

# Arizona

## Maricopa County

The Southwest Human Development Center (SWHD) is the largest non-profit organization in Arizona that is dedicated to early childhood development. They deliver services to 135,000 children and families each year through 40 different programs. They are Head Start and Early Head Start grantees, and they also lead the state's early childhood mental health consultation program, Smart Support. Through the EHS-CCP, the SWHD partners with three child care programs across the Phoenix metropolitan area that focus on serving families experiencing homelessness—including families of veterans experiencing homelessness, refugee families, and other families living in pockets of deep poverty.

### FAST FACTS

112	500	3	1	\$1.9M
Children Directly Benefiting	Children Indirectly Benefiting	Child Care Partners	Local Communities Affected	Total Grant Amount

### THE MODEL STANDOUTS

#### **A Focus on Families of Veterans Experiencing Homelessness:**

One of the SWHD's partners is the UMOM New Day Center, a family homeless shelter offering housing and support services to families experiencing homelessness in Phoenix. UMOM is currently serving 24 infants and toddlers, many from families of veterans. The SWHD also partners with a child care program near the regional Veterans Affairs (V.A.) building and a transitional housing program that specializes in services to veterans and their families. Through the EHS-CCP, low-income families and families of veterans now have access to family support services, including housing and job assistance, and their children have access to high-quality early care and learning services.

**Prioritizing Continuity of Care for Families:** One of the SWHD's priorities is to ensure continuity of care for families and to support families through difficult transitions. One way they do this is to select child care partners that are physically near other social services that families use. For example, when veterans' families leave UMOM, many move to transition housing near the city's V.A. facility. Similarly, the SWHD partners with a child care provider that offers services near the V.A. building. The SWHD also works with the city of Phoenix to acquire apartment units as a non-federal share contribution. These 1,000 units are located in an apartment complex that provides transitional housing. Through this contribution, SWHD is able to use some of these apartments as child care spaces. The complex is also home to a large number of refugees and resettlement families in addition to many other families who are going through significant challenges and living in deep poverty. The SWHD transformed those apartments and now, through the partnership, operates child care services from them. Another child

care partner operates out of Phoenix College, where many nontraditional students with families receive higher education. In all three cases, the SWHD brings child care to families' homes or schools and near other social services hubs, so that they can have access to reliable, high-quality early care and learning in places that are convenient for them.

**Self-Sustaining Quality Enhancements:** One of the SWHD's goals with the EHS-CCP is to promote self-sustaining quality enhancements with child care partners. As such, they focus much of their quality enhancement efforts on business and management, and they work with partners on a range of issues, including finding funding and securing subsidies for families. In addition, the SWHD emphasizes leadership development and provides coaching for program leaders and teachers.

**Supporting Families' Social and Emotional Development through Smart Support:** The SWHD manages Arizona's early childhood mental health consultation system, Smart Support. Smart Support delivers childhood consultations at no cost to all eligible center-based and FCC providers. Smart Support pairs mental health professionals with child care teachers to support children's social and emotional development, to manage challenging behavior, and to connect with families. They also make referrals for additional services, as needed, for children, families, and program staff. Given that the population of children the EHS-CCP serves includes children who are refugees and who may be recovering from traumatic experiences, children who are experiencing homelessness, and children whose families are escaping domestic violence, Smart Support plays a critical role in Arizona's EHS-CCP model.



## THE RESULTS

- **Data collected before and after the EHS-CCP program showed important improvements in classroom quality across multiple areas, including a positive climate, teacher sensitivity, behavior guidance, learning facilitation, language modeling, emotional support, and engaged support for learning, among others.**
- **Data showed gains in children’s receptive and expressive language scores after the EHS-CCP.**
- **Since the start of the EHS-CCP, 31 providers attained a CDA, four earned an associate’s degree, and one completed a bachelor’s degree.**
- **Since the start of the project, providers received a 5 percent increase in wages.**

## THE TAKEAWAYS

Before the EHS-CCP, children who faced the most developmental challenges were also those whose families experienced the most challenging circumstances at home. The SWHD notes that these children really needed a “Head Start experience” but were difficult to reach. Now, the EHS-CCP makes it possible for the SWHD to secure new partners and reach a new population of children. As a result, 112 additional children have access to high-quality early care and learning as well as a host of comprehensive services like health, mental health, dental health, family engagement opportunities, and assistance with housing and employment.

While high-quality care is beneficial for children, the real transformational outcomes happen when the focus is on the whole family, with an emphasis on self-sufficiency and breaking the cycle of poverty. Early Head Start and Head Start focus on the whole family. The programs engage families in their children’s learning and work with them on setting and achieving personal and professional goals, such as finding stable housing, going back to school, or finding a job. Combining these family services with high-quality care results in the most successful and sustainable outcomes for young children.

### THE TRUE COST OF HIGH-QUALITY INFANT/TODDLER CARE

The SWHD calculates that the cost per child is about \$22,000 per year, on average.

Partnerships are messy and challenging, but necessary. The EHS-CCP enables the SWHD to reach out to small-business child care programs and provide resources so that they, too, can support entire families and make a difference in the communities they serve. These small businesses would have never applied or been successful in attaining a large Head Start grant, but because of the EHS-CCP, they are now able to access those resources. The EHS-CCP model leverages Early Head Start resources across a much larger swath of the working poor.

Another important benefit of the EHS-CCP is that it brings state partners together. The SWHD says that when the EHS-CCP funding became available, a comprehensive group of state-level and community-level partners came together around infant and toddler issues like never before. As a result, the state is now working with local programs and partners in a more coordinated fashion.

While EHS-CCP funding has made an important difference, the needs in the state far outweigh current capacity. The last community assessment estimated that there are 34,200 low-income children without a stay-at-home parent who need care, but only 28,340 licensed early education slots available. This discrepancy affects families’ ability to work and go to school, and children’s ability to learn in a safe and enriching setting. Even if families have access to those slots, only 12 percent are rated as a four or higher (on a scale of one to five) by the state’s quality rating and improvement system, and in many cases, these higher-quality programs are cost prohibitive for middle- and low-income families. The state needs additional resources to increase access to high-quality early care and learning for Arizona’s youngest learners.

