every restricted dollar.) In GY09 we set a budget of \$524,476 in our “In-kind” category and actually reported \$600,439.72 in “In-kind” dollars at the end of GY09. Non-Federal Share or “In-kind” is garnered from donations of time, space, supplies, mileage, etc. and is given an assigned “dollar” amount according to federal rules and regulations. Worth noting is that the Head Start parents have one to two fundraisers each year and use that money to support additional field trips for classrooms, parent events, the Foster Grandparent Program which places grandparents in Head Start classrooms, and have often helped purchase curriculum items for the Program. The Head Start Policy Council has control of the Parent Fund monies and must approve all expenditures from the Parent Fund.

A good portion of Head Start’s funds go to support the 53 staff and four (4) contracted staff it takes to operate a quality Head Start program. At RMDC Head Start 73% of the federal funds are budgeted for personnel and fringe. (This does not include wages and/or fringe for contracted staff.)

Additional Financial Information

RMDC’s financial audit is available at www.rmhc.net. Go to heading “Board of Directors” and click on the link “Financial Statements/Tax Returns”.

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RMDC Head Start Program Information for PY09

As stated previously Head Start is to serve 248 children at all times. Each year, due to child turnover, the Program actually serves more than its funded number. The number of children who actually received services this last Program Year (PY) – (September 12, 2008 through May 22, 2009) – was 281; 16 were served in Broadwater County, 18 in Jefferson County and 247 in Lewis and Clark County. These 281 children were from 256 families. The average monthly enrollment was 246*, which is 99.2% of the funded enrollment number. The Program monitors average daily attendance for each month children are in session (mid-September to late May) and must analyze daily attendance per center if it falls below 85%. This PY average daily attendance ran between 84% and 89% with an average of 87%.

* Head Start regulations do not require classrooms to enter children during the last 60 days of the PY; hence the average monthly enrollment is less than 248.

Education

RMDC Head Start serves all children in a center-based option – this means all children come to a site with a teacher and an assistant to receive their Head Start services. The Program operates a variety of class times; some children attend 3½ hours per day in a collaboration classroom with School District #1, some children attend 4 hours per day, some 5 hours per day, and others 10 hours per day. The center-based option is driven by parent and community assessments. In PY09 RMDC Head Start had a site in Townsend and Whitehall, a site in East Helena in Eastgate Elementary School, and five sites in Helena – three of which are in School District #1 elementary schools. The Program uses three specific curricula: Creative Curriculum, Good Talking Words, and Talking About Touching. Other philosophies we honor are MBI (Montana Behavior Initiative) and the 40 Developmental Assets for Early Childhood. Every activity in a Head Start classroom provides an educational opportunity for a child...whether it is growth in relationship building, how a child perceives him/herself, the

ability to sort and categorize, how to set a table, pass food, and pour milk, to share, to recognize their name or letter, to expand their vocabulary, or to listen and follow directions. We achieve much of this through play – play is the “work” of children. In any given year at Head Start, teachers see between a 35-50% increase in the skills of children!

Health

One of the comprehensive services of Head Start is the health component...physical health, dental health, social/emotional health, and nutrition. Programs are required to work with families to help them establish a “medical home” – an ongoing sources of continuous and accessible, routine, preventive and acute medical care. The program employs staff to ensure that families establish a “medical home” – a health coordinator (who at RMDC is a registered nurse) and family advocates. In PY08 all 274 children finished with a “medical home”. The Program also helps educate families about the worth and value of preventive health care; our goal is to help each child receive a well-child exam each year they are in Head Start. This past PY, 88.7% of the children served were up-to-date on their scheduled, age-appropriate preventive and primary health care and 100% of the children served were up-to-date on immunizations for their age.

Dental health is another area in the health realm that Head Start educates families and children about. A dental exam is expected on each child. This past PY 89.4% of the children we served had completed a professional dental examination. Each day in a Head Start classroom children brush their teeth at least once. The Head Start Health Coordinator works with programs, agencies, and dental professionals to access new toothbrushes at least twice per year for children.

Preventive health also includes working with families to access health insurance for their children. Many children in Head Start qualify for Medicaid or CHIP; Family Advocates and the Health Coordinator support families in applying for these programs. Last PY, 97.4% of the children we served left the program with health insurance (Medicaid, CHIP, or private insurance). The Program also works with adults in the home to help them access health care.

Nutrition is a large focus in a Head Start program. Children whose tummies are hungry are less able to learn. A child in a 4 – 5 hour per day Head Start class would have breakfast and lunch or lunch and a snack. In the full day classes, all three meals are served. Head Start strives to serve over 2/3 of the child’s daily nutritional requirements through its meal program. RMDC Head Start follows the Ellyn Satter philosophy regarding feeding – that is...that the adult (or the program) provides what, when and where to eat; children decide how much they will eat and whether they will eat.

Transitions

RMDC Head Start and Family Outreach, which provides Part C services, share a Transition Protocol so that Head Start is aware of children with disabilities who may be attending the following program year. Oftentimes, Family Support Specialists from Family Outreach accompany their families to their Head Start intake appointments and then have the option of visiting Head Start classrooms to increase their comfort level of moving from one program to another.

Each year RMDC Head Start sends 145 – 150 children on to kindergarten (public or private). Teachers meet with their families to fill out a transition checklist that gives information on how both the parent and the teacher see the child in terms of going on to kindergarten. Permission from the parent is required in order for teachers to share this information with the receiving school. Information that is gathered via observation and assessment over the course of the program year is placed into the Creative Curriculum “Individual Child Profile” which gives teachers much insight into the child’s progress; this is shared with parents three times over the course of the year and the culmination is then put into the transition checklist. The schools that our children will be attending then send a team of their kindergarten teacher, school principal, and social worker to transition meetings where Head Start teachers meet with them individually on each child and give them a copy of the transition checklist. Families also have a copy of the transition checklist and are given their official immunization record to take to their receiving school. Beginning in January Head Start staff encourage families to register their children at their neighborhood public school (or private school) where their child will attend

kindergarten. Follow-up is done at spring parent/teacher conferences about kindergarten registration and again by Family Advocates as they make contact with their families.

Parent Involvement Activities

RMDC Head Start has a wide range of parent involvement activities ranging from observing in classrooms to parent leadership roles. Parent involvement is one of the cornerstones of Head Start so is a vital aspect of the program. Parents are asked to bring their children to a health and developmental screening and attend a classroom orientation prior to classes beginning. The program conducts at least four parent meetings each year. The first meeting is election of parents/guardians to represent their child's classroom as a Policy Council Representative or a Classroom Rep which are both leadership positions in the program's shared decision-making process. Parents in leadership positions have an opportunity to serve on many different committees and help make decisions that guide the program in meaningful ways.

Other parent involvement activities include: job/hobby share (in classrooms), helping in the classroom/bus/office, School to Home activities, parent/teacher conferences, participating in the Reading Instead of Television month, donating items for the classroom or for meetings, and attending program events such as the Tour of Lights or the Spring Picnic.

Results of Most Recent Review by the Office of Head Start

RMDC Head Start's last triennial federal review was May 2009. At that time RMDC Head Start had NO areas of noncompliance. The program was in full compliance with all applicable Head Start Program Performance Standards, laws, regulations, and policy requirements.

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For further information, please contact:

Patricia (Patty) Dahl, Head Start Director
Rocky Mountain Development Council, Inc.
P O Box 1717 – 200 South Cruse Avenue
Helena, MT 59624
(406) 457-7308
1-800-356-6544
pdahl@rmdc.net