



GULF REGIONAL
Early Childhood Services



Annual
Report
2022-2023

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

OUR MISSION:
Leading the way to a
BRIGHTER FUTURE
for all children.



First, my personal thanks is extended to all of you who have contributed to Gulf Regional Early Childhood Services' (GRECS) programs and achievements. Reflecting on the accomplishments of the past year, I am filled with gratitude for the unwavering support of our community, partners, and dedicated team.

GRECS is very fortunate to be led by a dedicated and knowledgeable board of directors and supported by generous funders that remain committed to the mission of our agency. With their leadership and support, the comprehensive, high-quality services for children and great training for early childhood professionals provided by our agency are making an impact in our communities. We can't help but be proud to see the success of our efforts!

As an example, our own GRECS centers are among our great community of child care providers being recognized by "Alabama Quality STARS", our state's Quality Rating and Improvement System. Earning a star rating allows child care programs to receive grants to use to maintain high-quality environments for children and put toward ongoing program improvements. GRECS plays an important role that supports STARS. We host information sessions and use our publications and social media platforms to encourage participation in STARS. In addition, our child care quality consultants and classroom coaches engage early career and education professionals with best practices instruction as well as program implementation guidance integral to the ratings process.

Last, but certainly not least, I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity to work with an incredible staff! We have a great team of employees who strive to make every day better for our community of children, families and early childhood education professionals. GRECS brings together talented individuals from diverse backgrounds, which plays a crucial role in advancing the agency's mission of providing comprehensive services in our communities. Each team member brings a unique perspective, shaped by their personal experiences, cultural insights, and community connections. This diversity fosters creativity, innovation, and a deep understanding of the nuanced needs of the communities and empowers GRECS to deliver impactful and sustainable solutions that create meaningful change in the lives of those it serves.

Looking ahead, we are excited to embark on new initiatives that will expand our impact and deepen our engagement with those we serve. From launching innovative programs to forging meaningful collaborations, we anticipate further reaching into the hearts and lives of individuals and families in our communities. Together, we will continue to work to achieve positive change and empower those in need. Thank you for being part of our journey and for your ongoing commitment to our shared mission.

Sincerely,

Wendy McEarchern
Chief Executive Officer

Programs & Services



Head Start and Early Head Start

Comprehensive services for infants, toddlers, and preschool children in Mobile, Baldwin, Clarke and Escambia counties.



The Resource Place

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



Bright Beginnings

Through the support of PNC Grow Up Great, this program uses professional development along with learning materials and information to enrich the time parents and children spend together.



Early Learning Literacy Initiative

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

Early Childhood Education Professional Development Programs

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



Head Start & Early Head Start Cumulative Enrollment Data

ALL PROGRAMS

ENROLLMENT DATA BY GRANT

Gender	
Male	340
Female	296
Pregnant Mom	4
TOTAL	640

Enrollment Eligibility	
Income Eligibility 0% - 100%	292
TANF	16
SSI	49
SNAP (Food Stamps)	234
Foster Care	19
Experiencing Homelessness	11
Over-Income 101% - 130%	17
Over-Income > 130% +	2
TOTAL	640

