



Because Every Child Deserves a Childhood

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The Astor Home for Children Head Start Annual Report

The Astor Home for Children
Head Start
2007-2008



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Astor Head Start and Early Head Start

Astor knows — and data has proven — that children need a good start in life. The better the start, the more likely it is that children will be successful in school and be emotionally and physically healthy. For almost 30 years, Astor has been a leader in the field of Early Childhood Development. Our philosophy is deeply rooted in providing quality, comprehensive child care — that is, our Early Childhood Programs not only benefit children, but their entire family. Our premier programs supporting that philosophy are our Head Start Programs in Dutchess County.



The goal of Astor's Head Start Program is to provide comprehensive child development for children, age 3-5, from low-income families in Dutchess County. The goal of Astor's Early Head Start Program is to provide comprehensive child development services to young children, age 0-3 and their families. Services are both Center-based and Home-based. The home-based program consists of a weekly 90-minute home visit by a Parent Infant Educator who supports the parents and child with information and activities on child development, parenting skills, nutrition and health. The center-based nurturing rooms offer small groups of mixed ages (six weeks through three years) opportunities for individualized development through primary care giving, one-on-one routines and exploration of interesting, safe materials in a child-focused environment. We are able to serve approximately 1/3 of eligible children in Dutchess County NY.

Astor's Federal Report Card

We are proud to report that this year's Head Start Federal review revealed that our programs around Dutchess County are in **100% compliance** and there were no program findings. The on-site review is conducted by a regional team of consultants and led by a regional Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Program specialist to determine the program's compliance with Head Start Federal Policies and Standards. The Program Review Instrument for Systems Monitoring (PRISM) is the process and procedure used in onsite monitoring of Head Start Programs. Management systems, service delivery, and the relationships between systems and services are examined. Interviews, focus groups, observation and record reviews are used to gather data about program quality.

Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK)

The early childhood programs are developing regional collaborations with local school districts to provide universal pre-kindergarten services to four-year-olds including Webutuck, Poughkeepsie and Beacon. Our program utilizes the High Scope curriculum which aligns with the Head Start outcomes for learning. These efforts prepare over 100 children for kindergarten success. We are also negotiating contracts to provide services in the Pine Plains and Dover School Districts.



