



**KNOX COUNTY
HEAD START, INC.**



2024-2025 Annual Report

Serving Knox County since 1965.

From Our Director

The 60th anniversary is traditionally the Diamond Jubilee, symbolizing decades of enduring love, strength, and brilliance. We are honored to celebrate 60 years of service in Knox County. Head Start stands apart from other early childhood programs with a commitment to supporting the whole child AND family, by our belief in parents as the first and most important teachers of their children, and by our work to influence child and family health, nutrition, mental health, and dental care via direct services and strong community partnerships. Our employees, Board and Policy Council members guide this critical work every day, and the parents who seek what is best for their children partner with us to lay the groundwork for a healthier future for children, families, and the Knox County community. We are thankful for this meaningful work.

*I wish you well,
Peg Tazewell, Executive Director*

Our Mission & Guiding Values

Committed to the future of Knox County, KCHS works in partnership with the community to provide quality early education, child care, and family services. Our purpose is to engage children, families, and staff in reaching their full potential.

Educating Children. Empowering Families. Building Community.

- A. We value families, fathers, mothers, and primary caregivers as the first and most important teachers and advocates for their children.
- B. We strive to make a difference through the education, care, and support of our children, families, and staff by:
 - Committing to provide quality services.
 - Hiring, training, and retaining competent staff.
 - Providing opportunities for personal and professional growth.
 - Developing and nurturing personal and professional, trusting relationships built on honesty and open communication.
 - Acknowledging and seeking diversity through our program design.
 - Creating and maintaining healthy and productive community partnerships.

Board of Directors

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Attorney, Zelkowitz, Barry & Cullers

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Sarah Whitt

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*former Head Start parent

**Board representative to the Policy Council

***Policy Council representative to the Board

About Knox County Head Start

- Founded in April 1965 as Kokosing Day Care Centers, Inc.
- Funded enrollment from the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families: Head Start (HS) slots: 149 funded slots and Early Head Start (EHS): 64 funded slots.
- Serving 411 children in 2024-2025
 - 198 children served in Head Start
 - 110 children and 5 pregnant moms served in Early Head Start
 - 98 children served in child care, including school-age programs.
- KCHS' Community Assessment data estimates 362 eligible EHS children and 242 eligible HS children live in Knox County. Total enrollment in 2024-2025 shows KCHS serving approximately 30% of EHS eligible children and 82% of HS eligible children. Most HS-eligible children not served by KCHS are served in state-funded preschool programs, and some EHS-eligible children are served in Early Intervention and Help Me Grow. Knox County continues to lack sufficient service options for most infants, toddlers, and their families.

Our Children

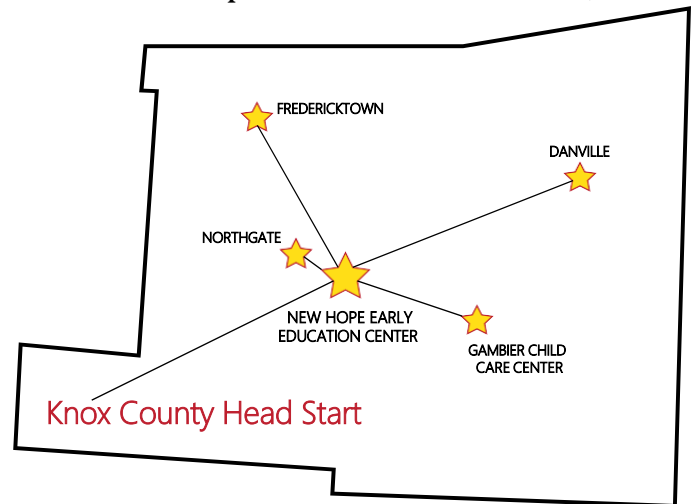
Average Monthly Enrollment

Average monthly enrollment for KCHS was at 98.2% in Head Start and 99.9% in Early Head Start.

