

ACHR CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT PLAN OVERVIEW FY 22 (March 2022-February 2023)

ACHR Child Development Program (CDP) strives to give staff support as they work with families to fulfill their role as parents and move towards self-sufficiency and to provide comprehensive child development services that enhance children's ability to be ready for school and life. A variety of sources and methods are used to provide training to staff, governing bodies and families. Each group has its own training needs that must be considered in the training plan.

Staff training and professional development (PD) is carried out within the agency as required by Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) to assist staff in doing their part to reach our school readiness and parent engagement goals through service delivery and documentation. ACHR staff members attend required health/safety and training specific to their responsibilities as well as training to help them understand and assist in the overall delivery of services. Specialized training is planned for specific groups such as the administrative and fiscal staff, support staff, training staff, management staff, child development program staff, family engagement staff, transportation staff, volunteers, governing bodies and parents.

Staff and families all vary in their levels of education and skills. There is great diversity in ages, interests, life experiences, cultural and community backgrounds. Research shows that people have different learning styles and that a variety of learning methods must be used in meeting PD needs. Through use of a variety of training methods, ACHR focuses on helping staff increase competencies in specific job responsibilities and improve their skills to assist children and families with school readiness. PD includes things such as reviews of policies and procedures, study of position-relevant information and learning new ideas and methods. PD is

provided through staff orientation, meetings, webinars, workshops, hands-on experiences, individual and small group sessions, modeling and coaching as well as attendance at outside conferences, meetings, workshops and college coursework (as funds allow). Guest speakers, consultants, agency coordinators and other specialists such as the registered dietician or intervention/behavior specialist, and education staff trainers and/or educators, provide in-house training.

Presently there is a full time HighScope and WestEd certified trainer on staff who coordinates training efforts, manages training equipment, and assists with planning and presenting workshops and serves as part of the Education team. All centers have an assigned educator. Educators supervise staff, observe, and do follow-up. Coaches provide intensive coaching for selected classroom and home visiting staff.

Verbal and/or written feedback is collected from staff and parents and future training needs are discussed. ACHR is moving to a survey-based system as one way to better collect data around professional development. Each year a series of planning meetings that include administrative level staff from all areas is held to discuss needs and calendar for the next program year. The group brainstorms ideas, discusses possible training available and plans the calendar including training for the upcoming year that includes known dates for conferences, workshops, in-house training, and meetings. Child assessment information, progress on school readiness goals, and information obtained through the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System), Home Visit Rating Scales (HOVRS), and mentoring and coaching activities and informal observation are used to plan teacher/home based parent educator training. In addition, we make use of the HighScope Program Quality Assessment (PQA) information, and our coaching and staff support system to monitor progress of curriculum implementation and

fidelity and teacher/home based parent educator PD. In December, an additional key planning meeting is held to discuss progress, consider revisions or improvements needed and begin planning for the next program year. In the past year during COVID many normal activities involving direct contact did not occur. At the same time, all Education team members increased virtual contacts with classroom staff, and provided various supports as the situation and information unfolded. New procedures were written and implemented and new technologies adopted and used. Support staff from all service areas participated in developing COVID related procedures and in guiding staff as they implemented new safety protocols, adapted learning environments, and dealt with personal and work stressors. In lieu of most group training, staff participated in newly available web-based professional development, some free and some purchased with training funds and Zoom meetings. For example, ChildPlus University was made available and online/virtual Conscious Discipline, CLASS, and HighScope training were purchased and used.

Professional learning is the best tool programs have for PD. It increases staff knowledge and skills on an on-going basis. Individual PD plans are created or revised with staff input each year. Staff training is documented on ChildPlus. One ongoing challenge in PD continues to be meeting the needs of new education staff while supporting veteran staff.