HEAD START PROGRAMS

2007-2008 Service Statistics

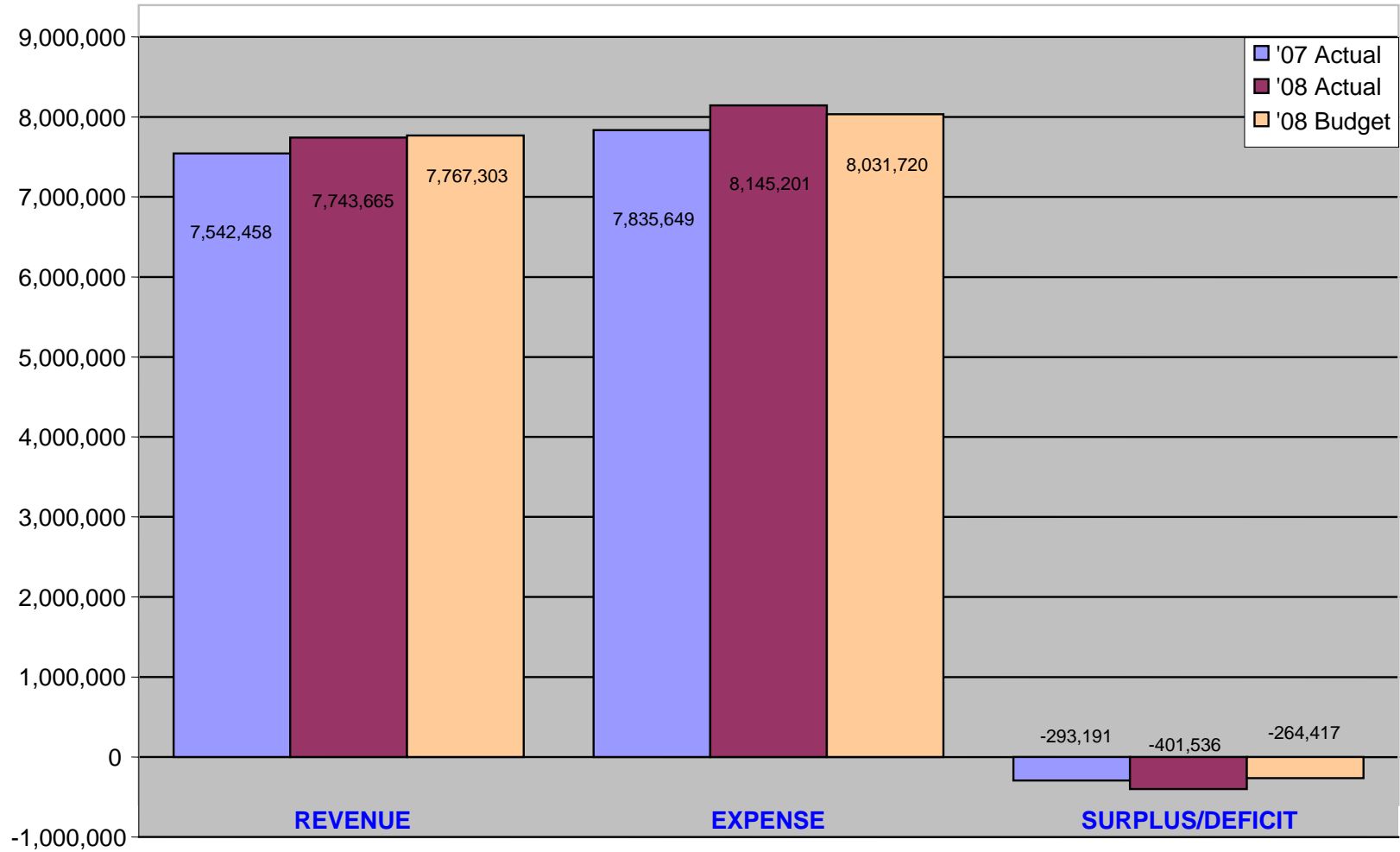


ASTOR operates Head Start Programs at the following Dutchess County, NY locations: Beacon, Millerton, Mt. Avernia, Pine Plains, Poughkeepsie, Windingdale

	HS	EHS
Total children served #	462	189
Total families served #	435	157
% of children completing medical exams	100	97.21
% of children completing dental exams	92	n/a
Avg. Monthly Enrollment	418	135
Percent of Capacity	100%	100%



FISCAL YEAR JULY 2007 TO JUNE 2008 RESULTS VS. BUDGET AND PRIOR YEAR
Early Childhood Programs – Dutchess County