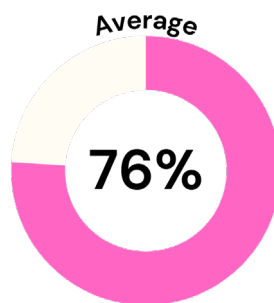
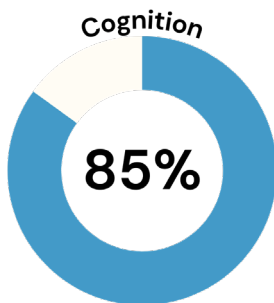
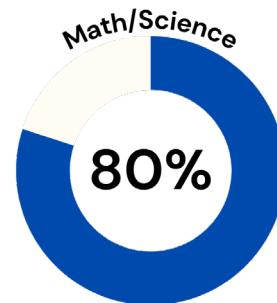
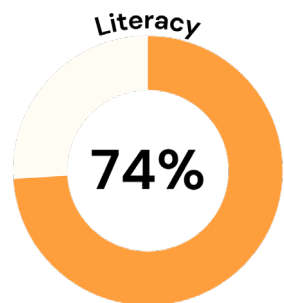
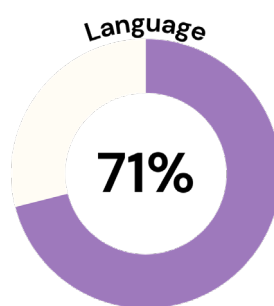
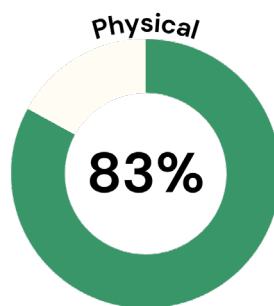
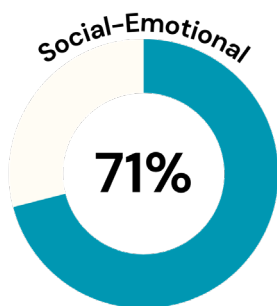
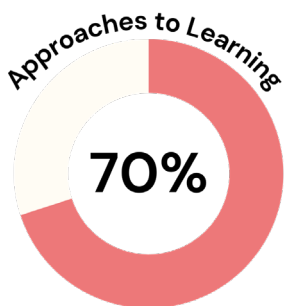
Baldwin, Clarke & Escambia Head Start / Early Head Start Grant #04CH011168-03		
Gender - Male - 225	Gender - Female - 165	Pregnant Mom - 0
Income Eligibility 0% - 100% - 161	TANF - 9	SSI - 31
SNAP (Food Stamps) - 155	Foster Care - 12	Experiencing Homelessness - 3
Over-Income 101% - 130% - 17	Over-Income > 130% - 2	
		TOTAL - 390

Mobile EHS Grant #04CH011305-02		
Gender - Male - 60	Gender - Female - 65	Pregnant Mom - 4
Income Eligibility 0% - 100% - 68	TANF - 1	SSI - 9
SNAP (Food Stamps) - 43	Foster Care - 5	Experiencing Homelessness - 3
Over-Income 101% - 130% - 0	Over-Income > 130% - 0	
		TOTAL - 129

EHS CC Partnership Grant #04HP000475-01		
Gender - Male - 55	Gender - Female - 66	Pregnant Mom - 0
Income Eligibility 0% - 100% - 63	TANF - 6	SSI - 9
SNAP (Food Stamps) - 36	Foster Care - 2	Experiencing Homelessness - 5
Over-Income 101% - 130% - 0	Over-Income > 130% - 0	
		TOTAL - 121



Early Education Outcomes



77% of Head Start & Early Head Start children enrolled throughout the 2022-2023 program year had well child exams and 87% had dental exams.

Head Start and Early Head Start Locations

Mobile County

- 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
- Starlight Learning Center

Clarke County

- Early Learning Center Jackson

Escambia County

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

Baldwin County

- Early Learning Center Fairhope
- Lighthouse Academy #5

*Cumulative Enrollment as reported on the previous page refers to all children who were enrolled in Head Start & Early Head Start throughout the 2022-2023 program year, including those who were enrolled and disenrolled throughout the year.

