

Communities United, Inc.

Annual Report for Program Year

9/1/2017 to 8/31/2018

In providing services to children and their families, Communities United Inc. does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Communities United, Inc.
Annual Report
Program Year September 1, 2017 to August 31, 2018

Communities United Inc. (CUI) is a community based private nonprofit organization which operates high quality, early childhood education programs and provides comprehensive services to children and their families. CUI's **Creative Start Children's Centers** operate half-day, full day and extended day child care programs for preschoolers and toddlers.

Communities United, Inc. actively serves families living in the communities of Arlington, Belmont, Brookline, Burlington, Lexington, Needham, Newton, Waltham, Watertown, Wellesley and Woburn. While CUI serves children from the full socio-economic spectrum, our focus is on identifying the most at-risk families and ensuring that their needs are met. Within our catchment area reside large populations of homeless families who are served both through our center based programs, as well as off-site through our Early Head Start and Head Start Home Visiting programs.

Funding to support CUI's ongoing mission comes primarily from Federal and State sources. CUI was founded in 1970 as a Head Start grantee agency with funding from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services which now accounts for over half of CUI's annual revenue. In 2000, CUI became an Early Head Start grantee, enabling the Agency to provide center based, as well as home based services to infants, toddlers and pregnant women.

Since health and nutrition are key components of CUI's core philosophy, CUI contracts with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) under their Child & Adult Care Food Program to provide nutritious meals -- breakfast, lunch, and snack -- to all enrolled children.

In addition, funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is obtained by contracts and grants, which provide child care subsidies to eligible families and support for staff and other program initiatives. Among the State grants that CUI receives is the Coordinated Family & Community Engagement (CFCE) grant, which supports outreach and programming, especially for isolated and at risk populations in seven of the towns served by the Agency. To support our philosophy of economic integration, CUI also enrolls children from families with the means to pay full tuition, which allows CUI classrooms to more closely reflect the enrollment of public school classrooms in the communities. Tuition fees account for approximately 6% of CUI's annual revenue.

As funding from federal, state and local agencies becomes less certain, it has been increasingly challenging for the Agency to meet steadily rising operational costs. CUI relies on donations from individuals, corporations, and private foundations to meet specific needs as well as to help reduce the shortfall from other funding sources.

Funding to Increase the Duration of Head Start Programs

On April 22, 2016 it was announced that Congress approved new funding that allowed all Head Start agencies to have access to full school year and full school day programming. Congress has appropriated supplemental funding for existing Head Start programs to increase the number of hours and days of high-quality services offered each year to children enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. CUI applied and was approved for the initial Duration grant. CUI has implemented the Duration program by providing one Pre-K classroom at each center with a daily and annual schedule that aligns with public schools. Pending federal approval for additional Duration grant funds, CUI will submit an application to increase the number of Durations slots available for the families we serve.

Background

This report is prepared to comply with the Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007 (Head Start Act 644A (2): “each Head Start Agency shall make available to the public a report published at least once in each fiscal year that discloses the following information from the most recently concluded fiscal year, except that reporting such information shall not reveal personally identifiable information about an individual child or parent”:

(A) Total HS-EHS Public and Private Funds Awarded to Communities United, Inc.

1. Public Funds:

a. Federal Head Start Grant	\$ 3,161,358
b. Federal Head Start Grant Training & Technical Assistance	\$ 35,560
c. Federal Early Head Start Grant	\$ 472,369
d. Federal Early Head Start Grant Training & Technical Assistance	\$ 11,439
e. USDA Child & Adult Care Food Program	\$ 186,951

2. Private Funds (required to meet the 20% funding match):

a. Non Federal Share of Head Start Grant	\$ 808,120
b. Non Federal Share of Early Head Start Grant	\$ 123,812

(B) Overview of funding available for the 2017-2018 School Year

Category	Budget for HS-EHS Fiscal Year February 1, 2017 – January 31, 2018	
	Basic Head Start	Early Head Start
Personnel	\$ 1,918,617	\$ 335,734
Fringe Benefits	476,592	83,621
Travel	0	0
Equipment	0	0
Supplies	30,758	2,214
Contractual	42,278	6,151
Other	591,966	48,859
Facilities/Construction	0	0
Total	\$ 3,060,211	\$ 476,579

Budget for HS-EHS Fiscal Year February 1, 2018 – January 31, 2019		
Category	Basic Head Start	Early Head Start
Personnel	\$ 2,021,761	\$ 347,747
Fringe Benefits	506,557	87,445
Travel	0	0
Equipment	0	0
Supplies	22,765	2,355
Contractual	38,684	6,142
Other	704,799	45,281
Facilities/Construction	0	0
Total	\$ 3,294,566	\$ 488,970

(C) Statistics on Total Children and Families Served, as well as Monthly Enrollment:

