



# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

HEAD START

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## Casa Central – Early Learning Academy

An Ounce of Prevention Fund Early/Head Start Delegate Agency

**Name of Delegate Agency:** Casa Central  
**Program Number:** 007  
**Program Name:** Casa Central – Early Learning Academy  
**Address:** 1343 North California Avenue, Chicago, IL 60622  
**Phone Number:** 773.645.2300  
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**Head Start Director Name:** Mary Reynolds, LCSW, I/ECMH-C  
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**Agency Web Site Address:** <http://www.casacentral.org>  
**Agency Type:** Social Service Agency / Non-Profit (Non-CAA)

### AGENCY DESCRIPTION:

Since 1954, Casa Central has been transforming lives and strengthening communities, with a special focus on Hispanics. Our network of social services propels a diverse population of all ages toward self-sufficiency and a higher quality of life. The agency’s Early Learning Academy provides Head Start and Early Head Start services to children, ages birth to five, and their families. The program serves 84 Head Start and 120 Early Head Start children and their families in both home- and center-based settings, and specializes in preparing children for entry into Kindergarten or Head Start with an emphasis on social-emotional development, literacy enhancement, and math comprehension.

#### *Center-Based Early Head Start & Head Start*

The Center-Based Early Head Start and Head Start program option, which includes Child Care collaboration, provides full-day early learning services in six classroom settings (two Early Head Start, four Head Start) for children ages two – five. All classrooms are also part of our partnership with the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative programs, which support increased staff credentialing and licensing and the maintenance of smaller teacher:child ratios to ensure high-quality, individualized services for all children.

The Center-Based program uses the research-based Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies GOLD developmental assessment tools to support quality education and ensure that programming meets the needs of all children in the program. Each classroom has three teaching staff who are overseen by a Site Director and an Academic and Development Manager/Education Coordinator.

The Center-Based program is in the Gold Circle of Quality as part of ExceleRate Illinois. ExceleRate Illinois is a statewide quality recognition and improvement system designed to make continuous quality improvement an everyday priority among early learning providers. The program establishes standards for helping young children develop intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally. It provides a framework for early learning professionals to identify opportunities for improvement, increase their skills, and take steps to make positive changes. Gold Circle programs like Casa Central's have met the highest quality standards in three areas: learning environment and teaching quality; administrative standards; and training & education. Furthermore, the program holds Awards of Excellence in Preschool Teaching & Learning and Infant/Toddler Services.

### *Home-Based Early Head Start & Head Start*

The Home-Based Early Head Start and Head Start program serves hard-to-reach populations (including, for example, teen parents and immigrant families) within the comfort of each family's home. The Home-Based program uses the research-based Parents as Teachers curriculum, as well as the High Scope/COR Advantage developmental assessment tools. In the Home-Based program option, families are assigned to a Parent Educator for weekly 90-minute home visits. The program is overseen by a Site Director and two Education Coordinators.

### *Early Learning Academy*

Across both the Home- and Center-Based program options, the Early Learning Academy provides a safe, nurturing environment, and addresses the comprehensive content areas of Early Head Start and Head Start programming, including ERSEA (Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance); Health and Nutrition; Education; Disabilities and Wellness Promotion; and Parent, Family & Community Engagement. Led by the Head Start Director/Vice President of Children's Services, the program-wide content-area staff include an ERSEA Coordinator, Nurse/Health Manager, Family Development Coordinator, Disabilities & Wellness Promotion Coordinator, Wellness Promotion and Nutrition Consultants, and a Systems Manager who manages data and supports continuous quality improvement activities across program options and content areas.

In order to holistically support participating families, each is assigned to a Family Development Specialist. Led by the Family Development Coordinator, each Specialist works closely with the family, helping families set and achieve goals, connect with community resources, and ensure that children are healthy, able to participate in program services, and equipped to thrive in Kindergarten and beyond. The Family Development Specialists use the evidence-based Parents as Teachers curriculum as a tool to connect with families, as well as other strategies and approaches. Specialists partner with the program's Nutrition Consultant to complete nutrition assessments and individualized

nutrition plans for children identified as in need of nutritional support. Furthermore, the Family Development Specialists collaborate with families and the program’s Nurse/Health Manager to ensure that children have comprehensive medical examinations including screening for lead, tuberculosis, and hemoglobin levels; are up-to-date on their immunizations; are connected with primary healthcare providers who serve as a medical home; have pediatric dental exams; and are connected with dental care providers who serve as a dental home.