Services to Children Identified with Disabilities

KCHS collaborated with the three local education agencies, Knox County Educational Service Center, Mount Vernon City Schools, and Danville Local Schools to provide special education services:

- 37 preschool children received services under an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), representing 18.7% of children.
 - 13 of those children's primarily identified disability was speech or language impairment.
 - 14 children's primary disability was a non-categorical developmental delay or specific learning disability.
 - 3 children's primary disability was health impairment.
 - 6 children's primary disability was autism.
 - 4 children received an IEP at the end of the year with services scheduled to begin in fall 2025 as they enter kindergarten.
 - 2 preschool children received services under a 504 Plan due to (1) a hearing impairment and (2) sensory concerns.
- 11 infants and toddlers received services under an Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP), representing 10.9% of enrolled children.



Children Served (8/1/24-7/31/25)

Head Start	198
Early Head Start	110
EHS Pregnant Moms	5
Child Care	98
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Total	411

97,256 meals/snacks served under the USDA/CACFP food program during the program year.





Medical Screenings (Physicals)

- 245/280 (87.5%) children received an annual physical and all medical screenings, including hearing, vision, lead, and hemoglobin.
- 116/280 (41.4%) children needed medical follow-up.
- 95/116 (82%) children received follow-up.



Immunizations

- 245/280 (87.5%) children up to date on required immunizations.
- 3 children in progress (but received all shots possible).
- 20 children meet Ohio's guidelines for exemption from immunization.



Dental Services

- 217/280 (77.5%) preschool children received a dental exam.
- 23/217 (10.6%) needed dental follow-up.
- 20/23 (87%) received follow-up.



Mental Health Services

- 37 children in Head Start/Early Head Start received direct services from The Village Network.
- 838 sessions of direct children intervention services were provided, totaling 398 hours of services.
- On average, each child received 23 sessions (11.5 hours of service).



Developmental Screenings

- 350/369 children (95%) received all developmental screenings within 45 days of enrollment (please note that school-age children do not receive developmental screenings).
- 34 children were referred for further evaluation (25 Head Start, 9 Early Head Start).
- 37 preschool-aged children received services under an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- 10 infants and toddlers received services under an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).



Nutrition

- 97,256 meals and snacks were served under the USDA/CACFP food program.
- Several publications focused on nutrition/physical activity are sent home with all families monthly: "Nubites," "Color Me Healthy News," "Get Moving" calendar.

Child Health Services are designed to ensure children receive age-appropriate screenings, follow up for health and dental concerns when needed, and are healthy and ready for success in school.

Working With Our Families

***Knox County Head Start believes that parents are the first and most important teachers of their children~
We are here to support children, parents, and families in achieving goals!***

163 families completed or made progress on a Family Partnership Agreement (FPA) or School Readiness Goal (SRG).

Family Partnerships

- 218 families were served in Head Start and Early Head Start.
- 91 families completed either FPAs or SRG goals in partnership with KCHS.
- 72 families made progress on their FPA or SRG.
- 75% of families served collaborated on the partnership process.

Referrals

- 716 referrals for community supports were documented.
- 126 Head Start families received a referral for service.
- 49 Early Head Start families received a referral for service.

School Readiness Goals

- 326 individual SRGs were established for 138 Head Start children.
- 293 (90%) of SRGs were either accomplished or progressing at year end.
- 284 individual SRGs were established for 85 Early Head Start children.
- 233 (82%) of SRGs were either accomplished or progressing at year end.

Demographics

- 16 families enrolled experienced homelessness, with 10 (62.5%) of the families acquiring housing.
- 18 children experiencing homelessness were served during the year.
- 90 families received WIC services through Knox Public Health.
- 23 children qualified for enrollment via foster care at any point during the program year.
- 154 families received SNAP benefits.

Family Involvement and Parent Education Opportunities

Parents are encouraged to serve on Policy Council, participate in School Family Roundtable (parent center committee) meetings and events, and family fun nights. Typically, events include the Fall Harvest, Shawn Kelly Holiday Event in collaboration with Kenyon College, Winter Fun Fest, the Annual Art Show, and the End of the Year Family Picnic.

