



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023





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# LETTER FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dear Head Start Friends and Supporters,

I am delighted to present the annual report for Stigler Health and Wellness Center's Adventure Head Start program. As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with gratitude for the unwavering support from our community and partners. Your dedication has been instrumental in helping us shape the lives of our youngest learners and ensuring a brighter future for them.

In the spirit of progress, this year's report highlights the remarkable achievements and meaningful work of our Head Start staff. Together, we have continued to pave the way for early childhood education excellence, promoting holistic development and creating a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

At Adventure Head Start, we firmly believe that every child deserves a strong start in life. Our Head Start program has diligently pursued this belief, focusing on fostering the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth of each child in our care. Through innovative curriculum design, skilled educators, and engagement with families, we have witnessed some incredible successes with many students.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the dedicated support of our community, partners, and volunteers. Your contributions have enabled us to make a lasting impact on the lives of countless children, setting them on a path towards success.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to our mission of providing the highest quality early education experience. Our vision is a future where every child enters school with a strong foundation, ready to embrace learning and face challenges with confidence.

I invite each one of you to join us in this journey of empowerment and transformation. Your continued support will help us create a brighter, more equitable world for our children. Whether through volunteering, donations, or spreading the word about our program, every effort counts.

Thank you once again for your unwavering dedication to our Head Start program. Together, we are sowing the seeds of promise and potential, ensuring that every child's future is filled with opportunity.

Warm regards,



Teresa Huggins  
Chief Executive Officer





# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Head Start Family and Community Partners,

We invite you to review the second Annual Report for HWC Adventure Head Start, a Health and Wellness Center, Inc., program! This year has proven to be a year of growth and opportunity as we continue to strive toward becoming the high-quality child development program we have envisioned – a program designed to enrich the lives of the children and families in our service area.

The HWC Adventure Head Start Leadership Team is comprised of dedicated and passionate individuals with diverse backgrounds who have a heart for seeing children succeed and families thrive. This year, we have been focusing on ways to increase enrollment, enhance the quality of services we provide as well as the resources and partnerships used to support families, and explore ways we can recruit and retain quality staff. We have continued our efforts to offer professional development opportunities that support existing staff in professional growth and ongoing support, and increase our focus on school readiness for both the child and their family.



Since it began in 1965, Head Start has helped shape the lives of over 38 million children and their families. Each year I hear countless stories from individuals who have said that Head Start truly changed the trajectory of their life. As a former Head Start graduate and Head Start parent, I can personally testify to the powerful impact that this program can have. From field trips to special programs, from dentist visits to family-style meals, from amazing teachers to life-long friends, it has been so great to see some of my earliest childhood memories still playing such a vital role in our Head Start classrooms today. The design and framework for Head Start continues to focus on those we serve.

While the challenges remain, this second year has been a chance for us to dig deeper into opportunities within the program as well as ways we can continue working toward our vision for this program – one of excellence, compassion, and service. As always, we appreciate the support of our community partners, our staff, and our families.

Wishing You Well,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caleb Knowlton".

Caleb Knowlton, M.Ed.  
Head Start and Early Head Start Program Director



# MISSION, VISION, VALUES, BELIEFS



## Mission Statement

To invest in our communities  
To improve the quality of life  
To provide comprehensive services

## Vision

The Health and Wellness Center will be a national model of excellence in providing all-inclusive care for people of all ages.