The Early Learning Academy has partnerships with local healthcare providers to ensure that children have current immunizations and physical examinations and that they have had hearing and vision screenings. These partnerships do not supplant a medical or dental home, but rather provide additional supports and resources to families. The program has additional partnerships with service providers in the community in order to ensure comprehensive supports to families; these include service providers in areas such as domestic violence, housing, and financial literacy.

***During the 2019-2020 program year, Casa Central ‘s Early Learning Academy:***

- Enrolled **349** children;
- Provided Early/Head Start services to **323** households;
- Served **58** children with disabilities and diverse learning needs and their families, including
  - 30 children in Early Head Start (22.1% of cumulative EHS enrollment)
  - 28 children in Head Start (13.1% of cumulative HS enrollment)
- Provided supportive case management and information/referral services to **313** families;
- Ensured that **338** children had medical insurance coverage;
- Ensured that **341** children had an identified medical home and **327** children were up-to-date on their immunizations; and
- Aided **307** children and their families to identify a dental home, with **288** receiving a comprehensive preventive pediatric dental exam.

**EARLY LEARNING ACADEMY SITE LOCATIONS:**

Home-Based 1335 North California Avenue Chicago, IL 60622	Center-Based 1343 North California Avenue Chicago, IL 60622
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**PRIMARY COMMUNITY AREAS SERVED:**

- Hermosa
- Humboldt Park
- Logan Square
- West Town

## **SUMMARY OF MOST RECENT COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT:**

Each year, the Ounce of Prevention fund supports Casa Central in conducting a community assessment in order to outline the strengths and needs of the communities served by the Early Learning Academy and ensure that programming remains responsive. The update to the community assessment was completed in July of 2019; it includes new data for 2019 which, in accordance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards, is used for program planning purposes.

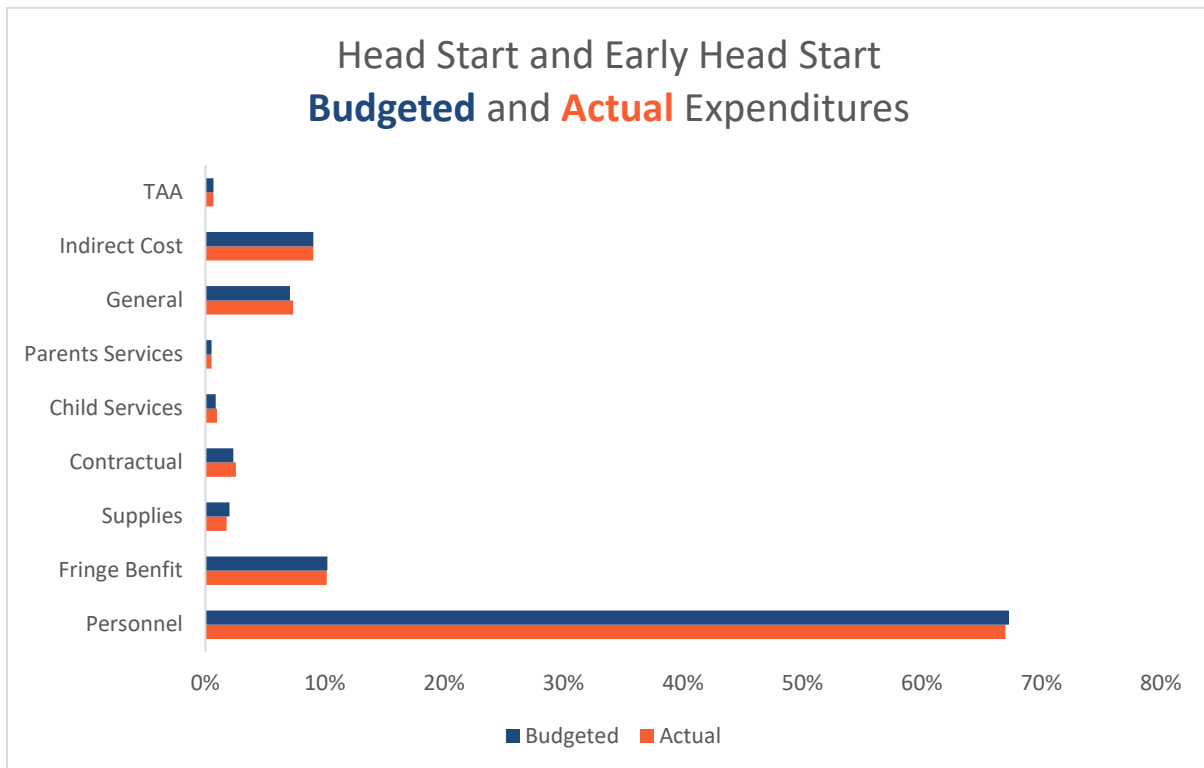
In summary, in the primary community areas served by Casa Central,

