

# 2021-2022 Annual Report



Leading the Way to a  
**Brighter Future**  
For All Children



GULF REGIONAL  
**Early Childhood Services**

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# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of Gulf Regional Early Childhood Services, I want to express our sincere gratitude for the continued support from our funders, partners and friends. In many ways, navigating the “new normals” brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic have proven challenging, requiring our best efforts to reach our goals.

We are grateful that community support and stable funding have enabled GRECS to continue offering high-quality early care and education programs throughout our region. Our dedicated teachers and education coaches are working hard every day to ensure that each child is reaching his or her highest potential. Family Advocates and other GRECS staff members also worked tirelessly to facilitate access to healthcare, employment, and education opportunities for parents to help families thrive during such a challenging time.

While meeting the critical needs of the children and families, GRECS also took steps to enhance organization operations. We opened a new early learning center in Mobile with the capacity to serve 79 children, infants through Pre-K; elevated quality standards by achieving a STAR 3 rating at Early Learning Center Fairhope; launched a new early literacy program, Bright Beginnings, in partnership with PNC Grow Up Great Foundation; and, recognized the extraordinary commitment of our staff. Also, understanding that access to trusted and reliable child care enables parents to work and pursue their professional goals, before and after care hours are now available in many of our program locations.

In this report, you will find many reasons why we are proud of the way GRECS serves our communities. With an unprecedented public investment being made into early childhood education, this coming year is certain to be exciting. We are looking forward to the opportunities the new year will bring and continuing to lead the way to a brighter future for children!

Sincerely,

*Wendy McEarchern*



**WE'RE A NATION OF  
TINKERERS, AND DREAMERS  
AND BELIEVERS IN A BETTER  
TOMORROW.**

**- Barak Obama**

# PROGRAMS & SERVICES

## Head Start and Early Head Start

Comprehensive early learning/child care services for infants, toddlers, and preschool children of families who live in Mobile, Baldwin, Clarke and Escambia counties

## Child Care

Affordable high-quality full day and extended day services for children

## Alabama First Class Pre-K

Free Pre-K program funded through Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education, Office of School Readiness that provide access to high quality early learning experiences prior to entering traditional kindergarten classroom settings

## Early Childhood Education Professional Development Programs

Face-to-face workshops and training events; Online and distance learning courses for CEU credit; Quarterly newsletters; Child Development Associate credential consultation and training; Reproducible resources for parents and Early Childhood Education professionals

## The Resource Place

A lending library of developmentally appropriate materials, a teacher workroom and reusable resource materials

## Bright Beginnings Project

This program engages in professional development and distributes learning materials and information to families, supporting them as they spend time together

## Early Learning Literacy Initiative

Providing developmentally appropriate books and resources to children in early learning programs throughout a seven county region



Early Learning Center Mid-City teachers and kids dressed up in costumes for Halloween!



Early Learning Center Brewton teachers and kids dress up for career day!

# PROGRAMS & SERVICES

## Early Learning Literacy Initiative

In 2021-2022, GRECS completed Early Literacy book distributions at 30 licensed centers, 10 license-exempt centers, and 8 family/group child care homes. These programs serve children ages 5 and under in Baldwin, Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia, Mobile, Monroe, and Washington Counties. At book distributions, GRECS staff modeled engaging read-aloud techniques for caregivers on site, and each child was given the opportunity to choose a book to take home.



## The Resource Place

The Resource Place, located at GRECS' office in Mobile, includes the Lending Library and Work Room, offering a wide variety of resources under one roof. The Lending Library gives early childhood education professionals, centers, parents, and anyone working with young children access to developmentally appropriate classroom materials, educational games, puppets, children's books, and program planning and resource materials. The GRECS Work Room includes special equipment such as die-cut machines, laminators and button makers. The highly qualified staff, equipment and materials at the Resource Place make it an ideal base for providing technical support to teachers and caregivers.



