



## ALABAMA COUNCIL ON HUMAN RELATIONS, INC.

### Annual Report for March 2019-February 2020

#### FROM THE CEO

This is a challenging year for some of our reporting. The ACHR *fiscal year* as well as our Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) fiscal year run from March through February each year. Our *school year* for regular Head Start runs from August into May of the next year; for Early Head Start and Duration Head Start, it runs from July into June of the next year. Most of the child-related data is based on the school year. To simplify reporting, several years ago, staff and board agreed to include in the annual report (in this case March 2019-February 2020) the reporting data from the school year (in this case July 2019 into June 2020). That means we can use the E/HS Program Information and School Readiness Reports completed for the year in July/August (in this case 2020). Since we cannot complete this annual report without the annual audit for the fiscal year (completed November each year) normally the system worked well. We had good data to share without trying to split school years.

This year, however, because of COVID 19 it has not worked so well. Just as the third set of child outcome data was being recorded and some follow-up and end of year health screenings were being done, everything in our area was shut down. Staff had spent a great deal of time during the current reporting period planning an agency-wide Conscious Discipline training event with an outside trainer for the beginning of our spring break week starting March 16. Having been monitoring the COVID situation in our area, as CEO I had to tell staff the Thursday before that we could not do large group training; even though the promised to take precautions, we could not have a trainer flying in from out-of-state. Almost immediately after that, our governor pretty much closed down the state; the offices of dentists and most doctors closed. Staff regrouped to serve children virtually through the end of the year. The aftermath of all that will be described in next year's Annual Report. For now, the important thing is to understand why our data is not as complete as it normally is.

March of 2019 began with a bang. On March 3, 2019, an EF4 tornado devastated parts of rural Lee County from Beauregard through Smiths Station. Twenty-three people were killed and many more injured. Approximately 750 homes were damaged and about 225 destroyed. Rebuilding still is not complete. Our ACHR "family" (both staff and participating clients and families) were fortunate. None was killed nor injured, although many were touched in various ways by this incident. We are proud that our staff took up collections and volunteered to help. The incident greatly impacted ACHR's ability to fully obtain the required non-federal share or "match" because the incident happened at the beginning of our grant year and both funds and volunteer time was redirected (as it should have been) to the areas so severely impacted. Even clearing the massive number of fallen trees in the area took weeks – not days. Many roads were closed so our buses had to be rerouted – minor things, considering.

Also in March of 2019, education staff learned the Alabama Office of School Readiness will offer the Conscious Discipline (CD) curriculum to Pre-K classrooms, where it will be required, to elementary educators. Thanks to our well-trained and innovative educators, ACHR classrooms have been using this program for ten years. Some kindergarten teachers and counselors in schools that

receive our children expressed interest in CD because of our children's ability to moderate their behavior in frustrating situations. Because of that, one goal at ACHR was to get CD into the elementary schools our children will attend so the children will continue to have a supportive, positive environment that helps them control outbursts and use other ways to handle problems. We are pleased that this news from the Office of School Readiness can help our local elementary school staff learn/use the program, as well as many others across the state.

In June of 2019, we received word that our November 2017 request to convert/drop 80 Head Start children (most had been part of a former partnership with the Lee County Schools) to provide classroom services for 16 EHS children was granted. In the meantime, our Community Needs Assessment done in late summer of 2018 had shown that because of increased housing costs in Auburn and Opelika in Lee County and lack of jobs in Russell County near our center in Hurtsboro that many persons living with low incomes were moving east. Staff and parents began hunting for space in the eastern end of Russell, or of Lee to house some of our children. We had almost given up when one of our staff was contacted by someone from Mother Mary Mission (MMM) at the edge of Phenix City in Russell County. The board MMM is interested in reopening an old school building to serve the needs of the community and believed ACHR's programs would be a good fit. Currently they are searching for funds for needed repairs and a new HVAC system. At the same time, ACHR is searching funds for the items that needed to make the facility appropriate for young children, including an up-dated kitchen and of course playgrounds. We hope this partnership will work out on behalf of the community.

In late spring of 2019, Feed the Children (FTC) contacted one of our staff and asked if ACHR could sponsor an event May 11 – Mother's Day weekend and not a lot of notice. Staff came together, planned together, made lots of phone calls, and in the end, we had an amazing event. With FTC's agreement, we combined that event with our Family Resources Day. Because of that, Policy Council helped with food costs (burgers, chips and bottled water) beyond items that were donated. Family Engagement Staff reached out to parents and to other agencies. FTC agreed we could cross county lines with offers of food vouchers, and encouraged us to focus on families who had not come to the October 2018 event. In addition to focusing on families impacted by the devastating March 3 tornado, through our Head Start and Community Action contacts we invited some families from Macon County (also affected by that tornado) and Chambers County. We agreed that there would be no boundaries between the two events, and if folks had a voucher but were not ACHR families wanted to participate in the other activities, they could.

