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**HEAD START CELEBRATES 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY IN 2005**

Nationally

Head Start and Early Head Start are federally funded child development programs that serve children from birth to age 5, pregnant women and their families. The overall goal of these programs is to increase the school readiness of young children from low-income families. Since its founding in 1965, Head Start has served more than 22 million of America's poorest and most at-risk children and their families.

Head Start began as an eight-week summer program by the Office of Economic Opportunity. It was designed to help break the cycle of poverty by providing preschool children from low-income families with a comprehensive program to meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs. Following its enthusiastic reception by education experts, child development specialists, community leaders and parents, the program expanded nationwide.

In 1969, Head Start was transferred from the Office of Economic Opportunity to the Office of Child Development in the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and has now become a program within the Administration on Children, Youth and Families in the Department of Health and Human Services.

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Today, Head Start programs serve children and their families in urban and rural areas in 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Territories. The program is locally administered by community-based non-profit organizations and school systems with grants awarded by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Nationally, in fiscal year 2004:

- 905,851 children were enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start programs.
- 1,604 Head Start grantees ran 20,050 Head Start and Early Head Start centers and more than 48,000 classrooms.
- The federal appropriation for Head Start programs was \$6.77 billion.
- The national average cost of serving a child enrolled in Head Start was \$7,222.

### Locally

Formed in 1996 and headquartered in Indianapolis, Family Development Services operates the Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Indiana's Marion and Hamilton counties. It provides educational programs and social services to more than 2,000 children and their families each year through 11 schools and service centers. Statewide, 14,234 children were enrolled in Head Start programs in Indiana in fiscal year 2004, at an average cost per child of \$6,681.

Family Development Services partners with many organizations throughout the Indianapolis area to support its schools and social services programs, including public schools, colleges and universities, health and social services organizations, and corporations. Through these partnerships, the organization delivers a variety of services to families of Head Start and Early Head Start students, including teen parent counseling, parenting skills programs, referrals for job training and employment counseling, health and nutrition services, fatherhood programs, literacy education, and childcare skills training.

Eligibility for Family Development Service's Head Start program includes the following criteria:

- Children must be 3 or 4 years old on or before July 1 prior to the September enrollment, AND;
- From families whose incomes are at or below the federal poverty income guidelines, or a child with a diagnosed disability whose family's income is at or below 150% federal poverty income guidelines.

The majority of Family Development Service's Head Start slots are for four-year-old children, with fewer available for three-year-olds. Five-year-olds who are not eligible for public kindergarten, and whose birth date is after July 1, may be accepted.

The eligibility requirements for the Early Head Start program include:

- Pregnant mother, or families with children 0-3 years old;
- Family meets federal low-income guidelines;
- Parent(s) enrolled in school or employed full time.

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