U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Early Childhood Development

2016 Accomplishments
The Administration for Children and Families’ (ACF) Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development (ECD) is the focal point within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for early childhood health and development at the Federal level. The Office provides oversight to two of the largest Federal programs—Head Start and Child Care, including the new Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships (EHS-CCP). The Office also co-administers the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), including important Tribal efforts. Finally, the Office co-administers the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grants and Preschool Development Grants with the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

Highlights in 2016 include the release of our [Head Start Program Performance Standards](#) and the release of the [Child Care and Development Fund Final Rule](#). To support cross-agency work within the ECD Office, there was a reorganization of the Office to have four important operating divisions: Policy and Budget; Research, Data, and Communications; Technical Assistance and Comprehensive Services; and Special Projects and Tribal Initiatives.

As we reviewed accomplishments in 2016, we have also been reflecting on our work during the last few years and the power of collaboration that has set the stage for all children to have the skills to succeed in school and life. Throughout this accomplishments document, you will read more about our intentional collaboration efforts through our ECD reorganization, our joint policy statements and our work on the EHS-CCPs. This Office promotes coordination with the States through the State Advisory Councils, partnership with the Regional Offices, and interagency efforts across the Federal Government, including developmental screening, early childhood goals:

**Early Childhood Goals**

Within all of our programs and projects, we strive to achieve the following goals.

- **Build successful early learning and development systems across Head Start, child care, and preK programs.**
- **Promote high-quality and accountable early learning and development programs for all children.**
- **Improve the health and safety of early learning and development programs.**
- **Ensure an effective early childhood workforce.**
- **Promote family support and engagement in a child’s development.**
childhood homelessness materials, new efforts on expulsion and suspension and partnering on multiple White House Summits.

This report highlights accomplishments in meeting our 2016 ACF Early Childhood Development goals.

Linda K. Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood

**2016 Highlights**

- Head Start Performance Standards
- Child Care and Development Fund Final Rule
- Early Childhood Development Reorganization
- Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships
- Providing Guidance for Practices in Early Learning
- Office of Child Care
- Office of Head Start
- Tribal Early Childhood Programs
- Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge
- Preschool Development Grants
- Early Childhood Homelessness
- Early Childhood Workforce
- Promoting Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
- Training and Technical Assistance
- Research, Analysis and Communications
In 2016, the Office of Head Start (OHS) announced the first comprehensive revision of the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) since their original release in 1975. The publication of this regulation marks an important milestone in the history of the Head Start program. The new standards build on 50 years of leadership in comprehensive early childhood services and will further raise the quality of Head Start programs. The new HSPPS are streamlined, simplified, and reorganized to improve clarity and transparency to support high-quality program delivery and to minimize administrative burden.

This Final Rule has been nearly a decade in the making, fulfilling Congress’ call for a review and revision of the Program Performance Standards in the bipartisan Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. The new standards were developed by incorporating the growing body of research on effective early care and education (ECE), consultation from subject-matter experts and representatives from grantees and Indian Tribes, and thoughtful consideration of the 1,000 public comments received on the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM). The result is a new set of standards that reinforces Head Start’s position as a leader in the field of comprehensive early education, reflects best practices for teaching and learning, allows local flexibility, and reduces the number of Federal requirements by approximately one-third.

Highlights of the new standards include:

- Raising educational standards, curriculum requirements, and professional development expectations based on the best research to ensure effective teaching practices in Head Start so that programs achieve strong child early learning outcomes.
- Increasing the amount of time that children spend in Head Start, which research shows promotes better outcomes for children.
- Affirming the role of parents in leadership of the Head Start program, and strengthening parent engagement services by enabling parents to participate in program activities and by targeting intensive family services to where they are most needed.
- Strengthening comprehensive services, including health and safety practices, mental health, services for children with disabilities, and support for dual-language learners.
- Reducing the bureaucratic burden on programs, cutting the current 1,400 Head Start regulatory standards by approximately 30 percent.

Head Start provides services to more than 1 million children every year in every U.S. State and Territory, in farmworker camps and in over 155 Tribal communities. To learn more about the new Head Start Program Performance Standards, visit the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC). See more about the work of OHS and the implementation of the new program performance standards in a later section.
Child Care and Development Fund Final Rule Released

Quality child care that is stable, safe, and affordable is critical to keeping working families on the pathway to economic well-being and children on the road to school readiness. Nearly 2 years ago, we celebrated when Congress passed the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014. This bipartisan legislation reauthorized the Federal child care subsidy program—known as the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)—for the first time since 1998. This most recent reauthorization of the CCDF program has set the stage for reforming child care for all children and families, not only the approximately 1.4 million low-income children who receive a CCDF subsidy each month. The CCDF program serves children younger than age 13 whose parents are working or engaged in education or training.

In 2016, the Administration released a Final Rule that addresses the new requirements in the CCDBG Act of 2014 to improve the health, safety, and quality of child care for all children and families. These regulatory changes reflect what research tells us about how developing young children benefit from high-quality early care and education and build on what we have learned from effective State policy and program innovation.

The Final Rule clarifies several new provisions in the law and provides needed guidance to States, Territories, and Tribes, including:

- Requiring child care staff to have criminal background checks
- Enhancing health and safety through more robust standards for CCDF program providers
- Requiring initial and ongoing training and professional development on 10 key topics (e.g. first aid/CPR, medication administration, sudden infant death syndrome prevention) for the early childhood workforce
- Helping parents choose child care, including through an accessible Web site
- Increasing funding to improve quality across all child care settings
- Ensuring that CCDF programs are monitored at least annually.

To see the new Final Rule, view this document. To learn more about the CCDF block grant program, visit this Web site. See more about the work of the Office of Child Care (OCC) and the implementation of the CCDF regulation in a later section.

Deputy Assistant Secretary’s Office of Early Childhood Development Reorganization

On February 5, 2016, Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell signed a Federal Register Notice announcing the reorganization of the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development, Office of Head Start, and Office of Child Care.
This reorganization established a clear, coordinated Federal vision for early childhood and the alignment of quality goals and standards that cut across Head Start and Child Care programs. This reorganization will help ensure that all children receive quality services regardless of the program they attend.

The reorganization also responded to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) 2012 Annual Report: *Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue*. GAO recommended that HHS consider ways to improve efficiency and the use of Federal resources in providing early learning and child care services. As part of ECD’s response to the 2012 GAO report, ECD designed a new organizational structure that will retain the autonomy of the Head Start and Child Care identities but will ensure that the programs are aligned to the extent allowable under current law.

The reorganization created four blended divisions.

- **The Division of Comprehensive Services and Training and Technical Assistance** merged the Division of Technical Assistance from OCC and the Division of Education and Comprehensive Services and the State Initiatives Division from OHS and coordinates training and technical assistance (T/TA) across all three offices.

- **The Division of Research, Analysis, and Communications** coordinates research priorities and direction in collaboration with the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation and ensures that key messages, research findings, and policy priorities are effectively disseminated through the early childhood field.

- **The Division of Policy and Budget** guides the development of policy and budget priorities and proposals that cut across Head Start, Child Care, and other child- and family-serving agencies.

- **The Division of Interagency and Special Initiatives** provides direction, coordination, and oversight of special initiatives and efforts with local, State, and national public and private early childhood and prekindergarten (preK) programs, as well as coordination of Tribal affairs across our three offices.