Pharmavite sponsored two semis full of food and sundries – enough for more than 800 families to take home two boxes each. They also provided children's vitamins, books (hardback Disney books!), a table with paper, markers, things to glue on etc., to make cards for Mother's Day and a carnation for each child to give his/her mother – and more than 100 volunteers from their staff. Their volunteers unloaded and stacked boxes and then loaded them into cars, directed traffic, both outside and inside, gave nutrition information along with the vitamins, helped with children, and smiled, no matter what.

Early the morning of May 11, staff moved the event indoors due to potential bad weather. Our staff saw that a bouncy house was set up in the corner near the Mother's Day table, the cotton candy machine and the clown. Due to the bad weather, the 20 community partners we had expected to be present to give out information, turned into 6. However, persons given vouchers for food came anyway, despite heavy traffic and some having to stand in the rain to get in. Even so, most were in a

good mood, and all seemed appreciative. Every food box and household item box-more than 800 of each-was claimed.

We are appreciative of Feed the Children staff, Pharmavite staff, the Policy Council, and members of our ACHR staff who made this event, in spite of time limitations and the weather, an asset to those in the area and over all a tremendous success.

The Internet and phone cutover finally took place in June; staff reports somewhat higher Internet speed, which was one of the goals. However, it did not resolve an on-going problem with caller ID from the phones in the centers which show up as restricted,” “unknown,” “private” and “restricted.” This has been a huge problem for staff. Of course, most parents and other persons staff calls will not answer (cannot blame them) so staff have resorted to using their personal cell phones.

We had intermittent power issues at King Center for more than a year. Without power, our phones and internet did not work – sometimes for a day, sometimes just a brief disruptive drop in service. The power problem caused us to be unable to serve children at King Center when the outage was long. Various electricians made several unsuccessful attempts to solve this vexing problem. A new transformer box installed in June 2019 finally resolved the problem. Our thanks to that electrical company the good diagnostics!

One of the goals staff set during the management training on “Project Management” in December of 2018 was to revise ACHR’s various social media starting with the web site. In the process, we learned that some of the web pages on our old site read at the 17<sup>th</sup> grade level with 35% readability. For a variety of reasons that is not acceptable in today’s busy world. The current aim is grade 7-10 with at least 55% readability without it sounding “written down.” The most important information is at the top of each page with details following. The revised ACHR website (achr.com) went live in August 2019. Because a number of community members (staff at DHR, school guidance counselors, etc.) ask for copies, we put *Branching Out to the Community*, our comprehensive community resource manual, on the website (under Information – Other).

One of the focuses of goals in our Head Start grants and also of the agency is learning more about trauma and its effects and about helping children and family members build resilience, which seems to be the best way to mitigate the effect of trauma. During this period several of our staff attended training and webinars on these subjects and are beginning to plan ways for ACHR be a strong partner to work in this area in our community.

In preparation for review and as needed revision to the agency *Policy and Procedure Manual*, our Administrative Coordinator attended a local training on “Effective Supervisors” along with five ACHR staff, most of whom are a part of our succession plan. There was a large group from another entity whose members for the most part just sat, as was true of many others. We are proud of our staff and their appropriate questions and participation.

The Community Services Block Grant requires that every Community Action Agency use the services of a ROMA trainer to train agency staff and boards and to assure that documents such as the Community Needs Assessment and the Strategic Plan meet ROMA standards. Tabitha Perry earned

her credential as a Certified ROMA (Results Oriented Management Accountability) Trainer during this period, which is not an easy status to attain.

In December, SEACAA Management Training and planning week again was at our Frankie B. King Center due to the inability of some of our staff to travel away from the area. The topic was “Critical Conversations” which was an intense workshop looking at one’s self and skill set and developing a better understanding of self and others as relates to our agency’s work world. Because of the deep sharing, staff had to agree to a confidentiality statement to participate. In addition to continuing to include the additional staff who participated one or both of the past two years of training at King Center, we added Tina Evans, who recently joined the agency as our Family Engagement Coordinator and the remaining four Family Engagement Advocates.

The last three days of the training/planning week included review of and up-dates to various documents including the ACHR brochure, several forms, the Strategic Plan, the Risk Mitigation Plan and our Emergency Response Plan.

