CEO’s Early Childhood Services 2024 Self-Assessment Report

**Introduction and Process**

The Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO) has served Rensselaer County since 1965 as a Community Action Agency and Head Start provider. CEO’s Head Start and Early Head Start program provide comprehensive services to children and families in nine locations throughout Rensselaer County. We serve 417 Head Start and 175 Early Head Start children through center-based and home-based programming. CEO’s Early Head Start/Head Start Self-Assessment is conducted annually in accordance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards. The self-assessment is conducted once each year and helps CEO understand the effectiveness of program operations by using program data including aggregated child assessment data, professional development, and parent and family engagement data as appropriate. The self-assessment process provides the mechanism to identify program strengths and determine areas that may need improvement. Our self-assessment will enable the program to achieve the goal of providing the best possible services to children and families.

The self-assessment was conducted in person on April 24, 2024, with a virtual option for those that were unable to attend. An overview of the self-assessment process and last year’s self-assessment report was provided to the team members. Teams were developed in the following content areas: education, family engagement, health, and nutrition, ERSEA, and program planning. After the self-assessment overview, team leads and members broke into their specific group and presented data and engaged in dialogue around the data and questions presented. This process included families, the Early Childhood Director, Director of Center Based Operations, ECS management members, Policy Council members, Board Members, staff, and community representatives. The self-assessment was approved by the Policy Council and CEO Board of Directors on May 21, 2025.