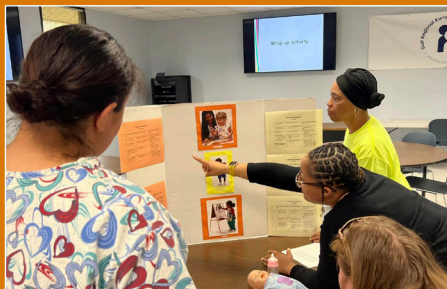


Professional Development

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

GRECS conducted workshop sessions in Baldwin, Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia, Mobile, Monroe & Washington counties, providing caregivers with the opportunity to complete training hours needed to fulfill DHR yearly training requirements, renew certificates and credentials, improve their skills and ability to provide high quality learning environments and experiences for children, and maintain professional status. In 2022-2023, our professional development team

- conducted **325** training sessions
- processed **7,341** registrations
- hosted **5,574** people at training events
- offered **533.5** credit hours
- provided **2,851** technical assistance consultations



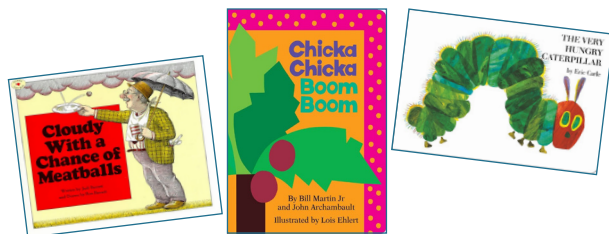
Tyronda Griffin and Destiny Autry, early childhood professionals from Florida, AL, traveled 103 miles one way to attend GRECS training classes. Combined they have over 168 contact hours obtained in a period of 4 months.

EARLY LITERACY PROJECT



GRECS Professional Development Team Member, Paula Reese, spends time reading to young children and distributing books for each child to take home. During visits to local child care programs, GRECS staff model developmentally appropriate read-aloud techniques for early education professionals.

Over **2,500** books were distributed during visits to **51** licensed child care centers, **13** license-exempt child care centers, and **11** family and group child care homes.



ALABAMA EARLY LEARNING GUIDELINES

GRECS Professional Development Trainer/Consultants provided training sessions to support child care professionals completing required coursework in order to receive the Alabama Early Learning Guidelines credential. GRECS had **59** individuals complete the full course and receive the credential.

THE RESOURCE PLACE

The Resource Place is made up of the Lending Library and Work Room, which offers teachers, child care professionals, home care providers and anyone else caring for young children a convenient outlet for ideas and materials. The highly qualified staff, equipment and materials at the Resource Place also make this an ideal base for providing technical support to teachers/caregivers. A work room includes special equipment such as die-cutters, laminators and button machines.

1,237

items checked
out

89

new
memberships

251

providers visited
The Resource
Place

900+

items entered
into new online
check out system.



LENDING BOXES

The Lending Box program provides early educators in Baldwin, Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia, Monroe and Washington Counties with pre-selected teaching aids, toys, games and books that support identified learning objectives structured around a theme and goal. GRECS Trainer/Consultants curated and delivered 49 Lending Boxes to early education professionals in 2022-2023.



*Scan the QR code above for more details about 2022-2023 Professional Development programs and initiatives.



Darlene Hildreth and Kathryn Kelley, family child care providers in Evergreen, Alabama, explore their pre-selected items that were conveniently delivered to them during an Early Literacy Project visit.

Activity Highlights

SCHOOL READINESS CALENDARS "GETTING READY FOR KINDERGARTEN"

Calendars were distributed to **61** child care programs where every 4- and 5-year-old child received a calendar to take home. The calendars are filled with activities for children and families. Training and technical assistance is provided for each program receiving the calendars. This year **2,500** English and **50** Spanish were distributed.

"USING PLAY TO PROMOTE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING"

Renowned play therapist & early childhood expert, Christian Bellisimo, conducted a workshop for **40** early education professionals in June 2023.



EARLY CHILDHOOD INSTITUTE WITH DR. ROSEMARIE ALLEN

GRECS had the honor of hosting Dr. Rosemarie Allen for the Early Childhood Institute in August 2023 at Dauphin Way Baptist Church. **144** early education professionals were in attendance. Dr. Allen is the Founder, President and CEO of the Center for Equity and Excellence. Her distinguished career spans over 40 years in education. Dr. Allen is the recipient of the prestigious T. Barry Brazelton Friends of Children Award, sharing this honor with other recipients such as First Ladies, Hilary Clinton, Rosalind Carter, and Laura Bush.

