2018-2019 Self-Assessment Plan, Report and Program Improvement Plan

Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc.
Head Start, Early Head Start, Early Head Start – Child Care

A plan for the evaluation of the program's progress toward meeting goals, compliance with regulatory requirements, and the effectiveness of professional development and family engagement systems in promoting school readiness.
I. Introduction

Program Description

Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc. (Head Start, Early Head Start, Early Head Start – Child Care) is a long standing program, operating since Head Start’s inception in 1965. All three programs are center based and geographically dispersed throughout Choctaw, Pushmataha and McCurtain Counties in twenty-three facilities including Little Dixie CAA owned facilities, leased facilities, public school campuses and private day cares. Little Dixie has 29 Head Start classrooms, 8 Early Head Start classrooms and 33 Early Head Start – Child Care pods. The program is funded to serve 429 Head Start children, 48 Early Head Start children and 132 Early Head Start – Child Care children.

Context for Self-Assessment

1. Little Dixie Head Start/EHS/EHS-CC conducts a self-assessment once annually in accordance with Head Start Performance Standard 1302.102(b)(2). The annual Self-Assessment occurs between April and June in order to ensure timely completion of the Self-Assessment and development of the Program Improvement Plan, which is submitted to the Policy Council, Governing Board and ultimately the HHS Program Specialist. The process relies largely on program data to complete an evaluation of the program’s progress toward meeting goals, compliance with regulatory requirements, and the effectiveness of professional development and family engagement systems in promoting school readiness. As a result, a full set of program year data is not available for the current program term; however, program data from the previous year will be used in conjunction with current program year data in order to ensure a full set of data is reviewed.
HEAD START 45 CFR PART 1303 - TRANSPORTATION WAIVER REQUEST
DATA COLLECTION FORM

Grant Number ___________ 06CH010743 ___________

Legal Name of Grantee _______ Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc. ___________

Name, Title and Signature of Authorized Official Requesting Waiver

Mrs. Rebecca Reynolds, Executive Director

Phone Number (580) 326-7581

Fax Number (580) 326-7584

Email Address
dgalyon@ldcaahs.org

1. Number of Children Served

   Head Start __429__ Early Head Start __48__ Early Head Start – Child Care __132__

2. Number of Children Provided Transportation Services:

   Head Start __225__ Early Head Start __0__ Early Head Start – Child Care __0__

   a. Using Grantee Owned or Leased Vehicles __17__

   b. Through Grantee Contracted Transportation Services __85__

   c. Through Interagency Agreement, Memorandum of Understanding or Informal Agreement at No Cost to Grantee __140__

3. Proposed Number of Children Who Will be Covered by Waiver

   Head Start __429__ on Field Trips & __225__ Daily EHS __0__ EHS-CC __0__

4. Requesting Waiver Of:

   __X__ Child safety restraint systems requirement (45CFR 1303.71(d))

   __X__ Bus monitor requirement (45CFR 1303.72(a) (4))
5. Waiver Request Applies to the Following:

[X] Grantee       ____ Delegate(s) (please list)

6. Grantee's Justification for Requesting a Waiver (attach no more than 5 pages).

Please explain fully as each request will be considered separately and waivers will not receive automatic approval.

If requesting waivers of both 45CFR1303.71(d), child safety restraint systems requirement, and 45CFR 1303.72(a)(4), bus monitor requirement, you must provide justification for each requirement.

 Each waiver approved will be effective for a period not to exceed 12 months (one year).
Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc.

JUSTIFICATION FOR WAIVER

Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc. is requesting a waiver of both 45CFR 1303.71(d) Child Restraint Systems and 45CFR 1303.72(a)(4) Bus Monitors.

The Head Start program operates in three counties served by Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc. (Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha Counties). The three counties have a total population of 58,764 people living in a 4,000 plus square mile area served by 26 separate rural school districts. The target area is located in extreme rural Oklahoma and is among the poorest in the nation. Choctaw County has 14,885 people, 4,274 families, and 4,064 children under 18 below poverty. Pushmataha County has 11,057 people, 3,247 families, and 2,926 children under 18 below poverty. McCurtain County has 32,822 people, 8,982 families, and 3,696 children under 18 below poverty. This is an indicator that transportation is one of many services needed by our parents.

