



Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council

ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022



A YEAR OF CHALLENGES



The 2021-2022 Program Year will be remembered as one filled with new challenges for the Agency. The Covid-19 pandemic continued on leaving a sense of trepidation and uncertainty throughout the departments. It also brought us the first major hurdle for the year - to vaccinate; or not to vaccinate. That was the question.

The Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council had already begun the year with an employee shortage. Help wanted advertisements weren't bringing in applicants like they had in the past and the vaccination debate felt like another hurdle to be faced. The decision to require that all staff be vaccinated was made and sadly, resulted in staff turnover and the stress that comes when acclimating a new staff person in a position.

Our focus then had to shift to retaining our staff who were burnt out, tired, and feeling the effects of covering multiple roles while also navigating pandemic related changes and challenges. In February, the Agency received funding to assist in this effort and all staff received a retention bonus of up to \$1,500.

While some challenges were Agency wide; other departments faced their own

internal stresses this year. Housing is not only a vital aspect of everyday life but also, a vital department within the Agency who had no choice but to navigate a series of catastrophes. Within a three month time span a house fire, broken water lines, and a fatal crime all occurred. While there was understandable disruptions in service; staff pulled together in ways they never imagined when they first applied for the job.

Change, and our reaction to it, while in the midst of a challenging year has perhaps been one of the greatest tests the Agency has faced. How we handled the near constant upheaval bodes well for the future of the Agency and the vital role we play within the community. The credit for the Agency's success is directly related to the dedicated staff who work tirelessly in assisting our clients to reach their full potential.

Change is not new, neither are the difficult times and situations. How the Agency overcame the obstacles of the past year is a testament to the staff and Board of Director's dedication to the residents of Forest and Warren Counties. It is with great pride that I present the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Warren Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council.

Respectfully,

Robert A. Raible

I would like to take a moment and recognize another huge change for our Agency. Ms. Dawn Turner, Director of Fiscal Operations retired from full-time employment on June 30, 2022.

Ms. Turner has been the Agency Fiscal Director since 1986. As we grew in total budget and, by extension, complexity, her attention to detail never wavered. During her tenure, the Agency maintained clean audits with no findings!

She is transitioning to a part-time role in the Fiscal Office in the upcoming year.

*Thank you Dawn
for all your years of
dedicated service.*





Produce Express

Each month the Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council handles sign ups for in demand Produce Express boxes. Produce Express is offered to the community through the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania. Distribution of boxes filled with seasonal produce and non-perishable foods are picked up by eligible families on the third Thursday of each month at the First Lutheran Church in Warren. The Agency maintains a listing of households and times they will be picking up as well as helps with completing annual program applications. On the first work day of each month households can call and select a time slot to pick up their box of food. Produce Express helps eligible families access fresh fruits and vegetables that they may not otherwise have access to. The program is first come, first served.

137 Households applied and were able to pick up a box of non-perishables and fresh produce at least one month this program year.

Utility Assistance

The Agency primarily offers assistance for clients who have received a shut off notice or who are in need of assistance in order to purchase deliverable heating fuel such as propane or pellets. In 2021 to 2022, the Agency administered the Neighbor-for-Neighbor (NFN) National Fuel program, assisted in processing applications for level billing assistance through Columbia Gas, and addressed various utility related crisis situations through funds provided by the Emergency Food and Shelter Program.

In the 2021 to 2022 program year we assisted with the following:

23 Households enrolled in the Columbia Gas CAP level billing program

4 Households received Emergency Food & Shelter Funds to address their utility crisis

15 Households were approved for the Neighbor-for-Neighbor program and received grants for deliverable fuel or to prevent a National Fuel shut off.





WEATHERIZATION

The Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council oversees multiple weatherization programs assisting low-income households in Warren, Forest, and Venango Counties. Depending on eligibility and situation, households enrolled in weatherization programs receive various measures to help control heating costs while creating a safer, more energy efficient home. Rising utility costs create a huge barrier for already struggling households. This often can lead to a crisis situation and unmanageable expenses. Weatherization programs offered by the Agency can help with needed improvements to homes through measures which help to conserve energy and reduce high heat and utility costs. In addition to the continuation of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP Crisis and Non-crisis), Penelec WARM, National Fuel, and the Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program; there were two new programs, the LIHEAP Clean and Tune Pilot and the LIHEAP Crisis Cooling Pilot, added to the department.

The purpose of the LIHEAP Clean and Tune Pilot program is to perform preventative maintenance services and provide client education to protect the health and safety of the client while preserving the integrity of the client's heating system and equipment. The principle behind conducting the clean and tune work is to provide equipment maintenance and client education on the importance of regular care. This will potentially prevent repeat Crisis clients which will allow services and funds to be available for other individuals and households in need of heating system repairs and/or replacements.

The Cooling Program is to provide a home with a comfortable area in extreme heat, replace or repair cooling units that are not working efficiently, improve household air quality, and provide client education to protect the health and safety of the client while preserving the integrity of the client's cooling equipment. These goals will be met by providing eligible households with Energy-Star rated air conditioners (window or through the wall) with cover/s or repairing or replacing an existing central air system or heat pump. Another option is to provide up to two energy-efficient fans and educating clients about energy conservation. This program doesn't have any reportable outcomes yet as this pilot program launched in June 2022.