All changes are intended to encourage a cross pollination of ideas, innovation, and best practices across Head Start and Child Care staff and programs.
Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships

In 2015, ECD announced 275 new Early Head Start –Child Care Partnerships and Early Head Start Expansion grantees to expand the quality and number of early learning opportunities for infants and toddlers. In 2016 the grantees partnered with more than 1,400 local child care centers and 900 family child care (FCC) programs. When the grantees reach full enrollment, they will serve 32,000 infants and toddlers across all 50 States, 1 Territory, and the District of Columbia as well as 14 American Indian/Alaska Native grants. In addition, we estimate that thousands more children will benefit from low teacher-to-child ratios and smaller class sizes, qualified teachers receiving ongoing supervision and coaching, and broad-scale parent engagement activities.

On March 24 ACF and the White House hosted a meeting in Columbus, Ohio, to showcase how public and private entities have been coming together to provide high-quality, accessible programs for young children and their families at the community level and to demonstrate the need for increased investments. The day-long event began at the Reeb Avenue Center, which is funded through public-private partners and ACF’s Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership grant and is operated by Ohio State University (OSU). The event included a tour of Reeb Avenue Center, a classroom visit, a business roundtable with local early learning ambassadors and parents, and a site visit to a local home visiting center. During the visit, attendees saw firsthand how a robust partnership between higher education and early education, local government and the private sector, and the health and social services systems can have a profound impact on children and their families. This partnership has made Columbus a beacon early learning community that truly “puts their babies first.”

Pictured: Board President Tanny Crane leads a tour of the Reeb Avenue Center for a group that included Roberto Rodriguez, Deputy Assistant to the President for Education, and Linda K. Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development, during the OSU Early Head Start Leveraging Partnerships symposium on March 24, 2016. The Reeb Avenue Center is a building on the South Side of Columbus, Ohio, housing 14 different non-profit entities serving the community.
The EHS-CCP effort brings together Early Head Start (EHS) and Child Care programs on a large scale. In 2015, we learned that mutually beneficial partnerships took longer than initially anticipated to establish and maintain. In 2016 we saw that with time and commitment, these partnerships were attainable and thriving.

The 18-month startup period was critical. This process was particularly true for grantees that did not have prior experience operating an EHS program. The gap between Child Care and EHS quality standards is large, and the 18-month period allowed grantees and partners to work together to phase in changes to meet EHS requirements. Many partner facilities were in need of repairs, renovations, or both before children could be enrolled.

From February to May 2016, Regional Consultation Sessions were held with grantees and their child care partners in each ACF region to build on an intensive, collaborative 1st year of implementation and to support grantees and partners in strengthening and further developing their partnerships. These Regional Consultations provided tailored T/TA around the activities taking place in the 2nd year of implementation. We continue to work with our national, State, and local partners to provide ongoing support, technical assistance (TA), and peer learning opportunities to ensure the success and sustainability of these partnerships.

Once grantees assessed partner needs related to facilities, they identified minor and major renovations that would be needed for children to be enrolled in the program. Typical facility improvements included renovating kitchens and bathrooms and making other physical improvements to bring facilities to EHS
standards; renovating partner sites to make them accessible for persons with disabilities; painting walls; removing or installing new floors and carpets; adding walls, partitions, or movable barriers to create additional classrooms, closets, and other storage spaces; and building or updating outdoor learning environments, including playgrounds and outdoor shade structures, to accommodate infants and toddlers.

“A picture is worth a thousand words,” and we have been able to see remarkable changes in environments for children through the partnerships. Research has shown that one factor contributing to early learning benefits for low-income children is the comprehensiveness of services they receive. In 2016, while still in the enrollment period of these new grants, we saw positive examples of progress through comprehensive services, for example, increases in health and medical services for young children, as seen below.

- The number of children who were up to date on a schedule of age-appropriate prevention and primary care, according to the relevant State’s Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment schedule for well child care, increased by 18.14 percent.
- The number of children with continuous, accessible dental care provided by a dentist increased by 11.42 percent.
- The number of children with health insurance increased by 2.46 percent.

Through these indicators and pictures, we are beginning to see the positive changes from physical locations and through comprehensive services for young children. The EHS-CCPs have helped us better understand ways to raise quality in child care programs and the true cost of quality. Each of the 275 EHS-CCP and EHS Expansion grants are very different, proving that flexibility with accountability for standards can work.

Congress appropriated an additional $135 million in fiscal year (FY) 2016 to support additional EHS-CCP and EHS Expansion grants. We received approximately 600 applications for the new grants, a statistic that demonstrates significant interest in improving the quality of and access to infant and toddler services across the country. These applications were reviewed by panels of non-Federal experts in the fall and winter. Approximately 75 additional grants are expected to be awarded in early 2017.

We are pleased with these highlights and know that we will continue to learn new lessons about alignment between EHS and Child Care programs at the national, State, and local levels as these partnerships mature and evolve over time.
Division of Policy and Budget

The Office of Early Childhood Development released, separately and jointly, several policy statements to drive attention to key areas of importance in States and communities as they develop their early learning programs and investments. Below, we highlight the 2016 released guidance to the early learning community through additional policy statements, webinars, and presentations.

Providing Guidance for Practices in Early Learning

Expulsion and Suspension

In 2015 the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education released a joint policy statement on expulsion and suspension practices in early learning settings, complete with a set of recommendations to establish fair and appropriate policies, implement them without bias, invest in a highly skilled workforce, access specialized supports for administrators and educators, strengthen family partnerships, implement universal developmental and behavioral screening, set a goal, and track data.

Work continued in 2016 with the release of a report that spotlights impressive progress on this issue across the country and provides a roadmap for States and communities interested in ending expulsions and suspensions from early childhood programs.

At our annual State and Territory Administrators Meeting (STAM), Dr. Walter Gilliam, an Associate Professor in the Child Study Center at Yale University and the Director of the Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy, presented new research findings indicating that bias in early childhood classrooms have negative implications for African-American children, especially African-American boys. Equipped with this research, we are confident that our field is ready and eager to begin addressing this difficult issue. See Addressing Implicit Bias in the Early Childhood System.

To support this work, HHS and ED awarded funding to the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports Technical Assistance Center to pilot-test an enhanced version of the Pyramid Model (an intervention that coaches early educators and providers on supporting children’s social and emotional development) that explicitly addresses such issues as implicit bias. Together with our partners at HRSA and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), ECD funded the Center of Excellence for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) to assist States and Tribal communities win building ECMHC systems. A key focus of this TA center is equity and the need to address issues of implicit bias through ECMHC.

We are confident that States and communities across the country are moving in the right direction in ensuring that all children have (and keep) access to the early learning experiences they need to thrive. A critical component of that process is building the skills and competencies of the workforce so that they can support all children and that we can all eventually eliminate the harmful and detrimental practice of expulsions and suspensions.
Family Engagement

This policy statement brings together research on effective family engagement and identifies core principles from HHS’s and ED’s family engagement frameworks. The statement includes recommendations to States, local education agencies, schools, and community-based early childhood programs for implementing effective family engagement practices and highlights resources to assist them with their work. It was supported by prior work, including the continuum of parenting interventions and the Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) Parenting Matters Report.

Dual-Language Learners

This policy statement promotes high-quality supports and services for young children who are dual-language learners (DLL)—children who have a home language other than English, are learning two or more languages at the same time, or are learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language. The statement increases awareness about the benefits of bilingualism and the important role of home-language development, reviews the research on the strengths and challenges faced by this population, and provides States, Tribes, and early childhood programs with effective strategies for promoting DLL’s learning and development.