During the continuing COVID pandemic, we will strive to continue to offer staff a rich variety of opportunities to attend training and receive support and feedback. As long as the COVID crisis continues and as often as considered necessary and most safe, we will offer virtual methods of presentation and participation in workshops, meetings, and coaching.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN – GENERAL

Agency staff members attend ongoing training planned on the agency calendar or annually

(based on individual expiration dates) on specific required subjects as found in the performance standards including topics such as first aide/CPR, prevention and control of infectious diseases, recognizing and reporting child abuse/neglect, building and premises safety, and USDA/CACFP. New staff receive orientation on the goals and underlying philosophy of the program, job responsibilities, HSPPS, health and safety requirements, and standards of conduct. Periodically staff receive ongoing or updated information regarding agency philosophy, policies, and procedures through pre-service training, staff newsletters, memos, or through supervisors/management staff. The purpose of this general training/PD is to educate program staff on the importance of understanding the program's vision and goals, to help them develop an understanding of Head Start Performance Standards, ELOF/school readiness and to help them learn how to keep the workplace safe and healthy for employees, children, families, and home based parent educators.

The Internet is also a valuable resource for information and training. Staff has access to information from ECKLC, Zero to Three, Quorum Learning and many other resources that focus on health, nutrition, safety, child development, and families. Through the Internet, staff has immediate access to information needed including IM's (Information Memorandums), PI's (Program Instructions), the Head Start Performance Standards, the Head Start Act, etc. The agency network, cloud storage, web site/Facebook and email systems are also excellent sources of communicating new information and sharing handouts, manuals, forms and so forth with others throughout the agency – without the need to print and distribute.

The agency maintains a training chart outlining training goals matched to program goals, roles and responsibilities, required training and projected timelines. Purposes of the training goals for staff include: steadily increasing the skills of our management staff, providing PD for

education, family engagement, health, transportation and other staff. Teachers and home based parent educators receive targeted training and support for high quality teaching and learning and school readiness in young children and families. Others with training needs or requirements such as Policy Council or Center Committee members and governing bodies are included on the chart.

In addition to the items listed within the goals, a variety of training occurs throughout the year for staff and parents. Materials available to staff and parents include booklets and brochures from various sources, including information pulled from the Internet. Materials appropriate for teachers/home-based educators are available through the center educators, coaches, trainer, and on Drop Box. Materials include curriculum information, child development information and related written materials and videos. Materials pertaining to specific topic areas (e.g. health, nutrition, mental health, disabilities, and dual language learners) may include giant teeth models, model assistive devices, dual language vocabulary cards, and children's books about health, dental care, nutrition, and emotions. To help increase the capacity of E/HS staff to recognize and appropriately assist children and families who are in trauma, affected by substance abuse problems, domestic violence, and similar issues including special needs (and if safe to do so), ACHR will host a program wide 2-day onsite Conscious Discipline training.

IDENTIFIED T/TA GOALS

The following is a description of key elements of our training plan, with items that are included in the T/TA Goals noted.

GOAL SPECIFIC DETAILS

Required Training: Many of these items are captured under ACHR's various T&TA goals.

This includes requirements found in HSSPPS such as new staff orientations, orientations/training of governing body and policy council on performance standards, roles and responsibilities, the ERSEA system, and other staff's safety and curriculum training.

Goal I: The training and PD system, as described in §1302.92, supports the delivery and continuous improvement of high-quality services; governing bodies and management staff (coordinators, managers and supervisors) will maintain skill levels necessary to execute the duties of their jobs and conduct/provide the training required to achieve and maintain a quality program for children and families.

Goal II: To regularly provide PD for education/family engagement/health staff, particularly those who train or mentor other staff or who work directly with parents, to increase staff member's ability to build school readiness & PFCE competencies.

Goal III: To regularly provide PD for education staff particularly those who train, coach, observe or mentor other staff or who work directly with children, designed to increase each staff member's ability to build school readiness-related competencies in their areas.

Goal IV: To improve Head Start and Early Head Start Teachers' and home based parent educators' ability to support children's development of self-regulation and higher order thinking skills.

Goal V: To note skills required of management, supervisory and other key staff in using Child Plus, COR Advantage, e-DECA and other software and provide training based on reports and observed needs to use the computer systems in collecting, evaluating, and reporting data.

