



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

Office of Head Start | 4th Floor – Switzer Memorial Building, 330 C Street SW, Washington DC 20024 [eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov)

## Program Performance Summary Report

**To: Authorizing Official/Board Chairperson**

Mr. Philip Curtis

Volunteers of America - Southwest Inc.

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San Diego, CA 92108 - 1743

**From: Responsible HHS Official**

**Date: 03/25/2021**

**On behalf of Dr. Bernadine Futrell**

**Director, Office of Head Start**

From February 8, 2021 to February 12, 2021, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted a Focus Area Two (FA2) monitoring review of the Volunteers of America - Southwest Inc. Early Head Start program. 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. Based on the information gathered during this review, we have found your program meets the requirements of all applicable HSPPS, laws, regulations, and policy requirements.

Please contact your Regional Office for guidance should you have any questions or concerns. Your Regional Office will follow up on the content of this report and can work with you to identify resources to support your program's continuous improvement.

### **DISTRIBUTION OF THE REPORT**

Copies of this report will be distributed to the following recipients:

Ms. Cynthia Yao, Regional Program Manager

Mr. Gerald McFadden, Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director

Ms. Doreen Mulz, Early Head Start Director

## Glossary of Terms

<b>Opportunity for Continuous Improvement (OCI)</b>	<p>An OCI is identified when the grantee is determined compliant in an area; however, through intentional, continuous improvement strategies, the agency has the opportunity to enhance overall program quality.</p>
<b>Area of Noncompliance (ANC)</b>	<p>An ANC is identified when the grantee is out of compliance with a specific federal requirement. The grantee is given a specified corrective action timeline wherein the ANC must be fully corrected. If not corrected within the specified timeline, the uncorrected ANC becomes a deficiency.</p>
<b>Deficiency</b>	<p>As defined in the Head Start Act, the term "deficiency" means:</p> <p>(A) a systemic or substantial material failure of an agency in an area of performance that the Secretary determines involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) a threat to the health, safety, or civil rights of children or staff;</li> <li>(ii) a denial to parents of the exercise of their full roles and responsibilities related to program operations;</li> <li>(iii) a failure to comply with standards related to early childhood development and health services, family and community partnerships, or program design and management;</li> <li>(iv) the misuse of funds received under this subchapter;</li> <li>(v) loss of legal status (as determined by the Secretary) or financial viability, loss of permits, debarment from receiving Federal grants or contracts, or the improper use of Federal funds; or</li> <li>(vi) failure to meet any other Federal or State requirement that the agency has shown an unwillingness or inability to correct, after notice from the Secretary, within the period specified;</li> </ul> <p>(B) systemic or material failure of the governing body of an agency to fully exercise its legal and fiduciary responsibilities; or</p> <p>(C) an unresolved area of noncompliance.</p>



## Program Management and Quality Improvement

### Program Management

The grantee establishes a management structure consisting of staff, consultants, or contractors who ensure high-quality service delivery; have sufficient knowledge, training, experience, and competencies to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of their positions; and provide regular supervision and support to staff.

### Ongoing Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

The grantee uses data to identify program strengths, needs, and areas needing improvement; evaluate progress toward achieving program goals and compliance with program performance standards; and assess the effectiveness of professional development.

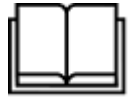
### Program Governance

The policy council is engaged in the direction of the program, including program design and planning of goals and objectives.

The grantee maintains a formal structure of program governance to oversee the quality of services for children and families and to make decisions related to program design and implementation.

## Program Management and Quality Improvement Summary

Volunteers of America - Southwest Inc. utilized a data-driven approach to management and ongoing monitoring, resulting in effective oversight and progress towards program goals. Funded to serve a total of 410 children across 3 Early Head Start grants in Southern California, the program designated a specialist or lead with management expertise to ensure service implementation and oversight of each content area. It ensured compliance with policies and procedures, monitored the delivery of services, supervised staff, and used data from observations, professional development plans, and annual evaluations to identify ongoing training needs. Each content area also gathered data for monthly reports, including information on identified challenges, strengths, and risks. These reports were shared with the policy council, governing board, and management team and were used to identify immediate and long-term improvement initiatives. The program also held monthly discussions with the policy council, parents, and program staff to identify and address needs and gaps in service provision. The program took steps to maximize its use of data when staff and stakeholders identified deficiencies in monitoring techniques and reporting. In response, the governing board utilized outside consultants to conduct periodic program system checks and summarized the results to identify areas for improvement. As a result, the program developed and implemented policies to ensure accurate qualitative and quantitative data collection, resulting in more effective monitoring of progress on program goals. The governing bodies actively participated in oversight and improvement practices, with Board members visiting sites to meet enrolled families, assisting with policy development, and participating in the self-assessment. The policy council members received annual orientation and recently led the push for a change in drop-off procedures to assist parents' arrival to work on time. The program's management team, governing bodies, improved data collection, and monitoring practices supported program improvement and goal progress.