Head Start is funded for 429 children within 29 classrooms. Currently our program has a partnership and contract with Little Dixie Transit to transport up to 90 Head Start children to and from class. Nine rural public schools in our three counties transport up to 140 Head Start children on approximately 40 rural bus routes with an average of 3 children per bus route. Therefore, approximately 53% of LDCAA Head Start children are transported by public schools and Transit.

At this time, the impact of the Head Start transportation regulations would force our public schools to discontinue transportation services for the up to 140 Head Start children as these services are not mandated by the state of Oklahoma.
1310.15(c)(1) Bus Monitors
Because of the rural nature of our program covering 4,000 square miles of service area, it is unrealistic to provide enhanced transportation services with bus monitors to our Head Start students. With 44 rural bus routes scattered throughout the public schools in our three counties, it would require considerable additional resources to meet this requirement. We are therefore requesting a waiver of this requirement so that we may continue to transport these children through public school routes that do not have these requirements.

1303.71(d) Child Restraint Systems
Not allowing children to be transported on public school buses without these requirements would most certainly disenfranchise many of our families who are the neediest of the needy and do not have the ability to get their children to and from the Head Start center. This would also pose significant safety risks for other children who, instead of being transported on a school bus, would be transported in private vehicles which have been shown in studies by the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) to put children at greater risk. According to NHTSA – School Bus Crashworthiness Research Report, “American students are nearly eight times safer riding in a school bus than with their own parents and guardians in cars.” Buses differ greatly from passenger vehicles in that they are larger and therefore have a high ground clearance; they are heavier with less crash forces; and their structure provides for different crash force distribution. “The fatality rate for school buses is 0.2 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled compared to 1.5 fatalities per 100 million VMT for cars.” Between 1988 and 1997 there were 115 fatalities related to large school bus crashes, which indicates a low probability of fatal injuries. This record is in part due to large school buses being required to have compartmentalization. Compartmentalization requires that the interior of large school buses provide occupant protection so that children are protected without the need to buckle-up. They have energy absorbing seat back structures with padded seat backs and strong, closely spaced seats. Because of this, of the estimated 8,500 school bus injuries per
year, 86% were minor, 10% moderate, and 4% serious to critical. “Given that school buses are the safest way to and from school, even the smallest reduction in the number of bus riders could result in more children being killed or injured when using alternative forms of transportation.”

As outlined in ACF-IM-HS-06-05, waivers will not be granted in the following three circumstances:

1. A grantee transporting EHS children will not be given a waiver for the child restraint requirement. *Little Dixie EHS and EHS-CC does not transport any EHS or EHS-CC children and is not requesting a waiver from this requirement.*
2. A grantee transporting children in a vehicle other than a bus (i.e. a van) will not be given a waiver for the child restraint requirement. *Little Dixie Head Start does not transport children in a vehicle other than a bus.*
3. A grantee transporting Head Start children on a bus in which there are adult non-Head Start riders will not be granted a waiver for the monitor requirement. *Little Dixie Head Start does not transport children on a bus with adult non-Head Start riders.*

Therefore, we are requesting a waiver of both 45CFR 1303.71(d) Child Restraint Systems and 45CFR 1303.72(a)(4) Bus Monitors for all 429 Little Dixie Head Start children during field trips and for up to 230 Little Dixie Head Start children on a daily basis so these children may continue to receive transportation services.
ERSEA ELIGIBILITY

I. Processes for collecting information that is complete and accurate from families and third party sources.

II. Strategies for treating families with dignity and respect and for dealing with possible issues of domestic violence, stigma, and privacy.

III. Policies and procedures that describe action taken against staff, families, or participants who attempt to provide or intentionally provide false information.

LITTLE DIXIE
HEAD START
&
EARLY HEAD START
EARLY HEAD START-CHILD CARE
Data Analysis Report Summary
April 2019

Disabilities
IEP/IFSP -

![Bar chart showing disabilities percentage by month and program]

Attendance

![Bar chart showing attendance by month and program]
Family & Community Engagement

Dad's Day

Parents Ready to Read
Proposed New Business:

Consideration, Discussion, and Vote to Approve Submission of a FY 2019 Budget Revision – Non-Federal Share Waiver Request to the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start in the Amount of $461,133 for the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Program

REQUEST FOR NON-FEDERAL SHARE WAIVER

Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc. is requesting a waiver of the Non-Federal Share required for the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Grant Non-Competitive New/Baseline and COLA Request, effective for the first year of a new five-year grant period (8/1/2019–7/31/2024). In total, Little Dixie CAA is requesting a Waiver for $461,133 in required Non-Federal Share. The timeframe for the Non-Federal Share Waiver would be the Year 1 Budget Period of 8/1/2019–7/31/2020.