For all households approved, there is an energy audit completed as the initial step. The audit typically includes an assessment of the property and concludes with recommendations of measures or steps needed to improve the energy efficiency of the home. These may include, but are not limited to, blower guided air sealing, improving insulation and ventilation, health and safety measures, and, in emergencies, even the replacement or repair of appliances, furnaces, and more.

LIHEAP, which clients apply for through the County Assistance Office, assists low-income families with heating costs through a grant program. Grant funds are sent directly to the utility company upon approval. In the coldest months of the year, a household at imminent risk of losing their heat can qualify for a crisis grant program administered by the Warren-Forest Counties EOC. In Penelec WARM, a participating household receives an in-home energy usage audit and creates an energy savings program for the home, with the help of our trained staff.

Program Stats & Accomplishments

12 Homes (27 People) in Forest County received LIHEAP Crisis

107 Homes (242 People) in Venango County received LIHEAP Crisis

70 Homes (151 People) in Warren County received LIHEAP Crisis

14 Homes (24 People) had their homes weatherized through the LIHEAP Standard Weatherization Program

150 Homes (346 People) participated in the LIHEAP Clean and Tune Program

20 Homes (33 People) were weatherized under the Department of Energy Program

66 Homes (201 People) participated in Penelec WARM

2 Homes (3 People) had their furnace or hot water tank repaired/replaced under the National Fuel Emergency Repair/Replace Program



The Community Services Department at the Agency has continuously evolved throughout the last few years as program offerings, funding, and staffing have created a need for staff able to adapt. This year, the focus of this small department remained primarily on emergency services through the FEMA utility assistance program, Homeless Assistance Program (HAP), and the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). While ERAP focused on renters, it was not until early 2022 that a comparable program was made available to homeowners through the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency, utilizing funding by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.



HUD Housing Counseling Helps

The Agency has long been a recognized and certified HUD Counseling Agency working within the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency network. Staffing challenges had left the Agency unsure of whether or not it would continue offering free-of-charge HUD Counseling Services, which require highly trained staff who hold national certifications, or remove the Agency from the network. As the pandemic continued more and more homeowners were struggling to keep their mortgages in good standing. As a result, when the moratorium on foreclosures lifted, the calls began rolling in. In the fall of 2021, the Agency hired back a nationally certified HUD Housing Counselor and began providing foreclosure intervention services that included a mix of individualized budget counseling, application submittal for the new PA Homeowner Assistance Fund (PAHAF) and the Homeowner's Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program (HEMAP), and

targeted suggestions for reducing overall household debt.

While both programs are designed to help homeowners facing foreclosure; there are several differences between the two programs. The HEMAP program is a repayable loan program providing mortgage assistance for homeowners who are delinquent on their mortgage through no fault of their own. Assistance is granted for a temporary period of time, typically limited to 24 to 36 months from the date of the delinquency. Homeowners must first receive an Act 91 from their lender, be Pennsylvania residents who own and occupy their home, be at least 60 days delinquent, be suffering a financial hardship through no fault of their own, and show reasonable prospects of being able to resume normal mortgage payments after HEMAP eligibility. Our role for homeowners in this position is to assist with completing and submission of the application.

9 Households had HEMAP applications submitted.

3 Households approved.



The PA Homeowner's Assistance Fund is a new program offered through the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency, through funding from the US Department of the Treasury, to assist homeowners facing financial hardship due to

the Covid-19 pandemic. Rather than a loan, approved applicants receive a one time grant to be used for mortgage delinquency, past due property taxes, utility bills, and HOA dues.

Hardship situations must have begun after January 21, 2020, (including a hardship that began before January 21, 2020, and continued after that date). Homeowners must own and occupy the property as a primary residence, be experiencing a COVID-19 related hardship, be at least 30 days past due, and have a household income equal to or less than 150% area median income.

7 Households had PAHAF applications submitted.

2 Households were approved & received funding.

At the end of each application our clients are asked to provide feedback on our counselor, the program, and the Agency.

"She is very professional, courteous, and showed us personal concern while thoroughly explaining the program. She assured us that there is no guarantee. I wish that all the institutions were as concerned and helpful."

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT



COVID-19 EMERGENCY

RESIDENTIAL RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 included funding for states to create and establish emergency rental assistance programs for those households impacted by the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. Spearheading this effort for the State of Pennsylvania as the designated agency overseeing the administration of funds is the Department of Human Services. Funds are to be used to provide assistance to renters, landlords, and utility providers who were impacted by the Pandemic. Upon receiving the allocation; the County Commissioners for both counties, as well as Forest-Warren Human Services, designated the Warren-Forest Counties EOC as the lead agency administering funds to eligible households at risk of homelessness or landlords who had been unable to collect rents owed.

Residents in Warren and Forest Counties apply online through the state wide COMPASS system. The application is reviewed by a Case Manager at the EOC who will then contact applicants to set up an appointment for them to bring in required documentation and sign all paperwork for the application. The Case Manager will then determine how much financial assistance a household can receive for rental arrearage, future rent, and utility costs on a case-by-case basis. The purpose of the financial assistance is to prevent homelessness and address pandemic related financial crisis. Approved households are eligible to re-apply for additional assistance if needed.

The demand for this program as well as the volume of applications received has been overwhelming at times. As always, our staff have faced any challenge with compassion and a willingness to help.