## Monitoring and Implementing Quality Education and Child Development Services

### Alignment with School Readiness

The grantee's school readiness efforts align with the expectations of receiving schools, the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF), and State early learning standards.

### Effective and Intentional Teaching Practices

The grantee's teaching practices intentionally promote progress toward school readiness and provide high-quality learning experiences for children.

### Supporting Teachers in Promoting School Readiness

The grantee prepares teachers to implement the curriculum and support children's progress toward school readiness.

### Home-based Program Services

The grantee ensures home-based program services provide home visits, and group socialization activities provide high-quality learning experiences.

## Monitoring and Implementing Quality Education and Child Development Services Summary

Volunteers of America - Southwest Inc. supported teaching staff and home visitors to effectively implement aligned school readiness practices and prepare children for school. The staff collaborated with other Early Head Start and state preschool programs to ensure its school readiness goals aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework and the California Learning Foundations. The program used the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) assessment to measure program progress on goals and trained staff to administer the tool accurately. This training helped staff collect and analyze data to create individualized goals for each child, with observable and measurable outcomes. The program also developed an Intentional Teaching Flow Chart. This provided a visual aid for education staff to determine action steps to promote school readiness. Steps included observation, assessment, data collection, goal setting, planning, and implementation. Teachers and home visitors received individual support in promoting school readiness through coaches and supervisors based on a needs assessment, which determined the cohort a teacher was assigned to and the intervention's intensity and focus. Coaching provided to cohort A focused on time management, organization, and foundation skills; cohort B focused on alignment, translating, and assisting with a visual understanding of child assessment; and cohort C was more intense, focusing on child developmental domains and included a peer-to-peer liaison. Home visitors also received specialized training and guidance on strengthening skills to support families, promote family child engagement, and increase children's school readiness. A review of DRDP data results from the winter 2019 benchmark period indicated the program was on track with meeting its May 2020 expected targets. The program's educational approach and support for teachers and home visitors prepared children for school.



## Monitoring and Implementing Quality Health Services

### Child Health Status and Care

The grantee effectively monitors and maintains timely information on children's health status and care including ongoing sources of health care, preventive care, and follow-up.

### Mental Health

The grantee supports a program-wide culture that promotes mental health and social and emotional well-being, and uses mental health consultation to support staff.

### Oral Health and Nutrition

The grantee maintains and monitors for effective oral health practices and nutrition services that meet the nutritional needs and accommodate feeding requirements and allergies.

### Safety Practices

The grantee implements a process for monitoring and maintaining healthy and safe environments.

### Services to Pregnant Women

The grantee provides quality services that facilitate pregnant women's access to health care and provide information to support prenatal, postpartum, maternal, and infant health and emotional well-being.

## Monitoring and Implementing Quality Health Services Summary

Volunteers of America - Southwest Inc. supported families' access to quality health, dental, nutrition, and mental health services and provided safe and healthy learning environments. The staff used ChildPlus to manage health data to ensure children stayed up to date on a schedule of age-appropriate medical and oral health care. Staff monitored ChildPlus health data every two weeks and contacted parents when follow-up services were needed. A review of data showed most children remained compliant with the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment schedule of medical care, but COVID-19 created problems for families seeking dental care. Staff explained that many dental clinics and offices closed during the pandemic, making routine and follow-up care difficult to complete. The governing board supported the program's provision of health services by reviewing ChildPlus reports and meeting with program managers to identify trends, understand the issues facing families, and identify services to better support positive health outcomes. Specialized health support for newborns and pregnant moms came from family service workers and the program's licensed vocational nurse during in-person or virtual home visits. During these visits, staff helped mothers complete the post-partum screening, made sure families had car seats, updated immunization schedules, and referred families for health insurance coverage and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits. To address children's nutritional health, the program contracted with a vendor who provided healthy, culturally diverse meals in compliance with the Child and Adult Care Food Program requirements. Parents also received a monthly nutrition newsletter and reviewed the menus for suggested changes. Prior to COVID-19, the program met the social-emotional needs of children, families, and staff with a contracted mental health professional who completed monthly classroom observations and provided individual staff and parent consults. The contracted professional ended services during the pandemic, and the program instead referred children and families to Public Health or Hawaii Elks agencies for mental health services. To ensure safe and healthy environments, the program implemented regular monitoring, including external inspections from the California Department of Social Services and internal center and playground checklists. The program helped keep children healthy and safe as they promoted school readiness.



## Monitoring and Implementing Quality Family and Community Engagement Services

### Family Well-being

The grantee collaborates with families to support family well-being, parents' aspirations, and parents' life goals.

### Strengthening Parenting and Parent-Child Supports

The grantee provides services that strengthen parent-child relationships and support parents in strengthening parenting skills.