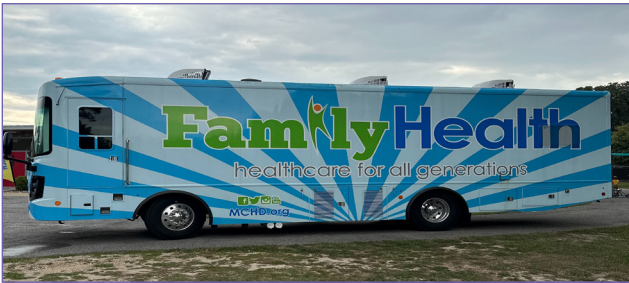


COMMUNITY OUTREACH AT LODA ARTWALK

LODA Artwalk is a monthly community event sponsored by the City of Mobile and Mobile Arts Council. GRECS set up a booth at the downtown Mobile event for 7 months, where we distributed a total of **975** family-friendly activity packets and **1200** free books to children. Books were acquired with support of Goodwill Gulf Coast.



Brushing Up on Oral Health



GRECS collaborated with Mobile County Health Department (MCHD) and Family Health (FH) to provide pediatric dental services at 3 Early Head Start sites, with other sites scheduled to come in 2023-24. Tooth decay has been identified as the most common childhood disease. The MCHD's Mobile Medical Unit conducted preventive dental assessments and made referrals to local pediatric dentists that accept Medicaid and other forms of payment for low-income patients. Practitioners and GRECS Health Services staff members also provided families with educational materials and resources on improving and maintaining the health of infants and toddlers.

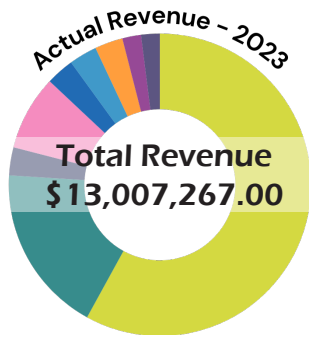
Family Spotlight



MEET THE MOREHOUSE FAMILY

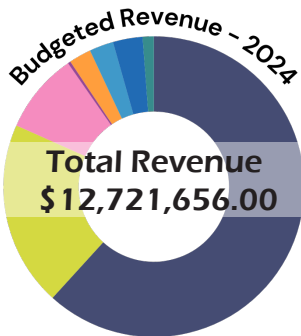
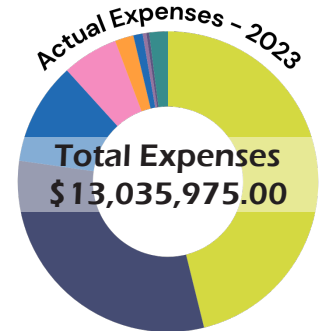
Jonathan and Alyshia Morehouse, along with their three children, have faced challenging circumstances in recent years. The Morehouse family relocated to Alabama from Alaska in hopes of a fresh start and a much-needed family support system. What they discovered upon arrival was that their extended family members were experiencing homelessness with no resources to spare. Jonathan's determination to turn things around for his family led him to GRECS Early Learning Center Fairhope, where our dedicated staff connected them to mental health services, job placement support programs and connections to other community resources. Through these services, Jonathan and his wife have been able to secure gainful employment and stable housing for their family. They are grateful for the peace of mind child care assistance brings and the kindness shown by GRECS staff. The Morehouse family is determined to make the most of the opportunities they have been given and create a brighter future together.