**ASTOR EARLY CHILDHOOD
COST CENTER SUMMARY
BUDGET FY08**

Prepared

4/22/2009

	% OF REVENUE	BUDGET FY08			ACTUAL @ 6/30/07			Surp(Deficit) % Change
		Revenue	Expense	Surplus (Deficit)	Revenue	Expense	Surplus (Deficit)	
HEAD START/ EARLY HEAD START	71.2%	5,526,873	5,813,190	(286,317)	5,464,290	5,779,535	(315,245)	-9.2%
SPECIAL CLASS / INTEGRATED SETTING	7.8%	605,242	623,416	(18,174)	624,857	606,123	18,734	-197.0%
BEHAVIORAL SPECIAL CLASS	7.0%	540,417	534,546	5,871	525,276	527,067	(1,791)	-427.8%
POUGHKEEPSIE DT - PRESCHOOL	3.9%	299,333	294,282	5,051	288,094	287,311	783	545.1%
PARENT AND STAFF EDUCATION	1.8%	141,426	141,701	(275)	134,453	106,104	28,349	-101.0%
DAY CARE	1.7%	135,423	115,495	19,928	126,104	109,193	16,911	17.8%
MILLBROOK EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER	1.7%	131,930	131,927	3	-	-	-	#DIV/0!
ECCSI	1.5%	117,800	119,256	(1,456)	73,777	73,896	(119)	1123.5%
TITLE I - PRESCHOOL (99-457)	1.1%	84,000	78,864	5,136	77,703	83,854	(6,151)	-183.5%
OMH - PDT PRESCHOOL	1.1%	83,052	64,349	18,703	80,226	90,717	(10,491)	-278.3%
EVALUATIONS - UPSTATE	1.0%	73,815	82,509	(8,694)	65,121	85,929	(20,808)	-58.2%
TITLE I - PDT PRESCHOOL	0.4%	28,000	32,098	(4,098)	26,294	28,234	(1,940)	111.2%
BEHAV SPECIAL CLASS 1/2 DAY	0.0%	-	-	-	56,263	57,688	(1,425)	-100.0%
TOTAL EARLY CHILDHOOD	100.0%	7,767,311	8,031,633	(264,322)	7,542,458	7,835,651	(293,193)	



“THE END OF BAD AND SAD”

(NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED)



A broad smile spread across Maria's* face, her shoulders straightened and she looked me squarely in the eye. “You want me to talk about my experience with Astor?” she asked. “Before Astor, door upon door had been slammed in my face...and then, for the first time, one opened wide.” She gestures toward Alyana* who is playing peek-a-boo behind the picture of “happy people” she is coloring. “Astor has given me hope and respect for myself because I have been able to help my children and give them hope and respect.”

Maria was seeking legal assistance when the last door slammed in her face and she felt at the end of her rope. She had injured her back and had been unemployed for over a year while caring for her four year old son Michel*. Some days she could not get out of bed and feelings of depression and hopelessness were starting to overwhelm her. She felt “she was not a good parent.”

As she was leaving the legal aid office that day a bright yellow flyer caught her eye. A flyer that talked of programs for low-income families that would help them give their child a “Head Start.” She tore off a piece of paper from the bottom of the sheet with the phone number of Astor's Early Childhood Programs. And as Maria said, “The rest is history.”

Maria called Astor as soon as she got home and was referred to a Family Advocate who told her she was eligible for the program and was the last applicant being taken. She arrived at the Early Childhood Center at 3:00 pm on the Friday before decisions were to be made on Monday and left with “no promises” but a feeling of great comfort that she knew someone was standing by her and for her. Maria and Michel were accepted into Astor's Head Start Program and the rest is not only history but the future. “For the first time in two years, I was reminded what it was like to feel happy and to be motivated! When I got the letter that we were accepted into the program I screamed, ‘Michel you're going to school’. We got dressed up and went shopping for back packs and a new school outfit. It was the end of Bad and Sad.”

Today, Maria is very proud of her involvement on Astor's Head Start Parent Policy Council and as a parent representative on the Dutchess County Early Childhood Coordinated Services Council (ECCSI). Maria says, “Michel has friends and is so sociable and happy – I am so proud that I was able to help in his accomplishments. The teachers haven't just helped Michel – they've helped me with encouragement and respect.”

Next month, Alyana, Maria's daughter, begins Head Start. Maria becomes animated as she talks about the family going shopping for school supplies together. “Some parents just go buy the things off the list. I think it's important for the children to pick out their things and know that it is special to learn” she said. She also grins as she talks about loving the smell of fresh crayons. Maria continues with her goal to “give back.” She sometimes assists the Head Start Teachers with Spanish translation, but she is most concerned about making sure all parents know about Head Start and ECCSI. “I was so lucky that day to see the poster. But, I worry that someone that needs Head Start and other services doesn't know. I tell everyone. I am waiting now to hear if someone I told at the grocery store was accepted. Then I will be so happy!”