- There is a sizeable percentage of the population served with limited English proficiency, indicating continued need for Casa Central's bilingual (English/Spanish) approach.
- Pre-K expansion grants are well underway, and many more children ages 3-4 are being served by Preschool for All and Chicago Public Schools-based free preschool; this means there are fewer and fewer Head Start-eligible children in our community who are not already connected with other programming.
- Although the population of children in the Early Head Start age range decreased in Casa Central's primary community areas, there still remains very limited access to both center- and home-based Early Head start programming for income-eligible children ages birth – three.

## OVERALL DELEGATE BUDGET, 2019

**Total Public and Private Funds received: \$2,463,979**

Public Funds		Private Funds	
Source	Amount	Source	Amount
Federal	\$2,009,683	Individuals Corporations Foundations etc.	\$54,985
State	\$0	In-kind	\$127,996
Local School District	\$271,315		
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,280,998</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$182,981</b>



**CHILDREN & FAMILIES SERVED**

**Casa Central, Funded Enrollment**

	<b>Head Start Enrollment</b>	<b>Early Head Start</b>
<b>Center-Based Program Option</b>		
<b>a. 5 days per week</b>		
1. Full-day enrollment	68	16
2. Part-day enrollment	0	0
<b>b. 4 days per week</b>		
1. Full-day enrollment	0	0
2. Part-day enrollment	0	0
<b>Home-Based Program Option</b>		
	12	108
<b>Unallocated Slots</b>	0	0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>120</b>

Total Children Served: 349

Total Families Served: 323

Average monthly enrollment (as percentage of funded enrollment): 100%

<b>Number of Income-Eligible (below 100% Federal Poverty Level) Children in Casa Central's Recruitment Area</b>  (Hermosa, Humboldt Park, Logan Square, and West Town Communities; 2017 estimates from the July 2019 Community Assessment, Tables 7 & 8)		<b>Percentage of Eligible Children in Casa Central's Recruitment Area served by Any Head Start/Early Head Start Program</b> (Tables 11 & 12)	
<b>Early Head Start, ages 0-2</b>	<b>Head Start, ages 3-5</b>	<b>Early Head Start</b>	<b>Head Start</b>
1,952	2,345	<b>14.8%</b> (289 out of 1,952 eligible children)	<b>43.5%</b> (1,019 of 2,345 eligible children)
		<i>Prevention Initiative Programs</i>	<i>Preschool for All and Child Parent Centers</i>
		<b>16.9%</b> (329 of 1,952 eligible children)	<b>58%</b> (1,360 of 2,345 eligible children)

**HEALTH SERVICES**

The data on the following table was drawn from the 2018-2019 PIR (Program Information Report) and reflects key indicators related to children’s health status

	<b>Early Head Start</b>	<b>Head Start</b>
Child has health insurance by end of program year	97.1%	96.7%
Child has medical home by end of program year	98.5%	98.6%
Child has dental home by end of program year	79.4%	96.7%
Child has a complete and up-to-date physical exam	66.2%	71.8%
Child has a complete and up-to-date pediatric dental exam	71.3%	89.7%
Child’s immunizations are up-to-date	88.2%	97.2%



## PARENT EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Casa Central encourages frequent parent involvement and communication by promoting an open-door policy for parents to visit the programs at any time and volunteer within their child's classroom. Home visits and parent conferences address individual child development and how parents can support learning at home.

**Health & Nutrition:** Casa Central's Director of Nutrition Services delivered a series of *Feed Your Potential* workshops to parents and families, in partnership with the American Heart Association and Aramark. Workshops like, "Healthy Cooking on a Budget," "Exercise Within Reach," and "Nutritional Label Know-How," were particularly popular. Further, Casa Central partnered with the University of Illinois at Chicago Extension program for an on-site healthy cooking and nutrition workshops for families.