- Total # of HS-EHS children served throughout the program year in center-based programs: **256**
- Total # of EHS and HS children and pregnant women served in home visiting programs throughout the program year: **61**
- Total # of HS-EHS families served in center-based programs throughout the program year: **239**
- Total # of EHS and HS families served in home visiting programs throughout the program year: **51**
- Average monthly enrollment of Head Start (as a percentage of funded enrollment): **100%**
- Average monthly enrollment of Early Head Start (as a percentage of funded enrollment): **100%**
- Percentage of Head Start children served qualifying at or below the federal poverty line: **67%**
- Percentage of Early Head Start children served qualifying at or below the federal poverty line: **78%**

(D) Monitoring Reviews:

Federal review by the Office of Head Start:

The Office of Head Start conducts Federal on-site monitoring reviews. These regular reviews provide CUI with the invaluable feedback for ongoing improvement to its high quality, early education programming.

Independent Audit:

In addition to on-going, internal program monitoring and local self-assessment, Communities United Inc. receives an annual independent audit, which was performed by the audit firm of Siegrist, Cree, Alessandri & Strauss, CPA, P.C. The most recent audit, conducted in Spring 2017, was for the period ending January 31, 2017. The audit resulted in no findings, no material weaknesses and no deficiencies of any sort. The full audit report is available for review at the Central Administrative offices of Communities United Inc., as well as at the Massachusetts State Attorney General's Office.

(E) Enrolled Children Who Received Medical and Dental Exams

Funding	% received medical exams	% received dental exams	% received oral health screening as part of well-baby exam
Basic Head Start (BHS)	100%	89%	N/A
Early Head Start (EHS)	78%	66%	10%

(F) Parent, Family and Community Engagement

As part of its mission and philosophy, CUI is committed to systematic and integrated parent and family engagement activities to achieve outcomes that result in children who are healthy and ready for school. In recognition of this important component, which is unique to Head Start, CUI incorporated the full-time position, Director of Family and Community Engagement, to focus on this vital service. Family Engagement occurs in all aspects of the agency and provides a wide variety of ways for parents to be involved. Parent and family engagement activities are grounded in positive, ongoing and goal-oriented relationships with families. These activities include:

- Two home visits and three teacher/parent conferences yearly to enable staff to acquire a better understanding of each child's abilities and experiences, to share progress with parents, and to share activities, ideas, and materials which help parents in their role as their child's primary teacher.
- Volunteer activities in such areas as Policy Council, classroom helper, kitchen helper, Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) and more.
- Guidance on community services to promote awareness and utilization of available resources, including the availability of an extensive Community Resource Guide.
- Monthly on-site parent trainings on topics such as Health & Safety, Family Literacy, Parenting, Transitions, Nutrition, Oral Health, Stress Management and Advocacy.
- Center and agency-wide family events that promote diversity and social connections and provide enrichment from the many cultures and ethnicities represented in our communities.
- STEM and literacy events to introduce activities that can be done in the home, which include the development of take-home activity kits.

- Parental access to substitute teacher training, which provides familiarity with child development and appropriate practices with young children, as well as the opportunity to work as a substitute teacher in CUI programs (which may lead to permanent employment).
- Development of an Individual Family Engagement Plan, which helps parents identify goals which can lead to self-enrichment, gainful employment or greater understanding of their role as a parent and their child’s primary teacher.
- Participation in trainings and events regarding the transition to Kindergarten process, to ensure the child’s and parents’ success in elementary school.
- Leadership development opportunities, through Parent Committee meetings, Policy Council meetings, legislative breakfasts and advocacy activities at the local and state level.



(G) School Readiness

CUI has developed a School Readiness Plan to ensure that all children are prepared when they enter kindergarten. This plan is based on the belief that it is everyone’s responsibility to support children during the early years and that a strong partnership between families, educators, schools and communities is a key factor in determining children’s future school success. According to the Office of Head Start, *School Readiness* is when children have the **“skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are necessary for success in school and for later learning throughout life.”**

CUI is committed to preparing children and families for a lifelong journey of learning. Our ultimate goal is to develop ***Ready Families, Ready Educators, Ready Schools, Ready Children and Ready Communities.***

Preparation for kindergarten begins at the initial home visit, which takes place before the child begins attending a CUI program. Through interview and documentation, CUI staff members obtain information about the child's developmental progress and the parent's goals for the child entering the school year. This conversation continues at registration and orientation as the child begins attending the program. The teaching staff complete an initial preschool assessment, which is the teacher's assessment of the child in 5 areas:

- Social-Emotional Development
- Language and Literacy
- Math
- Creativity
- Physical Development

Information obtained through parent interview and this initial assessment allows the teaching staff to individualize curriculum to meet the child's needs and the parent's goals for the child.

Throughout the year, the teaching staff record observations of the child's progress in the following areas:

- Social/Emotional
- Approaches to Learning
- Language, Literacy
- Math
- Science
- Creative Arts
- Physical Health

These observations assist the teaching staff in completing child outcomes/assessments, using the research-based Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment tool, in the Fall, Winter and Spring. These outcomes allow the teaching staff to track the child's progress and to continue to individualize curriculum to meet that child's ongoing needs. Parents receive feedback about their child's progress formally at three parent conferences, and informally throughout the year.

