

Early Learning Coalition of Polk County

ANNUAL REPORT Fiscal Year 2004-2005



INTRODUCTION

The Early Learning Coalition of Polk County recognizes that school readiness programs increase children's chances of achieving future educational success and becoming productive members of society. With that in mind, the Coalition continues to challenge the parents, early education and care providers and the community as a whole to have high quality and meaningful services for the birth to kindergarten children of Polk County.

The new Florida Voluntary PreKindergarten (VPK) Program is an incredible challenge for coalitions to provide services for all four year olds to prepare them for their school experience. Coalitions across the state produced creative ways to help parents understand the new program, get children enrolled and provide meaningful experiences. The Coalition attempted to educate parents on the VPK program by holding public forums across the county and on public television. Informational postcards were also sent to all families with a four year old. A "VPK Shopping Day" was held for providers who were eligible before June 30, 2005 to assist them in implementing their programs.

With the foundation being laid in these infant years of the school readiness legislation, the 2004-2005 fiscal year was another year of successes and challenges for the Coalition.

MISSION STATEMENT

All children enter school healthy, ready and eager for life long learning with the collaborative support of parents, families, educators and the community.

VISION STATEMENT

The Coalition will provide leadership, direction, and integrated resource management for quality services that support our vision of success for children.

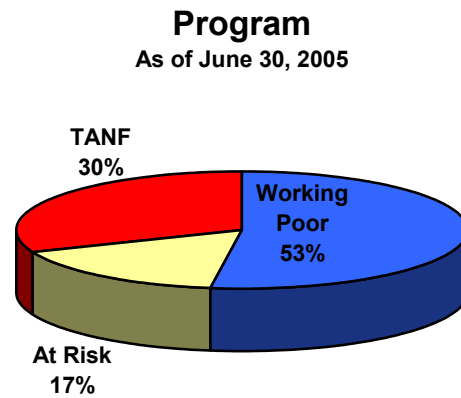
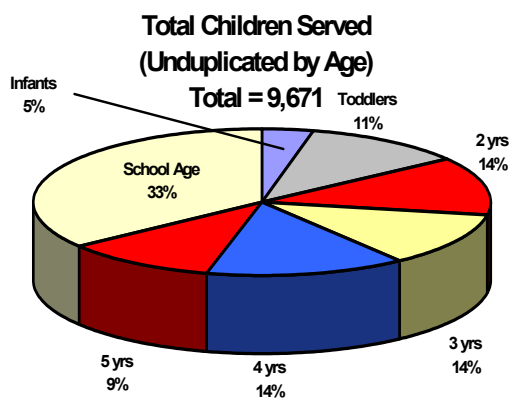
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PROGRAM SERVICES

As of June 30, 2005, 9,671 income eligible children age 0-13 were served throughout Polk County by 402 providers funded through the Coalition. There were 170 licensed Child Care Centers providing services to groups of children; 149 Family Child Care Homes providing in-home care for children from more than one family; 15 Informal child care providers serving the children of one family; 36 school-based sites; and 32 license-exempt centers, which are primarily faith-based facilities.

All families must be income eligible, but may come through one of three venues to receive childcare services. Parent(s) may have a referral through TANF while striving to become self-sufficient, they may have a referral from the Department of Children and Families as a Protective Services client or they may complete a self referral as a working poor family. The Coalition continues to have a large wait list of working poor families. As of June 30, 2005 the wait list was 1,799.



PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

All children entering school are assessed for school readiness within the first 45 days of kindergarten entry using the School Readiness Universal Screening System (SRUSS). The Early Screening Inventory Status (ESI-K) and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) were the tools used for the SRUSS in Polk County for FY 2004-2005. The Coalition continues to work with its community partners to reach out to those areas with the lowest scores.

ESI-K	Polk %	State %	DIBELS Letter Naming	Polk %	State %	Initial Sounds	Polk %	State %
Ready Now	76	84	Above Average	36	48		34	39
Getting Ready	17	12	Low Risk	16	15		20	19
Not Ready Yet	7	5	Moderate Risk	20	17		22	20
			High Risk	28	20		25	22
Total screened	6,056	175,806		890	175,023		889	174,913

QUALITY & SPECIAL INITIATIVES

According to the Coalition's grant with the Office of Early Learning, a minimum of 4% must be spent on quality initiatives.

