



## **Head Start and ECEAP Welcomes Military and Veteran Families; Rules Make It Easier to Enroll Kids; Services Geared Toward Kids with Deployed Parents**

**Bellevue, Washington// May 28, 2010//**

With Memorial Day fast approaching, the Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP (WSA) would like to offer our deepest gratitude to our military and veterans families for their service to our country. Today, we wanted to let the larger community know that Head Start and ECEAP programs are welcoming of military and veteran families and provide unique services and support.

In February 2008 the Department of Health and Human Services made it is easier for military families to enroll their children in the Head Start program. The new eligibility rules require that certain types of pay and allowances to members of the uniformed services not be counted as income for purposes of determining Head Start eligibility.

[http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Program%20Design%20and%20Management/Head%20Start%20Requirements/IMs/2008/resour\\_ime\\_005\\_020508.html](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Program%20Design%20and%20Management/Head%20Start%20Requirements/IMs/2008/resour_ime_005_020508.html)

ECEAP programs also make it easier for military families to enroll their children in the program. You can view the eligibility and enrollment rules here:

[http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/eceap/docs/ECEAP\\_PerformanceStandards.pdf](http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/eceap/docs/ECEAP_PerformanceStandards.pdf)

### **Service to Military Families**

Children born to parents serving our country are faced with frequent inconsistencies in their young lives. Head Start can assist children through high-quality education, with creating a stable environment, and a continued focus on the child's social and emotional skills during a time when a parent may be absent. The parent's anxiety can be greatly reduced knowing that at a time of deployment their child is receiving quality education and care. Head Start creates a partnership between families, the classroom and the community, and in doing so resources can be identified.

Several programs were pleased to share with us how they are specifically serving military families and dealing with the unique situations facing a child with a deployed parent:

**Connie Mueller, Head Start Director for Kitsap Community Resources. [cmueller@kcr.org](mailto:cmueller@kcr.org), (360)473-2085**

Our program is serving a family with a father in the Navy with two children, one in Head Start and the other in Early Head Start. Through the combined efforts of HS and EHS, a Behavior Specialist has been assigned for the children's behavior issues, which has appeared since their father's deployment. Another service that has been provided is known as "Parent Central," which allows the father to stay connected with the children's teachers on a daily basis, reviews their progress and allows them to view any finished activities, such as artwork.

Most importantly, their father is able to send and receive messages from his children. Here at home the mother is building a network of people through the program funding to attend Olympic College for Human Development and volunteering in her children's classrooms with other Spanish-speaking parents. She has also has the opportunity to create a support system with other military wives in the program.

Mueller said the following:

*"This family feels that we have made their family stronger and are grateful for the opportunity for dad to stay connected and share in his children's daily lives while away".*

**Kylee Allen, Head Start Parent in Skagit Island. [Kyleejallen@gmail.com](mailto:Kyleejallen@gmail.com). (360)672-5426**

As a Head Start parent, with a spouse in the military Kylee found she was alone on many occasions to care for her children. Through the help of Head Start she was able to have a driving force through assistance with access resources in the community and was taught what the affects are on a preschool child with a parent deployed. HS was also there for her child to provide additional support when her husband was deployed and assisted her when she had feelings of frustration.

Allen said the following:

*"For my children, Head Start was a constant even though their dad was deployed. HS was also there to help when their family was all together, to help them become stronger, through family events such as special classes on being a military family and how to better parent your child. I feel that our family was strengthened by the support and understanding of being a military family."*

**Anna Ragsdale, Family Support Coordinator for Pierce County Head Start, family support said the following:**

*"I am in awe of the fortitude and commitment these families display in keeping their life as normal as possible during this war. The military families I work with have experienced multiple deployments, and as difficult as it has been for them, these families are surviving. I believe that all of these families are success stories, and that we should be proud as a program and as a country of the sacrifices every family member has made."*

**Dana Abram-ECEAP Parent from Lakewood-(425)931-7103**

Dana's husband serves in the Navy on the USS Lincoln. She credits ECEAP for making sure her child knew her letters and numbers and was prepared for kindergarten. As a military spouse she has found comfort and support from regular parent and family nights put together by her ECEAP program.

Dana said the following:

*"ECEAP made a big difference in getting by daughter ready for kindergarten. I don't know what I would have done without this terrific program!"*

**Robyn Morehouse-ECEAP Parent from Everett-(714)425-9158**

Robyn's husband was deployed in the Persian Gulf for much of the year. Robyn could not have afforded preschool for her son without ECEAP. ECEAP provided stability for her son when his father was away.

Robyn said the following:

*When my husband was deployed ECEAP really stepped in to help. As a result of the program my son is a lot more sociable and is ready to take on kindergarten. Thank you ECEAP.”*

### **Enrolling Your Child in Head Start**

If you know of or are a military family please go to [www.wsaheadstarteceap.com](http://www.wsaheadstarteceap.com) to locate a Head Start program near you. Programs will begin recruiting children in the summer for the fall 2010 program near you.

### **Military Leaders Support Early Learning**

Military leaders across the country are supporting early education. A new group has formed called Mission Readiness to organize retired military commanders in support of early education. To contact this organization please visit [www.missionreadiness.org](http://www.missionreadiness.org)

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### **About WSA**

The Washington State Association of Head Start/ECEAP is a statewide organization composed of representatives from ECEAP, Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant/Seasonal Head Start, and Native American Head Start. The association has been in existence since the late 1960's, and was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1986. The organization advocates for Head Start and for ECEAP in Olympia and in Washington DC. You can visit our web site at [www.wsaheadstarteceap.com](http://www.wsaheadstarteceap.com).

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