Goal VI: To assist and support teachers, teacher assistants, and interns (sometimes the second person in our classrooms) in staying in or returning to college to attain an AA in Child Development or BA/BS in Early Childhood Education or HDFS with concentration in infancy and preschool or a certificate in Child Development or a CDA, depending on their PD Plan and funds available.

T&TA GOAL DETAILS

Required Training Not Covered Elsewhere:

1302.47 Safety Training. In accordance with HSPPS, CCDF requirements, and Alabama DHR Performance Standards, staff receive orientation and training prior to working with children and ongoing training. Training is provided on site by public health nurse, online through Alabama's Quorum or through the local Child Care Resource agency. Training includes: A). Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases; B). Prevention of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and use of Safe Sleeping Practices; C). Administration of Medication, Consistent with Standards for Parental Consent; D). Prevention and Response to Emergencies Due to Food and Allergic Reactions; E). Building and Physical Premises Safety, Including Identification of and protection From Hazards, Bodies of Water and Vehicular Traffic; F). Prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome and Abusive Head Trauma. G). Emergency Preparedness and Response Planning for Emergencies; H). Handling and Storage of Hazardous Materials and the Appropriate Disposal of Bio-contaminants; I). Appropriate Precautions in Transporting Children; K). Recognition and Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect; J) Administration of Basic First Aid/CPR.

1302.47(1)(ii) Staff without regular contact with children receive orientation within three months through their supervisor or designee and ongoing training as applicable to their work, including emergency and disaster preparedness.

1302.31(b)(iv)(2)/1302.35(c)(4) ACHR provides classroom staff and home based parent educators with research-based strategies and activities for children who are dual language learners that recognize bilingualism and biliteracy as strengths through resources such as ECLKC, written materials, videos, and webinars as available.

Training for Governing Bodies, Coordinators, and Assistants (T/TA Goal I)

Governing bodies receive orientation training to include required eligibility training and information on their respective roles and responsibilities within the time frames set forth in the performance standards. After COVID subsides, ACHR will continue to participate in the Southeastern Association of Community Action Agencies (SEACAA) management training by including staff in yearly refresher training. This training benefits staff in their planning, supervisory, management, and service delivery. Currently 8 staff members at ACHR have SEACAA certification. Each year they attend a two-day graduate class to maintain/increase their skills. Topics are diverse and have included everything from behavioral interviewing techniques to customer service to strategic planning to how to use an evaluation as a learning tool. As this original certification is no longer offered, an additional 10 management staff now attend the 2-day graduate class in order to gain knowledge in SEACAA management skills as part of ACHR's succession planning.

Many of ACHR's staff are active members of associations that provide a forum for networking, training, and affiliation. Some associations the program is involved with are the Southeastern Association of Community Action Agencies, the Community Action Association of Alabama, the Children's Defense Fund, and Alabama Head Start Association.

Coordinators and assistants involved in indirect services to our clients, such as fiscal, transportation and maintenance, need training in their specific service areas. The fiscal staff for

example, attends training offered by Head Start concerning budgeting, auditing, procedures, and requirements. Staff members attend workshops or other forms of training that increase specific knowledge and skills in other areas needed for good staff development, such as technology, sexual harassment and stress management when needed and available.

Education Staff – Training (from T/TA Goal III; IV)

ACHR has two education staff members who are HighScope Trainers who provide frequent training for our teaching staff. These two HighScope Trainers also are certified in the West Ed Program for infants and toddlers and are certified assessors in scoring CLASS observations. The HS King Center Educator, Coaches, Educator Assistant, and other educators also are certified CLASS assessors. The home based program educator and some home visiting staff periodically attend training in *Partners for a Healthy Baby* (PHB) or the Home-Based Conference in TN. New home based parent educators generally attend PHB training within their first year. Selected education management staff attend training such as HighScope International Conference and Conscious Discipline Institutes at least annually as funds allow in order to keep their skills fresh and curriculum knowledge up-to-date so that they are equipped to train others. They attend T/TA training, review materials from the ECKLC and use many of the training suggestions and materials with staff. CLASS assessors take recertification testing annually in order to maintain their reliability status. Educators and the Interventionist/Behavior Specialist attend Conscious Discipline live or virtual training annually as funds allow so they stay current on their skills in teaching the Conscious Discipline approach to classroom staff and home based parent educators.