Program Stats & Accomplishments

411 Applications for assistance received and processed

307 Households in Warren County received rental assistance for past due and/or future rent

190 Households in Warren County received utility assistance for past due balances

5 Households in Forest County received rental assistance for past due and/or future rent

6 Households in Forest County received utility assistance for past due balances

Warren County Homeless Assistance Program

The Homeless Assistance Program is administered by the Agency and the Salvation Army for Warren County. In Forest County, the program is administered by the Forest County Commissioners. The HAP program is designed to provide one time emergency rental assistance for a household facing eviction and at risk of becoming homeless. The Agency works closely with the Salvation Army to coordinate and assist with funds to address rental arrearages or, if the situation can not be resolved and isn't sustainable, funds can be used toward the first month rent and/or security deposits.

Eligible households can only receive assistance once per 24-month period. In an effort to assist household in moving past the initial housing crisis that resulted in near or actual homelessness, the Agency follows up to offer continued case management, referrals, or other program opportunities that the household may be eligible for up to a minimum of 90 days.



In 2021 to 2022

5 Households received assistance to address a utility shut off and maintain service

4 Households received assistance to prevent an eviction

2 Households received assistance with security deposits for new housing

The Agency's Housing Department administers multiple programs designed to help vulnerable families and individuals facing a housing crisis. Homeless and near homeless households are assisted through a combination of emergency, transition, or permanent housing programs as well as given housing assistance options. Programs and services are determined on a case-by-case basis and catered to what best fits the household's unique situation. The Housing Department has highly skilled case managers working intensively with clients and who coordinate services with other area human services agencies. This ensures that all essential services which a client may be eligible for are available to them.

Housing services and programs are provided throughout 19 properties in Warren and Forest Counties. This includes the Faith Inn apartments used for emergency shelter and transitional housing as well as 12 permanent housing units.

322 Individuals were assisted with housing needs and crisis situations in this program year

60% exited into a permanent housing solution



Permanent Housing

A primary focus of the Agency's Community Development efforts is to continuously seek out opportunities, properties, and partnerships that will expand our permanent housing options. There are currently 14 buildings with 43 apartment units.

68 Individuals (38 Households) were housed in our permanent, safe, affordable housing this year

Vacancies are rare due to the high demand in the community for affordable housing. In particular, this is a barrier that more vulnerable households often face. To apply for a vacancy; households must have established services with area social and human service providers, have a serious mental illness or co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorder, reside in the service area, and be approved by a local Housing Advisory Board.

During the 2021-2022 program year; a newly constructed, three bedroom single family home on Carbon Street was added to the available properties.

Emergency Shelter for Families in Crisis

The Faith Inn Homeless shelter is supported through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funding. The program serves homeless individuals and families with a goal of helping them into transitional and/or permanent housing, depending on that household's situation and their specific set of challenges.

In spite of some limited funding; in 2021-2022 the Faith Inn served:

60 Individuals (26 Households) were housed in emergency shelter units

Since opening its' doors in September of 2011 the shelter has consistently remained full while maintaining a wait list and only rare vacancies. This is typically a 30 day program that supports and assists individuals/families as they work to secure housing and overcome barriers.

This past year we had a family that was at risk of homelessness and living without heat in their home. Their solution, prior to moving into the shelter, was to heat the home with the stove. Upon move in, the EOC helped connect the family with mainstream benefits, mental health services, medical assistance, and obtaining identification documents. During this time the family was also able to reconnect with the children's father who was employed full time. As the family continued to stabilize they were referred to Northwest Rapid ReHousing, approved, and housed with a private landlord in Warren where they have remained housed.



HOUSING DEPARTMENT



Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness

SAMHSA's (Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration) PATH program funds services for people with serious mental illness who are experiencing homelessness. The PATH program's primary goal is to work with individuals and assist them as they successfully transition into permanent housing settings.

The PATH Mental Health Housing Specialist is responsible for oversight of 3 transitional houses located on North State Street at the Warren State Hospital Grounds: 217, 307, and 309. Referrals to PATH Transitional Housing come from a variety of sources including, but not limited to, jails/prisons, rehab facilities, walk-ins, families, psychiatric facilities, and hospitals. While other housing programs may contain strict guidelines regarding who can be approved; PATH is designed to be more flexible and to accommodate those individuals who might otherwise fall through the cracks. There is no income eligibility requirement. Referrals and applicants must simply be homeless or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental health diagnosis.

In 2021-2022:

23 Individuals were housed

9 Individuals exited into their own safe, affordable housing

Individuals ranged in age from 19 to 61 years old and presented with many different circumstances. The variation in age, conditions, and barriers did not

cause any added challenge. The EOC was able to accommodate everyone and work towards the varied housing goals.

The Long Road to Home: From PATH to the Emergency Solutions Program

We had one success story that began with the PATH program yet ended with a successful exit from the Emergency Solutions Program. A client, A.M., came to the Agency in need and looking to find a place where she could stabilize her life for both herself and her child. While she had support from her family; she couldn't live with any of them due to their own situations. This reality is what brought her to the Agency.

Initially, she applied for the Agency's Rapid ReHousing program however, at that time, there were not any openings and finding available apartments was challenging due to COVID era eviction moratoriums.