The policy statement was rolled out at a White House event on June 2 to promote the need to support DLLs at a national level. ACF and ED conducted a followup webinar that highlighted the research on DLLs, focused on policies that support their development and learning, and examined some practical approaches to serving DLLs.

As a complementary guide, we released the DLL Electronic Toolkit for Programs, Early Educators, Child Care Providers, and Families. The new DLL Toolkit includes free resources on supporting the learning and development, including dual-language development, of DLLs at home, in early learning settings, and in the community. The DLL toolkit was made available at no cost to all early childhood programs, including all Head Start programs, that serve more than 300,000 DLLs every day. The toolkit was also disseminated to home visitors in all 50 States supported by the MIECHV program and the families they serve.

Career Pathways

In 2015 the Institute of Medicine released its expert consensus report, Transforming the Workforce for Children from Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Framework. That report described the knowledge of child development and learning needed to work with young children and outlined a series of actions to support the competencies of early educators and the comprehensive, functioning system of professional development to promote a high-quality, well-compensated workforce across Child Care, Head Start, and school-sponsored programs.
In 2016, to support this study, ACF released a *Policy Statement on Early Childhood Career Pathways* as part of our focus on elevating the early childhood workforce in policy and practice. The paper makes recommendations for creating a sequence of stackable, portable credentials that reflect the sophisticated science of working with young children combined with the supports that educators need to advance their individual career advancement on that pathway.

This policy statement provides States and early childhood programs with research-based recommendations on developing and implementing career pathways to support the professional learning, practice, and compensation of early childhood educators and program directors. This policy document focuses specifically on the needs of teachers and program directors, with the goal of their having a sequence of stackable, portable credentials combined with the supports needed to advance their individual career progression. (Please see more information on the early childhood workforce later in this paper.)

**Monitoring**

This first joint policy statement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was released at the 2016 State and Territory CCDF Administrators Meeting (STAM 2016). (See more about STAM 2016 later in this paper.)

Inspector General reports from the 1990s have shown weaknesses in monitoring child care programs. Reforms to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Head Start have led to more effective, supportive approaches to oversight and continuous quality improvement. Now that the CCDBG Act of 2014 has called for more frequent and effective child care inspections, it is time to rethink monitoring approaches across ECE programs.

This joint policy statement with USDA sets a new vision for monitoring, encouraging States to align monitoring policies and procedures across funding streams (i.e., CCDF, CACFP, Head Start), where appropriate, rather than monitoring exclusively by funding stream. It recommends efficiencies that can be achieved through coordination, collaboration, cross-training, differential monitoring, data-sharing, and the greater use of technology and shifts the current focus of monitoring from one of “compliance-only” to “continuous quality improvement.” (Please see more information in the STAM 2016 section of this paper.)

**Homelessness**

This policy statement provides research and recommendations to local and State early childhood programs and housing providers on ways to intentionally collaborate to provide safe, stable, and nurturing environments for pregnant women and families with young children who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. (Please see additional information on young children experiencing homelessness, including 50 State profiles, later in this paper.)
Supporting the Development of Young Children Affected by Alcohol and Substance Abuse in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

This policy statement looks at what we know and don’t know about babies born to mothers who use alcohol or drugs during pregnancy. It addresses children affected by any substance abuse during pregnancy, including NAS and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). The statement provides important background information; principles in support of children’s social, emotional, and behavioral development; and gives recommendations to early childhood programs in Tribal communities, Tribal community leaders, and Federal, State, local, and philanthropic partners. Although the statement focuses on Tribal communities, the information, principles, and recommendations are relevant for all communities.

Data

Highlighting the efforts of eight States, this report helps States use existing administrative data from early childhood programs to improve services for young children and families. The report covers the importance of linking data collected across programs to better understand the needs of the children and families; supporting continuous program improvement, innovation, and research; and integrating data to help answer questions related to program access, participation, quality, and child outcomes. It also covers how data can affect resource allocation decisions; allow for the examination of patterns in service use; identify areas for quality improvement and innovation; and improve the coordination of service delivery across systems at the State and local levels.

Technology Use

This policy brief helps families and early childhood educators use technology to promote developmentally appropriate, active, engaging, meaningful, and socially interactive learning for young children.

State Advisory Councils

This policy statement provides State Advisory Councils with guidance on sustaining Federal and State investments and advancing work that supports the coordination of quality, comprehensive systems of early care and education at the State level.

Office of Child Care

Investing in Child Care

The Office of Child Care supports low-income families by providing access to affordable, high-quality early care and afterschool programs. It also promotes children’s learning by improving the quality of ECE and afterschool programs. OCC administers the Child Care and Development Fund program and works with State, Territory, and Tribal governments to provide support for children and their families juggling work schedules and struggling to find child care programs that fit their needs and to prepare their children to succeed in school. Below are a few highlights from 2016.
As highlighted earlier in this paper, in 2016 OCC released a Final Rule that addresses the new requirements in the CCDBG Act of 2014 to improve the health, safety, and quality of child care for all children and families. These regulatory changes reflect what research tells us about how developing young children benefit from high-quality early care and education and build on what we have learned from effective State policy and program innovation. They also reflect the comments submitted during the official public comment period that followed the December 2015 publication of an NPRM.

OCC has posted responses to frequently asked questions (FAQs) regarding the CCDF Final Rule and bipartisan reauthorization of the CCDBG Act. The questions and responses are organized by key topic areas, and additional FAQs will be added in the future on an ongoing basis.

OCC depends on CCDF plans from States, Territories, and Tribes to inform our grantee activity and compliance and to learn about new and interesting practices that States are developing. In 2016 OCC released a redesigned Federal plan preprint to align with the CCDBG reauthorization and restructured the Quality Performance Report. The new preprint, which States and Territories use to guide the development of their CCDF plans, included changes in data elements explicitly required by the new child care law (e.g., homeless status, number of child fatalities) and other changes that will help OCC and States implement reauthorization, including data on children with disabilities, provider quality, the date of the most recent health and safety inspection. The data forms are important improvements in the Nation’s CCDF program services to children and families.

To allow for the collection of newly required information, OCC extended the deadline for CCDF plan submission, and States and Territories submitted their FY 2016–2018 CCDF Plans in 2016. A thorough review was completed, and for the first time, OCC posted copies of all approved FY 2016–2018 CCDF Plans, along with each State or Territory conditional approval letter, to the OCC Web site. OCC released this information to provide transparent information about the direction and activities of lead agencies and the CCDF Plans, in which many stakeholders have expressed interest. See the Approved CCDF Plans on this Web site.

In 2016 OCC also launched the new Oversight and Accountability Division, convened a Peer Advisory Group to develop grantee monitoring, and convened two strategic planning meetings to ensure that OCC was poised to successfully meet the program goals for 2016.

There were new challenges in 2016, and OCC worked in collaboration with multiple early childhood and family services agencies in Flint, Michigan, to ensure that young children received safe drinking water. In addition, OCC provided ongoing TA to support flood-impacted communities in Louisiana.

The CCDBG Act of 2014 includes a requirement to design and develop a national Web site to disseminate publicly available child care consumer education information for parents. The information on the Web site will help parents access safe and quality child care services in their community, with a range of price options that best suits their family’s needs. The Act also includes a requirement to design and develop a
national, toll-free hotline to allow persons to report (anonymously if desired) suspected child abuse or neglect or violations of health and safety requirements by an eligible child care provider.