REASONING:

The basis for requesting a Waiver of the Non-Federal Share requirement for the EHS-Child Care Partnership Grant Program Carryover Request is due to the following circumstances, per Section 640(b) of the Head Start Act:

(1) The lack of resources available in the community that may prevent the Head Start agency from providing all or a portion of the non-Federal contribution that may be required;

(2) The impact of the cost the Head Start agency may incur in initial years it carries out such program; and

(3) The impact of an unanticipated increase in the cost the Head Start agency may incur to carry out such a program.
A lack of resources available in our rural area is a very real barrier in providing the required Non-Federal share. While the program has made strides in identifying and securing match for the upcoming budget period, it will not be enough to account for the share required for the New/Baseline grant funding. Second, the impact of the cost Little Dixie CAA has incurred in the initial years of implementing and carrying out the EHS-CC Grant project has greatly impacted the program. Renovations on partner child care centers (necessary for meeting Head Start Program Performance Standards) have been completed. However, other needs have not yet been completed due to contractor delays or lack of available contractors to conduct the work. This has resulted in additional costs, not to mention the staff time spent mitigating these situations instead of working to identify and secure additional match resources for the program. Third, once-eligible match sources have become unallowable for use by the EHS-CC Program, and many of the match sources that were used during the initial year of the grant project were one-time funds. Thus, staff members continue to struggle to account for additional Non-Federal Match within our needy, rural area.

Since the programs operated by Little Dixie CAA are approximately 95% grant funded, the vast majority of our funds are restricted and cannot be moved from one program to another. Therefore, each program must secure its own funding to stay in operation. Cuts at the state and Federal levels have influenced grant distributions from Little Dixie CAA’s annual funding sources as well. Because of the current economic climate, the grant application process has become increasingly competitive as more organizations are applying for a small amount of money. Larger businesses and corporations in our area which have historically provided Non-Federal match (Tyson Foods, International Paper, Wal-Mart) have drastically cut down on their local giving programs, which means there is a smaller amount of matching funds available (average of $250-$500 per donation). In addition, some organizations view the agency’s
successful track record in securing funds as reasoning to fund other organizations instead. Along with the decreasing frequency of community donations, there is increasing competition for donated space, volunteers, and services as well.

As it relates to severe economic downturns and how they have impacted our communities, Choctaw, McCurtain, and Pushmataha Counties have experienced long-term job deterioration. Most of the cities in these counties were established in early statehood because of the railroad running through the area. As the railroad industry has decreased in importance, these cities have struggled to remain in existence. Bureau of Labor Statistics data for January 2019 shows that Choctaw County had an unemployment rate of 5.3%, McCurtain County had a rate of 6.8%, and Pushmataha County had an unemployment rate of 5.6%. The unemployment rate for the State of Oklahoma for January 2019 was 3.8%, and nationally the rate was 4.0%. Clearly, this three-county area faces an unemployment crisis.

In addition, the tri-county service area has been hit extremely hard in the last few years due to the downturn in the economy. The lumber industry has provided income for the majority of local families during the last 100 years. Three mills, Weyerhaeuser, Huber and International Paper, have all had huge layoffs in the last few years due to the national downturn in the housing market. The Weyerhaeuser-Wright City mill in McCurtain County was closed permanently in March 2009, resulting in 165 direct job losses. The other two mills have shut down machines and slowed production, resulting in approximately 126 direct job losses. These direct losses are just a minor part of the picture; hundreds of families depend on the logging industry, which provides logs to these companies for production. Many other businesses have also seen a huge impact due to the loss of local income.

Furthermore, these three counties have and continue to experience long-term poverty. This fact has been evidenced by the designation of large portions of Choctaw and McCurtain
Counties as a Federal Enterprise Community in 1994, the designation of Pushmataha County as part of a Rural Champion Community in 2007, and the Federal designation of this area as part of a Promise Zone in 2014. In September 2015, Little Dixie CAA was one of ten agencies across the Nation selected as a Rural Integration Models for Parents and Children to Thrive (IMPACT) Demonstration Site. The Rural IMPACT Demonstration focuses on a two-generational approach of reducing child poverty. This approach addresses concurrently the needs of both the vulnerable children and parents, with a goal of increasing the well-being of the children and families. Each of these designations—part of Federal efforts aimed at revitalizing impoverished, disadvantaged communities—are a testament to the extremely high levels of poverty and low incomes experienced by many individuals and families in southeastern Oklahoma.