**2024 Self-Assessment Goals**

| **Goal** | **Action Steps** | **Person Responsible** | **Time Frame** |
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| To increase family’s knowledge and participation in School Readiness goals and activities. | * Educate families in September on the importance of School readiness goals and activities. * Start School Readiness committee to help make decisions regarding school readiness in the centers. * Develop incentive plan for families who participate in School Readiness activities. | Education Team,  Center Manager,  Family Advocate,  Teachers, Family Engagement Manager | September 2024 and throughout school year |
| To increase cultural competence in each center. | * Create a calendar that provides specific cultural holidays and traditions tailored to families and staff at each center. * Add cultural celebrations to monthly newsletters and highlight a family and their traditions. * Centers will create staff bio boards that include culture celebrations and practices. | Education Team,  Center Manager,  Family Advocate,  Teachers, Family Engagement Manager, ECS Director, Director of Center Based Operations | September 2024 and throughout school year |
| To increase support to staff who have significant behavioral needs in the classroom. | * Develop schedule for learning communities specifically relating to staff mental health and providing a safe space to talk to other teachers about classroom challenges. * Reach out to local colleges who have psychology and social work programs for collaboration. | Education Team, ECS Director, Director of Center Based Operations | September 2024 and throughout school year |
| To increase Mental Health education for families and staff. | * Explore new partnerships with St. Catherine and Whitney Young. * Create and provide a list for families of after-hour Health Care Providers and local physicians (different for each center location). * Create community resource information for families of crisis numbers, police, poison control, list of local physicians, after-hour health care providers, etc. | Health Manager and Health Team, Education Team,  Family Engagement Manager, Center Managers, and Family Advocates, ECS Director and Director of Center Based Operations | September 2024 and throughout the school year |
| To increase opportunities for families to have access and take part in health literacy education/trainings. | * Meet the Nurses’ events at the beginning of each school year and Health Team tabling throughout the year providing information on various health topics during pickup time including immunizations. * Continue to offer First Aid and CPR parent classes. * Health Team to offer training on understanding immunizations. * Increase access to health services to remote locations. * Share with family’s information on transportation assistance including Medicab, bus routes, etc. * Explore opportunities with Ride Health as additional transportation assistance. | Health Manager, Health Team, Family Engagement Manager, Family Advocates, Center Managers | September 2024 and throughout the school year |
| To increase staff trainings opportunities in health and nutrition. | * Provide education to staff on ways to identify signs of Mental Health (Mental Health First Responder). * Health Team will provide health education opportunities in the classroom for children and families. * Provide staff with de-escalation training (as necessary and needed). | Health and Nutrition Manager, Health Team, Cooks, Center Directors, Teachers | September 2024 and throughout the school year |
| Increase participation in Parent Committees and Parent Meetings. | * Survey parents on meetings times/hybrid meetings and utilize results to drive meeting schedules for each center/site. * Utilize community partners for informative parent meetings. * Provide information sheet for parents on the Parent Committee. * Encourage Policy Council representative to organize the Parent Committee. | Family Engagement Manager, Family Advocates, Center Managers, ECS Director, Director of Center Based Operations | September 2024 and throughout the school year |
| Increase collaborations, referrals, and knowledge for staff regarding CEO and other community agencies/resources to support staff in providing families with resources to meet their needs. | * Ensure FA staff have initial and ongoing training/knowledge of CEO and external resources**.** * Increase internal collaboration, information sharing, and referrals amongst CEO programs. * Connect and form a working relationship with other community agencies we commonly refer to. * Invite representatives from local agencies to host a parent meeting. * Include flyers/info on external community resources with ECS newsletter. | Family Engagement Manager, Family Advocates, Center Managers, ECS Director, Director of Center Based Operations | September 2024 and throughout the school year |
| To host a variety of engaging Family Fun Days to increase parent engagement. | * Highlight different cultures of families at each center. * Have a Back-To-School Picnic/Block Party (September) Spring “Field” Day (May). * Have vendors come to sites/centers (Magic Show, Mobile Zoo, Musicians). | Family Engagement Manager, Family Advocates, Center Managers, ECS Director, Director of Center Based Operations, All Staff | September 2024 and throughout the school year |
| Increase Policy Council family recruitment to ensure cross representation of members for all sites and program options. | * Ensure PC information and recruitment is occurring at family orientation sessions. * Ask current PC members that are transitioning out of PC for recommendations for future members. * Send PC video and flyer out to families through Learning Genie. * Ensure Center Manager and Family Advocates promote Policy Council and assist in engaging future members. * Hold PC information sessions for interested families. | ECS Director, Director of Center Based Operations Family Engagement Manager, Family Advocates, and Policy Council | Summer 2024 and ongoing |
| Ensure the Selection Criteria is prioritizing children and families most in need of services, including populations that have been historically marginalized. | * Continue to recruit and provide services to families and children throughout Rensselaer County. * Attend and table at community events targeted for diverse populations (Black and Latino Fest etc.). | ECS Director, Director of Center Based Operations, Enrollment Coordinator, Family Engagement Manager, Family Advocates | Ongoing |
| Ensure our recruitment efforts reach populations that have been historically marginalized. | * Have paperwork available for families in multiple languages. * Create flyers to attract Migrant/Refugee population. * Connect with Legal Aid who are collaborating closely with the migrant/refugee population. * Identify community partners that may be serving migrant/refugee families. Once identified provide info about our program. (Example Mom’s Start here) | ECS Director, Director of Center Based Operations, Enrollment Coordinator, Marketing Director, ECS Management Team, and all Staff | Ongoing |
| Increase wait-list numbers across all areas/locations of the EHS/HS program. | * Extend hours for CEO hosted events. Survey staff to see who would be willing to assist with events later in the day. * Plan, coordinate, and advertise for CEO hosted events further in advance to be sure families have time to plan for the upcoming event. * Create an event on FB events page to get the word out about CEO hosted recruitment events. * Strengthen relationship with local shelter to ensure new staff are familiar with our program. * Table/ provide flyers at local church events, example: church picnics, carnivals, Christmas concerts, festivals, etc. | ECS Director, Director of Center Based Operations, Enrollment Coordinator, Marketing Director, ECS Management Team, and all Staff | Ongoing |
| Continue to implement creative recruitment and retention strategies for staff. | * Continue to offer internal CDA courses for potential candidates to assist them in obtaining necessary credentials for positions. * Encourage Head Start families to apply for positions they are eligible for and host various informational sessions around job opportunities. * Provide paid training and develop robust, comprehensive training plans for new staff. * Continue to provide competitive pay, incentives (as able), and work/life balance incentives. * Provide staff will individual and/or group wellness opportunities (lunch and learns, wellness corner resources, staff day, team building opportunities). | ECS Director, Director of Center Based Operations, ECS Management Team, HR, Marketing, All ECS staff | Ongoing |
| CEO will successfully submit our 5-year EHS/HS base line grant application with proposed enrollment from change of scope, once approved. | * ECS Director will work with CEO leadership to analyze community needs data and utilize results to drive completion of components of grant application. * CEO will work with external grant consultant to support grant writing efforts. * ECS Director will collaborate with stakeholders and utilize program and community data to develop new and/or updated program goals. * ECS Director will spearhead grant writing efforts and work with key leadership O to complete grant application for December 2024 submission. | ECS Director, Director of Center Based Operations, President/CEO, CAO, COO, External Consultant, CEO Board and Policy Council, and other identified CEO leadership stakeholders | Summer 2024 with due date of January 2025 |
| CEO will continue to identify creative strategies to increase in-kind match. | * Ensure School Readiness initiative is being implemented and in-kind is captured for completed activities. * Family Engagement manager will meet with individual sites/centers to review the importance of family engagement, participation, in-kind, and the program’s family engagement calendar. * Highlight a family volunteer and volunteer hours in program newsletter. * Ensure in-kind is capture for collaborators, student teachers, and volunteers. * Diversify in-kind collection efforts by reaching out to other HS programs. | Family Engagement Manager, Family Advocates, ECS Director, Director of Center Based Operations, ESC Management team, Teachers | Ongoing |