KCHS leads the Parent Support Initiative (PSI), coordinating parent education open to Knox County caregivers of children from birth to 18. Supported by generous funding from the Ariel Foundation, the United Way of Knox County, and the Ohio Children's Trust Fund, education includes Conscious Discipline® for Parents and Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) with multi-level interventions delivered one-on-one, in small and large groups.

During 2024-2025, 455 parents participated in parenting education sessions, including 126 father figures.

Two Generational Approach= Hidden Success

Head Start works closely with parents in developing goals and encouraging parents to identify strengths and opportunities for self-reliance, for themselves and their families. In 2024-2025, 26 of 96 employees were current or former Head Start parents. Seventeen (17), or 65% of those parents, attained a degree or certification while employed, and six were in the process of attaining a college degree.

Knox County Head Start's two-generational approach opens doors for child and family successes - concurrently supporting children's school readiness and providing opportunities for family stability and success.



Our Staff

KCHS meets the requirement of the Head Start Act of 2007 that 50% of preschool teachers have bachelor's degrees. In 2024-2025, 56% of Head Start preschool teachers had a bachelor's degree and 22% had an associate degree in early childhood education (ECE). 22% of Head Start preschool teachers held a CDA and via a waiver process were approved to teach while completing their degrees.

In EHS, teachers are required to hold at minimum a Child Development Associate credential (CDA), but 57% of infant and toddler teachers held two or four-year degrees, with the remainder holding CDAs.

KCHS encourages continuous learning, and in 2024-2025, fifteen teachers, assistant teachers, and teacher aide floaters obtained their CDA credential.



Encouraging Literacy



Partnering with United Way of Knox County's Imagination Library

The United Way of Knox County, in partnership with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Foundation, continues to provide a literacy program wherein each child in Knox County up to age five is eligible to receive a FREE age-appropriate book delivered to his/her home each month (up to 60 books over 5 years).

KCHS' staff make referrals, with parent permission, beginning as early as recruitment and through enrollment. Knox County Head Start has 53 documented referrals to the Imagination Library program during the 2024-25 school year.



Preparing Children for Success in Kindergarten

KCHS classrooms implement *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* and *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos*, along with a variety of supplemental curricula. Teachers use the Creative Curriculum's Objectives for Development and Learning to track individual child progress and to plan lessons for large and small groups as well as individualized activities specific to the child's developmental level. Children are assessed quarterly. The spring assessment showed that the goal of 85% of transitioning Kindergarten children meeting or exceeding widely held expectations was reached in social-emotional, physical, cognitive and literacy development, but was missed in language (83.9%) and mathematics (73.2%). Gains were identified in all areas, with the domains of literacy (+37.5%), social-emotional (+35.7%) and cognitive (+35.7%) most significant, with full results shown below:

Domain of Learning	% of children meeting or exceeding WHE Fall 2024	% of children meeting or exceeding WHE Spring 2025	Percent (%) increase
Social Emotional	51.8%	87.5%	+35.7%
Physical	76.8%	98.2%	+21.4%
Language	71.4%	83.9%	+12.5%
Cognitive	55.4%	91.1%	+35.7%
Literacy	48.2%	85.7%	+37.5%
Mathematics	42.9%	73.2%	+30.3%

Promoting Excellence

Professional development can help to bolster employees' confidence in their work. Greater confidence can, in turn, translate into higher overall job satisfaction, employee performance, productivity, and overall morale. Throughout the 2024-2025 program year, Knox County Head Start staff logged a cumulative total of 4033.5 professional development hours.

Parent Survey Comments

- We love Head Start!
- Thank you for all you do! We fully rely on, trust, and support Head Start.
- Ever since we started having our kids here back in 2019, I have been amazed at everything about GCCC. The program and ALL the staff go above and beyond in every sense of the phrase and in every aspect of the program. I couldn't be more grateful!
- I just love everyone at the center. Very nice people! The teachers are great with my child. He loves coming to school.
- It has been very encouraging for my daughter to learn and grow.
- Knox County Head Start is very important to my family and me.
- I feel very supported by my home educator. She is always checking on us and lets me talk.