CUI also utilizes a Transition to Kindergarten checklist, which assists the teaching staff in helping both the child and the parent make a smooth transition from our programs to kindergarten. Teaching and social service staff help the parent identify which kindergarten program the child will be attending. Our staff obtain key information to aid in the family's transition, including details about the documentation needed by the parent for enrollment, registration dates and visiting dates. This information is shared with the parent and assistance is provided by CUI staff to help the parent obtain all of the documents required for kindergarten enrollment.

CUI invites kindergarten teachers, principals and assistant principals to attend CUI sponsored workshops and parent committee meetings, which allow parents to learn more

about the kindergarten program and to ask questions in smaller, more intimate settings. CUI staff encourage parents to attend any transitional or kindergarten workshops held at their child’s prospective school and will attend workshops to support parents, if necessary.

The CUI teaching staff conduct classroom activities designed to familiarize the child with kindergarten. Teachers integrate the topic of kindergarten into curriculum through relevant books and materials. Each child transitioning to kindergarten receives a transition book about kindergarten and packets of information for the parents, including at home activities to do during the summer to help the child prepare for kindergarten.

The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework is CUI’s primary guide in implementing a developmentally appropriate curriculum and assessment that aligns to our school readiness goals and tracks children’s progress across the Five Essential Domains. Teaching Strategies GOLD data is collected three times a year and used to determine how our children are doing in each of the Domains. This data is analyzed thoroughly by our Director of Early Childhood Education and Education Managers. The results of this analysis are shared with Policy Council, the Board of Directors and Parent Committees who use the data to assess the impact of our program options.

Spring 2018 GOLD Assessment Data (summarized below, comparing Fall to Spring results) shows the impact that our program has had on meeting the educational needs of children in our programs.

Toddlers - Fall 2017/Spring 2018

Domains	Below Expectation	Meets Expectation	Exceeds Expectation
<i>Social Emotional</i>	75%/25%	44%/100%	6%/0%
<i>Gross Motor</i>	81%/69%	44%/56%	0%/0%
<i>Fine Motor</i>	25%/5%	88%/75%	13%/0%
<i>Language</i>	88%/56%	38%/69%	0%/0%
<i>Cognitive</i>	69%/31%	50%/94%	6%/0%
<i>Literacy</i>	56%/19%	56%/88%	13%/19%
<i>Math</i>	75%/25%	44%/94%	17%/17%

3 and 4 year olds - Fall 2017/Spring 2018

Domains	Below Expectation	Meets Expectation	Exceeds Expectation
<i>Social Emotional Domain</i>	53%/9%	40%/74%	7%/17%
<i>Gross Motor</i>	58%/17%	38%/79%	4%/4%
<i>Fine Motor</i>	58%/16%	38%/79%	4%/5%
<i>Language Domain</i>	47%/12%	45%/77%	8%/11%
<i>Cognitive Domain</i>	53%/11%	40%/82%	7%/7%
<i>Literacy Domain</i>	59%/17%	31%/68%	10%/15%
<i>Math Domain</i>	41%/9%	52%/79%	7%/12%

(H) Services to Homeless Families

As part of CUI's Early Head Start grant, the agency also focuses on the needs of homeless families residing within our catchment area. During this program year, CUI served pregnant women, newborns, infants, and toddlers living at the transitional homeless shelter at a local hotel and other shelters in the City of Waltham. Services included weekly home visits as well as parent-child socialization groups facilitated by CUI staff, in concert with Early Intervention staff.

Toddler and preschool children from homeless shelters, and other local domestic violence and substance abuse shelters, are also served in CUI's center-based programs.

Appendix 1

Facilities

Communities United currently operates three early childhood centers, shown below.

Newton-Watertown Creative Start

573B Washington Street

Newton, MA 02458

(617) 527-6689

Fax: (617) 581-6781

Waltham Creative Start

169 Elm Street

Waltham, MA 02453

(781) 647-0542

Fax: (781) 894-4783

Woburn Creative Start

470 Wildwood Avenue

Woburn, MA 01801

(781) 932-9578

Fax: (781) 938-0811

CUI also operates one other facility at which it conducts a variety of activities to serve children and families and meet the agency's mission:

Central Administration

108 Water Street, Unit 2D

Watertown, MA 02472

(617) 744-6076

Appendix 2

Community Resources

Information about CUI and all of its programs is available on our website at: www.communitiesunitedinc.org

Additionally, CUI provides an extensive range of information to assist families in addressing basic as well as emergency needs like education, housing, health, etc. This information is available in community-specific resource guides that can be downloaded from our website: www.communitiesunitedinc.org . A hard copy can be requested by contacting CUI's Central Administrative Office at 617-744-6076.