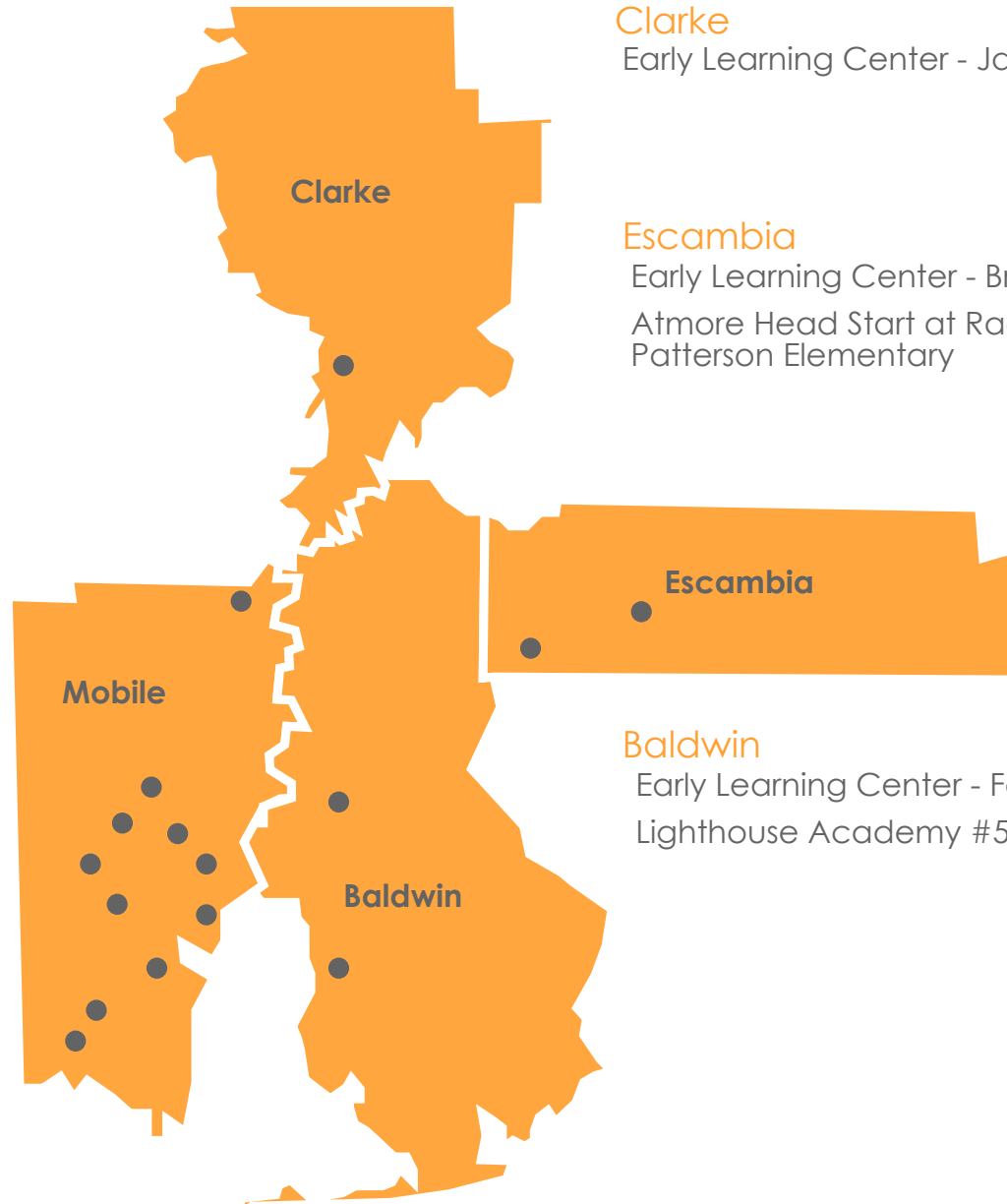
# GRECS PARTNER AGENCIES



# HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START LOCATIONS

## Mobile

The Clever Caterpillar  
Dearborn YMCA  
Early Learning Center  
- Mid-City  
Highpoint Christian  
School and Daycare  
Lighthouse Academy #1  
Lighthouse Academy #3  
Mt. Ararat Child  
Development Center  
Nina Joseph CDC  
Small Wonders  
Watch Me Grow  
Starlight Learning Center