The design and planning effort for the Web site began in September 2015. In 2016 OCC sought comments on the National Child Care Hotline and Web Site. A design for the Web site was selected by ACF, and it will be operational by September 2017.

**2016 State and Territory CCDF Administrators Meeting**

The 2016 State and Territory CCDF Administrators Meeting hosted more than 400 attendees filled with excitement and interest in talking and learning about the new Child Care and Development Fund regulations.

Dr. Walter Gillian presented *new research* to kick off the first plenary session on “The Role of Implicit Bias in Explaining Disparities in Early Childhood Expulsions and Suspensions.” Researchers at Yale University released a new study suggesting that implicit bias—negative or positive feelings that people are unaware they hold—could be behind the disparity in higher numbers of black children being suspended from preschool. The study examined the potential role of preschool educators’ implicit biases as a viable partial explanation behind disparities in preschool expulsions. (See the earlier section on the suspension and expulsion policy statement.)

A second plenary session, “Family Child Care 2.0: Strengthening Family Child Care for the Future,” focused on what we know about FCC providers from the National Survey of Early Care and Education. It highlighted the diversity of FCC providers and the importance of individualizing supports based on their unique needs, and the data offered an opportunity to start with FCC provider strengths.

The third plenary session, “Rethinking Monitoring,” focused on rethinking monitoring across ECE programs to promote more efficiencies, cost-effectiveness, coordination, and collaboration and to shift the focus of monitoring from “compliance-only” to “continuous quality improvement.” HHS and USDA issued a Joint Policy Statement on Coordinated Efficiencies in Monitoring and Oversight of Early Care and Education Programs. (See the earlier section on the monitoring policy statement.) More information can be found on a *new Web page* with tools and resources to spur discussion, ideas, and innovation to promote more effective monitoring strategies that better support monitors, providers, and the children who will benefit.

There were also multiple STAM workshops and Open Space Meetings within four topical tracks: Access & Subsidy, Standards & Monitoring, Continuous Quality Improvement, and Strong Workforce.
Office of Head Start

Head Start promotes the school readiness of children from birth to age 5 from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development. More than 1 million children are served by Head Start programs every year, including children in every U.S. State and Territory and in American Indian and Alaskan Native communities. Since 1965, more than 32 million low-income children and their families have received these comprehensive services to increase their school readiness. Head Start programs offer a variety of service models, depending on the needs of the local community. Below are highlights of our work in 2016.

Program Integrity and Operations

OHS’s 12 Regional Offices currently manage more than 2,000 grants. Each Head Start, EHS, and EHS-CCP grant requires ongoing oversight by Federal program and fiscal staff to ensure that programs receive funding on time to provide the level and quality of services intended and to ensure the appropriate expenditures of Federal funds.

This oversight involves a variety of activities, including reviewing grant applications, issuing funding actions appropriate to the budget and project periods of the grant, meeting grantee T/TA needs through the direct management of the region’s T/TA contracts, and providing followup reviews for issues of noncompliance and deficiency identified through monitoring. Additionally, program staff members communicate regularly with each grantee, discussing program data and outcomes and providing policy guidance, programmatic updates, and responsive feedback to grantees. They conduct periodic site visits to see the program in action and to interact with governing boards, staff, and families to understand program impacts and needs.

In 2016 staff members worked tirelessly to support the continued implementation of the partnership grants and to review and fund nearly 700 grantees under the congressional appropriation for increased days and hours of services, commonly referred to as duration funding.

Program staff members served as panelists for competitive grant competitions and negotiated for final awards. Regional staff members administer the Head Start Collaboration grants. They often present at meetings and conferences and participate in various regional and State events, providing a solid Federal presence to support HSPPS implementation.

OHS supports ongoing program integrity efforts. This work focuses on strengthening Federal fiscal oversight of grantees and on developing training, tools, and data systems to ensure the proper tracking and use of funds and the timely recovery of misspent funds. OHS continues to support the implementation of the new audit circular, cost principles, and fiscal regulations that became effective in December 2014.
In 2016 the Policy Oversight and Planning (POP) Division fully implemented the Aligned Monitoring System. OHS conducted 2,626 reviews and completed the goal of visiting all grantee classrooms and centers to ensure safe environments and facilities for children. Although many Head Start and Early Head Start facilities were aging beyond their useful facility life, grantees overwhelmingly maintained the safety of the facilities for children. OHS has continued to increase its focus on quality and prioritizing, having more frequent interaction with grantees to provide information to support their continuous improvement in core performance areas. The Aligned Monitoring System has given OHS the ability to look at a grantee’s performance each year and to provide a comprehensive summary report to each grantee.

The POP Division was able to provide differentiated reviews for 11 percent of the grantee population. In 2016 112 grantees were eligible for differential monitoring, while 1,045 received comprehensive monitoring.

Last year, the POP Division developed the Aligned Monitoring Virtual Expo as a primary source of information to educate and train grantees and Regional staff on the Aligned Monitoring System. In 2016 the Aligned Monitoring Virtual Expo provided 8,226 registered users with a virtual forum space to learn about the Aligned Monitoring System and to interact with OHS monitoring experts. Features of the Virtual Expo include videos, interactive training modules, an electronic library with downloadable documents (e.g., protocols, FAQs), live “Question & Answer” sessions, and office hours to chat with monitoring experts. The Expo was expanded in 2016 to include a dedicated space and tools for the EHS-CCP grantees, providing information and training modules on the EHS-CCP protocols.

OHS conducted 2,626 monitoring review events in the 2016 calendar year:

- 524 EnvHS reviews
- 327 Fiscal/ERSEA reviews
- 306 CLASS reviews
- 480 CSSR reviews
- 297 LGMS reviews
- 112 Other reviews
- 493 Followup reviews
- 75 HSKI-C reviews

Data and Information Systems

Head Start’s mass communications helped members of the Head Start and early childhood community find, understand, and share Head Start resources.

- The ECLKC Web site saw 2.2 million people making 4 million visits in 2016. This number represents a 30-percent increase in visitors and a 24-percent increase in visits over 2015. Our efforts to clarify the home page, streamline navigation, and reduce content lowered the
number of people who leave the site after viewing a single page from 42 percent to 35 percent while slightly reducing the number of pages visited and total time people spent on the site to get the information they needed.

- The ECLKC Web site engaged more Spanish-language users, who were drawn by new social media and e-mail strategies and Web site refinements. The ECLKC Web site was visited by 12 percent more Spanish-speaking visitors in 2016 than in 2015.

- The ECLKC Web site saw a 25-percent increase in mobile users. Nearly 30 percent of ECLKC sessions occurred on mobile or tablet devices, reflecting a return on our investment of moving the Web site to a responsive design.

- The ECLKC Web site posted more than 400 new pages and assets, including resources from the National Training and Technical Assistance Centers and information on the new HSPPS. At the same time, to keep the Web site current and useful, 350 pages were removed, while many others were updated.

- To support HSPPS implementation, OHS hosted a monthly series of webcasts for the Head Start and early childhood community. The initial webcast reached 2,912 viewers, and subsequent events each reached well over 1,000 viewers.

- OHS created a searchable archive to host regulations, policy documents, and resources that have been withdrawn or are otherwise outdated but are still accessed by the Head Start community.