Financial Summary



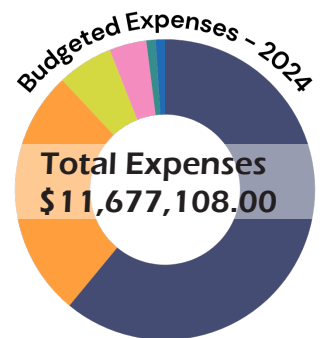
Head Start/Early Head Start (Federal)	\$7,490,710.00	58%
Early Head Start (State)	\$2,327,520.00	18%
CARES/American Rescue	\$453,240.00	3%
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$1,017,650.00	8%
United Way	\$46,365.00	0%
Office of School Readiness Pre-K	\$385,400.00	3%
Alabama Dept Of Child Nutrition	\$331,665.00	3%
Alabama ECC	\$395,217.00	3%
DHR Stabilizing Child Care Programs	\$300,000.00	2%
Other Contrib/Local Programs	\$259,500.00	2%

Salaries & Benefits	\$7,950,655.00	61%
Contractual	\$3,566,695.00	27%
Supplies	\$750,050.00	6%
Occupancy/Rent	\$471,890.00	4%
Equipment/Facilities	\$52,465.00	0%
Professional Development	\$105,200.00	1%
Professional Fees	\$37,500.00	0%
Travel	\$20,351.00	0%
Other	\$81,169.00	1%



Head Start/Early Head Start (Federal)	\$7,868,428.00	62%
Early Head Start (State)	\$2,516,640.00	20%
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$1,109,230.00	8.7%
United Way	\$32,000.00	0.3%
Office of School Readiness Pre-K	\$310,358.00	2.4%
Alabama Dept Of Child Nutrition	\$330,000.00	2.6%
Alabama ECC	\$405,000.00	3.2%
Other Contrib/Local Programs	\$150,000.00	1.2%

Salaries & Benefits	\$5,393,191.00	46%
Contractual	\$3,581,790.00	31%
Supplies	\$1,322,280.00	11%
Occupancy/Rent	\$681,732.00	6%
Equipment/Facilities	\$255,000.00	2%
Professional Development	\$173,070.00	1%
Professional Fees	\$42,000.00	0.4%
Travel	\$31,505.00	0.3%
Other	\$196,540.00	2%



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, 2022 through September 30, 2023 and indicates no findings or questioned costs.

Leadership

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Abigail Baxter, Ph. D.
Chairman

Julie Bellcase, MBA
Vice-Chairman

Suzy Hardy
Treasurer

Carolyn Douglas
Secretary

Alexandra K. Garrett, J.D.

Gloria Hill

John Marshall, LCC, NCC

Melissa Creighton

Benterah C. Morton, Ph. D.

POLICY COUNCIL

Martrice Hayes - *Chairman*

Sommerlyn Mitchell -
Vice Chair

Destiny Williams - *Secretary*

Crystal Kirksey

Najarie Weathersby

Nykeema Montgomery

Kenisha Todd

Shashundra Paige

Samuel Castleberry

Tomonica Griffin Destiny
Williams

Mamie Frowner

Aesia Brito

Brittane James

Cyntasha Atkins

Daijah Salter



Pictured: Rep. Jerry Carl and Mrs. Carl with Monica Byrd (ELC Fairhope Director), Wendy McEarchern (CEO) and Catherine Kregger (VP of Children's Services)

SENIOR LEADERSHIP

Wendy McEarchern

President/Chief Executive Officer & Executive Head Start/Early Head Start Director

Ruth Vollmer

Chief Financial Officer/Executive Vice President of Finance & Administration

Sarah McKay

Chief Operating Officer

Kym Carroll

Vice President of Research, Policy & Programs

Sallie Martin

AL Early Head Start Child Care Partnership Program Manager & Quality Assurance

Catherine Kregger

Vice President of Children's Services

Allison Goff

Early Learning Career Center Director

COORDINATORS

Ann Sands

Center Operations Coordinator

Shajuane Kent-Cook

Head Start/Early Head Start E.R.S.E.A. Coordinator

Candace Ellis

Education Services Coordinator

Tammy Street

Family Services Coordinator

Irma Dennise Melendez

Health, Safety and Disabilities Coordinator



United Way
of Southwest Alabama





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