Education Staff – Training (from T/TA Goal II-IV)

The education staff is diverse in their educational levels and abilities as well as in length of

service, ages, and backgrounds. The trainers/education management team use a variety of training methods to meet staff needs and provide ongoing support, including Practice-Based Coaching and mentoring. Classroom and Home Based parent educators are provided with opportunities to attend workshops, webinars and staff meetings on topics such as HSELOF, school readiness, child development, curriculum, classroom management, appropriate classroom and home-based strategies, adult/child interaction, and how to work with parents along with an understanding of the home environments and cultures/languages and differing abilities of our children. With the rise of children with significant developmental and behavioral concerns and new research on the effects of trauma on young children, ACHR is exploring ways to learn more about trauma informed care and providing trauma sensitive settings. ECLKC, Devereux, Conscious Discipline, and the Harvard Center for the Developing Child have integrated information on trauma and trauma informed care in their training, publications and newsletters. We will continue to use these PD resources. Funds also have been put in the training budget to help offer HS teachers additional outside expert consultation about children with various disabilities in their classrooms and best practices for working with them.

Additionally, various education staff receive training through local, state, regional, and national conferences and workshops. In-house orientation and other ongoing PD is provided through such things as videos/DVDs, supervisor-staff conferences or observation-feedback, professional publications, books, small group sessions, displays, ECKLC, and hands-on activities. New classroom staff receive specific orientation/training. Intensive coaching and other PD and support is provided to assist classroom staff in gaining specific skills and confidence and to increase fidelity of curriculum implementation, school readiness of children, and staff retention. On-going training for both EHS and HS teaching staff includes pre-service

training and occasional in-service training days during the program year. Strategies used by trainers/mentor coaches for providing additional training/coaching include such things as formal and informal discussions and action steps as needed with staff about their performance, modeling appropriate activities and interactions with children, providing current information and ideas, and suggesting reading materials and articles. Recordings of classrooms made on the monitoring system or tablets are used to provide individual classroom staff with feedback and observation of their skills. Those participating in practice base coaching (PBC) have opportunities to make use of recordings as part of coaching. Recordings may also be used to identify staff strengths and weaknesses and to pinpoint strategies for working with individual children.

Over time education training focuses on a wide variety of areas. These include: Head Start Performance Standards, HSELOF, child development, school readiness goals, HighScope Curriculum, Conscious Discipline strategies, CLASS (Positive Climates, Classroom Organization, Instructional Support such as higher order thinking skills), attachment, active learning, the learning environment, daily routines, assessment and use of individual child data for planning, language/literacy, math/science, adult/child interaction, and supporting DLLs and children with special needs. Teachers receive information that emphasizes the importance of home visits and parent-teacher conferences, and how to communicate and establish joint goals with families. Extensive child development and curriculum resources are available at each center and home-based office. Information on basic child development, classroom management, professionalism, leadership, and teamwork is also available to staff.

Education Staff –PD (Professional Development) (T/TA Goals II - VI)

ACHR has some teachers who started working with only a high school diploma and who

now have an AA in Child Development or a BA in Early Childhood Education. This tradition continues. At this time, second persons who are working on qualifications are working on CDA's, Child Development Certificates and AAs in Child Development. ACHR will continue to help classroom staff who are not eligible for PELL grants or TEACH scholarships search for other funding for tuition and/or books and will help staff as funds allow. We will continue to communicate with local higher education institutions such as Southern Union State Community College and Wallace Junior College in order to keep one another aware of what is available and needed for our staff. PD is equally important for all staff so that they can stay abreast of current knowledge in the field and provide high quality teaching and learning. This is why it is important to include ongoing in-house training and opportunities to attend outside conferences and workshops either virtually or in-person when they are offered and funds are available for staff to attend.