- OHS now sponsors MyPeers, an online community for ECE professionals to share best practices, lessons learned, and core knowledge and to access direct support from peer-to-peer collaboration. Since launching in May, MyPeers has launched communities to connect teachers, child care health consultants, and health networks in South Dakota and Oregon. Topic communities have also connected staff members across the country who work on Disabilities and Inclusion; Health, Safety, and Wellness; American Indian and Alaska Native Language and Culture; and Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships. Currently, MyPeers has 4,356 members.

Designation Renewal System

Beginning in 2009, OHS leadership set out a Roadmap to Excellence that outlined the steps needed to improve quality in Head Start programs. We began using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®)—a research-based, valid, and reliable tool—to assess classroom quality in the Head Start monitoring system and trained all grantees on that tool. In 2010 President Obama announced plans for the Designation Renewal System (DRS), implementing the congressional requirements to reform the grant process and infusing competition into the Head Start grant system, which until then had automatically renewed grants year after year regardless of the quality of the services provided by Head Start agencies. In 2011 OHS began implementing the DRS and notified 129 grantees they would need to compete with other qualified entities for renewal of the Head Start grant in their area. As of summer 2016, all Head Start programs have transitioned onto a 5-year grant period.
OHS released important new data and research regarding these quality improvement efforts. These include data showing significant improvements in the quality of Head Start classrooms and an evaluation of the DRS. The documents include:

- **Designation Renewal System by the Numbers (2011–2016)**, a report on the DRS that summarizes data compiled across all cohorts of DRS implementation
- **Early Implementation of the Head Start Designation Renewal System**, a report on the independent DRS implementation evaluation commissioned by ACF
- **Tracking Quality in Head Start Classrooms**, which provides information about Head Start quality from the Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) through 2014.

From these four reports, we have noted several significant findings. One is that Head Start classrooms have improved in areas that have been positively linked with children’s learning and development in prior studies. Multiple measures of classroom quality showed significant improvements in average scores and on the proportion of classrooms with scores at higher levels. The OHS CLASS data reflect similar findings but goes even further to suggest that programs with a higher percentage of teachers with bachelor’s degrees obtain higher CLASS scores. Data from FACES also confirm that a larger percentage of our teachers now have bachelor’s degrees.

Additionally, since 2010 grantees have implemented training initiatives to improve teacher-child interactions, and their competitive applications reflected lower teacher-to-child ratios and higher teacher qualifications. These findings suggest that DRS is meeting the goal of incentivizing quality improvement.

Of course, these reports also raise some important questions that will need more scrutiny, such as whether the conditions for competitive grant application in DRS, particularly the CLASS observations as they are being implemented, are adequate to accurately distinguish quality at the grantee level. Program deficiencies, another condition for a competitive grant application, were found to be related to measures of quality.

Head Start has a 50-year legacy of evolving to meet new challenges, incorporating the latest child development science, improving the management and accountability of programs, and leading the field of early childhood education. The latest findings from each of the DRS-related reports illustrate Head Start’s commitment to ensuring that the highest quality services are delivered to the Nation’s most vulnerable children and families.
Division of Interagency and Special Initiatives

Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program

Since 2010 ACF has been implementing the Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program in collaboration with our colleagues at HRSA. The Tribal Home Visiting program is designed to develop and strengthen Tribal capacity to support and promote the health and well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) families, expand the evidence base around home visiting in Tribal communities, and support and strengthen cooperation and linkages among programs that service AI/AN children and their families.

The goals of the Tribal Home Visiting program include:

- Supporting the development of happy, healthy, and successful AI/AN children and families through a coordinated home visiting strategy that addresses critical maternal and child health, development, early learning, family support, and child abuse and neglect prevention needs
- Implementing high-quality, culturally relevant, evidence-based home visiting programs in AI/AN communities
- Expanding the evidence base around home visiting interventions with Native populations
- Supporting and strengthening cooperation and coordination and promoting linkages among various programs that serve pregnant women, expectant fathers, young children, and families, resulting in coordinated, comprehensive early childhood systems in grantee communities.

With the most recent reauthorization of the program in 2015, ACF was able to publish two funding opportunity announcements this year: Tribal MIECHV Implementation and Expansion and Tribal MIECHV Development and Implementation. These two grant programs are designed to meet the overall goals of Tribal MIECHV.

First, ACF awarded 2 grants totaling $600,000 for the Tribal MIECHV Development and Implementation grant program to develop the infrastructure needed for planning, implementing, and sustaining home visiting programs in Tribal communities. Second, 17 new grants totaling $8.8 million were awarded to Tribal MIECHV Implementation and Expansion grants to sustain and/or expand their established infrastructure for home visiting services in Tribal communities.

To support these grants, ACF’s Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation awarded a contract to the team of James Bell Associates, Inc., and the University of Colorado Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health to carry out an innovative multisite implementation evaluation. This evaluation will help support the quality implementation and adaptation of Tribal Home Visiting programs and will explore how implementation relates to outcomes.

As part of these new awards, a press release was issued to highlight ACF’s continued investment in Tribal Home Visiting. The press release was published and can be found on the ACF Web site. In addition, ACF Deputy Assistant Secretary Linda K. Smith took the opportunity to reflect on the success of the Tribal Home Visiting program, along with the importance of home visiting as an effective practice in Tribal communities, in this post on ACF’s Family Room Blog.
In 2016 ACF published a Tribal Home Visiting program video that features the voices of Tribal Home Visiting grantees as they describe the histories, cultures, and traditions of their communities and the positive impacts of Tribal home visiting. Several grantees participated in the development of the video and are highlighted. To learn more about Tribal home visiting, the video is featured on ECD’s Web site and can be viewed via this Web link on ACF’s YouTube channel.

**Tribal Home Visiting Report to Congress**

The Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Report to Congress, available on the ACF Tribal Home Visiting Web site, shares information about the Tribal Home Visiting program and grantees’ progress from the program’s inception in 2010 through 2014. Both an executive summary and the full report are available and provide details regarding:

- The approach of the Tribal Home Visiting program, including the TA activities and supports provided to grantees
- The grantee, family, and community contexts that have influenced program implementation and evaluation in AI/AN settings
- The expanded reach and availability of home visiting services in Tribal communities as a function of the program
- The extent to which grantees demonstrated quantifiable, measureable improvements in each of the six “benchmark” areas specified in the legislation
- Findings about the successes of grantees, lessons learned for other programs working with AI/AN communities, and recommendations to strengthen the Tribal Home Visiting program and to build on the solid foundation already established.

The Tribal Home Visiting program published its latest issue brief, *Cultural Enrichments, Enhancements, and Adaptations of Tribal Home Visiting Programs*. The brief discusses ways grantees have approached cultural enrichment in the first 5 years of the Tribal MIECHV program and is based on interviews with eight Tribal MIECHV grantees. The report discusses the importance of cultural enrichments of evidence-based home visiting models, highlights three different approaches that Tribal MIECHV grantees have pursued to shape programs to best reflect their communities, and offers guidance for programs that are searching for a way to best fit home visiting within the cultural context of their communities.
In 2012 ACF began the Tribal Early Learning Initiative (TELI), a partnership with American Indian Tribes to support better outcomes for Native children and families by supporting collaboration across Head Start, Child Care, and Tribal Home Visiting programs at the Tribal level. TELI’s objective is for Tribes and their communities to continue to grow and sustain critical early childhood systems to meet the needs of young children, families, and the community as a whole and to increase the number of children in quality ECE settings.

In 2016 the TELI program page was redesigned on the ACF Web site. The new TELI program page features grantee profiles, highlights, grantee activities, and TELI-related reports and resources. To discover more about the TELI, visit the TELI Web page.