## Clarke

Early Learning Center - Jackson

## Escambia

Early Learning Center - Brewton  
Atmore Head Start at Rachel  
Patterson Elementary

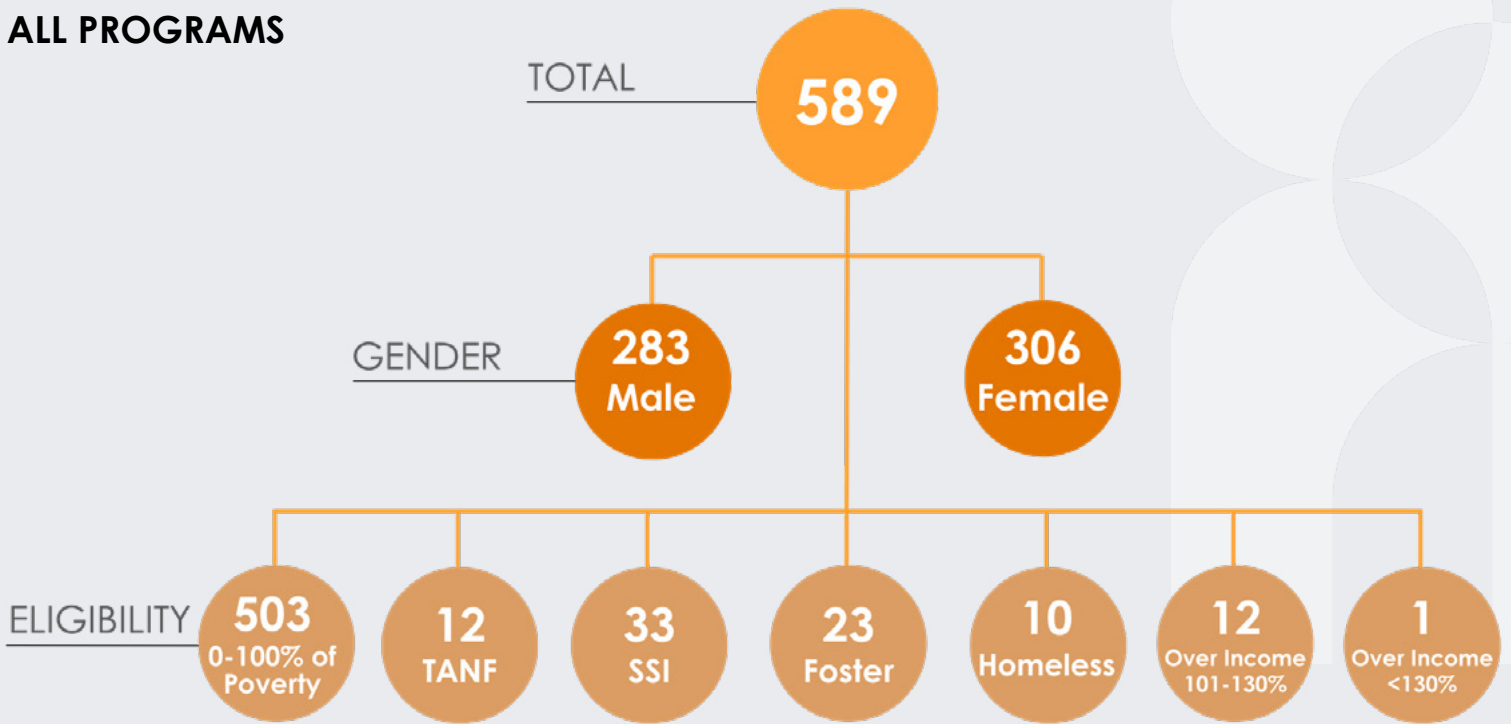
## Baldwin

Early Learning Center - Fairhope  
Lighthouse Academy #5

"Cumulative Enrollment" as listed on the next page refers to all children who were enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start throughout the 2021-2022 program year, including those who enrolled and disenrolled throughout the year.