## Values

Innovation  
Balance  
Accessibility  
Teamwork  
Excellence

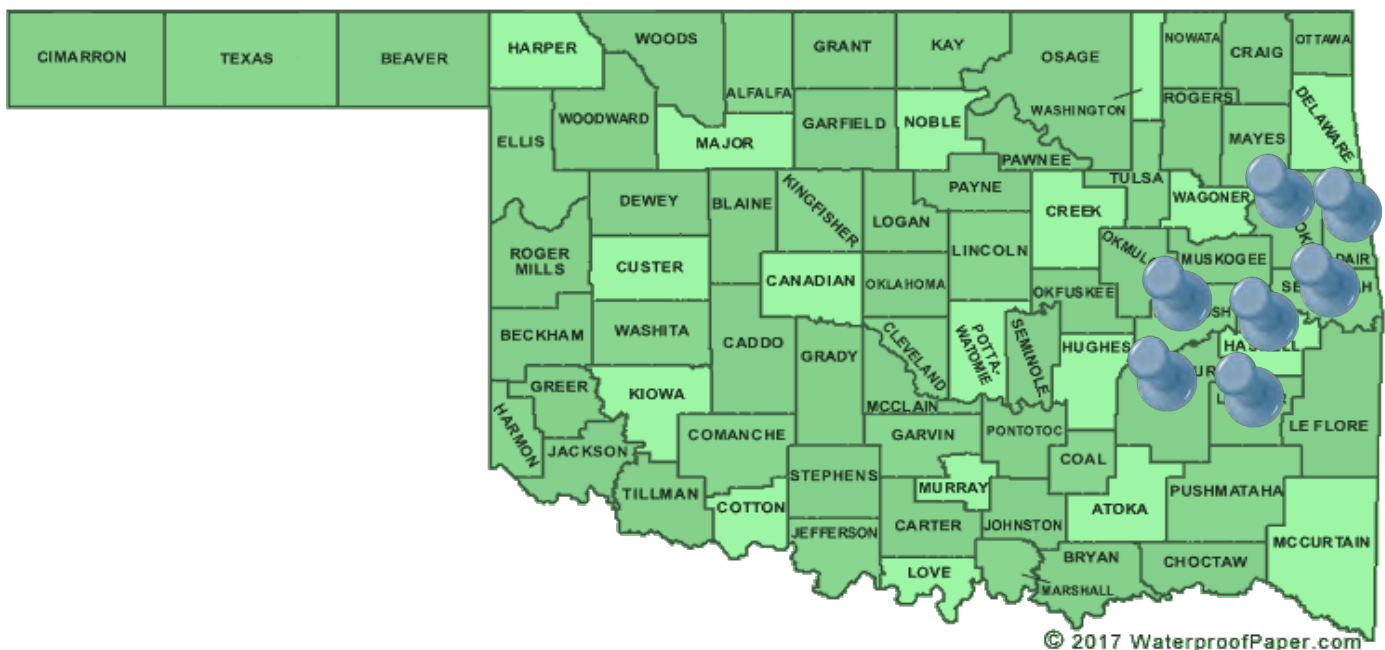
## Core Beliefs

We believe that ALL children can learn.  
We believe that ALL children deserve to feel safe and respected.  
We believe that ALL families deserve an opportunity to succeed.



# WHO WE ARE

HWC Adventure Head Start is a program of The Health and Wellness Center, Inc., a private non-profit organization. As a Community Health Center, HWC has been committed to serving our communities since our start in 2005. HWC Adventure Head Start began operating the Head Start and Early Head Start program in September 2021. Our centers are located throughout Adair, Cherokee, Haskell, Latimer, McIntosh, Pittsburg, and Sequoyah counties. HWC Adventure Head Start is funded to serve 617 Head Start children ages 3-5 in full-day classes and 64 Early Head Start children ages 6 weeks to 3 years as well as pregnant women. Head Start classrooms are limited to 15-20 children per classroom with one Teacher who has, at a minimum, an Associate degree in Child Development, a related field, or related coursework, and an Assistant Teacher who has, at a minimum, a Child Development Associate for Preschool. Early Head Start classrooms are limited to 8 children per classroom with two Teachers who have, at a minimum, a Child Development Associate for Infants and Toddlers. Each center has a Center Director that oversees the day-to-day operations of the center and a Family Advocate to help connect families to resources and opportunities within their communities. Classrooms often have additional Program Aides that are there to support teachers and children in the classroom to ensure an optimal Head Start experience for each child and family!





## WHO WE SERVE

Head Start and Early Head Start is designed to serve children from families with low income as well as foster children, children and families experiencing homelessness, and children from families receiving financial support through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Up to 10% of the program's actual enrollment may be filled with children who are eligible based on other types of need determined by the Eligibility Selection Criteria adopted by the program's Policy Council and Board of Directors each year. An additional 35% of participants whose families do not meet one of these criterion may be accepted if the family's income is still below 130% of the federal poverty line.

In the 2022-2023 Program Year, HWC Adventure Head Start served a total of 441 Head Start children and families and 50 Early Head Start children and families.

Eligibility Status	Number of Head Start Children Served
Income at or below 100% of Federal Poverty Line	140
Public Assistance (TANF, SSI, SNAP)	188
Foster Care	28
Experiencing Homelessness	48
Eligibility based on Other Need	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>441</b>

Eligibility Status	Number of Early Head Start Children Served
Income at or below 100% of Federal Poverty Line	21
Public Assistance (TANF, SSI, SNAP)	21
Foster Care	5
Experiencing Homelessness	2
Eligibility based on Other Need	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>



# ENROLLMENT

Navigating the post-pandemic world as a new grant recipient has been a challenge to say the least. One of the greatest challenges continues to be around enrollment and attendance. The national workforce shortage has a negatively tremendous impact on enrollment simply because programs are unable to open classrooms. We have placed an emphasis on recruitment of staff as well as children and families in order to support enrollment efforts. As part of our under-enrollment plan, HWC Adventure Head Start submitted a Change-in-Scope request in July 2023 for a conversion of Head Start to Early Head Start slots as well as an additional reduction of Head Start slots to better meet the needs of our communities as public schools expand their Pre-K and Preschool services.

