

**Western Carolina Community Action, Inc.**  
**Self-Assessment Report**  
**Summer 2021**

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## **Section I: Introduction**

### ***Program Description***

Western Carolina Community Action, Inc. (WCCA) is a Head Start (HS), Early Head Start (EHS), and EHS-Child Care Partnership (CCP) grantee serving pregnant women and children ages birth to five across four counties in western North Carolina. WCCA serves families through center-based and home-based options. Center-based options include stand-alone classrooms, located in elementary school and community settings, as well as WCCA facilities dedicated to early childhood education. Cumulative enrollment for the 2020-2021 program year was 200 in EHS, 150 in HS, and 114 in CCP.

### ***Program Goals and Objectives***

WCCA has identified three BROAD goals and SMART objectives that relate to school readiness, family engagement, and coordinated program services. Our 5-year program goals and objectives include:

**School Readiness:** Enhance school readiness by providing high quality early education and child development services to all children enrolled that is inclusive of those with disabilities and dual language learners and promotes children's growth across each domain of development.

- Raise the educational levels of 10% of Early childhood teaching staff.
- Curriculum is implemented and taught to model fidelity across all programs by up to 75% of all teaching staff.
- 100% of WCCA sites will have planned and designed Outdoor Learning Environments (OLE). Staff will be trained in the optimal utilization by children with alignment to classroom curriculum.
- WCCA will use HOVRS (Home Visiting Rating Scales) and the team will achieve an average HOVRS rating of 5 or higher to exemplify a high-quality program.

**Coordinated Program & Health Services:** In partnership with parents and community agencies, meet the health, oral health, nutritional and mental health and social emotional needs of children that support their optimal growth and school readiness.

- 100% of Children's Services Managers will participate on a local task force with community partners to address service challenges and form strategic partnerships.
- Create a program wide focus on mental health by establishing and completing up to 88% of action plan to implement Trauma Informed Care practices.
- Develop a behavioral support system that serves teachers & children utilizing CCP Coach and behavioral intervention support.

**Family Engagement:** Build strong, effective partnerships with families and community agencies that supports school readiness for children enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start Programs.

- Increase use of WCCA website resulting in 40% of enrollment applications being submitted online.
- Have an active Parent Committee at 100% of WCCA centers.
- Encourage parent or guardian attendance in Policy Council meetings by 75%
- Increase Non-Federal share generated by family involvement by 30% including growth through father/child activities taking place in the home

- 100% of FSW and Home-based staff will be trained in Family Development Model to maintain a strength-based approach to working with families.
- Provide 6 educational opportunities per year to support families of children with disabilities to inform them of their rights, resources available and make them better advocates for their child's needs.

### ***Context of the Summer 2021 Self-Assessment***

In order to use the Self-Assessment process with an ability to look at program year data and develop changes for the following program year, we moved to a model where the Self-Assessment is completed during the summer which is a natural break between our program years and data collection cycles.

The management team reviewed data from the program year related to previous self-assessment recommendations and our program goals and chose three big questions to ask of our community partners. We then invited community partners to join our staff in digging deeper into these three questions while reviewing and reflecting on quantitative and qualitative data from the program year.

## **Section II: Methodology**

### ***Self-Assessment Design***

The self-assessment leadership team, with input and approval from Policy Council, identified three primary focus areas for this year's self-assessment related to our school readiness and family engagement program goals. After an initial self-assessment team orientation to the process, the team was divided into subgroups per expertise and interest to further examine data, identify areas of growth, and develop recommendations. Our primary questions we focused on were:

#### School Readiness

- How do we create a pipeline for qualified teaching staff and for those in supervisory roles?

#### Family Engagement

- What work can we be doing around creating environments that are not only safe but also inclusive?
- How do we motivate families to engage in Head Start Programs?

### ***Team Members***

The self-assessment team was composed of internal and external stakeholders and community partners to ensure a comprehensive assessment of our program.

- Internal WCCA staff:
  - Children's Services Director
  - Program Support Services Manager
  - EHS & CCP Program Manager
  - Education Coordinator
  - Operations & Procurement Manager
  - Enhanced Program Quality & Data Manager
  - Health & Nutrition Coordinator

- HS & NCPReK Program Manager
- Local health department
  - WIC Nutritionist
- Local school district:
  - Director of Elementary Education
  - Kindergarten Transition Coordinator
  - McKinney-Vento Case Manager
  - Food Services Director
  - Director of ESL, Migrant Education, and Dual Language Program
- Local Community College: Early Childhood/Teacher Education Faculty
- Local CCR&R: Children and Family Resource Center; Family Services Director
- Local Advocacy Program for Latinx population: True Ridge, Bilingual Client Advocate

### ***Timeframe***

#### **June 2021**

- Self-Assessment Leadership Team is established by the Children’s Services Director
- Team reviewed data from 20-21 program year in conjunction with our previous self-assessment recommendations and current program goals and developed 3 big questions to bring to our community partners.
- Community partners invited to a one-day workshop

#### **July 2021**

- Self-Assessment Workshop held to engage in conversation and building of recommendations for WCCA’s implementation in the coming program year.