Behavior Management with typically and atypically developing children in the classroom continues to be a concern among teachers, although the ongoing implementation of Conscious Discipline has helped teachers to be more successful with classroom management. Training is provided in a variety of ways to assist staff in working with children who have challenging behaviors (e.g. modeling appropriate behavior in the classroom and with individual children, providing written information, individual conversations, videos, and web-based courses). Teachers learn to use the E-DECA-2 with Conscious Discipline Strategies to develop individualized plans to use Conscious Discipline strategies to assist in specific areas of social-emotional concern. There are many influences on the development of self-regulation and other related social skills affected by brain development, attachment, early experiences, trauma and special needs. Our newest effort around Conscious Discipline includes providing all HS-EHS

staff with a two-day on-site Conscious Discipline training (when safely available). It is an extraordinary and transformational learning experience that impacts our program effectiveness in a positive way, increases staff understanding of childhood trauma and ways to help those affected by it, and improves their ability to respond sensitively to families and children experiencing trauma.

An increasing number of children display behaviors consistent with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), though most come to us undiagnosed. This has led to a need for specific information on ASD and strategies for individualizing with other diverse learners. This information is woven throughout various topics offered to classroom staff/home based parent educators. Additional funds have been put aside to offer classroom staff 1 on 1 consultation around their children with disabilities.

As is always true, whenever new staff are hired, the learning process and orientation /training on a variety of topics begins all over again from the baseline. With staff turnover increasing throughout the country and the pool of qualified applicants shrinking, we are constantly looking to hire and hiring/training new classroom and home visiting staff.

Home Based Parent Educators (from T/TA Goals III and IV)

Selected home based parent educators generally attend either a yearly national home visiting conference, or Florida State University's PHB to stay current on Home-Based information and strategies. Home based training is useful in helping home based parent educators to implement the curriculum with fidelity, efficiently find and use curriculum resources, understand child development from birth through age three, make connections between the curriculum and HSELOF, and to support home-based families including pregnant

women, and families with infants and toddlers.

The Home-based Program Educator and the home-based coach also provide home based parent educators with required training such as orientation (using the HS Home Based Parent Educator's Handbook), health/safety training, adult learning principles, ERSEA, curriculum, child development, building relationships with families, documentation and family tracking. The home based parent educators also often attend education training with EHS center based staff in areas such as child development, COR ongoing child assessment, HighScope, Conscious Discipline, the HSELOF and school readiness as appropriate.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING – SUPPORT-STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND PARENTS

The CDP support-staff, volunteers, and parents work together for the good of our families and children. They share in our common philosophy and mission. Additionally, they seek to stay current in their specific fields of knowledge and continue their professional growth and development. Support-staff receive training through orientation, attending conferences and workshops on the state, regional, and national levels such as Head Start, early intervention conferences and Conscious Discipline training as funds and pandemic circumstances allow. We will be providing an agency wide 2-day Conscious Discipline training in year 4 of our 5-year grant as funds allow, if it is safe to do so. This training helps support staff to understand the basics of Conscious Discipline as they assist in providing secure, safe environments for children, families and staff. It will also help staff learn more about the development of social emotional learning (SEL), and how to work with program children/families, many of whom have experienced trauma or toxic stress. increasing the capacity of E/HS staff to recognize and appropriately assist children and families who are in trauma, affected by substance abuse problems, domestic violence, and similar issues including special needs.

Staff also receive information through in-service workshops, and agency and community meetings. They use the ECKLC web site as well as others to research specific concerns, and obtain new publications and up-to-date information about the needs of our children and families. They also receive information and PD through different forums and webinars.

Support-Staff – Health and Nutrition (Goal II)

Health/Mental Health and nutrition staff members attend meetings and workshops to stay current on issues related to health and nutrition. They receive journals and read articles that relate to health/mental health/nutrition needs and share information acquired with other staff as appropriate. The Health Coordinator, also a registered dietician (RD), attends training offered the Alabama Dietetic Association and others to maintain her accreditation. Much of this training and the related materials provided, such as training on breast-feeding, is an asset to helping Early Head Start families. The intervention/behavior specialist receives training and information on child/adult mental health, behavior, and children's special needs through Conscious Discipline materials, ECKLC, DECA, webinars and outside training as available.

