



Orange County Head Start



March 2025 Self-Assessment Report

# Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Methodology	6
Key Insights	9
Recommendations	10
Conclusion	12

# Introduction

Orange County Head Start (OCHS) is a federally funded early childhood education program that has been in operation since the inception of Head Start in 1965.

Orange County Head Start offers comprehensive services to eligible children and their families throughout Orange County, FL. The program offers both a traditional and extended school day as well as Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten services. Offering services to 1,536 children across 23 centers, operating between the hours of 7:30 a.m.- 5:30 p.m. OCHS established five program goals and school readiness goals to guide its efforts and shape the experience provided to the children and families served.

## Program Goals:

Goal 1 Professional Development	Orange County Head Start will be a learning organization in which staff engages in continuous improvement to reach their potential and improve children and family outcomes
Goal 2 Staff Retention	Orange County Head Start will create an environment that supports staff retention and reduces turnover.
Goal 3 Physical Health and Mental Wellness	Orange County Head Start will enhance the physical health and mental wellness of staff, children and families by developing a comprehensive wellness approach.
Goal 4 Technology	Orange County Head Start will design and build a technology infrastructure that will provide students, families and staff with access to resources and education to increase children's achievement of the skills needed to thrive in a globally connected world.

Goal 5 Wellbeing of Families	Orange County Head Start will identify and partner with community agencies to provide services and resources to increase family wellbeing and to assist families to become self-reliant.
---------------------------------	--

School Readiness Goals:

1. Approaches to Learning	Children will show interest in and curiosity about the world around them. Child will use imagination in play & interactions with others.
2. Language & Literacy	Children will be able to identify basic concepts of literacy including phonological awareness, print concepts, alphabet knowledge, and build early reading and writing skills.
3. Social & Emotional Development	Children will engage in and maintain positive relationships and interactions. Children will use basic problem-solving skills to resolve conflicts.
4. Perceptual, Motor & Physical Development	Children will demonstrate personal safety practice routines. Children will demonstrate increasing control, strength & condition of small & large muscles.
5. Mathematic Development	Children recognize number of objects in a small set. Child understands addition as adding to and understands subtractions as taken away from.

Head Start programs are required to complete at least one self-assessment during the program year to evaluate the program's progress to achieving its goal while operating in compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards and

effectively promoting school readiness. This program year, OCHS has chosen to complete two self-assessments; one in October 2024 and another in March 2025.

### ***Context for Self-Assessment***

In alignment with Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302.102(b)(2), OCHS conducts an annual self-assessment to evaluate progress toward program goals, ensure regulatory compliance, and assess the effectiveness of professional development and family engagement systems in supporting school readiness. For this self-assessment, the senior leadership team met to determine key focus areas. Given that the previous self-assessment had thoroughly reviewed the first three program goals, the team decided to continue to concentrate on the program's five-year action plan, ultimately selecting to review progress on its program goal focused on Family Wellbeing goal and Health and Safety practices as the topics. Each program manager reviewed relevant data within their areas and contributed information to determine progress.

### ***Families***

The self-assessment team reviewed several key documents, including the Family Outcomes Report, updated Family Needs Assessment worksheets, community partnership contracts, and the program's five-year action plan, which outlined expected outcomes and action steps. To support their evaluation, the team was provided with supplemental resources such as the Community Partnership Standard Operating Procedure, ChildPlus reports identifying community resource referrals, and Program Information Reports from both the 2023–2024 and current school years. The team analyzed the provided data to ensure that families are equipped with resources addressing four critical disparities: better wages, affordable housing, high cost of living, and childcare. This review also aimed to confirm that the program is effectively meeting its intended outcomes.

## ***Health & Safety***

The self-assessment team reviewed health & safety incidents from the 23-24 school year, and current school year. Supplemental resources were provided such as: the health & safety information memorandum, OCHS injury prevention plan, standard operating procedures, daily health and safety checklist, tracking forms and child incident reports. The team used the data provided to identify if incident reporting procedures were strengthened.

## **Methodology**

### ***Design and Team Members***

The self- assessment team was curated of community partners, program staff, policy council representatives, and OCHS leadership team. The team was divided into three groups to discuss the two topics of review. Each group was assigned a team leader. The team leaders ensured a strength-based approach was used while reviewing the data and encouraged dialogue amongst the group. A summary of current progress was provided for each topic. Content experts provided an overview of the data that was analyzed. After giving some time to review the data provided, the team reassembled to discuss the answers to each question provided for the topics. The following questions were presented to the Self-Assessment team to be reviewed and answered:

### ***Families***

- What additional community resources or partnerships could be developed to meet emerging family needs?
- Have there been measurable improvements in family well-being as a result of accessing program supported services?

- How do families rate the effectiveness of the resources provided through community partnerships?
- How has the program improved in connecting families to resources compared to previous years?
- What adjustments or strategies should be implemented to strengthen the programs impact in helping families become more self-reliant?
- What additional training, education, or resources would help families move toward long-term stability?