- The Coalition was able to provide health clinics again this year through the Polk County Health Department. Opportunities were held for almost 500 children. They received one or more of the following: health screens including vision, hearing, growth and development; physicals; immunizations and body mass indexes. Children were seen at five (5) sites to prepare for school, VPK and child-care programs.
- The Coalition received additional funds after the hurricanes to help providers. Almost \$32,000 was given in the form of mini-grants to providers to assist them in their needs to rebuild their sites and replace damaged items.
- The Coalition had been long awaiting the United Way of America/Success by 6 parent campaign in conjunction with the Ad Council. The Born Learning campaign was designed for parents to use everyday moments to help their children learn and be ready for school. The Born Learning campaign was launched in the spring at the national level and the Coalition immediately began a multi-media campaign for Polk County. The local campaign included cable and theaters commercials, buses, billboards and print materials. Printed materials are widely distributed by the Coalition's community partners including the Health Department, the Department of Children and Families, Healthy Start, Healthy Families, & Heartland for Children. Materials are available in health clinics, to every new mother in the hospital, at agencies, and special events throughout the county.
- In partnership with the local Success by 6 initiative, the Coalition placed eleven (11) Lending Libraries in childcare sites. These libraries allow parents to borrow a variety of books to take home and share with their family.
- The Even Start Program promotes family literacy and is new to Polk County. The Coalition supported the program by providing the "Book Cooks" and "Picture This". Even Start is a federal program that promotes early literacy by working with both parents and young children of low income families.
- The Coalition was able to support the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) scholarship program this year as it related to a special program developed between the University of South Florida and Polk Community College. The T.E.A.C.H. scholarships this year were to be used for graduates of the Polk Community College Early Childhood Education A.S. degree program who were transitioning on to the University of South Florida to complete their B.A.S. in Early Childhood Development.
- The Coalition believes strongly in providing books whenever possible and as funds allow. Over 1,000 books were provided for the Exploration's V Museum's Children's Festival in April 2005 for children to take home. Over 400 books were also given to childcare providers at the Polk Collaborative Conference held in May 2005.
- The Coalition in conjunction with other coalitions supported the Florida Children's Forum in developing a new membership orientation program called "**Because We Care.**"



"To prepare children to enter school ready to learn, the process must begin at birth. We must support parents as their first teachers and also involve the community to make a difference in the lives of our children."

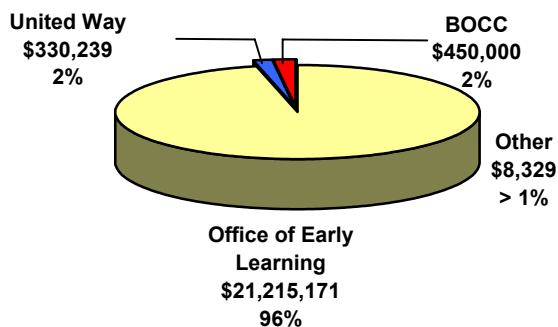


FINANCIAL REPORT

The Coalition budget for FY 2004-2005 was approximately \$22,003,739

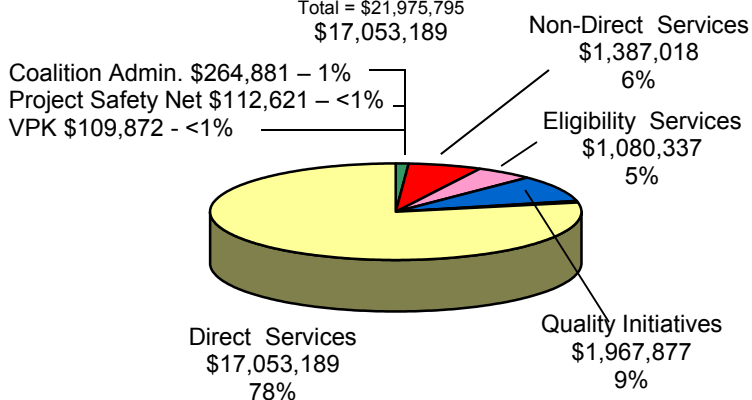
Income

Total = \$22, 003,739



Expenses

Total = \$21,975,795
\$17,053,189



CHILD CARE RESOURCE & REFERRAL SIMPLIFIED POINT OF ENTRY & UNIFIED WAIT LIST

The Coalition continues to provide Child Care Resource & Referral through Youth and Family Alternatives, Inc. (YFA). These services include helping all parents find child care that best suits their family's needs. YFA maintains a comprehensive database of child care providers providing families with unbiased, computer-generated referrals.

YFA also maintains a Simplified Point of Entry and Unified Wait List for all school readiness funded children.

For more information on school readiness programs & services contact:

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of Polk County**

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www.elcpolk.org

SUMMARY

The Coalition provides the majority of its services through contracts with Youth and Family Alternatives, Inc. and the School Board of Polk County. These contracts include a variety of initiatives including: Client Eligibility, Caring for Kids, Lending Libraries, Infant/Toddler Coordinator, Inclusion & Child Development Coordinators, Dental Education Program, Florida First Start, Hanen Project, Health and Developmental Screenings, and Project Safety Net. Providers also receive training, technical assistance and payments through these contracts.