The Health Coordinator attends training provided by USDA. In turn, she provides information to teachers in the areas of nutrition, family-style meal service, feeding schedules for infants, and related activities that can be used in the classroom. She also provides similar information to home based parent educators and support-staff so that it can be shared with parents. The Health Coordinator/RD and/or Nutrition Assistant provides on-going training and follow-up for center cooks in such areas as safety, food allergies, nutrition, portion sizes, sanitation, and production records.

Support- Staff – Family Engagement Staff (Goal II)

The Family Engagement Staff is provided training that helps them work more effectively

with their families and PFCE goals. Family Engagement Staff receive required eligibility training, on-going information on case management, understanding the needs of families, families and school readiness, family goal setting, and strategies to assist families in becoming self-sufficient. Training in related areas such as communication skills, adult learning, parenting, child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and money management are provided when available. Home based parent educators also attend some of these trainings as they pertain to their families. A consultant provides annual training to Family Engagement and a small mix of other HS/EHS staff and policy council on PFCE, governing body roles and responsibilities, ERSEA and other HS/EHS requirements.

Because families have a variety of concerns and barriers to engagement, training covers many different topics. Staff members attend various conferences and training activities on a variety of family engagement issues. Some or all of them participate in training in areas such as literacy, drug abuse, violence in communities, domestic violence, child abuse, parenting skills, employability skills, health/mental health and dual language learning issues. They must stay informed about these issues so they can offer information, referrals and follow-up to families.

Family Engagement Staff work in partnership with other community organizations and attend workshops with parents. They benefit from this involvement both personally and professionally. Family Engagement staff receive information from ECKLC and other relevant webinars that provide them with additional information and new ideas.

Support- Staff -- Special Services

The Special Services Team is made up of staff from different areas within the Head Start program (e.g, health, education, family engagement), our intervention/behavior specialist and a

mental health consultant. The Special Services Team provides staff with information to ensure delivery of appropriate services to children who have special needs including behavior/mental health needs and to their families. ACHR has experienced increasing challenging behaviors and children with characteristics of ASD so staff see a need to focus attention and resources on this concern and have included this concern in Program Goal I. We recognize the increasing stress on our teachers and work to provide them with mental wellness and technical support. Our intervention/behavior specialist, trainers, and educators play a significant role in providing teachers with information, strategies and support to ensure children receive appropriate individualized services within the typical preschool setting, daily routines and school family. Our contracted mental health consultant provides ongoing services to staff and families as needed. Due to increased needs of children, families and staff, ACHR has increased the number of hours in our contract with East Alabama Mental Health, including small group trainings for classroom/home based staff. Special Services/health staff are crucial team members in our efforts to increase the capacity of E/HS staff to recognize and appropriately assist children and families who are experiencing or affected by trauma, affected by substance abuse problems, domestic violence, and similar issues including special needs.

When university schedules and pandemic circumstances allow, Auburn University nursing students receive training so they can assist parents/children in completing the ASQ-3 screener. Members of the Special Services Team or consultants may work with teachers during the year when the needs of a child require that his/her teacher have specific skills related to special needs or other information.

Members of the Special Services Team attend a variety of training and conferences, such as the Alabama Speech and Hearing conference, early intervention conferences, Conscious

Discipline training, training provided on the web by organizations such as SpeechPathology.com and DECA and workshops provided by the state when available and funds allow.

Since the HighScope Curriculum and Conscious Discipline approach can be used with all children at their individual levels, they are appropriate for children with special needs. Curriculum training helps staff focus on children's strengths and support children as they move through developmental sequences at their own pace. The HighScope on-going child assessment processes (COR Advantage) are also appropriate because they can help in implementing IEPs and follow-up strategies. In order to work with children identified with special needs, it is important for staff to have knowledge of developmental sequences, appropriate practices and about the specific exceptionality of the child they are working with.