### ***Health & Safety***

- Are current reporting procedures effective, or are there any barriers preventing staff from reporting incidents properly?
- How well does the current system track and analyze trends in incidents over time?
- How can the incident review process be improved to ensure better accountability and preventive actions?
- Are there any recurring patterns in the incidents (specific locations, times of day, staff involved)
- Is there consistency in how incidents are reported across different classrooms and sites?
- Are there any gaps in the incident reporting process that need to be addressed?

### ***Timeline***

Planning for Self-Assessment began in January 2025.

January 27 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	Review program data and ongoing monitoring results to determine focus areas.
January 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	Develop a detailed plan for the Self-Assessment process
February 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	Invite Stakeholders to participate on the Self-Assessment team
February 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	Present Self-Assessment Plan to Policy Council, then submit it to Board of County Commissioners (BCC).
February 26 <sup>th</sup> ,2025	Meeting with OCHS Leadership team to discuss expectations and assign teams.
March 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orient the Self-Assessment participants to this year's process</li> <li>• Discuss roles of team members, team leader and content experts</li> <li>• Develop a strategy for reviewing the data provided</li> </ul>
March 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	Conduct the Self-Assessment. Analyze data to determine the program's performance
March 25 <sup>th</sup> -March 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form conclusions and make recommendations for improvements</li> <li>• Team leaders will submit a summary of recommendations to Facilitator.</li> </ul>
March 31 <sup>st</sup> – April 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare report from the findings and recommendations for improvement provided by the self-assessment team.</li> <li>• Present results to management</li> </ul>
May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present final report to Policy Council and the BCC.</li> <li>• Revise the program improvement plan</li> </ul>

- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Present Program Improvement Plan to Policy Council and BCC</li></ul> |
|--|--|

## Self-Assessment Results

The results of the Self-Assessment will be used to develop a plan for continuous improvement with the objective being to strengthen program quality and ensure sustained progress toward goals and objectives. Below are the key insights from the team along with the recommendations.

### Key Insights

#### *Families*

The self-assessment team identified several key findings related to our family goal. Firstly, the current procedure for documenting referrals in ChildPlus does not effectively capture detailed information about the nature of referrals and their outcomes. Additionally, family service workers are managing high caseloads, making it challenging to meet the diverse needs of all families. Language barriers have also been noted, as many vendors and community partners lack multilingual brochures or services, limiting accessibility for non-English-speaking families. Furthermore, parents have expressed frustration when referred to other county departments, often having to restart the approval process, leading to delays in receiving assistance. Lastly, tracking communication and engagement appears to be ineffective, as there is no mechanism to confirm whether parents are opening messages sent through ChildPlus and School Messenger.

#### *Health & Safety*

The Health & Safety review focused on evaluating the program's improvement in incident reporting procedures, safety practices, and the reduction of injuries among

children and staff. The team identified that the current process for recording and reporting incidents lacks a standardized method for centers to extract data from ChildPlus. Additionally, teaching staff often submit separate reports when multiple children are involved in a single incident, leading to inefficiencies. A notable increase in incident rates was observed in September; however, there is no existing report to confirm whether incident reports have been uploaded post-signature. Furthermore, center managers do not have comprehensive access to all center data, making it challenging to monitor and track behavioral patterns effectively.

## Recommendations

### *Families*

The self-assessment team identified several family-related challenges as systemic issues. As a result of these findings, the following recommendations were proposed as innovative ideas to consider:

- Utilize internal resources such as staff and volunteers, to tailor support for each center (i.e., Haitian Creole resources at Bithlo).
- Develop clear benchmarks to assess progress and impact effectively.
- Provide targeted training to help managers build and sustain strong partnerships.
- Enhance the needs assessment and ChildPlus system by adding evaluation questions and conducting family exit interviews.
- Leverage mandatory meetings to complete necessary parent-related tasks efficiently.
- Strengthen relationship-building efforts and implement engagement tracking via Child messenger to encourage parent participation.

- Collaborate with the business systems analyst and PFCE unit to enhance community resource tracking.
- Reinstate the community resource fair during Head Start Awareness Month to provide families with essential items (food, diapers) and information.
- Create survey to receive feedback from families and help the program to target the area of need.
- Include an orange color when comparing the evaluation between the first and second family assessment, which will allow the program to know what category needs immediate attention.
- Create a one stop shop where families can access resources.
- Foster interdepartmental collaboration within Orange County by eliminating departmental silos.

### ***Health and Safety***

The self-assessment team identified several health & safety related challenges as innovative issues. Based on these findings, the following recommendations were proposed:

- Continue to share incident reporting information with the whole program.
- Improve data tracking, streamline the incident reporting process and enhance communication.
- Create baseline for non-injuries to severe injuries.
- Implement a process for centers to pull data for incident reports.
- Quality Assurance Data Coordinator become more present in management meetings.
- Add additional health & safety questions to Center Managers monthly report.
- Additional health personnel to review incident reports.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, implementing these recommendations for families and health & safety will improve our program efforts in assisting our families and ensuring our safety practices are effective. The recommendations will be evaluated to strengthen the programs improvement plan and ensure continuous progress towards meeting the programs goals.