She ultimately made a difficult, yet short term decision, while faced with homelessness and had her daughter stay with her mom until she could make progress toward a home of her own. A.M. then accepted a room in the PATH transitional housing, obtained employment, and pressed forward working with the Rapid ReHousing case manager at the same time. A major setback occurred when a pipe burst in the house and she came home to soaked belongings and a small flood. Rather than let this derail her; she called and worked with staff

to make a plan. Over the next few days and weeks she moved her belongings, salvaged, and replacing as needed. She then received word that a permanent housing option was opening!

While the pipe burst had been a set back; having the right supports in place and already working on a permanent housing option allowed A.M. to keep her focus on her goals. She had, at that point, been living in the PATH program for 2 months before formally being referred to the Rapid ReHousing Program funded through the Emergency Solution Grant. Her approval was official in January 2022 and she quickly found a two bedroom apartment for her and her daughter. In all of this, A.M. worked with Agency Housing Specialists, stayed connected to mainstream benefits, connected to mental health services, and increased her overall income through full time employment. Her new home is part of the EOC's permanent housing program which determines monthly rental costs based on household income.

A.M.'s story is one of perseverance and hope. It's also a perfect example of when our multi-layered programs work cohesively together to help our clients secure housing.

How the Emergency Solutions Grant Works

The Emergency Solutions Grant funds the Rapid ReHousing, Homeless Prevention, and My First Place programs for Warren and Forest Counties. The Agency is a subgrantee in a much larger,

and more robust, regional program with Lawrence County Community Action. The program assists literally homeless individuals or families with the opportunity to obtain a permanent housing solution through rental and utility assistance for a short period of time while the household works to stabilize their situation. In the past program year:

92 Individuals (30 Households) received housing location services, case management, and/or rental assistance.

The Housing Specialist works with participating households to connect them with other internal, Agency programs as well as other programs and services in the community. The goal is to provide the household with all of the tools and supports for long term success. These include but are not limited to Beacon Light, Deerfield Behavioral Health, Head Start, Children & Youth, local school districts, and the Salvation Army. Budget counseling is required every 30 days and is provided by the EOC. Participants are also assisted with job search and applications, given referrals, and learn the process of searching for suitable, permanent housing. If needed, the Housing Specialist may also work with clients on re-establishing utility services, moving assistance, and acquiring basic necessities on a case-by-case basis.



Rapid ReHousing & Homeless Prevention

ReEntry Transitional Housing for Ex Offenders

Beginning in April of 2018, the ReEntry Housing program was launched to fill a much needed void in the local housing Continuum of Care. Six of the nine efficiency apartments in the Faith Inn were repurposed for use as transition housing for hard to place individuals exiting the Warren County Jail, who had maxed out their sentence and who would otherwise be homeless.

Participants work closely with the ReEntry Housing Specialist to achieve income/employment and access to mainstream benefits. The Housing Specialist also connects participants with additional EOC programs and community agencies that may assist them in achieving and maintaining ongoing success. These include, but are not limited to, Beacon Light Behavioral Health, Deerfield Behavioral Health, child care subsidy through the Early Learning Resource Center, Head Start, Children and Youth, Warren County School District, and the Salvation Army. Once the participant is able to establish a steady income through earned income and/or any mainstream benefits that they are eligible for, the Housing Specialist assists the participants with locating and securing affordable housing. This includes, on a case-by-case basis, assistance with utilities, moving costs, and securing basic necessities.

In 2021-2022:

26 Individuals (20 households) participated in the re-entry program

9 Households exited into permanent housing



From Prison Cell to College Dorm Room

One of our recent participants was referred into the program by the Warren County Jail. This participant was motivated and positive which helped them find a job fairly quickly working full time hours at a local factory.

While holding down the full time hours this participant also worked with the Housing Specialist on an individualized plan. Part of this was enrolling in mental health services and signing up for all mainstream benefits that they were eligible for. As things continued moving in a positive direction, this client continued to display a desire to improve their situation. They opted to look into college opportunities that would further their career options.

It wasn't long before one of those applications to colleges resulted in an acceptance letter for a major in Mathematics. They accepted and transitioned into a dorm room in August 2022 ready to begin classes in the Fall of 2022!



Permanent Supportive Housing Program

This program is offered through the Agency as part of the Western PA Continuum of Care application to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Permanent Supportive Housing program is designed for chronically homeless individuals and families with mental health and/or physical disabilities who are in a crisis state.

Housing Specialists follow a Housing First Approach. In this, the guiding principle is that people need to have basic needs such as food and shelter met before they can focus on secondary needs such as budgeting for household expenses, employment, and recovery from substance abuse. This approach is used by the National Alliance to End Homelessness and is based on a theory that client choice is valuable in the housing and supportive service selection. Our clients are encouraged to actively take part in the planning and selection of services. This strength based approach can help clients rebuild confidence and a sense of self which ultimately can help contribute to greater long term success. This is referred to as low barrier housing which means that participants do not need to be actively addressing behavioral problems, mental health, substance abuse, or participating in other support services prior to moving into a permanent supportive housing program like ours.

The program consists of the Youngsville location with four site based apartments

while the Warren location had two sites. In this case, each site had 2 apartment units. Sadly, in March 2022 one of the locations was lost due to a house fire. Thankfully, nobody was injured and the EOC is now moving forward with plans to replace these apartments at a duplex in the downtown area.