Support-Staff -- Transportation and Maintenance/Janitorial

Transportation staff receives required transportation and safety training to ensure child safety and meet HSPPS/CCDF/DHR standards. Bus drivers receive ongoing training to maintain a CDL license and to meet Head Start standards. Bus drivers and bus aides receive a variety of training to ensure children's safety. Training attended includes performance standards, state minimum standards, child abuse and neglect reporting, route training, bus evacuation methods, first-aid and CPR, handling health emergencies such as seizures and using epi-pens, relating to children and families appropriately, and required documentation such as pick-up and release paperwork. We recognize the stress on transportation staff who work with increasing numbers of children with special needs and challenging behaviors and will include them in basic training, mental wellness and technical support around these issues as available.

In-service training is provided through workshops, videos, meetings, and written materials.

New transportation staff receive required orientation and other agency training to provide them with information about goals and underlying philosophy of the program and on the ways they are implemented, as well as safety, various program areas, policies and procedures, and areas of concern.

To maintain safe and healthy facilities/premises maintenance staff members periodically receive training in areas such as OSHA standards, cleaning techniques and hazard prevention. They also receive training in required HSPPS/CCDF/DHR health and safety topics and about the state and federal requirements concerning childcare facilities. One maintenance staff person has become a certified playground inspector and will maintain his certification

Other ACHR Staff

Non-CDP Staff such as those connected with the Hunger Coalition-Garden Project, the Child Care Feeding Program, CSBG staff and housing counselors attend training as appropriate and available specific to their positions. For example, ACHR's Housing Counselor attends a variety of trainings events such as training on predatory lending, bankruptcy laws, alternatives for foreclosure, self-help homeownership programs, and loss mitigation. Staff who provide energy assistance attend training specific to working with clients, energy conservation and the various energy assistance programs. Staff members who work with the income tax program attend relevant annual training.

Volunteers Including Parent Volunteers

Many people volunteer their services to the program. Regular volunteers are provided orientation, standards of conduct, guidance, and information about our expectations of their role in the program and how to conduct themselves within the program. Volunteers receive guidance on basic center rules and how to fill out volunteer paperwork. By giving time to the program in

various classrooms, volunteers receive hands-on training experience while our children receive the benefit of community involvement. Past volunteers have included parents, Kiwanis Club members, high school students, members of various clubs, and students in a variety of disciplines from both Auburn University and Southern Union. On-site volunteering in HS/EHS centers is suspended until the COVID crisis has abated. Currently, ACHR is beginning to allow a limited number of vaccinated volunteers from established groups such as nursing students, early childhood students, and foster grandparents.

One group of volunteers that consistently provides services to the children is Foster Grandparents. Foster Grandparents receive orientation and training twice a year and as needed through East Alabama Services for the Elderly (EASE). Their initial training covers a brief orientation on program philosophy, goals, and the volunteer's role. Foster Grandparents also receive information on child development and the kinds of help they can provide to children with special needs. Due to budget cuts in that program, we have fewer Foster Grandparent volunteers than previous years. On-site use of Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) volunteers was suspended until the late fall of 2021.

Training is provided to parents in a variety of ways. Parent Orientation provides parents with information about the Early/Head Start Program, the center, the classroom, transportation/pedestrian safety, screenings, nutrition and the curriculum. Parents are provided a community resources handbook on the website (hard copy available if needed) and a parent handbook that contains a yearly calendar and information about the program, daily routines, parent and staff rights and responsibilities as well as policies on medication, sickness, attendance and discipline and our school readiness goals. The parent-teacher visits, beginning with the transitional home visit, are partly devoted to individualized parent information and training during teachable

moments. During the COVID crisis, handbooks are available on the web site and home visits done virtually. Parent orientations are completed using a drive through method or, when safe, in person at the center, with various department staff in masks going over information. At this distanced visit, the parent is given the parent handbook and HS children receive the transition booklet *Going to Preschool*.

Additionally, we encourage all HS/EHS parents to be involved in the Reading, Activities and Growth for Success program (RAGS). Each parent receives weekly activity sheets articulated by the teacher/home based parent educators written around children's needs related to one-two school readiness goals. Additional written information related to children's early development and learning opportunities through a newsletter and Facebook. During the COVID crisis, additional information for parents was available on our website. Website pages are translatable into many languages with a click on the desired language.