Federal Monitoring

Results of KCHS' most recent federal monitoring, from the Office of Head Start, March 29, 2023:

From March 6, 2023, to March 10, 2023, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted an onsite Focus Area Two (FA2) monitoring review of the Knox County Head Start, Inc. Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

This report contains information about the grantee's performance and compliance with the requirements of the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) or Public Law 110-134, Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. The Office of Head Start (OHS) would like to thank your governing body, policy council, parents, and staff for their engagement in the review process.

Through the FA2, performance is evaluated in two ways:

- Determining whether a grant recipient is compliant with the Head Start Act and the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS).
- Understanding strong practices that the grant recipient may be implementing to further promote quality services for children and families.

KCHS was found to meet program expectations in all areas monitoring:

- Program Management and Quality Improvement
- Quality Education and Child Development Program Services
- Quality Health Program Services
- Quality Family and Community Engagement Services
- Fiscal Infrastructure
- Developing Effective Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance (ERSEA) Strategies



BARNES DENNIG
Accounting • Tax • Business Insight

Results of most recent Financial Audit

In a letter dated February 26, 2026, to the KCHS Board of Directors, Barnes Dennig Independent Auditors wrote that they had audited the financial position of Knox County Head Start as of July 31, 2025. The audit was conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the basic financial statements of KCHS taken as a whole. This included identifying any significant deficiencies in internal control reported at the financial statement level (Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards), along with identifying any material weakness conditions at the financial statement level, any material reported noncompliance at the financial statement level, significant deficiencies in internal control for any major federal programs, or material weaknesses reported for major federal programs.

Barnes Dennig reported no findings or reportable matters and returned an unmodified opinion related to financial statements and major programs' compliance. There were no findings related to internal control over major programs, nor were material weaknesses identified, nor significant deficiencies identified or reported.

Step Up to Quality

Since the 2009–2010 program year, Knox County Head Start Centers have earned annual Step Up to Quality recognition for exceeding state licensing standards and providing high-quality early childhood services. This honor—awarded by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services – Bureau of Child Care and Development, and now the Ohio Department of Children and Youth—reflects a long-standing commitment to excellence. In 2024–2025, all five centers proudly maintained the highest possible – Gold -- rating.

Summer Camp

School agers enjoyed 11 weeks of summer camp at the Gambier Child Care Center, with 36 children participating in 918 units of camp. The camp schedule included a variety of weekly themes such as "Fashion Week", "Lego Week", "Sports Week, and more. Field trips were taken to Top Golf, Rockin' Jump, LEGOLAND, Central Ohio Fire Museum, and many parks! The camp focused on physical activity, health, and wellness, as well as literacy.

Our Financials

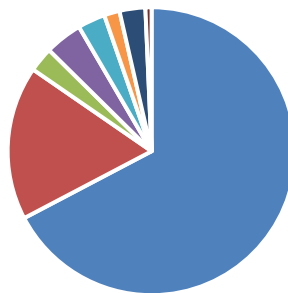
2024-2025 Funding by Revenue Source: \$6,377,940

FEDERAL HEAD START & EHS	\$3,657,225
STATE AND LOCAL GRANTS	\$221,985
FEDERAL TANF	\$1,524
FEDERAL USDA/CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CACFP)	\$197,322
CHILD CARE REVENUE	\$1,377,182
UNITED WAY OF KNOX COUNTY	\$135,965
IN-KIND	\$589,922
MISC REVENUE	\$196,815
TOTAL FUNDING	\$6,377,940