In the 2021-2022 year:

31 Individuals (12 households) were served in the Warren location

9 Households in the Warren location exited into permanent housing

7 Individuals obtained employment and increased income while enrolled

22 Individuals in 8 households were served in the Youngsville location

3 Individuals obtained employment while living in Youngsville

4 Households exited into permanent housing from the Youngsville location

Permanent Supportive Housing for Chronically Homeless

WARREN HEAD START



Head Start is a federally funded pre-school program promoting school readiness for children ages 3 to 5 by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development in a classroom environment through a combination of individual and group activities. Our highly qualified teachers hold four year degrees in education with certification or specific experience in early childhood education. Classroom Aides have, at minimum, the Child Development Associate credential (CDA). Students in the Head Start program participated in 12 classrooms across three center locations. Our primary focus is to not just prepare children for Kindergarten, but also to work with our families to address any and all health, nutrition, social, and developmental needs for each child and family based on Family Needs Assessment completed at the beginning, middle, and end of the year with an assigned Family Resource Assistant.

After two years of virtual instruction to enrollees, Head Start was able to open its' doors and provide face to face instruction. The Creative Curriculum (Preschool) was used in all classrooms while our approach to school safety and appropriate behavior followed the methods outlined by the positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS). Children and staff conducted daily health checks to ensure that there was nobody in the classroom with a temperature exceeding 100 degrees. Mask wearing continued throughout the school year except at times where children were engaged in physical activities outdoors and meal times.

There were still several challenges faced by the program as we moved into the year. Transportation still faced issues as the Office of Head Start mandated one child per bench seat on the school bus. This created a need for more driving, shifts in bus routes, and some creative scheduling of classes and start times.

Program funds were utilized to purchase individual portable desks, allowing mobility for an outdoor classroom and safe distancing indoors. Another challenge, and possibly the greatest one for the year, was staffing. Nineteen new staff were hired during the program year including 6 new teachers, 1 Family Services Coordinator, 11 classroom aides, and a custodian. At the beginning of the year we also had three staff opt not to return. One teacher accepted a job with the school district, an aide worked

as a tutor with the school district, and the Disabilities Coordinator accepted a job with the local intermediate unit. Throughout the year there were 6 additional staff members who chose to leave the program due to the Agency wide COVID vaccination mandate.

In the 2021-2022 year:

185 students was the funded enrollment

193 students were enrolled and participated in Head Start

Classes all met for in person instruction. Duration classrooms met for a total of 178 days at 5.75 hours per day while regular classrooms met for 160 days at 5 hours per day. There were 12 Head Start classrooms in three center locations.

Training for staff and parents is also a key part of our program. This past year there were:

11 Practice based coaching sessions throughout the year

2,086 total combined hours for staff training

15 Classroom focused training sessions for our teachers



Building Healthy Kids

One part of the Head Start program includes screening all enrollees for over-all health and development. This typically includes screening for developmental, social/emotional, vision, hearing, physical growth, dental health and articulation problems that may need an intervention. This effort also establishes a baseline for each child enrolled. Results are reviewed and help guide staff in working with families to provide any needed referrals for additional services, community resources (like IU5), or programs that would benefit the child prior to entering Kindergarten. In some situations, staff may also work with the family to help advocate.

193 children had health insurance by the end of the program year

192 children were up-to-date with scheduled, age appropriate preventive and recommended health

100 children were diagnosed with a chronic condition by a health care professional and **85** received care

181 children were brought up to date with all immunizations

152 children had access to dental care by the end of the year

148 children had preventive care by a dental health care professional. **44** needed additional dental treatment and **23** received or are in the process of receiving care.

100% children newly enrolled to the program were screened for hearing, vision, physical growth, and developmental delays

There were 37 children who were referred for an evaluation to determine eligibility under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the 2021-2022 program year. Of these, 26 went through the evaluation process and 19 were diagnosed with a disability. Of the remaining 7 who were not diagnosed; the program continued to provide other supports and services such as an individualized learning plan. 38 children had an IEP in place at some point during the school year. 24 children had the IEP prior to the beginning of the year while 14 received an IEP during the school year.



Family Connection

Head Start strongly believes in and supports the role of the parents as their child's first and most important teacher. Staff work to build relationships with the family as a whole and not just the students. Throughout the year there are multiple opportunities for families to engage including volunteering in the classroom, attending center meetings, joining Policy Council, attending parent/teacher conferences, and utilizing suggested resources like Ready Rosie. Ready Rosie promotes literacy and opportunities for families to interact in positive ways.



Fast Facts & Stats

185 funded enrollment

193 actual enrollment

101 four year old enrollees

92 three year old enrollees

49 second year students

4 third year students

173 students transported to and from Head Start

113 children from families with income below 100% of poverty (Income eligible)

47 children from categorically eligible families (10 receiving public assistance, 3 in foster care, 17 homeless, and 17 with eligibility based on other type of need)

33 children from families with a household income between 100% to 130% of poverty

330 program volunteers

2,086 hours of staff training

43,919 meals served

Assessment in Head Start is a continuous cycle of observing, collecting facts, evaluating, summarizing, and planning. Children are assessed three times throughout the program year to evaluate their progress in seven key areas of development using the Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment System. The chart below shows the percentage of Head Start children (3 and 4 years old) meeting or exceeding the specific objectives in each key areas of development in Spring 2022:

Physical (Fine Motor) | Demonstrates fine-motor strength and coordination, uses fingers and hands, uses writing/ drawing tools.