Little Dixie CAA and its staff have worked to develop relationships with vendors, area groups and organizations, and the community as a whole. We have researched private pay use patterns at our partner child care centers, past giving and in-kind donation histories of area/regional vendors and businesses, and volunteer service patterns and frequencies within our existing programs (including Head Start and Early Head Start) to ensure the matching funds proposed can be obtained. In addition, we worked to develop an in-kind plan with a local contractor for services provided. As a result of these efforts, some valuations or possible sources of match for the project were deemed unallowable or unavailable, while match from other sources were identified. With the relationships/rapport built by the agency and staff, as well as history of donations/in-kind provided to our existing programs (including Head Start and Early Head Start), we are confident Little Dixie CAA will be able to secure the Non-Federal share of $9,757 proposed to be provided by the agency for the Year 1/FY 2019 budget period. These contributions have been detailed in the Budget Justification Narrative within the New/Baseline application. Our work to recruit volunteers for the program and secure match will be an ongoing
activity for the upcoming budget period and subsequent grant years. The valuations for space utilized during program trainings and continued work with vendors to secure discounted or in-kind materials/services holds the possibility of additional Non-Federal match as well.

Little Dixie CAA is continually researching new opportunities that could assist with the project and securing of Non-Federal funds. Identifying and applying for Non-Federal funds for the project will be an ongoing activity carried out by Little Dixie CAA’s Planning/Grant Writing Department. Staff members are also looking at other fundraising opportunities, as well as in promoting the use of AmazonSmile (in which web retailer Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to Little Dixie CAA, which can be used as Non-Federal match for the project). The agency’s Governing Board has become more involved with fundraising for programs; the Board Giving Committee has instituted new strategies such as annual giving drives and the distribution of “Pledge Cards”, in which individuals can designate which programs they would like their donation to benefit. Staff members will work to raise public awareness regarding the need for Non-Federal match resources in concert with the Board Giving Committee’s efforts. Staff will continue to hold meetings with partners and other community groups to identify other avenues of match for the program as well.

If approved, the Non-Federal Share Waiver would provide staff the opportunity to continue concentrating on building a successful program; the demonstrated success would then be used as a catalyst for recruiting donations, more volunteers, and other sources of Non-Federal match for this and next year’s budget period. The benefits provided to the participant children, as witnessed by parents/guardians and the community will be our largest “selling point” in gaining additional Non-Federal resources for the project. The impact and merit of the program will spur the community to give to the program, both monetarily and in-kind.
In this and future project years, we expect to form new partnerships with area organizations and businesses to help with obtaining sufficient matching funds or in-kind donations. The agency and staff will work to build new or better relationships initiated in the first grant cycle to expand the donor base to include corporate and private giving as well. Little Dixie CAA will continue to seek additional funding from other sources (such as Foundations) to assist with allowable activities to be used for the Non-Federal share requirement. Identifying and securing Non-Federal funds will be an ongoing activity throughout the life of the project. With three full-time grant writers on staff, Little Dixie CAA is one of the few organizations in our remote area that can successfully compete for and bring in new grant monies to our region. The Planning/Grant Writing Department will work tirelessly with program staff to help ensure sufficient matching funds will be provided in next year’s budget period.

Therefore, a Non-Federal Share Waiver for the FY 2019 New/Baseline budget period (8/1/2019–7/31/2020) would be most beneficial for the EHS-Child Care Partnership Program in that staff would be able to concentrate efforts more on building the capacity of the program, to ensure procurement of required award match, and that all Head Start Program Performance Standards are met.

Note: Little Dixie CAA received approval to submit the Non-Competitive New/Baseline and COLA Application (which included this Non-Federal Waiver Request) by Little Dixie Community Action Agency’s Board of Directors on March 12, 2019. Furthermore, the agency received approval to submit the Non-Competitive New/Baseline and COLA Application (including the Non-Federal Waiver Request) by Little Dixie Community Action Agency’s Head Start Policy Council on March 26, 2019.