

MEDIA RELEASE
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EARLY HEAD START COMING TO HARPER COUNTY

WICHITA, KAN. – Child Start, a nonprofit, charitable organization in Wichita, announces that they will be able to provide Early Head Start services in Harper County through a grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

The ARRA grant creates about seven new full-time and part-time jobs in Harper County including early childhood teachers and family educators.

A coalition in Harper County has been working to expand and enhance early childhood services in the area since developing a comprehensive plan in 2007. According to 2009 Kids Count data, the proportion of Harper County children living in poverty exceeds the state average for rural counties.

The goal of Child Start's Early Head Start program is to promote family unity, attachment and self-sufficiency for families with young children. The local program will enroll families with children birth to 30 months-old who meet eligibility requirements including income or disability. There will also be services for pregnant women and teens. The enrolled parents will receive home visits once a week and enrolled children will be served in an early childhood center six hours a day, five days a week. Services will begin June 1, 2010.

Some of the children will be placed in existing child care facilities which meet rigorous performance standards. However, Child Start is in negotiations to lease property and is currently seeking funding to renovate a site into two classrooms that can serve eight children each.

"I am so excited that Early Head Start will be coming to Harper County," said Heather Whealy, an early childhood advocate. "The research is clear on what a difference early intervention makes in the lives of families and children. This investment in Harper County will create successful children and strong, able adults. I am thrilled that we were accepted to be able to be one of the counties offering this amazing program."

Child Start expects to begin hiring staff in April. Positions will be advertised in local papers as well as the Wichita Eagle and on the Internet at www.childstart.org.

"Investing in early childhood development is the most effective investment for the future." said Glenda Wilcox, Early Childhood Program Director for Child Start. "I'm particularly pleased to be able to make this investment in Harper County where I grew up and still have family."

Child Start, Inc. is a charitable, nonprofit agency in operation since 1958 promoting early childhood experiences that prepare children for lifelong success. Administering Early Head Start, Head Start and the Child Care Resource and Referral program, Child Start works with parents, child care providers, early educators and caregivers providing a wide range of services to ensure that children enter school ready to learn. For more information about Child Start, please visit www.childstart.org on the Internet or contact the agency at 316-682-1853. Child Start is located at 1069 S. Glendale in Wichita.

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