Physical (Gross Motor) | Demonstrates traveling, balancing, and gross motor manipulative skill sets.

Social Emotional | Regulates emotions and behaviors, establishes and sustains positive relationships, participates cooperatively and constructively in group settings.

Mathematics | Uses number concepts and operations, explores and describes spatial relationships and shapes, compares and measures, demonstrates knowledge of patterns

Literacy | Demonstrates phonological awareness, knowledge of the alphabet, knowledge of print and its uses, comprehends and responds to books and other texts, and demonstrates emergent writing skills.

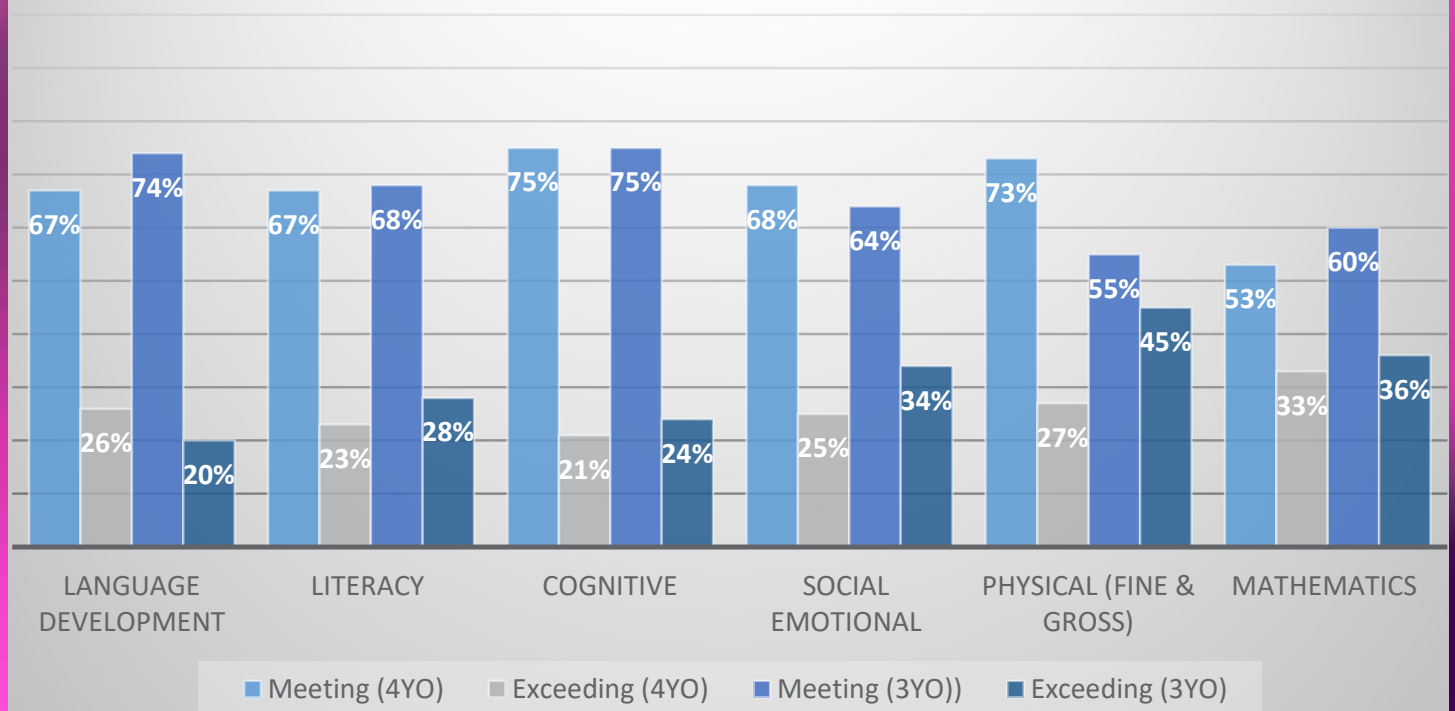
Language | Listens to and understands increasingly complex language, uses language to express thoughts and needs, uses appropriate conversational and communication skills.

Cognitive | Demonstrates positive approaches to learning, remembers and connects experiences, uses classification skills, uses symbols and images to represent something not present.



STUDENT ASSESSMENTS

Spring Assessment Results



Heading Off To Kindergarten

One of our program goals is to help families smoothly transition from preschool to Kindergarten. This is accomplished through strong, positive connections between Head Start and families and the Head Start and area Kindergarten teachers. The Education Coordinator and the Disabilities Coordinator also work closely with personnel from the school district to ensure appropriate services are in place for those children who have IEPs.



Family Resource Assistants also work with families to ensure that they have the proper documentation, paperwork, and dates/times to register for Kindergarten. Last, parents and families are empowered to advocate for their child.

92 Children transitioned into Kindergarten



What is PA PreK Counts?

The Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council provides the state funded pre-school program, PA PreK Counts to area 3 and 4 year olds living in households with an income limit at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Guideline. This year the program expanded to 48, by enrolling an additional 18 children. However, nine of those children left during the school year and their slots were not filled. To accomodate the additional enrollees; the Agency opened an additional classroom. Children participate in 180 days of classroom instruction with classes held 5 days per week for 5.75 hours per day. The expansion class with the 18 additional enrollees who began in October met for 5 days per week for 5 hours per day and a total of 160 days of classroom instruction.