In January in preparation for the Early/Head Start Focus Area One (FA-1) review to be held in February, key staff met to review the new FA-1 HS/EHS monitoring tool. The FA-1 review was done by phone in February 2020.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Alabama Council on Human Relations, Inc. is a private non-profit organization, funded exclusively for, educational and eleemosynary (charitable) purposes that partners with persons and agencies in the community, on behalf of the low-income population. The goal of ACHR is to serve those persons with low incomes and the promotion and implementation of programs that improve economic conditions, education and racial relationships for all people, resulting in increased self-sufficiency and overall improvement in their quality of life.

## **AGENCY DESCRIPTION**

ACHR, incorporated in Montgomery in 1954, has provided Head Start (HS) services in Lee County since 1965 and in much of Russell County since 1992. ACHR has provided Early Head Start in both counties since 1998. In addition to HS and EHS, ACHR administers other programs, including the Alabama Coalition Against Hunger (ACAH), the Child and Adult Care Food Program (serving daycare homes in multiple counties), housing counseling (also multiple counties), VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance), and LIHEAP (Low Income Heating Assistance Program), which offers energy counseling and assistance with payment of energy bills. ACHR also offers low-income housing at 11 housing complexes in seven counties. ACHR is the designated Community Services Block Grant program provider for Lee County.

ACHR’s Early Head Start (EHS) program, which started in 1998, is an essential part of the agency’s overall program. It is widely recognized that the years from conception to age three are vital to growth and development. Staff in both the EHS classroom program and in the EHS Home

visit program provide EHS families with suggestions enrich their child's development and to ensure a support system for both the child and primary caregiver.



ACHR has three centers offering services to children, two in Lee County and one in rural Russell County. Darden in Opelika is the largest center, with 11 HS classrooms and five EHS classrooms, as well as a school-aged class serving 18-20 school-aged children (mostly siblings of HS/EHS children or former HS children) who come to the center for before and/or after school and for summer care.

The Darden campus includes Darden on the Hill. That area houses the Sunshine Shop where staff accept, store and display donated goods for easy access by HS/EHS families. There is office space for EHS home visitors and a socialization area for the 64 home-based infants, toddlers and pregnant women/teens served by the home visitors in Lee County. The Frankie B. King Center houses the ACHR Main Office that provides space for administrative, fiscal, secretarial, and other agency support functions and eight Head Start classrooms serving children and families in Auburn and Eastern Lee County. There are offices for services including energy assistance, housing counseling and weatherization for Lee County. The Marian Wright Edelman Center, located in Hurtsboro in rural Russell County, houses three HS and three EHS classrooms, as well as offices and socialization space for home visitors for 24 EHS infants, children and/or pregnant women.

In addition to these centers, there are some auxiliary facilities, such as a garage to service agency buses and other vehicles.

## **HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START**

### **NUMBERS FUNDED/SERVED**

As we have stated, our grant year runs from March to February. Now that we have both EHS and the HS duration grant and run EHS and duration classrooms well over 200 days, our school year for many of our children runs from July to June. For non-duration HS children the year runs from late August into May. It is a challenge to reconcile those three periods. As is explained in the CEO's report, we normally base the data in this section on the school year (in this case July 2019-June 2020) and use the data in the Head Start reporting which was not required during that period due to COVID in March of 2020.

The ACHR-CDP was funded to serve 424 Head Start (HS) and 152 Early Head Start (EHS) children in at the beginning of this reporting period (March 1, 2019). In June of 2019, we received word that we had the conversion of slots from HS to EHS requested in November of 2017. Therefore, when we opened school year 2019-20 we were funded for 344 Head Start children and 168 Early Head Start children. By then, due to the up-dated information in the community needs assessment we realized that if at all possible the two new EHS classes should be placed toward Phenix City. After searching we found a possible community partner offering space, so we began that period serving those 16 children home based. At the time we moved to virtual, due to adds and drops, we had served a total of 357 HS children and 198 EHS (including 25 pregnant women).

Home Visitors visited each home-based parent and child once a week and, together with the parent, provided the full array of EHS services. In addition, mothers and children who were in the home visit program were invited and encouraged to come for a “socialization” visit once every two weeks. The parents had small group meetings and learned from each other, outside speakers and other community resources; the toddlers began to learn to play with other children. ACHR provided transportation to these events to those who needed it.

According to the community needs assessment, among the various programs available, including additional Pre-K classes in both Lee and Russell Counties, most of the need for preschool services was met in rural Russell County and approximately 80% of the need met in Lee County. According to the community needs assessment the number of infants and toddlers served was approximately 65% of the need in rural Russell County but only about 20% of the need in Lee County.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

During the period from July 2019 until we had to close within a day in March 2020 due to COVID, all children enrolled more than 45 days had received health screenings. Follow-up could not be completed for all children because providers’ offices (health, vision, dental) also closed. We had 32 Head Start children with active IEPs. Because we left quickly at shut down, and when staff returned they were focused following COVID protocols to try to stay open to serve the next group of children, we do not consider data beyond what is given to be complete and accurate and so are not reporting the details we normally would report.

