



Media Release

Contact:

**Amy Webb, DHS Director of Communications
(501) 682-8650**

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Contractor Agrees to Take Over ABC Slots for State Starting Monday

Community Development Institute out of Denver has agreed to contract with the state of Arkansas to take over the 388 Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABC) grant slots that were held by Child Development Center Inc. out of Russellville (CDI Russellville) for the remainder of the school year.

“This is an unfortunate situation, but we are grateful to the Denver program for its willingness to take on these ABC slots this quickly,” said Tonya Russell, director of the Department of Human Services Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education. “This allows for a seamless transition and continuity of services for these children, which in some instances are integrated in the same classrooms or buildings with the federal Head Start program.”

ABC is the state-funded pre-kindergarten program in Arkansas. It serves about 25,000 children statewide and has been repeatedly recognized by the National Institute of Early Education Research as one of the best pre-k programs in the nation for high quality standards that result in children being ready for school.

Community Development Institute, which also has a contract with the federal government to oversee the Head Start slots that CDI Russellville relinquished, will operate both programs at existing locations.

CDI Russellville employees who worked for both the ABC and Head Start programs are being asked to attend a job fair this weekend ensure continued employment. CDI Russellville had been a licensed early childhood provider since 1987, and was one of the first state-funded pre-k programs in the state.

Prior to the financial issues that surfaced in January, the program had a history of compliance with state regulations, including licensing and ABC requirements, as well as a high-quality rating for the educational services it provided.

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The CDI Russellville board has requested a federal audit of CDI Russellville's program. DHS also will be reviewing the financial information for all programs for which it is responsible.

Before the school year ends, DHS will put out a request for proposals for other early childhood providers to assume administration of the 388 ABC slots.