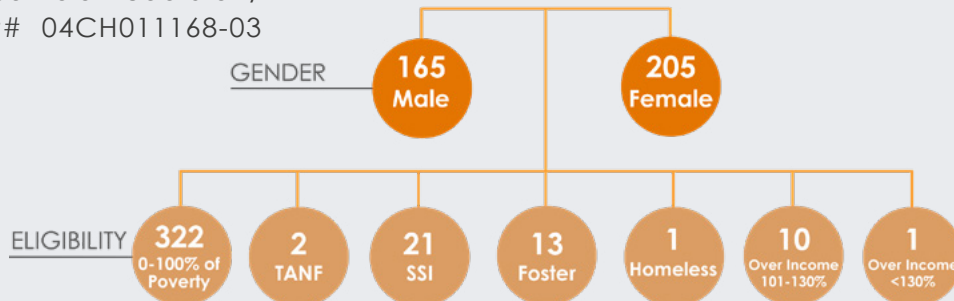
# CUMULATIVE ENROLLMENT

## ALL PROGRAMS

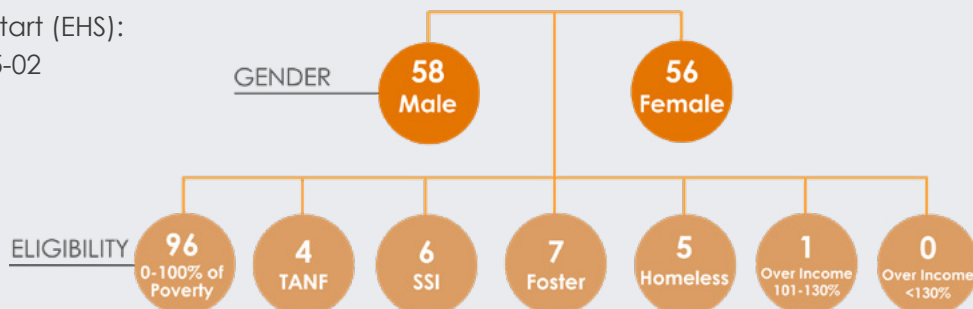


## BROKEN DOWN BY GRANT

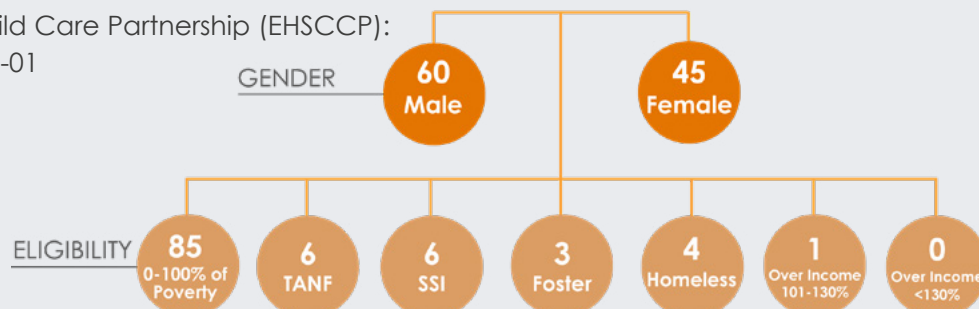
Baldwin, Clarke, Escambia Head Start/  
Early Start: Grant# 04CH011168-03  
**2021-2022**



Mobile Early Head Start (EHS):  
Grant# 04CH011305-02  
**2021-2022**



Early Head Start Child Care Partnership (EHSCCP):  
Grant# 04HP000475-01  
**2021-2022**




# EARLY EDUCATION OUTCOMES

All GRECS Head Start/Early Head Start Children 2021/2022 Year	
Meets/Exceeds Developmental Expectations	
Approaches to Learning	72%
Social - Emotional	74%
Physical	79%
Language	77%
Literacy	71%
Cognition	77%
Math/Science	75%
<b>Average</b>	<b>75%</b>





# FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

 **Rokhaya Swan** enrolled her three-year-old daughter in the Early Head Start program two years ago. She was looking for specialized child care options and saw a yard sign about Early Head Start. Upon entering the program, she was surprised to learn that all she needed to bring to school




each day was a change of clothes for her daughter. Early Head Start programs provide diapers, wipes, food and formula, all of which are expensive and can increase the financial burden families experience. This is just one way that Early Head Start is helping parents improve their prospects for economic security while simultaneously ensuring their children are on a solid path from the earliest age to engage in lifelong learning. Before starting the program, Rokhaya's young daughter used very little spoken language and was not potty trained. After two years in the program, her daughter's vocabulary has increased and she enthusiastically uses her growing language skills to communicate with her teachers and friends at school every

day. Rokhaya is grateful that she found out about the GRECS Early Head Start program and wishes she had known about it sooner. She openly tells anyone who will listen what a difference the Early Head Start program has made in her family's life.

Supporting families is a cornerstone of the program. Each family is assigned a Family Advocate (FA) who helps them set goals for themselves and their family. Families are helped with information, resources and encouraging support.



 **Kennedy Tims**, a first-time mother, had a heart full of nerves about leaving her son, Ranger, in a childcare setting. With the encouragement of her GRECS family advocate, Kennedy found the strength to trust the process despite her fears and hesitations. The first two weeks were difficult, but with time, Kennedy began to see how much her son was thriving and growing inside the Early Head Start program. In fact, she realized that Ranger was not the only one growing through this experience. Kennedy openly talks about her journey of overcoming the challenge of trusting others to care for her son. The Early Head Start/Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework is a collaborative process through which early childhood professionals, families, and children build positive and goal-oriented relationships. It is a shared responsibility of families and staff at all levels that requires mutual respect for the roles and strengths each has to offer. At GRECS, we believe that a strong support system is key to a child's success in school and throughout his life. The everyday achievements like those in Kennedy and Ranger's story are a perfect example of how the PFCE honors and supports the parent-child relationships that are central to a child's healthy development, school readiness, and well-being.

# BRIGHT BEGINNINGS PROJECT

The Bright Beginnings Project is funded through PNC Bank's Grow Up Great Foundation. Each year, this project reaches 450 children from birth to 40 months old in Mobile and Baldwin counties, along with each child's parents and teachers. Carefully selected children's books and early learning materials are packaged with specific activity suggestions and parenting tips and sent home with children each quarter. These materials are designed to encourage and enhance parent-child interactions that support typical child development and school readiness. Early childhood educators also receive the same materials for their classrooms, allowing the learning experiences and interactions to extend from the classroom into the home and back again. Our highly qualified GRECS staff conduct training classes to model intended use the materials, preparing educators to engage parents in their child's early learning experiences. The families and children reached by the Bright Beginnings Project are enrolled in the comprehensive early learning programs provided in GRECS Early Head Start classrooms and other infant-toddler classrooms at our child care center partner centers.

**Family Fun Card**  
12 - 36 Months

**Read together:**  
I Went Walking by Sue Williams

I Went Walking is a great book about a young child going for a walk and discovers a colorful parade of animals along the way. The child sees a black cat, a brown horse, a red cow, a green duck, a pink pig and a yellow dog. While reading the book, point to the animals describing the animals by size, color, and the sound they make. For example, look at the small black cat, the cat says "Meow." Look at the big red cow, the cow says "Moo." Take a walk outside around your home or go to the park. Make connections with your child of different animals you may see along the way.

**Play together:**  
Bubbles are so much fun! Simply blow the bubbles and encourage your child to follow with their eyes. This helps with visual tracking, which is important for coordination and body awareness. Fine motor skills are strengthening during bubble play. Get your little one to pop the bubbles with their hands. They can pop it with their whole hand, clapping, and smooching it. They can also use their pointer finger to pop them.

This summer we are adding a pail and shovel to your child's collection of toys! Pail and shovel improves baby's coordination and motor skills. Here are five play actions for motor skill development:

- Trying to put sand in the shovel/out of the shovel.
- Learning to put sand in the bucket/out the bucket.
- Holding firm grains of sand without letting them slip through the fingers.
- Keeping a tight grasp of the shovel while moving it.
- Combining two physical activities such as squinting while shoveling.