While Early Head Start continues to be a great need, recruiting qualified staff is very much a challenge. We have partnered with Carl Albert State College, an area community college, and Kiamichi Technology Center, an area CareerTech school, to assist with support staff seeking credentials to work in our Early Head Start program.

- ✓ Head Start Average Monthly Enrollment: **58.3%**
- ✓ Head Start Maximum Monthly Enrollment: **60.62%** (77% of Open Slots)
- ✓ Early Head Start Average Monthly Enrollment: **44.8%**
- ✓ Early Head Start Maximum Monthly Enrollment: **60.94%** (98% of Open Slots)

- ✓ Head Start Average Monthly Attendance: **84.43%**
- ✓ Early Head Start Average Monthly Attendance: **86.09%**





## PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Head Start and Early Head Start is dedicated to promoting the health and well-being of the children we serve. Through these efforts, staff work with families on ensuring children receive necessary health examinations and immunizations as well as oral health screenings, vision screenings, and hearing screenings. The HWC Adventure Head Start Health team also facilitates Behavioral Health Support for the classroom and at home. HWC Adventure Head Start is fortunate to have a dedicated Behavioral Health Consultant that can provide one-on-one support as well as classroom support when it comes to challenging behaviors and emotional dysregulation.

*98% of enrolled Head Start children and 98% of enrolled Early Head Start children had an ongoing source of continuous, accessible health care provided by a health care professional beyond emergency or urgent care.*

*There were 191 Head Start children were brought up-to-date on a schedule for well-child care after enrollment.*

*91% of enrolled Head Start children and 88% of enrolled Early Head Start children were up-to-date on all immunizations appropriate for their age by the end of the program year.*

*94% of enrolled Head Start children and 90% of enrolled Early Head Start children had received dental care including access to preventative care and dental treatment.*



# SCHOOL READINESS

School Readiness goals are used to support children and families in their Head Start experience while ensuring each child is ready for Kindergarten. School Readiness goals also equip families with the tools necessary to support their child's learning and facilitates the transition process so that the child's new school is also ready for them. School Readiness goals are developed by the Education Committee made up of Head Start Staff, Public School Staff, and parents to look at previous child outcomes data, State Education Standards, and the Early Learning Outcomes Framework from the Office of Head Start, to determine specific areas our students and families needed the most support. Our teaching staff also connect with our public school partners for input on areas of concern specific to their school. Once all the information is gathered, the committee decides on the specific goals our program needed put in place.



We developed our School Readiness goals to include Social and Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, Language and Communication, Literacy and Understanding Mathematical Development, Scientific Reasoning, and Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development. Once we established the domains, we developed goals for each of the domains. Our School Readiness goals were provided to the staff

as well as professional development around these goals. As children progress through the developmental goals identified, teachers document the mastery of the goal. Children that do not make adequate progress, will receive one-on-one instruction focused on the specific goal. All staff work with the child and their families to meet these goals throughout their Head Start experience.





# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

HWC Adventure Head Start focuses on families as being the primary educator for their child. We strive for open communication between families and staff and strongly encourage families to be a part of the planning and decision making in their child's classroom.

Our primary strategy for our Family engagement is to build strong and effective partnerships with families that can help both the child and the family thrive. These partnerships are grounded in positive, ongoing, and goal-oriented relationships resulting in the healthy development and wellness of their child.

We also encourage parents to volunteer in the classroom, attend parent-teacher conferences, and to be involved in the learning experiences for their child both in the classroom and at home through home activities designed specifically for family engagement. With staff, we promote strong communication skills with their parents and to stay involved with their families by spending one-on-one time with each child and to actually get to know the family and child as well as their personal likes and interests.

*Approximately 2 out of every 3 volunteers in our program are current or former Head Start or Early Head Start parents!*





# HEAD START FUNDING

The operation of the program is provided through a federal grant through the Office of Head Start under the Administration for Children and Families. HWC Adventure Head Start also receives funds from the State of Oklahoma, USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) funds, and supplemental funding from public schools where there are Head Start/Preschool collaborations.