### **Preparing Children for School**

For more than 40 years, the ACHR-CDP has used the HighScope Curriculum in its efforts to have children ready for school. This approach takes each child at his/her level and works to build knowledge and skills using the child’s interests and strengths. All learning areas required by Office of Head Start as outlined in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework Ages 0-5 (HSELOF), including Social Emotional Development, Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development, Approaches to Learning, Cognition, and Language and Literacy are embedded in children’s everyday activities. This research-based curriculum approach is developmentally appropriate and is tailored for children ages birth through five years.



In addition to regular activities at the center, resource visitors come to classrooms to enrich children's experiences. Parents, professionals, and community helpers are among those who volunteer their time to make presentations and share experiences with the preschool children. Classroom staff members take children on field trips to visit businesses/community resources such as police and fire departments, museums, farms/stables and other sites around our area and Auburn University. It is amazing what pre-school children can learn from these visits and field

trips and how much fun they can have in the process. Teachers talk with the children before the visit, during the visit, and after the visit to stretch children's knowledge and vocabulary.

We encourage parents to do much the same thing with their own children as part of our school readiness parent program called RAGS (Reading, Activities and Growth for Success). Teachers send home RAGS activity sheets with suggestions of ways parents can help their child to grow in a particular focus that supports some of the classroom activities that week.



The activity sheets can help parents change a routine visit to the grocery store from an event that is frustrating for parent and child into a learning “adventure” that helps increase vocabulary, sentence length, ability to follow directions, or to increase math skills or self-regulation. The same child who was bored and crying can be enlisted to help find a can of green peas for dinner and the box with the big “K” on it for breakfast. We suggest that when parents have their child with them at the store, that they take a few moments to say things like: “The peas are in a can with a *green* label. Can you find it?” “Look one shelf *higher*.” “Good find! Please put it *in* the cart.” Of course, as a child gets better at this game, we encourage parents to make the skills progressively more challenging. (“Please put the can *in* the cart *beside* the corn and beans. Now we have *three* cans.”) Repeated over a several visits, these “adventures” make a difference in a child’s skills including those needed for school readiness.

Teachers make frequent observations of children and place them into each child’s Child Observation Record to track each child’s progress towards school readiness goals and to know when to help a child stretch for the next level. In addition, classroom staff focus on children’s social skills and self-regulation in an effort to have the children ready to fit into a kindergarten classroom. As described when discussing our partners, we are pleased to be partnering with Children’s and Family Services, a department in East Alabama Mental Health in this effort. Additionally, during the past several years ACHR has been training staff to implement the Conscious Discipline approach within our classrooms and spreading the approach to home visitors. The program has provided staff new ways to improve classroom management and assist children in developing self-regulation and other skills that help them to be connected, cooperative, and helpful members of a classroom family.

### **ACHR-CDP SCHOOL READINESS REPORT for PROGRAM YEAR 2019-2020**

ACHR CDP’s school readiness goals were developed using Office of Head Start (OHS) requirements, the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF), curriculum guidelines, alignments with state standards for four-year-olds/Alabama Early Learning Guidelines, local school expectations, and staff and parent input. School readiness goals are statements that articulate knowledge and skills needed by infants/toddlers prior to preschool and for preschool



children prior to entering kindergarten. These goals address social and emotional development, language and literacy, perceptual, motor, and physical development, approaches to learning, and cognitive development including general knowledge, mathematics, and science.

At ACHR, progress towards school readiness goals is measured through the HighScope Child Observation Record (COR) known as the *COR Advantage* assessment tool, and through teacher skill tracking logs, photographs, and data collection such as samples of children's work.

The COR Advantage is a seamless birth-through-kindergarten assessment tool. Categories and items on the COR align with state standards, Common Core standards and the HSELOF. Head Start and Early Head Start teachers as well parent educators (home visitors) use this tool. Because the tool is seamless, it allows for scoring all children, whether typically developing, with special needs, or exceptional.

Classroom staff and Early Head Start parent educators collect data on an ongoing basis to determine how well children are progressing across the required OHS five essential domains: perceptual, motor, and physical development, Social and Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, Language and Literacy, and Cognition and General Knowledge including mathematics and science. To the extent possible, staff assess dual language learners in the child's home language across all domains by communicating with parents/translators, and assessing the children's increasing proficiency in learning English.

