

**Memorandum of Understanding  
Between the  
Arkansas Head Start State Collaboration Office/AHSA  
And the  
Division of Children and Families Services**

1. The Arkansas Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO)/Arkansas Head Start Association (AHSA) and the Division for Children and Families Services (DCFS), for the purposes of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), will outline roles, authorities, and responsibilities for jointly creating and maintaining cooperation at the state and local level between Head Start/Early Head Start (EHS) programs and local DCFS offices. It is acknowledged that while both agencies have the same focus for children and families, their structures, funding, governance, policies and procedures are different.
2. The purpose of Head Start is to promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children in enrolled programs through education, health, nutrition, and social services. . There are 20 Head Start grantees in Arkansas serving 9,702 children and families in all 75 counties.
3. The purpose of Early Head Start is to promote healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women, enhance the development of very young children, and promote healthy family functioning. There are 10 Early Head Start grantees serving 1,228 children and families.
4. The purpose of Migrant Seasonal Head Start is to work with families who primarily work in seasonal agriculture but have not moved in two years. Community Action Program for Central Arkansas serves as the lead grantee. They serve 500 children and families.

**Article I: Purpose**

5. The purpose of this agreement is to foster collaboration, effective communication, and cooperation between the HSSCO/AHSA and DCFS on the state and local level in providing services to children and families in EHS/Head Start programs across the State.

**Article II: Definitions**

1. For the purpose of the MOU, the following definitions are provided for clarification:
  - A. Collaboration —To communicate and work together equally in an effort to support and serve vulnerable families without duplicating services.
  - B. Head Start —A program that serves low-income three and four year old children and their families.
  - C. Early Head Start — A program that serves low-income families with infants and toddlers and pregnant women.
  - D. Migrant Seasonal — A program that serves children birth to five years of age and their families who move from one geographic location to another for agriculture work.
  - E. Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) -The designated state agency to administer and supervise all child welfare services (Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act), including child abuse and neglect prevention, protective, foster care, and adoptive programs.
  - F. Family Service Worker (FSW) - The designated staff that provide direct services to the children and families who are clients of DCFS. They have case management and decision making authority.

**Article III: General Provisions**

1. HSSCO/AHSA and DCFS agree to collaborate according to the provisions outlined in this MOU.
2. This MOU does not alter the terms of the relationship between HSSCO/AHSA and DCFS. This MOU also does not alter the work, job responsibilities, or policies and procedures that are required by both agencies.

## **Article IV: Program Overview**

### **1. HSSCO/AHSA**

The *HSSCO* is an organization that creates a visible presence at the state level and assists in the development of significant, multi-agency and public and private partnerships between Head Start and the State. The HSSCO uses the following methods to build systems, provide services, coordinate and lead efforts for diverse entities to work together: Communication, Access, and Collaboration.

The *AHSA* is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to meeting the needs of Arkansas children and their families. It represents more than 11,000 children, 3,000 staff, and 22 Head Start, Early Head Start, and Migrant Seasonal Head Start programs in Arkansas. The Arkansas Head Start Association also provides training and networking opportunities for grantees in Arkansas. As a professional organization, the Arkansas Head Start Association, a collaborative group of agencies and programs pledges to advocate, communicate, and partner at the community and state levels to enhance and ensure the provision of high quality outcome-oriented services to children and families.

2. DCFS-DCFS is the designated state agency to administer and supervise all child welfare services (Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act), including child abuse and neglect prevention, protective, foster care, and adoptive programs. The State's child welfare system investigated 33,353 reports of child maltreatment in SFY 2013. DCFS managed approximately 13,000 family cases with 30,000 children involved during SFY 2013. This includes protective and supportive services cases. In addition there were a total of 7,700 children at any time in foster care with 4,000 foster children in care at the end of SFY 2013. The Division is in compliance with Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act and operates, manages, and delivers services without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, mental or physical disability, veteran status, political affiliation or belief.

The Division's mission statement is as follows:

*Our mission is to keep children safe and help families. DCFS will respectfully engage families and youth and use community-based services and supports to assist parents in successfully caring for their children. We will focus on the safety, permanency and well-being for all children and youth.*

The Division's Practice Model goals include:

- Safely keep children with their families.
- Enhance well-being in all of our practice with families.
- Ensure foster care and other placements support goals of permanency.
- Use permanent placement with relatives or other adults, when reunification is not possible, who have a close relationship to the child or children (preferred permanency option).
- Ensure adoptions, when that is the best permanency option, are timely, well-supported and lifelong.
- Ensure youth have access to an array of resources to help achieve successful transition to adulthood.

## **Article V: Agreement and Responsibilities**

1. HSSCO/AHSA will consider the DCFS population as a priority population in providing services and supports to the children and families referred.
2. HSSCO/AHSA will assure that all services and supports available to families within Head Start will be available to families.
3. HSSCO/AHSA and DCFS will explore and provide opportunities to DCFS families for visits and other activities if in the best interest of the child and all parties are in agreement (e.g., coordinate parent-child visits at the Head Start center, provide opportunities for parental involvement, etc.).
4. DCFS will invite the Head Start Family Service Coordinator to case plan staffings in order for the Head Start Family Service Coordinator to provide updates on the child's individual progress and to discuss how the biological parents' services provided by Head Start may be included in the biological parents' DCFS case plan services and goals.
5. DCFS will consider any training provided to foster parents by the Head Start staff as allowable for the annual 15 hour continuing education requirement as long as it is relevant to the ages and characteristics of the children placed with the foster parent and/or preferences of the foster parents.
6. HSSCO/AHSA and DCFS will share any screenings and/or other child information necessary to ensure appropriate and timely intervention services are provided to the child referred to the program and to avoid duplication of services.
7. DCFS will encourage and support biological parents, foster parents, and other family connections to participate in the services and supports offered and provided by the Head Start program once the child is enrolled in the program.

**Article VI: Communications between Agencies**

1. HSSCO/AHSA and DCFS at the local level will share information, as it relates to the child, for services and supports.
2. HSSCO/AHSA and DCFS at the executive level will meet annually to review the MOU and assure no amendments are necessary. Either party may call a meeting to discuss any issue or concern that may arise throughout the year.

**Article VII: Termination of the MOU**

This MOU will be effective for three years (October, 2013 until September, 2016) with revisions and updates made on an annual basis as requested by either party.

**Article VIII: Dispute Resolution**

1. Any disputes between agencies and/or programs at the local level, that cannot be managed or resolved, shall be reported to the agencies represented in this MOU. Both agencies will work together to resolve any disputes between agencies and programs at the local level.

**Article IX: Amendment of the MOU:**

1. Any changes or updates made to this MOU must be made with knowledge from both parties with a revision date and new signatures.
2. The MOU shall not be approved, amended, or assigned without the consent of each party. Both parties on the state level will sign and monitor the effectiveness of this MOU. It will be reviewed each year to identify if it is meeting the needs of DCFS and EHS/Head Start programs..

  
 HSSCO/AHSA Director      2/26/14  
 Date

  
 DCFS Director      2/26/14  
 Date