Cross-Department Initiative Supporting the Social-Emotional and Behavioral Health of Young Children in Tribal Communities

ACF, in collaboration with HRSA, SAMHSA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Indian Health Service, held a meeting in February with national Tribal experts to discuss a new cross-Department initiative on supporting the social-emotional and behavioral health of young children in Tribal communities. The initiative has a particular focus on children, from birth to age 5, living in families with mental health and substance abuse challenges to provide the best strategies to care for children who are growing up in this context.

As part of the initiative, Linda K. Smith, ACF Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development, made a visit to several Tribal communities in Maine to learn about some promising strategies to address challenges faced by families dealing with substance abuse issues, such as NAS and FASD.

The initiative culminated with HHS’s issuance of a policy statement (see earlier in this paper) on supporting the development of young children affected by alcohol and substance exposure in AI/AN communities, building on the feedback from experts at the February meeting. The purpose of the statement is to support early childhood programs and Tribal communities by providing recommendations that promote the early development of AI/AN children, from prenatal to age 8, who have been exposed to alcohol or substances during pregnancy or who are affected by parent or caregiver substance misuse during early childhood.
**Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge**

Since 2011 ACF’s Early Childhood Development Office has been working closely with ED’s Office of Early Learning to develop, award, and administer the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) program.

The purpose of the RTT-ELC program is to improve the quality of early learning and development and to close the achievement gap for children with high needs. RTT-ELC grants focus on improving early learning and development programs for young children by supporting each State’s efforts to increase the number and percentage of low-income and disadvantaged children in each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who are enrolled in high-quality early learning programs while designing and implementing an integrated system of high-quality early learning programs and services.

The 20 RTT-ELC States reported progress toward expanding and improving the quality of early learning and development programs in their States. You can see the 2015 Progress Update on this Web page.

The Office of Early Childhood was an integral part of the planning for the 3-day meeting on November 16–18, 2016, to bring together State teams of Preschool Development Grantees and RTT-ELC grantees, as well as nongrantee participants, to share information and to discuss current issues related to early learning.

The meeting objectives were as follows:

- Bring RTT-ELC grantees and Preschool Development Grant (PDG) awardees together to share successes, challenges, ideas, and solutions in achieving excellence and equity for the Nation’s children.
- Develop a collective understanding of what works to innovate and expand access to high-quality early learning programs for all children.
- Facilitate discussions of future directions to support and sustain early learning efforts.
- Foster peer networking to build communities of learners.

You can access the agenda and presentations via this Web link.

**Preschool Development Grants**

The purpose of the Preschool Development Grants program, jointly administered by ACF’s Early Childhood Development Office and ED’s Office of Early Learning, is to support State and local efforts to build, develop, and expand high-quality preschool programs so that more children from low- and moderate-income families enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and in life.

ACF and ED completed their 2nd year of joint administration of the PDGs. States submitted their annual progress reports summarizing their year 1 progress and activities in implementing high-quality preschool
programs. ACF and ED conducted onsite and desk monitoring with States, which received continuation funds for year 3 and benefited from PDG technical assistance, including topics focused on supporting DLLs, addressing poverty, and advancing equity. PDG and RTT-ELC States participated in a joint grantee meeting on November 16–18, 2016, that addressed high-quality early learning programs. (See above.)

The Departments also released a national report and 18 State progress reports on the PDG program. The reports detail how States are meeting the high-quality standards and are improving access to early learning for at-risk children. Classrooms improved by supporting well-qualified and compensated teachers, expanding to full-day schedules, reducing class size or teacher-to-child ratios, providing evidence-based professional development, and providing comprehensive services.

Last school year, more than 28,000 children from low-income families had access to high-quality early learning because of the PDG program. This year, another 35,000 had the chance to enroll in these programs.

High-quality preschool helps create the foundation for children to thrive in school and in life. Studies have shown that children who participate in quality preschool programs are more likely to graduate from high school, grow up healthy, avoid involvement in our criminal justice system, and find good jobs. The Obama Administration has made expanding high-quality early education a priority.

**Interagency Policy Board**

In 2010 the Secretaries of Education and Health and Human Services formed an Early Learning Interagency Policy Board (IPB) to advise the Secretaries on how to better align across programs and systems and to improve the coordination and administration of federally funded ECE programs serving children from birth to age 8 (e.g., Head Start, Child Care, Home Visiting, ECE programs funded under Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

The jointly administered ED and HHS Interagency Policy Board has met quarterly since 2011 to improve the quality of early learning and development programs and outcomes for young children by increasing the coordination of early learning and development efforts across the two Departments. Made up of senior staff from ED, HHS, Domestic Policy Council for the White House (DPC), and the Office of Management and Budget, the IPB has acted in an advisory capacity, focusing on reducing duplication and maximizing resources, especially for children with high needs.

The IPB used the development of joint policy statements to drive attention to key issues that States and communities are struggling with in the early childhood area and to make recommendations and provide resources to support States and communities in addressing these challenges. (See the earlier section on policy statements.)
Through the IPB work, the Departments also collaborated with philanthropy to fund four National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine consensus studies on key issues: early childhood workforce, family engagement, DLLs, and ECE financing. One study previously cited, Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation, was released in 2015 and offered recommendations to build a unified workforce using the science of child development and early learning and the shared knowledge and competencies needed to provide consistent, high-quality support for the development and early learning of children from birth through age 8. A second report, Parenting Matters: Supporting Parents of Children Ages 0–8, was released in July 2016; examined the state of the science with respect to parenting knowledge, attitudes, and practices that support positive parent-child interactions and the healthy development of children ages 0–8; and was important in the release of the family engagement policy statement.

Two additional studies were started in 2016. To address the continuum of young English learners and DLLs from birth through the end of high school, the study results in “Fostering School Success for English Learners: Toward New Directions in Policy, Practice, and Research” will soon be released. Recently launched, Financing Early Care and Education will review the available evidence on funding mechanisms across ECE settings that are currently being employed successfully on a large scale and illustrative examples of funding strategies that are being employed on a smaller scale but have promise for expansion. The results are expected in 2018.

In 2016 the Secretaries of HHS and ED, in consultation with all Federal agencies, submitted to Congress a report, The Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education Joint Interdepartmental Review of All Early Learning Programs for Children Less Than 6 Years of Age. The report discusses the Federal programs identified by GAO and explains that only eight programs have the primary purpose of promoting early learning for children from birth to age 6. The report also talks about the efforts to maximize the current and future investments to increase the quality of and access to early learning for children from birth to kindergarten, and it describes how the Departments are fostering coordination and collaboration at the Federal, State, and local levels, including through the IPB, to ensure a more effective, efficient, and high-quality system of early learning.
Ensuring the well-being of our youngest children is essential to the work of ACF and is especially urgent when considering the vulnerability of young children experiencing homelessness. Young families with newborns and infants are among the most likely population to need and seek shelter due to housing instability or homelessness. The 1st year of life is when children are most likely to enter shelter and transitional housing programs, followed by those ages 1 to 5 (Gubits, Shinn, Wood, Dastrup, and Solari, 2015).

ACF is a participating member of the Workgroup to End Family Homelessness. The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness provided clarity in its Amendment to Opening Doors on what needs to be done specifically for youths and children if we are to reach the goal of ending homelessness among families, children, and youths by 2020, and early childhood staff members from multiple agencies and departments focused on outreach and awareness materials to work toward these goals.