### Family Engagement in Education and Child Development Services

The grantee provides education and child development services that recognize parents' roles as children's lifelong educators and encourage parents to engage in their child's education.

## Monitoring and Implementing Quality Family and Community Engagement Services Summary

The program maintained strong community partnerships and resources and provided engagement activities to help families reach their goals and strengthen family well-being. The annual family needs assessment determined family strengths and needs and established a basis for goals, which were addressed by staff through the disbursement of relevant resources. Community resources that directly helped families included a local community college for education assistance, Arrowhead Credit Union for financial literacy, budgeting, and debt counseling, and Apple One and Manpower for employment opportunities. The program also utilized Veronica Home of Mercy and the Salvation Army to help displaced families find housing and had a strong partnership with the Knowledge and Education for Your Success (KEYS) program, which provided homeless families with employment, budgeting, and housing assistance. The program provided information about available resources to families and encouraged them to be actively engaged in decisions about what services and programs would be most helpful to their families. Family service advocates met with families monthly to assess goal progress and provide additional supports. The program also supported families with parent engagement activities where they had opportunities to gain knowledge from staff and other parents. During COVID-19, the program did not host onsite events but continued to give parents a chance to engage through virtual parent meetings, socialization, policy council meetings, and the ReadyRosie parenting curriculum. In addition, the program hosted a drive-by opportunity for families, where children and families met their teacher and received educational activity packets and a virtual Zoom cooking event where a staff member shared and prepared a recipe parents and children could make together. With community partnerships, staff support, and virtual engagement opportunities, the program helped families reach their goals, engage with the program, and strengthen well-being.



## Monitoring and Implementing Fiscal Infrastructure

### **Budget Planning and Development**

The grantee develops and implements its budget to sustain management, staffing structures, and the delivery of services that support the needs of enrolled children and families.

### **Ongoing Fiscal Capacity**

The grantee plans and implements a fiscal management system that supports the organization's ongoing capacity to execute its budget over time and meet the needs of its organization.

### **Budget Execution**

The grantee's financial management system provides for effective control over and accountability for all funds, property, and other assets.

### **Facilities and Equipment**

The grantee complies with application, prior approval, and reporting requirements for facilities purchased, constructed, or renovated with Head Start funds.

## Monitoring and Implementing Fiscal Infrastructure Summary

Volunteers of America - Southwest Inc. ensured fiscal accountability and ongoing capacity through its fiscal infrastructure, data-driven financial management systems, and qualified staff. The grantee relied on its fiscal officer and staff, policies and procedures, and internal controls to oversee federal funds and accurately identify, monitor, and report federal awards, non-federal match, and administrative costs. Fiscal staff also used an automated accounting system to produce reports that reflected sources and use of funds to ensure adherence to federal rules and regulations. A review of supporting documentation for personnel and non-personnel expenditures determined costs were necessary, reasonable, allocable, and adequately documented. Budget planning, development, implementation, and oversight occurred in multiple phases and included interactions between program and fiscal staff, the policy council, agency executive staff, and the Board of Directors. The process began with the review of data from multiple sources, including the community assessment, historical financial reports, the Program Information Report, the annual self-assessment, and independent audit results. The proposed budget and actual expenditures were monitored throughout the year, with monthly finance reports presented, reviewed, and approved by the policy council and the Board of Directors. The grantee demonstrated fiscal oversight of the federal award through its sound fiscal infrastructure, financial management systems, and qualified staff.



## Monitoring ERSEA: Eligibility, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance

### Determining, Verifying, and Documenting Eligibility

At least 10 percent of the grantee's total funded enrollment is filled by children eligible for services under IDEA or the grantee has received a waiver.

The grantee enrolls children or pregnant women who are categorically eligible or who meet defined income-eligibility requirements.

### Enrollment Verification

The grantee maintains and tracks enrollment for all participants including pregnant women.

## Monitoring ERSEA: Eligibility, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance Summary

Volunteers of America - Southwest Inc. ensured enrollment of eligible families. The program's point-based system was structured to prioritize enrollment for income and categorically eligible children first, using documents such as tax forms, public assistance awards, foster care documents, check stubs, and self-declaration forms. ERSEA policies and procedures and the point system were updated annually to reflect the demographics of the community assessment and presented to the governing board and the policy council members for input and approval. The program also provided annual ERSEA training to all staff, the governing board, and the policy council to ensure compliance with the regulations. The program met or exceeded the requirements to serve income-eligible children as shown by 91-100 percent of families in each of the three grants falling below the income guidelines during the 2019-2020 program year, and a review of 112 child files showed 100 percent had correct eligibility determinations. The program regularly tracked enrollment numbers and maintained a waitlist, which included pregnant women, to ensure eligible families received a notification when an opening occurred. The program ensured continuous opportunities for eligible children, families, and pregnant women to participate in program services using its prioritized enrollment process.

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