In Center-based EHS, parents interact daily with their child's caregiver and receive daily note forms and handouts related to early development and learning. In home-based, parents discuss child development during each weekly visit and receive follow-up information/resources matched to their child's needs as well as periodic information around health/nutrition, safety, mental wellness, and other family goals. When COVID rates are high in our communities, home visits will remain primarily virtual, with some porch visits and drop offs of support materials. As rates have fallen, families are beginning to accept in-person visits again. Socializations are virtual when COVID rates are high, with groups participating through virtual meetings. Again, as rates have fallen, in-person, distanced or outside socializations will occur.

In HS, children receive booklets to take home about transitioning to preschool, their classroom's daily routine, riding the bus, going to the dentist, having health screenings, and our

four-year-olds receive a booklet about going to kindergarten. The *Going to Pre-School* booklet introduces children to the basic daily routine and is a way for parents to help their children make a smooth transition into Head Start. The booklets and activity sheets are ways for parents to learn about early learning and development, skills and concepts, know themselves what to expect, and learn ways of helping their children gain school readiness. Parent workshops, meetings, the parent newsletter, and RAGS activities provide a wide variety of information that encompasses the HSELOF and all the Head Start school readiness goals including family literacy. During COVID, parent training will be done virtually. Staff is using our YouTube channel to give parents information on filling out forms, nutrition, and cooking. There are dozens of videos of staff reading children's books for children to watch and as family literacy models. Tablets signed out to children during COVID include apps for parents such as Zoom, which enables families to participate in activities and training.

Research-based parenting curricula *Triple P Parenting* is offered to our families through our local Family Resource Center. During COVID, parenting classes are offered online. Conscious Discipline parenting classes are offered to families at ACHR. This year, Conscious Discipline parenting will be included in virtual "café style" meetings meant to sound less formal and avoid the stigma some parents associate with "parenting classes." Parent interests as identified through the Family Information Form are used to schedule additional parent engagement activities. Parents serving on Policy Council as well as members of the parent committees receive training about eligibility and their roles and responsibilities as required by the Performance Standards and as needed for successful service.

Board members are another group of people who volunteer their time on behalf of the agency. We developed a new Board Orientation Manual and process. We shared the documents

with all board members as a refresher and an easy source of key information. Board members receive information about program changes and more formal training as needed when there are major changes.

Developing Computer Skills (T/TA Goal V)

ACHR staff began using client-tracking software in 1985. As software and operating systems change, staff members need additional support or training. We continue to offer computer training in a variety of ways to staff as needed. Since learning efficient computer use is a hands-on process and retention of information largely depends on the need to know and use the information, we have had great success with staff assisting one another. Often when a staff member needs a new piece of information to complete a project, another person within the agency is able to do a quick “training.”

At other times, having one or more staff attend a class or participate in on-line training is more appropriate. For example, in most (non-COVID) years, at least one fiscal staff members attends training on the Grants Management software that they use. They have also participated in a variety of other training meetings and webinars to hone their financial management skills. Some of our staff who use other data programs such as ChildPlus and FACSPRO attend training specific to those programs as needed and available. This year we plan to continue PD opportunities in child tracking by maintaining a subscription to ChildPlus University.

Our Parent Engagement/Special Projects Coordinator learns and then provides staff training on ChildPlus (E/HS child data system) and FACSPRO (CSBG program client data system). Through her efforts, more staff are able to use these programs and to more quickly pull the information needed from them. She provides informal training on more rapid intake using the data programs to assist staff in doing their jobs more efficiently and helps staff as they learn

program updates when they become available.

SUMMARY

In short, ACHR management continues to have a commitment to providing training, PD opportunities and technical assistance to all ACHR staff at all levels to help them do their jobs efficiently and effectively in order to provide teaching and quality school readiness and family engagement services to children and families and to progress on ACHR's 5-Year Program Goals.