Early in 2016, ACF released Early Childhood Homelessness in the United States: 50-State Profile. It provides a “snapshot” of early childhood data available for children who are experiencing homelessness in each State and is a tool for communities in planning to meet the needs of vulnerable children.

On March 30, 2016, ECD participated in a Congressional Briefing on Early Childhood Homelessness in the United States. The briefing provided an overview of early childhood homelessness, including available Federal data, as summarized in the recently released Early Childhood Homelessness in the United States: 50-State Profile. Panelists described local and State innovations in increasing homeless children’s access to quality early childhood programs and the remaining challenges they face. Linda K. Smith, ACF Deputy Assistant Secretary, reviewed the steps that have been taken to remove barriers to early childhood programs, including CCDF, Head Start, and TA activities.

Pictured: Carie Bires, Policy Manager, Ounce of Prevention Fund, Chicago, IL; Kresta Horn, Director of Children and Youth Services, UMOM New Day Centers, Phoenix, AZ; Khari Garvin, Director, Great Expectations Initiative, Forsyth County, NC (Former North Carolina Head Start State Collaboration Director); and Linda K. Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Early Childhood Development, ACF.
You can see presentations from the briefing on [this Web page](#) and can view additional materials and resources developed on early childhood homelessness via [this Web link](#).

### Early Childhood Workforce

As mentioned earlier in this report, in 2016 ACF released a *Policy Statement on Early Childhood Career Pathways* as part of our focus on elevating the early childhood workforce in policy and practice. This policy paper focuses on lead teachers, with State and local recommendations for creating a sequence of stackable, portable credentials that reflect the sophisticated science of working with young children combined with the supports that educators need to improve their individual career advancement on that pathway.

This report complements the [joint report](#) released in conjunction with the [United State of Women Summit](#) on compensation across the early childhood workforce that shows the remarkably inequitable and low compensation of early educators by setting. In every State, the average/median wage for a child care teacher was below the eligibility cutoff for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

The report reviewed wages of preschool teachers with kindergarten and elementary school teachers. In 2015 the median annual wage for preschool teachers paled in comparison with the annual earnings of kindergarten and elementary school teachers.

Earlier this year, we unveiled [Early Educator Central](#)—a source for online course work and tools for States in designing early childhood professional development systems, such as a cost analysis tool and sample articulation agreements. All this work leads to the same conclusion; our workforce has a critical role in the current and future success of our Nation, our workforce is inadequately supported and compensated, and wide inequities remain in who has access to those supports to be a great educator and to continue working with children and families.

In addition, spearheaded by HHS and ED, the Early Learning Career Pathways Report examines comprehensive career pathway systems in the early childhood education field. Career pathways, defined as comprehensive education and training systems, provide a sequence of course work and credentials aligned with employer and industry needs. Pathways offer a much-needed solution to fostering the educational and workforce training needs of adult learners to meet national and regional workforce demands.
This report, *Credentialing in the Early Care and Education Field*, draws a national landscape of all of the 50 States’ requirements for ECE staff. The report documents many notable practices that comprise a strong set of recommendations for States and the field as they work to improve and design strong, comprehensive pathway systems intended to meet the skill, employment, and advancement needs of low-income, low-skilled adults who are in or entering the ECE field. In addition, the report offers 14 recommendations illuminated with State examples.

**Promoting Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math**

On April 21 the White House, in partnership with the U.S. Departments Health and Human Services and Education and Invest in US, held an event to highlight the importance of promoting active science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) learning for young children and to celebrate a broad range of public-and private-sector leaders committed to promoting STEM learning across the country. Innovative STEM work from leaders across the country, representing State and local entities, nonprofit organizations, foundations, media organizations, technology companies, research institutions, and museums, participated in the event to bring new active STEM content for young children to millions of households across the Nation. ACF, in partnership with ED, Too Small to Fail, and Talk Read Sing, developed a suite of resources in the form of tip sheets to help promote STEM activities that parents, families, and early childhood teachers can do with young children.

To support STEM in the early years, HHS and ED partnered with Too Small to Fail to create a set of early STEM resources for families and educators. The “Let’s Talk, Read, and Sing About STEM!” tip sheets build on the successful “Talk, Read, and Sing Together Every Day!” tip sheets and aim to transform small moments into big opportunities for our littlest innovators. These new tip sheets are filled with ideas for STEM conversations that can take place during everyday routines.

The **“Let’s Talk, Read, and Sing about STEM!”** resources include:

- Tip sheet for families
- Tip sheets for infant/toddler teachers and preschool teachers
- “Let’s Talk About the World” poster.

All tip sheets are also available in Spanish.

**Training and Technical Assistance and Comprehensive Services**

ECD initiatives achieved substantial gains in 2016 in support of nearly 12 million young children from many of the Nation’s most vulnerable families, and 2016 marked the first full year of an integrated T/TA system for the Child Care and Head Start/Early Head Start communities, including the implementation of a new comprehensive ACF/ECD State-level T/TA planning process for FY 2017–2018. The joint T/TA system supports ECE programs and professionals working at the regional, State, and local levels to deliver high-quality education and care to children and families nationwide.
The integration of these two well-established systems involves extensive collaboration, planning, and communication. Both communities support the success of low-income families with young children through high-quality care. Child Care supports low-income working families by providing access to affordable, high-quality early care and afterschool programs for children from birth through age 12. Head Start/Early Head Start serves children from birth through age 5 with comprehensive center-based education and child development services. Together, they provide a critical safety net for families with a range of needs. With the transformation and merging of the Child Care and Head Start T/TA networks into one consolidated network, our offices aim to ensure that all our early childhood programs, staff members, and children receive quality T/TA support.

High-quality ECD programs serving at-risk families face many complex challenges. T/TA services help staff members deal with those challenges and work with families and community partners so that children can achieve gains in health, education, and social behaviors, while their families gain skills and move toward achieving economic stability. Such outcomes lay the groundwork for children’s school success and future employability. Nobel laureate James Heckman and colleagues recently calculated a 13-percent annual return on high-quality ECD services.

Reflecting complementary missions, Child Care and Head Start/Early Head Start are guided by different regulations and are engaged with a host of community stakeholders who may not have had strong connections in the past. At the Federal office, we were proud to see the fruits of cross-center workgroups, T/TA collaboration, and the coordination of messages and content to the field, including intentional alignments, with similar sections of the new OCC and OHS regulations.

We look forward to even greater achievements for children and families in 2017.

**Highlights of Training and Technical Assistance**

**Implementation of New Child Care Final Rule**

On September 23, 2016, the Office of Child Care released final regulations for the CCDF program. In 2014 Congress reauthorized the Child Care and Development Block Grant and made sweeping changes to the law for the first time in 18 years. This Final Rule is necessary to address those changes. Although this regulation took effect 60 days from publication, the Administration for Children and Families’ goal is to support successful implementation by September 30, 2018, for States and Territories and by September 30, 2019, for Tribes.

As a part of OCC’s ongoing effort to support CCDF program grantees with the work of implementing the CCDBG Act of 2014 and the new CCDF program regulations, OCC launched a new webinar series that featured monthly webinars focusing on specific CCDF policy topics. The multifaceted discussion on each webinar included a presentation on the policy and requirements around a particular topic; a conversation focused on State, Territory, or Tribal experiences; and suggested resources and next steps that could be
taken as they move toward full implementation of the new policies. Webinars were held regularly and were recorded and posted on line.