Teaching staff/parent educators gather and monitor the continuous progress of each child through means such as anecdotal notes, skill logs, portfolios, writing and art samples, formal observations by other professionals, parental input through family contacts and joint goal setting, service provider reports, photographs, videos, and Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) progress reports. Children show gains in the COR Advantage by moving to the next skill level of each objective. Possible scores for each objective are the same, ranging from 0-7.

Assessment data is used to develop lesson plans and activities for all children and individualized instruction and activities for each child throughout the year. ACHR has set scoring goals for child outcomes for 1-year-olds, 2-year-olds, and 3-year-olds in EHS, and for three and four-year-olds in HS. Staff aggregate the data by program option and program level three times per year – approximately November, March, and June. At each point, the education leadership team studies the child outcome averages across domains for the total program to identify any school readiness areas where children are not progressing as expected. Next, the team looks at the distribution of scores to examine the variability of children's progress. Subgroups of children (e.g., grouped by age, gender, home language, IEP status) are compared for disparities so that if any exist the program can work to help these children in ways that may result in furthering their school readiness.



At the midpoint analysis, progress towards school readiness goals is assessed and reported to teaching staff, program administration, the school readiness advisory committee, parent policy council/parents and the ACHR board. Time is used to assist teachers/home visitors in understanding their data and how they can maximize children's progress moving forward. The school readiness advisory committee meets to discuss the program's progress towards school readiness goals and to advise the program on school readiness issues from many perspectives.

Education team members assist teaching teams in analyzing this classroom data using classroom level COR reports and other indicators.

The teaching teams use the analysis to refine their planning process for each child and groups of children, and as a guide to set professional goals. COR reports are also used as part of the process for determining staff's group and individual professional development needs.



COVID-19 school closures and community quarantine began in March 2020. Due to the timing, suddenness and unusual nature of the pandemic, the third period of assessment data was incomplete and there was not enough data to give accurate information for the final reporting period. This year's final reporting centers on the mid-year assessment data and the trajectory it was taking.

The ACHR education, administrative teams, and Policy Council use child data results to plan for continued program operations, possible program improvements, professional development needs, and possible purchases of resources to support specific school readiness goals for the upcoming program year.

Families generally receive a COR child developmental summary after period 2 and again at the end of the program year. During the pandemic year, however, parents received only the period 2 summary.

### **School Readiness Results at the Mid-point for Head Start 2019-2020: 4-5 YR Olds**

- The average beginning COR score for all typically developing 4-5 yr. old children was 3.15
- The mid-point COR scores had moved up, indicating growth. Overall, the ACHR score for 4-5 yr. olds went from 3.15 to 3.87, a 23% increase.
- The 4-5 yr. old children were on a strong upward trajectory, needing only an 18.6% increase in period 3 to reach ACHR's school readiness goal of 4.59.

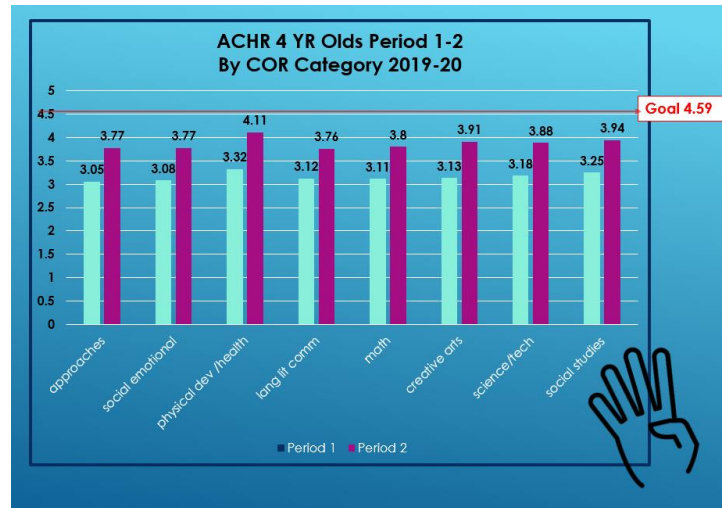
As per HS philosophy, *we take children from where they are and help them to move forward toward our school readiness goals.* Our data show we are doing that.

## Head Start School Readiness Achievement: 4-5 year olds by COR Advantage Categories

After period 2, Head Start 4-5 yr. old children's category scores were 81-88% towards their category goals.