Logos: GOLF REGIONAL Early Childhood Services, GRECS Early Head Start, PNC, Grow Up Great

## Project Goals

**Goal 1** - Families of infants and toddlers (birth to 40 months) will be engaged in activities that support their child's healthy development and early school readiness.

**Goal 2** - Family engagement activities are strength based and support the child's parents/family as their most important advocate and teacher.

**Goal 3** - Parents/families gain closer connection to their child's educational experience by sharing activities they do at home with teachers and with family engagement staff!

## GRECS DISTRIBUTED MATERIALS TO OVER 450 CHILDREN, INCLUDING 122 INFANTS AND 318 TODDLERS!



EHS/HS teachers and parents receiving activity bags to do with their children.



# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

GRECS is dedicated to supporting the continuum of quality across all areas of learning, by increasing the quality of early childhood education programs and of the secondary education programs that educate our workforce. Our professional development opportunities are designed to help educators master content, hone teaching skills and address challenges faced in the classroom all in accordance with developmentally appropriate practices. GRECS' educational programs meet the highest standards for continuing education and training, earning our agency the distinction of being awarded Accredited Provider status by the International Association of Continuing Education and Training (IACET), the accrediting organization for Continuing Education Training credit (CEU).



## Professional Development Training

The GRECS Professional Development training program provided an impressive 608 credit hours of training sessions to early childhood professionals. The program aimed to enhance the skills and knowledge of professionals in the field, and the sessions covered a range of relevant topics. The training was delivered by highly experienced trainers who employed interactive and engaging methodologies to ensure the participants' active involvement. The feedback received from the participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing how the training had helped them in their work and increased their confidence.



## Technical Assistance Visits

In addition to the professional development training, GRECS conducted 2739 technical assistance visits to early learning programs. The visits aimed to provide tailored support to the programs and address specific needs and challenges.

## Participant Attendance

The GRECS Professional Development training program were attended by a total of 4093 participants. The program attracted a diverse range of professionals, including early learning teachers, administrators, and other related professionals. The attendance figures indicate the program's popularity and success, with many participants returning for multiple sessions.

## Distribution of Newsletters

GRECS also distributed 5450 issues of the "Early Learning News" newsletter. The newsletter contained relevant and informative articles on early learning programs and issues. The distribution of the newsletter aimed to keep professionals informed and up-to-date on developments in the field.



# SNAP

In April 2022, President Biden's Executive Order on Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government made changes to reduce the challenge of navigating multiple eligibility processes and intends to support better alignment and coordination across federal public benefit programs. This change was made possible through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Information Memorandum (IM) that included SNAP in the definition of "public assistance" under Section 645 of the Head Start Act. ***This means that eligible families can now use proof of SNAP receipt to determine eligibility for enrollment in Head Start, making it easier for families to participate in Head Start and Early Head Start programs.***

Previously, the Office of Head Start (OHS) only considered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) as public assistance. However, with the sharp reduction in families that establish eligibility through the current public assistance definition, Head Start has made the public assistance route more available to families and grantees.

**By allowing SNAP to qualify families for our Head Start programs, GRECS hopes to reach more eligible families and provide them with the support they need to ensure their children's success.**

We believe that every child deserves a strong start in life, and we are committed to making that possible for families in our community.

## EARLY LEARNING CENTER MID-CITY

### UWSWA DAY OF CARING

During United Way of Southwest Alabama's annual Day of Caring event, a team from SSAB, a steel company in Axis, AL, worked alongside our dedicated GRECS staff to build furniture and set up classrooms in preparation for the grand opening of Early Learning Center Mid-City.



