

Legislative Update

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HEAD START PRISM REPORT

Federal Report Positive

Results from the Department of Health & Human Services PRISM (Program Review Instrument for Systems Monitoring) visit indicate near compliance for the Audubon Area Community Services Head Start program. The few findings that were documented, such as faulty locks on cabinets and the claiming of parent co-payments as non-federal match, have already been corrected or will be soon. The agency has 90 days to formally respond in writing.

“All in all I believe it was a great report with all programmatic and program design areas in full compliance,” said Aubrey Nehring, Audubon Area’s Head Start director. “Considering the intensity of the reviews in the current environment, I believe we came out very well.”

A team of federal reviewers visited the agency February 6-10 to examine AACS systems and Head Start services. The team met with families, community members who collaborate with the agency and administrative personnel in finance and human resources. Of the four items found to be in non-compliance, three were in finance. The other was due to a missing lock at one of the sites.

The Head Start program, governed by the Head Start Act, provides grants to local public and private non-profit and for-profit agencies to provide comprehensive child development services to economically disadvantaged children and families. Its goals are to enhance early learning and promote parental involvement.

The Head Start Act requires that each grantee be reviewed every three years to ensure standards are being met.

Audubon Area Community Services administers Head Start in the 16 counties in the Pennyriple and Green River regions. In May it was named a *Program of Excellence* by the National Head Start Association.

Did you know?

Community Action Agencies were founded in 1964 with the signing of the Economic Opportunity Act. Today there are more than 1,000 nationwide, each providing services designed to alleviate poverty and address specific needs as determined through local needs assessments. Results from Audubon Area’s latest assessments of the Green River area can be found at www.audubon-area.com.

COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT

2007 Funding Appropriations

Federal funding for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program now stands at \$449 after the mark up of the FY 2007 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill by the House Appropriations Committee. This last mark up added \$18.6 million, but the amount still accounts for a 29 percent cut in the program.

CSBG, which funds many services including the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), receives a great amount of bipartisan support, and many Republicans and Democrats say funding will be restored in its entirety before the end of the year. Paying for the additional dollars for CSBG, however, is a hurdle all Community Action Agencies are facing. With limited funding in the proposed federal budget, an addition in one program within the appropriations bill means a cut in another. Other programs in the bill include Head Start, job training and Older Americans services.

The bill was still in Committee in late June. But Appropriations Chairman Lewis (R-CA) has set the goal of passing all appropriations bills in the House before the July 4 recess.

The National Community Action Foundation believes that support for CSBG continues to grow. The Bush Administration called for a phasing out of the program., but 143 Representatives signed a joint letter requesting that CSBG funding be restored to at least the FY 2005 level of \$637 million. Of those who signed, 35 were Republicans.

This most recent letter brings the total of letters in support of CSBG sent this year to three. A total of 42 Representatives, including 13 Republicans and a half-dozen appropriators, signed on to the letters to the White House and the Budget Committee but didn’t sign on to the most recent letter. So that means that a total of 185 Representatives have expressed support for protecting FY 2007 CSBG funding in recent months.

CSBG funding at Audubon Area Community Services keeps offices operating in the seven counties in the Green River region, consisting of Daviess, Ohio, Henderson, McLean, Hancock, Webster and Union counties. Eligible clients sign up for a variety of services at these offices, including LIHEAP, Weatherization, *CHOICES* (a case management program), Senior Employment and more. To learn more about CSBG, visit

Head Start Parent Survey Results Positive

Parents of children enrolled in Audubon Area Community Services Head Start have once again given high marks for the program. Results from the 2006 Parent Satisfaction Survey just released indicate a range of excellence on all responses. “We are constantly gauging the progress of our program to make sure we are meeting the needs of our families,” said Aubrey Nehring, director of Audubon Area’s Head Start. “This is one more indication that parents are more than satisfied with the quality of service they and their children are receiving.”

The survey consisted of nine questions that asked parents to rate their overall satisfaction of the program on a scale from 1 to 4, with 4 being excellent. Out of the approximately 2,500 surveys that staff sent, 1,194 responded for a response rate of nearly 50 percent.

The question that received the highest ranking pertained to staff respect and courtesy toward families. It received an overall score of 3.85 out of a possible 4 points. The lowest ranking score was 3.71, which asked if the enrollment process was easy to understand. That’s an area that Nehring said staff is constantly working to improve.

Head Start began surveying parents in 2001 in an effort to measure the impact on families. Since then, responses have remained in the excellence range, 3.65 or higher.

Created in 1965, Head Start is the most successful, longest-running national school readiness program in the nation, providing extensive education, health, nutrition and family involvement services to low-income children and their families.

Audubon Area Community Services operates Head Start in sixteen western Kentucky counties in the Green River and Pennyriple regions, serving approximately 2,500 children annually. In May, the National Head Start Association awarded the program a Program of Excellence Award for the third time. AACS’ Head Start is one of only about 25 in the nation, out of more than 2000 grantees, to have received the award that many times. The agency received the honor for 2000-03 and in 2003-06 for its continued commitment to providing innovative programs that impact children, families and communities.

Visit www.audubon-area.com to see the complete Parent Satisfaction Survey results.

FY2007 Weatherization Allocation Reduced

The Kentucky Association for Community Action, Inc. (KACA) in late May released the amount of funding for weatherization programs across the state. The total allocated to Audubon Area Community Services’ Weatherization Program totals \$194,174, significantly less than last year’s program budget. The current allocations are based on the regular Department of Energy funding and on a 5.4 percent transfer from the allocation of \$17.6 million in emergency LIHEAP to Weatherization that Kentucky received in April. Statute allows the state to transfer 15 percent of LIHEAP to Weatherization. These figures do not include whatever allocation Congress will appropriate for the LIHEAP program for the 2006-07 fiscal year.

Tom Emberton, commissioner for the Department for Community Based Services, said the lower levels of transfer are due to the Cabinets concern that LIHEAP funding may be reduced this year. If the Cabinet released the entire 15 percent from the \$17.6 million, the funding for the state’s Weatherization programs would be 10 percent less than it was on July 1, 2005. That does not include, however, the 2006-07 funding that Congress is likely to pass this year. If those funds are approved, then the overall allocation to the state’s Weatherization programs will be comparable to last fiscal year’s funding.

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