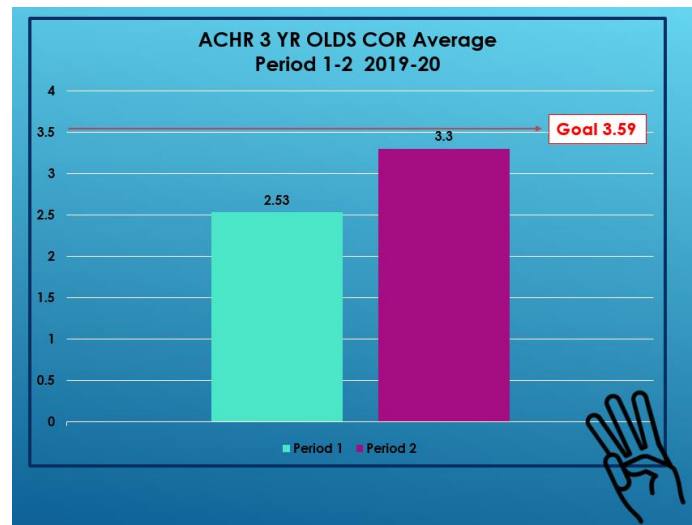
4-5 yr. old children's COR Advantage category scores indicated gains in all categories between period 1 and 2. Categories include:

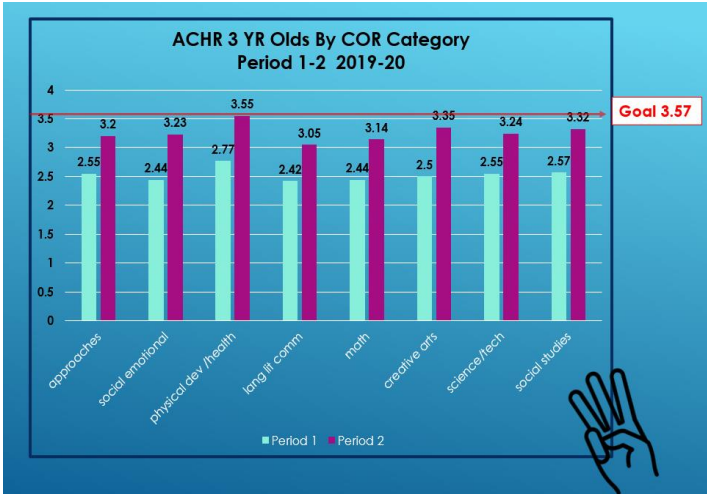
- Approaches to learning
- Social/Emotional Development,
- Physical Development and Health
- Language/Literacy/Communication
- Mathematics
- Creative Arts
- Science and Technology
- Social Studies



## School Readiness Results for Head Start 2019-2020: 3 Year Olds

- The average beginning COR score for all typically developing 3-4 yr. old children was 2.53.
- The mid-point COR scores had moved up, indicating growth. Overall, the ACHR score for 3-4 yr. olds went from 2.53 to 3.3, a 30.4% increase.
- The 3 yr. old children were on a strong upward trajectory, needing only an 8.2% increase in period 3 to reach ACHR's school readiness goal of 3.59.





### Head Start School Readiness Achievement: 3 year olds by COR Advantage Categories

After period 2 Head Start 3 yr. old children’s category scores were 85-97% towards their category goals.

The 8 COR Advantage Categories are consistent for each age group. The 3 yr old group made notable gains in each category between period 1 and 2. 3 year old scores at the end of period 2 data collection were on a trajectory to exceed ACHR’s 3 year old school

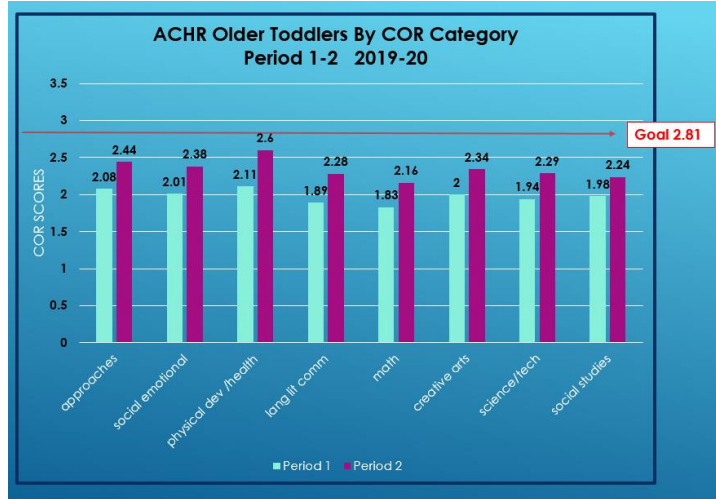
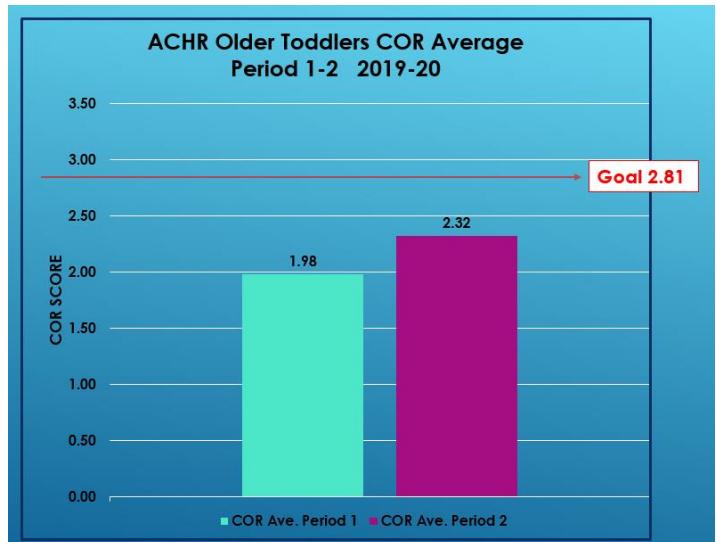
readiness goals.

