

Deeply Rooted Head Start Values: Then and Now

Since its inception in 1965, the success of Head Start has been grounded in general values. These values frame all our work, whether our focus is on optimizing child health, enhancing our facilities, assessing our communities, pursuing strategic goals – or creating, expanding and enriching school readiness initiatives.

Comprehensive Services: Head Start is not only an early childhood program, nor is it only a health, social services or parent engagement program. It is all of these and more. We believe that significant positive changes in the lives of young children happen only when they and their families receive an array of services and opportunities that are individualized, strength-based and multi-faceted.

A Focus on the Whole Child: This oft-used concept has new life when we remember that children are creators, thinkers, movers, feelers, and doers. Program experiences and the child assessment tools we use to shape those experiences must focus on all developmental domains: cognitive-language, social, emotional, and physical.

Parent Engagement: Head Start values parents as the first and most important teachers of their children, knowing that children develop to their fullest potential when they are loved, nurtured and supported by all the significant adults in their lives. Head Start relies on the strengths and knowledge of parents throughout the program.

Governance: Effective program oversight, accountability, and leadership, through which parents, agency leadership, other staff, and community members work, ensures the provision of quality program services in keeping with Federal regulations.

Collaboration: Head Start originated as a Federal to local community-based program and local partnerships with agencies and institutions continue to contribute to our success. Collectively, we shape and continuously improve services to children and families.

Professional Development: Empowering all staff through an array of training and educational experiences is a vital component of program improvement efforts. Professional development underscores Head Start's commitment to providing services of the highest quality and developing local leadership and advocates for vulnerable children and their families.

Diversity: The unique and special contributions of each child, family, community, and staff are celebrated throughout our programs. Head Start remains a place where individuals of different ethnic, racial, religious, educational, and experiential backgrounds pool their talents on behalf of children and families.

Continuous Quality Improvement: Head Start stands as a model for excellence in early childhood and human service fields by engaging in data-driven decision-making, embracing evidence-based practices, and consistently seeking to excel in the pursuit of excellence.