**Expanded T/TA Activities**

ACF/ECD T/TA efforts focused on two strands of TA—systems-building/infrastructure and the adoption and implementation of best practices in programs. As a result, Cross-Center Regional planning teams responded to more than 575 TA activity requests. Examples goal-focused TA include the following:

- The National Center on Child Care Subsidy Innovation and Accountability collaborated with other National Centers to develop “The Layering Tool: A Cost Estimation Tool for Layering Early Head Start With Child Care Services,” which is designed to help EHS-CCP programs develop budgets that support their child care partners and support the effective implementation of the layering budget concept.

- The National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance released nine new Issue Briefs addressing the health and safety topics specified in the CCDBG law to support licensing administrators and CCDF administrators as they begin to consider revisions to State standards for licensed and license-exempt providers.

- The National Database of Child Care Licensing Regulations Web site was launched and included links to each State’s licensing requirements, quality rating and improvement system program standards, subsidy program requirements, and preK program standards.

- The Child Care State Capacity Building Center (CCSCBC) launched the Impact Project for States and Territories in March 2016 to support nine States and Territories (Colorado, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oregon, and South Carolina), which were selected through a competitive application process, to develop their capacity to implement early childhood projects and priorities. These States and Territories have diverse contexts, geographies, and entry points for advancing quality and are united by their commitment to building stronger early childhood systems to support significant change for young children from low-income families. The Impact Project is supporting these projects with intensive consultation and assistance from CCSCBC’s experts, working closely with these nine States and Territories over an 18- to 48-month period.

- The National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment launched an online Resource Library that contains a collection of tools, information, and examples of promising practices that can inform and support efforts to increase access for and to improve the quality of programs for school-age children.

- The National Center on Tribal Implementation and Innovation rolled out a multimedia toolkit for Tribal CCDF lead agencies that addresses monitoring and enforcement policies.
**Implementation of the new Head Start Program Performance Standards**

The entire Head Start/Early Head Start community anticipated the release of new standards, which were rolled out with a Federal staff prerelease in August and with the entire regional T/TA network in September. Planning, release, and implementation guidance was carefully coordinated, involving messaging and training for Federal and regional staff, six national T/TA centers, and 12 regional T/TA contractors. The regional offices were heavily involved, working within their regions to build an awareness of timelines and implementation support.

Key activities included:

- Materials development and training with Federal staff and regional and national T/TA systems
- Monthly webinars for Federal staff, T/TA providers, and grantees focusing on key aspects of the standards, with more than 8,000 users participating in OHS national webinars and webcasts that introduced and answered questions about the HSPPS
- Wholesale review and revision of hundreds of online materials to reflect the new standards, with a focus on plain-language resources
- Grantees being encouraged to participate in relevant learning opportunities as they gather data and implement standards.

**Expanded T/TA Services**

Particular to Head Start, with input and oversight from the Federal office, T/TA is delivered primarily through five National Training and Technical Assistance Centers, regional experts, and the development of tools and resources. In 2016 ECD teachers, staff members, and leaders participated in more than 50,000 hours of in-person training to build skills and capacity and to solve challenges, often through a process consultation model.

**National Training and Technical Assistance Centers (National Centers)**

National Centers work directly to promote excellence through high-quality, practical resources and approaches that build early childhood program capacity and that promote consistent practices across States, Territories, Tribes, and communities. The National Centers are noted below:

- National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning (NCECDTL) (co-funded by OHS and OCC)
- National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness (co-funded by OHS, OCC, and HRSA’s Maternal and Child Health Bureau)
- National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (co-funded by OHS and OCC)
- National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations (co-funded by OHS)
- National Center on Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships (co-funded by OCC and OHS).
Activities in 2016 included more than 300 in-person and virtual trainings to update and develop hundreds of evidence-based tools and resources, undertake collaborative work with regional T/TA offices and networks to support Regional 2016 professional development plans for 2016, and engage more than 4,300 early childhood professionals in MyPeers, the OHS-sponsored online communities for sharing best practices, lessons learned, core knowledge and for accessing direct support from peer-to-peer collaboration efforts.

**Regional T/TA**

Regional leaders and individual grantees use the Regional T/TA network for individualized assistance. T/TA experts include early childhood specialists, who support increased grantee capacity with curricula, teaching, coaching, child assessment, and family engagement, and grantee specialists, who focus on monitoring findings, corrective actions, and issues that regional leads identify as needing more attention. In 2016 regional networks added expert health specialists to focus more on developing expertise in hearing and vision screening to support grantee capacity. Other 2016 activities included supporting regional offices’ professional development plans for the delivery of T/TA in each region, introducing and increasing the use of implementation science, continuing to focus on supporting grantees in improving school readiness through mentoring and coaching (research-based practice) to improve program quality and child outcomes, continuing to use the process consultation model to build grantee capacity, and increasing linkages with State child care systems specialists to increase the collaboration and coordination of services.

**T/TA Resources and Tools**

The Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center Web site attracted more than 2 million unique visitors in 2016, a 30-percent increase from 2015. More than 400 new pages and assets were introduced in 2016, including resources from the National Centers and information on the new Head Start Program Performance Standards. To keep content current, other resources were updated, and more than 350 pages were removed. ECD professionals and staff members turn to ECLKC for notice of virtual and in-person trainings and for resources and tools on a range of topics.

Evidence-based resources help ECD staff members work as leaders in the field of early childhood care and education. The year’s 10 most downloaded T/TA tools and resources on ECLKC were:

- Getting Started with the Head Start Early Learning Framework
- Outdoor Play Benefits
- Health and Safety Screener
- Practice-Based Coaching (two documents)
- Active Supervision Toolkit
- Head Start Father Engagement Birth to Five Programming Guide
- Tips for Teachers
Looking ahead, 2017 will be a year of even deeper coordination of integrated T/TA, the expansion of data-driven implementation science, and most importantly, high-quality education and services so that children and families in greatest need can continue to build successful, resilient lives.

**Research, Analysis, and Communications**

The Division was implemented after the recent reorganization of early childhood offices within ACF. Its purpose is to promote high-quality early childhood care and education through the analysis of research and data and related communications that inform the public and TA policy.

Selected accomplishments from 2016 include:

- An analysis of OHS CLASS monitoring data and the publication of a user-friendly report, which allows grantees and other interested users to understand the scope and findings of federally conducted CLASS reviews of preschool Head Start programs. The report included a series of questions to help grantees consider implications for their own programs.

- A series of resources supporting the implementation of Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF) by Child Care and Head Start programs. Domain-specific implementation guides and a promotional video will ensure that HSELOF does not remain on the shelf and is used by program management and education staff for individualized, research-based teaching and learning.

- The creation of an annotated research library for internal use.

- An infographic on why child care costs so much (pending).

- A lead role in the Head Start Program Performance Standards rollout, including the development and presentation of introductory videos and webinars and presentations at national and State conferences.

- A Promotion Policy statement on early childhood inclusion and new Head Start standards for services to children with disabilities through presentations at the Frank Porter Graham National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute and DEC conference.

  A partnership with the Office of Special Education Programs, ED, and NCECDTL to plan and present a series of webinars commencing with the role of Response to Intervention in early childhood education.

Overall, the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary supports early childhood communication and outreach efforts. We grew the ECD listserv, updated the Web site with new information, launched an updated ECD newsletter, increased our use of social media, and conducted webinars and presentations at conferences and State and national events.

*Sign up for the ECD newsletter!*