### School Readiness Results for Early Head Start 2019-20: Older Toddlers

The process used for gathering, analyzing, and using developmental growth data in EHS is the same as that used in HS. The COR Advantage is the primary tool for tracking ongoing infant-toddler growth and development. The principal goal is for children to be progressing steadily and to be ready to transition into preschool after turning three years old.

Children in EHS showed steady growth in 2019-2020. Below is a sample of the older toddler group and their progress during the periods of 2019-2020.

- The average beginning COR score for all typically developing older toddlers was 1.98.
- The mid-point COR scores had moved up, indicating growth. Overall, the ACHR score went from 1.98 to 2.32, a gain of 17.2%
- The older toddlers were on a steady upward trajectory, needing a 21% increase in period 3 to reach ACHR’s school readiness goal of 2.81.



## Early Head Start School Readiness Achievement by COR Advantage Categories:

After period 2, the Early Head Start older toddler category scores were 78-90% towards their category goals.

## ACHR PROGRAMS OTHER THAN HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START



ACHR is the designated Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) provider in Lee County. CSBG funds assist, extend and strengthen a variety of programs and make it possible for the agency to provide services that otherwise could not be provided.

CSBG assists with funding for many programs, including housing counseling and the gardening projects described below.

ACHR's LIFE (Learning Information about Food and Exercise) began in 2014 through CSBG funds, because of a 10% up-tick in self-reported obesity by clients completing our community assessment survey. The program was planned and implemented to help participants living with low income improve their overall health and maintain or decrease their weight. Our Registered Dietician provides weigh-ins and individualized diet counseling (including for a variety of health concerns, such as diabetes). Some participants check-in by phone, others in person. As a certified fitness instructor, she also offers low-impact aerobic exercise program at Darden, Edelman and King Centers.

Other programs ACHR administers designed to assist families living with low incomes in Lee County and, in some cases, in other areas of Alabama, include:

- **Alabama Coalition Against Hunger (ACAH)**, with a current emphasis on community gardens in Lee and Russell Counties. One of the gardens in Lee County is a collaboration with several churches and with youth involvement.
- **Child & Adult Care Food Program**, which provides training and reimbursement for qualified meals to approximately 27 day care home providers serving approximately 212 children in four counties
- **Housing Counseling** (Department of Housing and Urban Development-certified Housing Counseling Agency) to residents with problems with mortgages, tenant/landlord relations, etc.
- **Certified Community Housing Development Organization** has built 12 low-income housing complexes in eight counties. The grand opening for Shiloh, a project for seniors in Opelika was held in November 2017. Shiloh is our fifth complex in the Lee County area.
- **Weatherization** - assesses and then contracts to weatherize homes (including mobile homes) for home owners who qualify;



- **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program** participant; ACHR staff and volunteers were received intensive training and served more than 100 families.
- **Energy counseling and assistance with energy bills** through LIHEAP, and the Alabama Charitable Trust. In this fiscal year, 3447 families received assistance through regular LIHEAP, LIHEAP crisis, and the Alabama Charitable Trust.
- **S.T.E.P.S. (Systems to Empower Parents and Students)** is a relatively new, youth focused effort, in partnership with other community groups. The goal is to encourage young people to stay in school, work to become eligible, and attend college. The S.T.E.P.S. Chairperson worked one-on-one with students who requested help.