FROM THE PLAYGROUND TO THE NURTURING ROOM: A YOUNG WOMAN'S LIFE WITH ASTOR'S EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

Every fall, Astor employees from all program areas join each other at a recognition dinner. It is a time to celebrate successes and each other. It is not unique to find one or more of our employees listed that has served our children and their families for over 20 years. But one employee's history at Astor is unique. Margie Pudvah works with Astor as an Infant Toddler Care Assistant in our Millerton Early Childhood Center. Margie has been with Astor for over twenty years – which for her is almost a lifetime. Margie's "career" with Astor began as a young student at the Millerton Head Start in 1985.

"I will always remember how the teachers and staff at Head Start were always there for me and my family. The staff that visited us through the Home Based program cared for our family like we were their own. They made sure we had clothes and school supplies and everything – food, presents, decorations – that we needed to celebrate the holidays," says Margie.

Margie and her sister both worked with Head Start when they were in High School and once again felt nurtured and cared for by their "Astor family". When Margie became pregnant her senior year of high school, she was referred to Astor by the professionals at the maternity clinic she visited. Astor educators visited with Margie even before her baby arrived to provide support and to help Margie develop her parenting skills.

"I was scared and nervous," says Margie. "The Astor staff gave me the confidence and skills I needed to provide my baby girl, Aliza May, with the nurturing and care she needed when I brought her home."

Each of Margie's three children has benefited from the Head Start program. The youngest, Alexis, just entered Head Start this fall. Margie now attends childcare classes in Hudson each month to continue developing skills she can share with others.

"I have had Head Start Home Based support with all of my children and I just want to say – thank you!" says Margie. "All of the people who have touched my life with Head Start have left a part of themselves inside of me. They have given me the confidence and the encouragement to set goals and then follow my dreams. I will always, always remember their presence."



ASTOR TAKES PRIDE IN PARENT INVOLVEMENT!!!

Astor views parents as primary educators of their children and we encourage involvement in every aspect of the EHS and HS programs. From volunteering in classrooms and offices to riding the bus to setting policy, Astor's Early Childhood Programs know that the program is only as effective as the parent involvement. Astor's parent involvement opportunities also include parenting classes which are offered at each of our sites.

We asked for and received input for Astor's agency wide 2009-12 Strategic Plan from over sixty Head Start and Early Head Start parents including the Policy Council. They expressed praise for Astor staff and the difference that the Early Childhood programs have made to their children and to themselves. Many parents talked about how Astor "changed my life" and emphasized their own growth in self-esteem and parenting skills equal to the advances in their children's physical and emotional health and learning skills.

During conversation we identified areas where we can provide increased support to our parents:

- Parents as a whole were very confused about Astor's Early Childhood Services before their children were enrolled in Head Start. Some thought Astor was only a "home", but others who knew Astor provided community based services believed that those services were only for children with "problems".
- Parents suggested that many providers such as pediatricians, schools, retail services, etc. would be wonderful sources of information and referral if they were better informed and utilized. For the most part, parents in our groups knew about Astor through "word of mouth" referral from a parent or because at some point they or another member of their family had already been involved in Head Start.
- Parents fear the transition from the nurturing environment of Astor to the public school system. They expressed uncertainty about their own knowledge and wondered if they could still call upon Head Start staff for guidance and support.
- Transportation, particularly in relation to accessing medical care, is a huge concern for our parents in both rural and urban areas. Many utilize the emergency rooms inappropriately because of this. Many others shared stories of expensive cab rides or non-treatment for their children or themselves because they had no transportation.
- There is a particular angst surrounding a child's transition to public school for parents who have a native language other than English. They feel they cannot provide adequate support to their children for schoolwork and also fear that their children will "lose respect" for them as a result. They cited examples of being "tricked" by their children because their own language skills were poor. While many laughed uncomfortably at some of the shared stories, their eyes showed pain and humiliation.