# LEADERSHIP

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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*Chairman*

**Linda Steele**  
*Vice-Chairman*

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*Treasurer*

**Suzy Hardy**  
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**Carolyn Douglas**

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**John Marshall, LCC, NCC**

**Katrina Trammell, M.D.**

**Micah Wheeler, C.P. A.**

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**Cheryl Gwin**

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**Brittanee James**

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**Tianna White**

**Centrell Williams**

**Lauren Burgess**

**Kim Curry**

**Shameka German**

**Anna Patterson**

**Brittanee Crayton**

**Anna Ballard**

*Incoming Board Members for 2022-2023 include Julie Bellcase, MBA (AltaPointe Health Systems, Inc.); Melissa Creighton (Mobile County Health Department); and Benterah C. Morton, Ph.D. (University of South Alabama)*

## Senior Leadership

**Wendy McEarchern**  
*President/Chief Executive Officer & Executive Head Start/Early Head Start Director*

**Ruth Vollmer**  
*Executive Vice President/Chief Financial Officer of Finance & Administration*

**Kym Carroll**  
*Vice President of Research, Policy & Programs*

**Allison Goff**  
*Early Learning Career Center Director*

**Sarah McKay**  
*Operations Director*

**Sallie Martin**  
*Community Connections Coordinator & AL Early Head Start Child Care Partnership Program Manager*

**Catherine Kreger**  
*Head Start/Early Head Start Director of Children Services*

## Coordinators

**Ann Sands**  
*Early Learning Center Mid-City Director*

**Shajuane Kent-Cook**  
*Head Start/Early Head Start E.R.S.E.A. Coordinator*

**Niki Thompson**  
*Education Services Coordinator*

**Candace Ellis**  
*Education Services Coordinator*

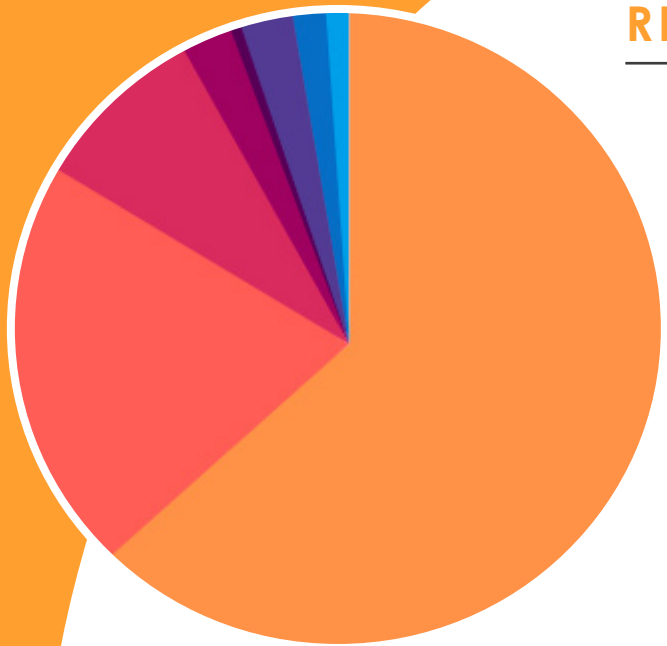
**Steffani Hammit**  
*Mental Health Services Coordinator*

**Tammy Street**  
*Family Services Coordinator*

**Irma Dennise Melendez**  
*Head Start/Early Head Start Health Coordinator*

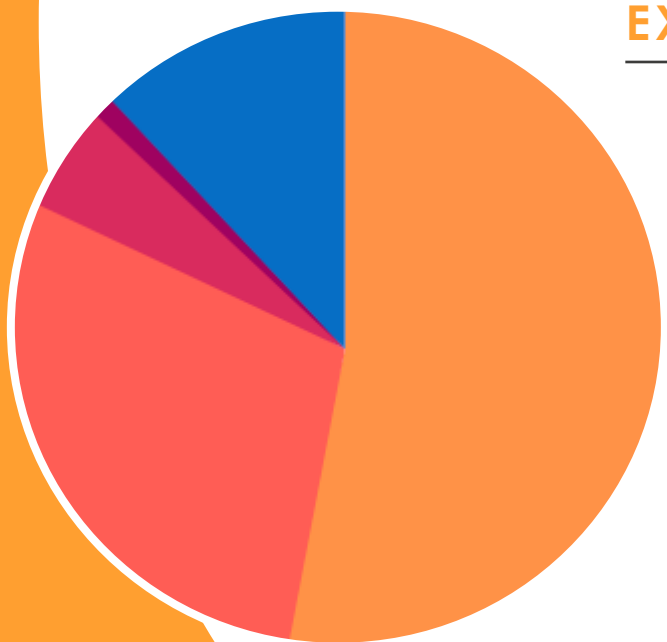
# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