KCHS 2024-2025 EXPENSES BY CATEGORY

SALARIES AND WAGES	\$3,778,063
FRINGE BENEFITS	\$971,428
SUPPLIES	\$156,077
SPACE	\$235,608
FOOD	\$173,032
TRAINING & TRAVEL	\$97,736
CONTRACTUAL	\$162,661
BUS OPERATIONS	\$38,783
DEPRECIATION	\$86,938
OTHER	\$102,054
IN-KIND (Local match funds)	\$589,922
TOTAL EXPENSES	<u>\$6,392,302</u>

2024-2025 EXPENSES BY CATEGORY



- SALARIES & WAGES
- FRINGE BENEFITS
- SUPPLIES
- SPACE
- FOOD
- TRAINING & TRAVEL
- CONTRACTUAL
- BUS OPERATIONS

Federal Budget Explanation for 2025-2026 Program Year

Knox County Head Start and our local community benefit from federal funds to support Head Start (HS) preschool services to 149 children and families, and Early Head Start (EHS) services for 64 pregnant moms, infants, toddlers, and their families. KCHS is funded for 213 Head Start and Early Head Start slots; the actual number of children and pregnant moms served will be higher. *This project is supported by the Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$4,469,341, with 81.83% funded by ACF/HHS (typically 80%, see waiver information below).*

The majority of budgeted funds support salary and fringe costs for direct services, as KCHS works to increase wages and provide full benefits to employees and their families. KCHS has dedicated all funding increases from the Office of Head Start to employee salaries and benefits, including the award of two retention awards, for the purpose of increasing staff hiring, retention, well-being, and the quality of services in our program.

In 2025-26, KCHS requested a partial waiver to reduce the amount of federal match required. Like many communities, Knox County is experiencing a reduction in philanthropic giving and a reduction in volunteerism. KCHS has relied heavily on cash match from the United Way of Knox County and other state and local foundations, as well as volunteer commitments, and any funding reductions or changes to volunteer patterns will create challenges in meeting the cash match. KCHS was granted a partial waiver reducing the total local match requirement for the current budget year due to continuing concerns around the ability to access full-match requirements due to increases in operational costs and a reduction in volunteer hours. The 2025-26 budget year's local match requirement is \$812,116.

Federal Budgets 2025-2026	Head Start, including training & technical assistance award	Early Head Start, including training & technical assistance award	One-Time Nutrition & Healthy Eating award	Total Head Start/Early Head Start Budgets
Salaries and Wages	\$1,484,641	\$970,100	\$49,920	\$2,454,741
Fringe Benefits	\$386,759	\$253,746	\$14,975	\$640,505
Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$26,826	\$0
Supplies	\$72,079	\$40,232	\$21,280	\$112,311
Travel	\$5,301	\$4,093	\$4,461	\$9,394
Contractual	\$55,915	\$22,618	\$10,000	\$78,533
Occupancy	\$140,886	\$60,992	\$11,040	\$201,878
Other*	\$104,966	\$54,897	\$33,404	\$159,863
Total Approved Budget	\$2,250,547	\$1,406,678	\$171,906	\$3,657,225

KCHS staff at the all-staff Conscious Discipline training in August.



Our Thanks!

...to the individuals, businesses, and organizations who have contributed cash, goods, and talents, enabling KCHS to offer quality child care programs to the community and to the nearly 500 children and families we serve annually.



Individuals

Jayden Adams
Anonymous Donors
Kelly Bailey, RD, LD, NPI
Xinchang Chen
Tanner Cooper-Risser
Ziyi Chen James
KCHS Board Members
KCHS Parent Volunteers
KCHS Policy Council
KCHS Staff
Dr. Amy Murnen, MD
Dr. Margaret Somple, DO
Scott Swingle
Bruce Kinzer
Diane Stiffler
Jesse Ensmiger
Ellen Ensmiger
Susan Givens
Hannah LaVigne
Tiffany Moore
'Brennan Varnes
Ebben O'Quin
Garrett O'Quin
Ho Kwan Chen

“The broadest, and maybe the most meaningful definition of volunteering: Doing more than you have to because you want to, in a cause you consider good.”
-Ivan Scheier

