

Tennessee

Chattanooga

The city of Chattanooga is one of Tennessee's EHS-CCP grantees. The city sees the partnership grant as an opportunity to leverage Early Head Start resources across their communities and to help more children and families thrive. Though children with access to Early Head Start receive a rich array of comprehensive services, most eligible children do not have access to the program and instead are served by a variety of child care programs across the city. Chattanooga is primarily concerned with this group of families, as well as families with incomes slightly above the eligibility cutoff for Head Start who nonetheless struggle to get by. Partnership funding enables them to lift up the quality of services for all of these groups of children.

FAST FACTS

372

Children Directly Benefiting

314

Children Indirectly Benefiting

6

Child Care Partners

1

Local Communities Affected

\$2.1M

Total Grant Amount

THE MODEL STANDOUTS

A City-Level Grantee: Chattanooga is one of only five city grantees in the first cohort of the EHS-CCP. Spearheaded by the leadership of Mayor Andrew Burke, the city prioritizes high-quality early care and learning, prompting them to apply for the EHS-CCP opportunity. Many cities, including Chattanooga, have the infrastructure, existing partnerships, and leverage with the state to implement successful EHS-CCP programs. Chattanooga demonstrates that the EHS-CCP grant can enhance the quality of infant/toddler care and learning in areas of high need, as determined by the city, and has the added benefit of bringing federal dollars into the local economy. When compared with a nongovernmental organization or a state, a city-level grantee has the dual benefit of offering greater employee benefits than many nongovernmental organizations and being closer to the ground, which inspires a greater sense of community and closeness than a state agency.

Expanding Access to Higher Education: Chattanooga arranges and pays for two on-site college courses for staff through the Chattanooga State Community College. They also pay for tuition and books for others to attend Chattanooga State and the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. The city assigns mentors to work with staff toward a CDA, and it hires one floater per site so staff have access to one-on-one support from mentors.

Increasing Compensation: The city encourages the partner sites to raise staff wages. Three partners now pay staff on a higher pay scale, and the remaining partners are increasing pay as staff attain credentials and degrees.

Expanding Comprehensive Services: The city makes the full spectrum of comprehensive services available to all partners through collaboration with other community service providers. Partners have support staff assigned to them, including education mentors, disability and mental health resource specialists, family support advocates, and a dietary supervisor.

Renovating Space: The city encourages all partner sites to improve the children's learning spaces, which benefits every child currently in the program whether or not they are directly enrolled, as well as future cohorts of children. Renovations—including installing new flooring, electrical and plumbing, improving playgrounds, and modifying food-preparation and meal areas—ensure that children's environments are safe, enriching, and promote learning.



“Every time I’ve partnered with Head Start, the quality of my programs has increased.

A rising tide lifts all ships.”

—EHS-CCP Center-Based Partner



THE RESULTS

- **28 staff attained or are in the process of attaining a CDA, a state certificate, or an associate's degree.**
- **All partner sites increased salaries for staff**, with some partners increasing compensation both initially and once staff completed a credential or degree.
- **Each early educator received more than 82 hours of additional training on a variety of topics**, including curricula and assessments, math and science instructional support, working with families, and effective record keeping.
- **Prior to the partnership, none of the child care partners used a curriculum; after the partnership, 100 percent use a research-based curriculum.**
- **Prior to the EHS-CCP, only 14 percent of partner sites offered mental health services. Now, 100 percent of partners offer mental health services to children, families, and staff.**
- **Before the partnership, just over half of partner sites offered disability services to children; now, all of them do.**
- **Before the EHS-CCP, none of the child care sites offered dental services and referrals. Now, 100 percent offer these services to children and families.**
- **All child care sites underwent facility improvements**, including improving and installing new playgrounds, security cameras, toilet areas, and food-preparation areas.
- **About 250 children who were not directly enrolled in the program benefited from the EHS-CCP grant** through enhanced playground space, more highly trained staff, and a formal curriculum.

THE TAKEAWAYS

One of the most important takeaways for the city of Chattanooga is that Early Head Start demand far exceeds supply. Though partnership funding is making a difference in the partners and children it reaches, there is far more need, making it critical that partnership funding continues and expands. A recent community assessment indicated that there are 2,224 children under the age of 3 in poverty in the community and that the number of individuals experiencing homelessness increased by 300 percent in recent years. Most of these children and families do not have access to high-quality early care and learning.

The partnership model is truly a systemic approach that lifts up the quality of care and learning that enrolled children *and their peers* receive. Today, Early Head Start only serves a fraction of eligible children; the rest of the children in Chattanooga are being served in child care settings across the community. Many of those community-based sites would have never directly applied for an Early Head Start

grant. The partnership opportunity provides a mechanism and financial underpinning for them to raise their quality, increase their staff credentials, and offer comprehensive services to children.

In most communities, the early education system is disjointed. Yet, the common denominator for the system across every state and community in the country is Head Start. Coupling child care sites with Head Start is a promising first step to forming a cohesive system.

Finally, the city appreciates the concerted effort to bring the Head Start and child care systems together, with an understanding that “these are all our children” and that Chattanooga has a responsibility to ensure those children receive the highest-quality early experiences, regardless of the program door they walk into. Early care and learning are important for all children, at all income levels, and across all geographic locations.