#### **August 2021**

- Write Self-Assessment report
- Translate report to Spanish

#### **September 2021**

- Present report and recommendations to Policy Council and WCCA Board of Directors
- Create Improvement Plan
- Communicate insights shared with stakeholders and staff

#### **October 2021**

- Adjust report, if needed, as advised by Policy Council
- Present report to WCCA Board of Directors
- Create Improvement Plan

## **Section III: Key Insights**

### ***Program Strengths***

- We have inclusive materials in classrooms that reflect our children and families.
- Families trust our program to provide safe and secure environments for their children to learn and grow.
- 1/3 of direct-services staff are working on furthering their education.

### **Systemic Issues**

- There is a shortage of Early Childhood Educators in our area in Western North Carolina that have minimum education requirements of a CDA.
- While following guidance from Head Start and child care licensing to place staff in positions they have the education for, we have not created an internal learning pathway to support growth in the Head Start Program.

### **Findings and Discoveries**

- We are making the language shift to using inclusive terms (families versus parent or specific references to “mom” or “dad”)
- Our families are busy and many do not take the time to play. In order to be successful in engaging families, we must meet them where they are, take some of the “have-tos” away and create opportunities for families to “want-to” participate and engage.

### **Progress in Meeting Our Goals and Objectives**

WCCA is headed into the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of our 5-year grant for WCCA sites and 4<sup>th</sup> year with CCP sites. We continue to make progress and improvements to meet our goals and objectives.

*School Readiness: Enhance school readiness by providing high quality early education and child development services to all children enrolled that is inclusive of those with disabilities and dual language learners and promotes children’s growth across each domain of development.*

We developed new processes and procedures to support accountability in staff completing goals set with coaches. Coaching 2 Fidelity tool was introduced to staff and base-line data was captured on how well our staff were implementing curriculum. We found the greatest need of support was with our Early Head Start teaching staff and developed plans to support them with greater success for the upcoming program year. We were able to complete installation and training for one center’s Outdoor Learning Environment. Training was provided to all staff in changes they can make in their own spaces until their site can be designed and implemented. Home Visiting staff received training in HOVRS. We will be gathering data and full implementation will begin September 2021.

*Coordinated Program & Health Services: In partnership with parents and community agencies, meet the health, oral health, nutritional and mental health and social emotional needs of children that support their optimal growth and school readiness.*

Our Management Team with other leadership in WCCA are participating in local tasks forces including homeless coalition, child-find advocacy, community health, and county focused support for young children and their families. While we were able to secure quality funds targeted on training and support for our organization to move to a becoming a trauma-informed organization, due to the pandemic and other community needs, we were unable to implement work with a partnering organization. We did offer Wellness Circles as an opportunity for staff to have safe spaces to learn mindfulness skills and find support from each other. Our Mental Health consultant program has grown to 2 community mental health professionals providing support and care to our program.

*Family Engagement: Build strong, effective partnerships with families and community agencies that supports school readiness for children enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start Programs.*

We were able to increase our application use through our website to over 60%. Our enrollment team added a bi-lingual staff member to ensure we have clear communication with our Spanish-speaking

families. The pandemic has dampened our efforts in family involvement in Policy Council and Family Committees. As we move forward into this program year, we hope to build these programs back up and continue for them to grow. We implemented ReadyRosie as our parenting curriculum with some success. This coming year as our 2<sup>nd</sup> year of implementation we plan on using more of the materials for workshops and learning moments during family committee meetings.

#### **Section IV: Key Recommendations**

The key recommendations were developed with insight from community partners.

- Provide training for all staff around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and ensure that there are actionable steps at the individual level to support communication with families and activities in the classrooms.
- Shift our thinking about what family engagement looks like. Equip our staff with the tools and resources to build communities and support families making connections with each other.
- Improve our digital presence so that we can support our families engaging with each other in meaningful ways.
- Leverage our community partnerships to enable us to be a part of a community pathway to grow our staff and the Early Childhood Education field.
- Formalize internal pathways for staff development.