

# Florida

## Miami-Dade County

In 2007, United Way of Miami-Dade opened its Center for Excellence in Early Education (UWCFE), an innovative learning, teaching, research, and training facility dedicated to elevating the quality of early care and education in Miami-Dade and beyond. UWCFE is an EHS-CCP grantee operating throughout Miami-Dade County and nearby communities. In addition to providing EHS-CCP services, they also deliver Head Start and Early Head Start services, run a demonstration school where they model evidence-based high-quality early childhood programming, and offer professional development opportunities for early educators throughout their community and neighboring communities. After receiving two EHS-CCP grants, UWCFE now has 20 partners, including four FCC partners and 16 center-based partners. Their partner selection strategy focuses on selecting partners who are most in need of quality enhancements and resources and who share a commitment to improving the lives of children and families.

### FAST FACTS

520

Children Directly Benefiting

625

Children Indirectly Benefiting

24

Child Care Partners

7

Local Communities Affected

\$9.2M

Total Grant Amount

### THE MODEL STANDOUTS

#### Increasing Access to Credentials and Higher Education:

Enhancing the qualifications and professional development of the existing workforce is a top priority for UWCFE's EHS-CCP grant. They intentionally sought out providers whose highest level of education is a high school diploma and put them on a pathway to attain a CDA (in either English or Spanish) and, subsequently, an associate's degree and a bachelor's degree. Providers enroll in classes and have access to mentors/coaches who help them complete classes and coach them through their demonstration portfolio, a requirement for the entry-level credential. Upon completing a CDA, UWCFE connects providers with TEACH, a national organization that provides financial assistance and mentorship to early educators seeking to earn a bachelor's degree, to continue their higher education journey.

**A Focus on Families Experiencing Homelessness:** UWCFE partners with the Lotus Village, an organization that provides shelter and social services to women experiencing homelessness. As part of the EHS-CCP, UWCFE is running an early care and education program for the children of the women at the village, which now serves 48 families. In addition to early education services, UWCFE conducts parenting education courses to help families identify their strengths and understand their child's development.

**Partnering with FCC Providers:** UWCFE partners with four FCC providers who would otherwise never have had access to the rich array of resources and technical assistance that Head Start provides. Through

the EHS-CCP, UWCFE makes necessary health and safety renovations to children's learning environments (including playgrounds), purchases books and age-appropriate learning toys, and provides a wide array of training to providers. Their training focuses on child development and learning but also includes information on business administration. Prior to the EHS-CCP, none of these providers used a curriculum, provided comprehensive services, or conducted screenings and assessments of any sort. Now, all of them do and are continuing in their efforts to increase the quality of those services.

#### An Emphasis on Continuity of Care and the Transition to School:

UWCFE uses their EHS-CCP grant as an opportunity to partner with public schools to promote continuity of care and to improve the transition from early childhood to school. UWCFE collaborates with local elementary schools and with a Head Start grantee in Miami that operates three Head Start programs. Infants and toddlers who graduate from the EHS-CCP program transition into the Head Start program and then into partner public schools. The partnership allows UWCFE to more closely track the outcomes of the children who leave their programs. Each child who leaves the program receives a unique ID that transitions with them into the school system. Data show UWCFE how the children are doing and what areas need more attention or modifications. The partnership also brings important benefits to schools. In one case, a school was set to close due to low enrollment. Instead, through the EHS-CCP, the school partnered with UWCFE



and housed six EHS-CCP classrooms on its campus, which created a steady pipeline of future students. As a result, the low-enrollment school was transformed into a Primary Learning Center that serves children from 6 weeks old to 5 years of age.

**Supporting Dual-Language Learners:** UWCFE works with a lot of Hispanic families, many of whom have children who are dual-language learners. UWCFE is intentionally working with partners to increase their understanding of dual-language development and of the many

early cognitive, social, and economic benefits of bilingualism identified by research. They are also working closely with families, highlighting evidence that indicates that strengthening children's home language early in life promotes English acquisition and broader academic achievement later in life. UWCFE's demonstration center models evidence-based, high-quality early childhood programming in a dual-language immersion setting. Given their expertise in this space, families and staff at an EHS-CCP partner program are exploring implementing a dual-language immersion model at their own center.

## The Ripple Effect

Though the EHS-CCP directly serves 520 children, more than 625 children are indirectly impacted through access to more highly trained teachers, research-based curricula, and family engagement opportunities.

## THE RESULTS

- **Classroom quality assessments indicated improvements across many measures**, including emotional and behavioral support, a positive climate in the classroom, teacher sensitivity, and behavior guidance. There were also increases in the facilitation of learning and development, the relational climate, and facilitated exploration.
- **To date, 110 providers attained a CDA (or equivalent) over the course of the EHS-CCP. An additional cohort of 40 to 60 providers will complete a CDA in fall 2018.**
- **Seven providers are enrolled in Miami Dade College and working toward an associate's degree.**
- **All providers at partner sites received higher pay.**
- **Before the grant, none of the partners used a curriculum; now, 100 percent use a research-based curriculum.**
- **Before the grant, none of the partners offered health, dental, or mental health supports; after the EHS-CCP, all of them do.**
- **All partners renovated their outdoor playgrounds to improve children's learning experiences and to ensure their health and safety.**



*“This program changed my life and the lives of my children. Besides providing my children with excellent early care and education, we are so grateful for the food pantry that the United Way placed at the program. Every other week, we are given the privilege of shopping for food, toiletries, and other critical items for our home. There are times when funds are tight and we are short of basic needs—and then comes pantry day where we have the ability to receive things we need to make it another few weeks. I am always amazed at the patience and kindness of the staff and volunteers.”*

*—Parent, A New World Academy*



## THE TAKEAWAYS

One of the most important takeaways for UWCPE is that the EHS-CCP enables them to raise the quality of services and infuse funding into small community-based programs that would otherwise never have had access to those resources. As a result, the children and families using those programs now have access to high-quality early care and learning and to a wide array of additional supports, like health and nutrition services.

UWCPE's work with providers in the community is powerful. They

note the importance of working with these providers and helping them understand the science behind how their work influences brain development and learning and how it can set children's trajectories in a positive direction.

UWCPE also notes that given the right level of resources, the Head Start Program Performance Standards can serve as a foundation for any program. Though it takes a significant amount of work to meet the standards, it can be done. And that's when children and families win.