## **FINANCIAL INFORMATION/FUNDING 2019-2020**

### **Head Start/Early Head Start**

The Alabama Council on Human Relations, Inc. received funding from Health and Human Services in the amount of \$6,816,504 to fund its Head Start and Early Head Start programs. That included the supplemental funding for the 45% of our Head Start children who were able to be in the program additional days as specified by the duration guidelines. Because Head Start/Early Head Start programs are required to have a 20% match, we must find “match” or “in-kind,” which can be goods or services donated that of benefit to the program within the community in the amount of \$1,704,126.

### **Funding For Other Programs**

Funds in the amount of \$423,205 were awarded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide meals for children. The Child and Adult Care Feeding Program (CACFP), serving family day care homes in four counties received \$208,164. The City of Opelika provided \$20,000 to assist with extended day/year care for children of working parents. In combination with funding through the state voucher program and parent fees on a sliding scale, the City of Opelika funding allowed us to provide before and/or after school and summer care for approximately 100 children of mothers who were working or in school.

Beyond that, we have LIHEAP funds of \$1,294,702 (most of which provides heating and cooling assistance directly to clients), Alabama Charitable Trust Funds of \$32,058 which were used to assistant clients who were not eligible for LIHEAP funding or who needed additional assistance, and CSBG funding of \$403,711 (which supplements various programs as well as providing direct services). Last year, we received \$10,181 in General Funds from the State of Alabama and weatherization funds of \$63,465 received this year

We also received funding from H.U.D. In the amount of 23.694 to aid clients in home counselling and F.E.M.A FOR 4,219 for emergency housing needs.

At this writing, we expect our budget and expenditure in all grant areas for the coming year to be similar to that in the past year.

## Audit Results

The independent audit done by an outside Certified Public Accountant on ACHR programs for the 2019-20 year resulted in no audit findings. The most recent Head Start/Early Head Start was favorable allowing us to remain eligible for the five-year designation. In addition, various programs including Child and Adult Care Feeding Program, LIHEAP (Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program), and Weatherization were audited during this year and although there were a few things to respond to, there were no significant findings.

## IN-KIND -- DONORS AND BENEFACTORS



Federal requirements state that HS/EHS programs must match the federal grant funds on an 80-20 basis. That means that “in-kind” (donations of time, goods and funds) is essential to the continuation of the federal funding that allows ACHR to provide children and families living with low incomes Head Start/Early Head Start services. Sometimes, we have had to push and struggle to find enough in-kind for a fiscal year. With tighter federal restrictions on what can count toward the in-kind requirement, ACHR staff have to continually look for new sources and ensure proper documentation.

Obtaining sufficient In-Kind this year was a challenged due to the devastating tornado in March 2019. Even so, during the past year, many generous individuals and companies donated goods (everything from toys to dryers) that helped the program in various ways.

Just as important is the value of the help provided by our many volunteers. During this year, more than 700 volunteers contributed their time and energy.

We are proud to say that we have good community partners who provide a variety of goods and services to our program. This year we continued a partnership with Auburn University’s Department of Kinesiology. The department provided a motor skills program for Head Start children at our Darden Center. This project continued helped children gain large motor skills and increase activity levels. It provided teaching staff with a deeper knowledge of how children’s specific motor skills can increase with adult assistance and opportunity. The project involved university professors, doctoral students, graduate students, under graduates, and creative materials.

Others partners included AU Early Childhood Education students who volunteered time in HS/EHS classrooms, the AU Nursing Department, who shared health and safety information with HS children and SUSCC nursing students who helped do heights and weights. The Auburn University cheerleaders provided a mini-pep rally (we are a sports-oriented area so the children love it). Many individual volunteers came to assist in other ways including helping us organize the Sunshine Shop,

which provided donated goods at no cost to Head Start/Early Head Start families. Families who had emergencies, such as those recovering from fires or storm damage, also sometimes received goods.

One of our most committed community partners, Jean-Dean RIF, celebrated 29 years of service to children's literacy. The local Kiwanis clubs raised funds, bought children's books, and volunteered in our HS/EHS classrooms three times per year as readers - for 29 years! Soon after we started Early Head Start, they began to provide toddler books and parenting/pregnancy books to our pregnant moms – and still did this year. We were able to offer these same books to pregnant teens at local high schools during workshops provided by our Home-based Educator.



This year, staff placed great importance on School Readiness and on Family Partnerships. As a result, many of our parents participated in RAGS (Reading, Activities and Growth for Success). That meant more parent volunteer time toward in-kind. More important, it meant that more parents did activities with their children to support classroom learning and enhance the child's abilities. Those things should lead to stronger families and improved school readiness.

Though we cannot name them all, we want to offer our sincere thanks to the volunteers who have given of their time and talents this year to help our children, their families and our program. It is no exaggeration to say that without their help, not only would our program not be the quality it is, we would not have a program.