**Wellness Promotion (Mental Health):** Parents received training in mental health and wellness in early childhood and how mental health can impact school readiness and success. Parents also received training and resource materials about managing stress, self-care, and tending to their own mental health and wellbeing. Additionally, parents received training and supports related to developmental screening and the referral processes to the Chicago Public Schools and Illinois Early Intervention System for children identified as needing further assessment for special needs services.

**Education and Literacy:** Math and literacy continue to be a primary focus for Casa Central's Early Learning Academy in order to prepare children for success in Head Start, Kindergarten and beyond. Parents receive orientation to our curricula (Creative Curriculum in Center-Based and Parents as Teachers in Home-Based), and participate in home visits and parent conferences with staff members to learn more about their children's developmental progress in these areas.

**Community and Social Services:** At parent meetings, featured speakers shared information on specific topics parents have indicated as being of interest during the fall participant survey. These speakers are from local community service providers and inform parents of resources available, how to access services, and eligibility requirements.

**Other Community-Related Education:** Each year, Casa Central engages hundreds of volunteers throughout the community and beyond. Volunteers work within the Center-based program to provide support, activities and special crafts for the children, and parents are invited to participate and engage in those activities. Further, the program provided curriculum and learning activities during parent meetings using the engaging Parents as Teachers curriculum.

**Parent Committee Meetings:** Each program option has a Parent Committee and elects officers and representatives that take on an active role in the program’s Policy Committee and the grantee’s Policy Council. The program Policy Committee met monthly. This year, they participated in training on Head Start and the role of committee members in interviewing and hiring staff; fiscal management of the program, including monthly budget reviews and program amendments; participated in the annual Self-Assessment and reviewed the Quality Improvement Plan and changes made; reviewed the 2019 Community Needs Assessment, Program Information Report and Selection Criteria and recommended changes.

**Other special gatherings or activities:** Each program option hosted activities designed for parents and children: male involvement activities; literacy events including large-scale recognition of the Week of the Young Child; Hispanic heritage celebrations; transition celebrations; seasonal celebrations; food experiences; and field trips.

**Kindergarten Readiness:** Kindergarten Readiness activities included a focus on literacy, language, and math skills in classrooms. Each program worked with a local education advocacy group that came to the programs to talk to parents in the fall about educational options in the Local Education Agency (LEA): program types, eligibility, and application process. They also distributed school district catalogs.

**Special Efforts to Prepare Children for Kindergarten:** Children transitioning to kindergarten from our Center-Based program option are in classrooms with a certified teacher, via a partnership with the local LEA, and the focus of the training for teachers from the partnership is to ensure the skills (cognitive and social-emotional) needed for kindergarten are present and acquired in the activities that the children participate in.

Each child receives regular developmental assessments utilizing the Teaching Strategies GOLD/COR Advantage assessment tool, which regularly evaluates each individual’s progression regarding academic, fine and gross motor, and social emotional growth based on expectations for their age. Teaching Strategies GOLD is utilized throughout the City of Chicago as a respected tool to accurately analyze a child’s preparedness for entering kindergarten based on whether they are “meeting” or “exceeding” expectations for their age level; COR Advantage is used because of its particular applicability and utility in home-based settings. Teachers and Parent Educators create checkpoints three times a year to review each child’s progression and utilize the information to engage parents in the child’s learning and set individual learning goals for each child based on their strengths and areas of concentration.

**Transition Activities to Promote Kindergarten Readiness:** For children with special needs, we have worked with local schools to ensure that the parent and child have visited the school and classroom they will be placed in the fall. When possible, the Head Start teacher, Disabilities/Wellness Promotion Coordinator and/or Family Development Specialist will visit the new school, as well. For all children, a file with their most recent screenings is provided to the parents to take to the new school.

### **Summary of Audit Findings**

There were no financial audit findings at Casa Central, a delegate agency of the Ounce of Prevention Fund, for FY2019.

### **Summary of Annual Review Findings**

There was no Federal Review for the Ounce of Prevention Fund's Early/Head Start program during 2019.

### **Summary of Information Required by the Secretary**

The Ounce of Prevention Fund Board of Directors and Policy Council were given brief summaries and links to all program instructions and informational memorandums; this information was also shared with the Head Start Committee of Casa Central's Board of Directors and the Casa Central Policy Committee, comprised of parents with children participating in programming at the Early Learning Academy.