PreK Counts Stats & Facts

48 Funded enrollment slots

48 Actual enrollment

28 Three year old enrollees

20 Four year old enrollees

6 Children diagnosed with a disability (3 speech/language & 3 developmental delays)

48 From households with income at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Guideline

76% Daily Attendance

Much like Head Start, PreK Counts enrollees are assessed on developmental milestones and complete hearing, vision, and growth screenings. The goal is that by the end of the school year; all enrolled children will have and keep a medical home and have all required immunizations plus well-child exams on record.

Head Start (Yr 40) Revenue & Expenses

Federal Revenue	\$2,266,986.00
Other Income	\$0.00
Interest Earned	\$0.00
Non Federal Contributions	\$421,849.25
USDA Reimbursement	\$145,992.31
CSBG Support to Programs	\$36,000
TOTAL REVENUE	\$2,870,827.56

EXPENDITURES

Salaries	\$1,210,853.62
Fringe Benefits	\$481,165.96
Indirect	\$322,674.38
Classroom Supplies	\$247,879.02
Child / Adult Food	\$1,882.20
Transportation	\$18,161.71
Training	-
Insurance	\$10,564.35
Space Costs	\$86,351.46
Match (In Kind)	\$420,544.33
Communication (Phone & Post)	\$23,395.21
Equipment/Vehicle Purchase	\$584.27
Computers / Software / Consultant	\$14,086.75
Other	\$32,684.30
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$2,870,827.56

** Amounts shown above are actuals for FY 2021-2022*

Federal Review: Focus Area 1

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted, from March 23, 2020 to March 27, 2020, a Focus Area One (FA1) monitoring review of the Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council Head Start program. This review allows the Office of Head Start to understand how programs are progressing in providing services throughout a 5-year grant cycle and includes the performance measures used to understand progress toward all program wide goals.

There were no deficiencies found.

CLASS Assessment

CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) provides teachers research-proven insights, skills, and strategies needed to improve interactions. Coaching two times each month using an evidence-based curriculum to increase their skills. As a result, the program's CLASS scored increased from the fall assessment. Emotional support increased from 6.25 to 6.57, Classroom Organization increased from 5.75 to 6.27, and Instructional Support increased from 3.06 to 3.76. Our program is nationally in the top 10%.



PreK Scholarship

The Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council is an approved pre-kindergarten scholarship organization. Funds are donated by area business and are then awarded to families who can then use the funds at a preschool program of their choice. Contributors to the fund for the 2021-2022 school year included Whirley Industries, Lilly Broadcasting, Key Bank, UPMC Health Plan, and Northwest Bank.

Thanks to their generosity:

\$18,800.52

in scholarship funds were awarded for at least one quarter to 27 children attending area PreK programs!

During the 2021-2022 school year the following contributed to the fund which will be used for scholarships awarded in the 2022-2023 school year:

Lilly Broadcasting

Whirley Industries

Northwest Bank

Statement of Agency Revenue & Expenses

Actual for FY 2021-2022 / Estimated for FY 2022-2023

REVENUE

Federal Revenue	\$5,846,938.51
State Revenue	\$921,237.61
Local Revenue	\$668,393.05
Interest/Dividend Earned	\$65,693.10
In Kind Contributions	\$453,863.52
USDA Reimbursement	\$168,488.82
Donations (Cash & Carry Items)	\$133,303.11
Rent & Security Deposits	\$310,779.23
Other Income	\$468,916.27

TOTAL REVENUE

\$9,037,613.22

EXPENDITURES

Personnel	\$3,169,413.15
Consultants	\$62,984.01
Audit	\$30,945.00
Travel	\$11,414.12
Supplies	\$442,744.52
Training	\$33,895.08
Insurance	\$51,857.00
Advertising/Printing	\$9,521.76
Equipment/Vehicle	\$68,696.74
Computers & Software	\$8,155.23
Playground	(\$6,057.22)
Household Furnishings	\$16,363.99
Fleet of Vehicles	\$18,745.98
Materials-Labor-Rehab-QCI	\$676,516.52
Space Costs	\$288,050.21
Inkind / Match (Donated Items)	\$485,803.31
Direct Aide to Families	\$1,611,685.92
Telephone/Postage/Cable	\$53,981.76
Acquisition Costs/Taxes/New Construction	
Construction / Renovations	\$169,606.50
Gain on Investment / Bank Fees	(\$450,056.75)
Maintenance & Repair	\$70,678.79
Other Costs	\$51,873.35
Depreciation	\$180,619.32

TOTAL EXPENDITURES

\$7,057,438.29

OBLIGATED FUNDS

Deferred Revenue	\$1,196,337.46
Due to Grantor (Includes Interest)	\$8,078.20
Closed to Fund Balances	\$775,759.27

**THE EOC AGENCY
ANNUAL BUDGET**

2021-2022 AGENCY STAFF

Officers of the Board

Father Matthew Scott
President

Heather Cathcart
Vice President

Kyle Bancroft
Treasurer

Ted Lord
Secretary

Elected Officials

Mary Kushner
Commissioner Tricia Durbin
Honorable Judge Maureen Skerda
Commissioner Basil Huffman
Barb Litten, Esq.
Teresa Wolfgang

Public Officials

Melissa Feaster
Robert Willman
Michelle Munksgard
Kyle Bancroft
Sheriff Brian Zeybel
Father Matthew Scott