Educational & Partner Agencies/Businesses

Amazing Eyes
American Electric Power
American Legion of Danville
BHP of Central Ohio, Inc.
Bottoms Up Diaper Bank
Brandon United Methodist Church
Centerburg Church of Christ
Centerburg Fire Department
Centerburg Local Schools
Centerburg Pointe
Central Ohio Technical College
ComDoc
of Licking and Knox Counties
Conway Pharmacy
Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development
Craftsmen for Kids
Danville Family Dental
Danville Local Schools
Directec Corporation
Discount School Supply
Divine Remodeling, LLC
Dolly Parton Imagination Library
East Knox Local Schools
Eastern Knox County Joint Fire District
Energy Cooperative
First Congregational Church
Fredericktown Community Fire District
Fredericktown Local Schools
Harcourt Parish Episcopal Church
Interchurch Social Services
Kenyon College
Kenyon College-Delta Kappa Epsilon Fraternity

Kenyon College-Environmental Studies Department
Kenyon College-Epsilon Delta Mu Sorority
Kenyon College-Kokosingers
Kenyon College Men's Basketball Team
Kenyon College Men's Football Team
Kenyon College-Men's Lacrosse Team
Kenyon College-Owl Creeks
Kenyon College-Theta Delta Phi Sorority
Kiwanis Club of Mt. Vernon
Knox Area Transit
Knox Community Hospital
Knox County Board of Developmental Disabilities
Knox County Career Center
Knox County Chamber of Commerce
Knox County Dept. of Job and Family Services
Knox County Educational Service Center
Knox County Family and Children First Council
Knox County Foundation
Knox County Juvenile Courts
Knox County Properties, Inc.
Knox Public Health
Kokosing Construction Company, Inc.
Lakeholm Church of the Nazarene
Lakeshore
Mental Health and Recovery Board of Licking & Knox Counties
Mid-Ohio Food Collective
Mt. Vernon Arts Consortium
Mt. Vernon City Schools
Mt. Vernon Fire Department
Mt. Vernon Nazarene University
Mt. Vernon Shade Tree and Beautification Committee
National Head Start Association
Nationwide Children's Hospital
New Directions
New Life Church of the Nazarene
Ohio Association of Child Care Providers
Ohio Dept of Children & Youth-Ohio Children's Trust Fund
Ohio Dept of Children & Youth-Help Me Grow

Ohio Department of Education & Workforce-Children & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
Ohio Dept. of Health-Women, Infants & Children (WIC)
Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources-Division of Wildlife
Ohio Head Start Association, Inc.
Park National Bank
Parent Support Initiative of Knox County, Ohio
Pathways of Central Ohio
Peoples Bank
Place 4 Grace
Prescription Turf Care
Public Library of Mt. Vernon and Knox County
Salvation Army of Mt. Vernon
Starting Point
St. Vincent de Paul School
The Ariel Foundation
The Creative Learning Workshop
The Freedom Center
The Glenn A. Gallagher Centre
The Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association
The OSU Extension Office of Knox County-SNAP-Ed Program
The Sanctuary (Danville)
The Winter Sanctuary Emergency Homeless Shelter
TouchPointe Community Resources
UHC
United Way of Knox County
Village of Gambier
YMCA of Mt. Vernon

Volunteer Services

A total of 90 Kenyon students contributed to the 33rd annual Shawn Kelly Memorial Holiday Party, which was organized and fundraised by the Theta Alpha Kappa sorority and the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity. This event was held on December 13th and was attended by 302 KCHS children and adults.

Bottoms Up Diaper Drive

KCHS participated in the annual Bottoms Up Diaper Drive, collecting packs of diapers to be distributed to KCHS families. In the 2024-2025 program year, we distributed a total of 627 packages of diapers, 42 packages of wipes, and seven (7) changing pads to enrolled families, including families referred by community partners such as Knox Community Hospital or WIC.



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www.knoxheadstart.org

Follow us on social media!