## Proposed Budget and Expenditures for HHS-Head Start & Early Head Start

Expense	Actual 2023	%	Budgeted 2024	%
Program Salaries	\$3,792,925	47%	\$4,312,718	60%
Fringe Benefits	\$881,825	11%	\$937,555	13%
Travel	\$66,848	1%	\$179,150	3%
Equipment	\$409,792	5%	\$61,989	1%
Supplies	\$1,056,535	13%	\$448,373	6%
Contractual	\$138,518	2%	\$84,420	1%
Other	\$1,599,711	20%	\$1,059,919	15%
Indirect Cost	\$0	0%	\$0	0%
Training & Technical Assistance	\$72,164	1%	\$87,382	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,018,318*</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$7,171,506</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Fiscal Year 2023 Funding Sources

Source	FY23 Amount
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Head Start/EHS	\$8,018,318*
U.S. Department of Agriculture – CACFP	\$252,263
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – CRRSA/ARP	\$766,112
Oklahoma Department of Human Services	\$270,000

*\*With the large number of open positions in FY22, HWC Adventure Head Start submitted a Carry-Forward request to be able to add unobligated funds from FY22 to our FY23 increasing the amount of funds available for FY23 relative to the original NGA. With the same scenario in FY23, a Carry-Forward request is being submitted to add unobligated funds to our FY24 budget as well.*



# REVIEWS AND AUDITS

## Monitoring Results

HWC Adventure Head Start complies with a variety of regulations and standards including the United States Office of Head Start's Head Start Act and the Head Start Program Performance Standards, Oklahoma's Department of Human Services Child Care Licensing Regulations, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Child and Adult Food Care Program (CACFP) Regulations, and the U.S. Department of Labor's Uniform Guidance for Federal Awards.

In FY23, a Focus Area One monitoring review took place for HWC Adventure Head Start to understand how our program was progressing in providing services at this point in our 5-year grant cycle. Our program was found to be in compliance with all applicable Head Start Program Performance Standards, laws, regulations, and policy requirements, and is making progress toward implementing program services that promote quality outcomes for children and families.

## Financial Audit

The Health & Wellness Center, Inc., contracted with FORVIS to complete the annual financial and compliance audit. Through this contract, FORVIS is responsible for forming and expressing an opinion about whether the financial statements that have been prepared by management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, are prepared in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States. FORVIS also conducted a compliance audit performed in accordance with OMB Uniform Guidance is designed to obtain reasonable, rather than absolute, assurance about whether noncompliance with the types of compliance requirements described in the OMB Compliance Supplement that could have a direct and material effect on a major federal award program occurred.



Based on this audit, The Health & Wellness Center, Inc., complied, in all material respects with the compliance requirements that could have a direct and material effect on its major federal program for the year ended November 30, 2023.



# 2023 HEAD START STAFF AWARDS

For our first year, HWC Adventure Head Start wanted to recognize outstanding staff members based on the five core values of our organization: Innovation, Balance, Accessibility, Teamwork, and Excellence. Awardees were nominated by and voted on by their peers and recognized at the End-of-Year Appreciation breakfast.



## Innovation

Shannon Kennedy, Center Director/Teacher  
*Checotah*



## Balance

Melinda Ross, Teacher  
*Stigler*



## Accessibility

Sharon Smith, Family Advocate  
*Checotah/McCurtain/Quinton*



## Teamwork

Deanna Robinson, Family Advocate  
*Roland*



## Excellence

Dalene Duvall, Center Director/Family Advocate  
*Sallisaw EHS*



# HWC ADVENTURE HEAD START

## Leadership Team

Caleb Knowlton, M.Ed.

*Head Start & Early Head Start Program Director*

Jaynie Steele

*Health & PFCE Manager*

Braedon Howard

*Quality, Data, and Operations Manager*

Vanessa Farrow

*Nutrition & CACFP Manager*

Crystal Cole

*Health  
Coordinator*

Lisa Gurulé

*Education  
Coordinator*

Julie Ellis

*Nutrition/CACFP  
Coordinator*

Karen Resendiz

*PFCE  
Coordinator*

Miranda Henderson

*Disabilities  
Coordinator*

Ronald Brown

*Facilities/IT & Transportation  
Coordinator*

## Administration Team

Tiffany Headrick  
*Human Resources &  
Payroll Coordinator*

Alisa Slater  
*Staff  
Accountant*

Shelly Rethman  
*ERSEA  
Representative*

Ashley Monks  
*Mentor  
Coach*

Alesha Monks  
*Administrative Assistant - Operations*

Isidoro Garcia-Landaverde  
*Administrative Assistant – Reception*

## Center Locations

### Head Start

Briggs  
Grand View  
McAlester  
Quinton  
Ryal  
Stigler  
Tenkiller  
Westville

Woodall

Checotah  
Hartshorne  
McCurtain  
Roland  
Sallisaw  
Tahlequah  
Vian  
Wilburton

### Early Head Start

Sallisaw  
Stigler





**Stigler Administration Office**

1501 East Main Street  
Stigler, OK 74462

**Tahlequah Administration Office**

20 Plaza South  
Tahlequah, OK 74464

(918) 967-0748

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