Target Representatives

Trista Knaus
Patricia Lewis
Ted Lord
Heather Cathcart
William Wilcox

Executive Committee

Father Matthew Scott, Chairperson
Heather Cathcart
Kyle Bancroft
Ted Lord

Program Compliance and Evaluation

Teresa Wolfgang, Chairperson
Patricia Lewis
Melissa Feaster
Robert Willman
Barb Litten

Governing and Nominating

Honorable Judge Maureen Skerda,
Chairperson
Commissioner Tricia Durbin
Father Matthew Scott
Heather Cathcart
Ted Lord

Personnel Committee

Heather Cathcart, Chairperson
Honorable Judge Maureen Skerda
Michelle Munksgard
Brian Zeybel
William Wilcox
Mary Kushner

Program Development and Finance

Kyle Bancroft, Chairperson
Father Matthew Scott
Commissioner Basil Huffman
Commissioner Tricia Durbin

Since 1968, local community action agencies have been required to have tripartite governing boards to gain and retain their designation and be eligible for Community Services Block Grant funding. An effective tripartite board will reflect the community and demonstrate an understanding of the problems facing low-income households, guide the Agency in carrying out its' mission, and provide insight, suggestions, and input on how to address the causes and conditions of poverty. The Board of Directors are all volunteers dedicated to the Agency mission and creating a stronger community for everyone.

The Board is composed of low-income individuals / families, elected officials (or their representatives), and members from local business and industry. This last group can also include representatives from religious organizations or area churches, teachers, or other community stakeholders. Each representative group comprises one third of the Board of Directors.

This year has certainly been challenging and we would like to take this opportunity to say a sincere and heartfelt:

THANK YOU!



Administrative Staff

Executive Director | Robert Raible

Head Start Director | Roxanne Carifo

Grant Administrator & Community Services Director | Jeanne Fralick

Weatherization | Brittany Spicer

Fiscal Operations | Dawn Turner

Staff Listing

Jennifer Adams
 Sarah Ashe
 James Babcock
 Lisa Benson
 Angela Bigelow
 Carilee Branstrom
 Shelly Brown
 Stephanie Brown
 Roxanne Carifo
 Jane Chapman
 Jeannie Christman
 Brandon Christman
 Casey Courtney
 Allison Craft
 Kasaundra Cressley
 Daniel Dart
 Brenda Dean

Anthony (Tony) DeMauro
 Heather Arthur DeRemer
 Cayla Eckman
 Amanda Englert
 Joshua Erizer
 Allison Erizer
 Jeanne Fralick
 Lee Gorton
 Christopher Guiffre
 Caitlin Hammersley
 Emily Hecei
 Aimee Hillard
 Kaitlin Ishman
 Amanda Jespersen
 Mara Johnson
 Rhonda Johnson
 Harlee Johnson
 Gail Jones
 Jennifer Keyes
 Stacey Kilhoffer
 Christopher Korbar
 Maggie Kratz
 Kristy Kuzminski
 Megan Loomis
 Jora Lyon
 Christine Lyon
 Amy Massa
 Marla McMillen
 Sheri Miller
 Samantha Mocny
 Laura Myers
 Savannah Nichols

Lynn Olsen
 Heather Passmore
 Nicole Phillips
 Robert Raible
 Stephen Reitz
 Shelly Ristau
 Misty Roos
 Laura Ryder
 Shannon Sawatis
 Mark Shaffer
 Dawson Silliman
 Kaila Sinclair
 Faite Smith
 Loraine Smith
 Wendy Smith
 Kerwin Smith
 Tami Sorensen
 Brittany Spicer
 Davet Storm
 Paul Streich
 Melanie Swab
 Stephanie Swanson
 Tressa Sweeney
 Shelle Tubbs
 Dawn Turner
 Jessica VanEpps
 Emma VanOd
 Mary Weaver
 Donna Wilcox
 Amy Willsie
 Kassandra Wilson
 Janene Zaffino

2021-2022 AGENCY STAFF

The Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. (EOC) is a Community Action Agency sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The EOC is supported by the Warren County and Forest County Commissioners as well as municipalities, agencies, and organizations in Northwestern Pennsylvania. This project was financed by a grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.

Warren-Forest Counties EOC is a private, 501(c)3 non-profit organization established in 1965. As such, donations to the Agency are tax-deductible. We appreciate the community's generosity in helping us fulfill our mission. The agency utilizes available funds to operate programs designed to reduce poverty in Warren and Forest Counties. Our nearly 30 programs and services are offered to low-income families and individuals. Since its' inception, the agency has ventured to move individuals to a higher economic position through services provided and by instilling a self-reliant and self-sufficient attitude in each client. This is, and will continue to be, the Agency's highest priority.

If you are interested in donating, please make checks or money orders payable to WFCEOC, 1209 Pennsylvania Avenue, West, PO Box 547, Warren, PA 16365. Donations of gently used clothes and housewares such as furniture, dishes, etc. are always greatly appreciated.

Please contact us at (814) 726-2400 for more information about our various programs and services.

The Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. is registered as a Charitable Organization with the Department of State, Bureau of Corporations and Charitable Organizations under The Solicitation of Funds for Charitable Purposes Act, 10 P.S. § 162.1 et. seq., and is authorized to solicit charitable contributions under the conditions and limitations set forth under the Act.