## 2022 ACTUAL REVENUE & EXPENDITURES



### REVENUE \$11,446,753.00 100%

● Head Start/Early Head Start (Federal)	\$ 7,243,017	63%
● Early Head Start (State)	\$ 2,337,120	20%
● Quality	\$ 933,625	8.2%
● CARES/American Rescue	\$ 275,648	2.4%
● United Way	\$ 62,000	0.5%
● Office of School Readiness Pre-K	\$ 286,085	2.5%
● DHR Stabilizing Child Care Programs	\$ 182,000	1.6%
● Other Contributors/Local Programs	\$ 127,258	1.1%



### EXPENSES \$11,324,996.00 100%

● Salaries & Benefits	\$ 6,011,907	53%
● Contractual	\$ 3,326,550	29%
● Supplies	\$ 568,530	5%
● Equipment/Facilities	\$ 65,400	1%
● Professional Development	\$ 29,699	0%
● Travel	\$ 8,030	0%
● Other	\$ 1,314,880	12%

An annual A-133 financial audit was conducted by Smith, Dukes & Buckalew, L.L.P. in accordance with Government Auditing Standards. The audit included all expenditures from October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021 and indicates no findings or questioned costs.

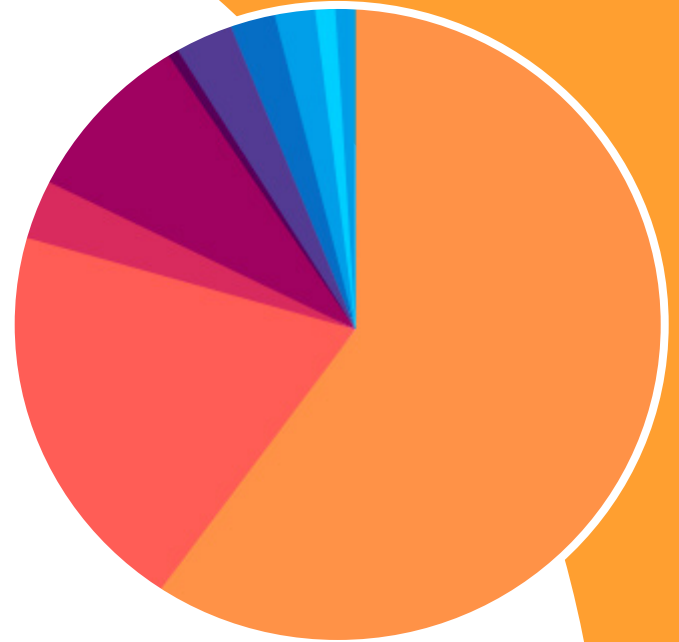
# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

2023

## BUDGETED REVENUE & EXPENDITURES

**REVENUE** \$12,197,369.00 100%

● Head Start/Early Head Start (Federal)	\$ 7,329,471	60%
● Early Head Start (State)	\$ 2,327,520	19%
● Quality	\$ 1,017,650	8.3%
● CARES/American Rescue	\$ 355,728	2.8%
● United Way	\$ 62,000	0.5%
● Office of School Readiness Pre-K	\$ 344,000	2.8%
● Alabama Dept Of Child Nutrition	\$ 270,000	2.2%
● Alabama ECC	\$ 250,000	2.0%
● DHR Stabilizing Child Care Programs	\$ 120,000	1.0%
● Other Contributors/ Local Programs	\$ 121,000	1.0%



**EXPENSES** \$12,043,563.00 100%

● Salaries & Benefits	\$ 6,505,551	54%
● Contractual	\$ 3,335,202	28%
● Supplies	\$ 545,250	5%
● Professional Development	\$ 95,050	1%
● Equipment/Facilities	-	0%
● Travel	\$ 12,500	0%
● Occupancy/Other	\$ 1,550,010	13%





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