

WNCSource CEO Report
February 9, 2023

The Western North Carolina – Trauma Resilient Communities Project (WNC-TRC)



WNCSource has been selected as a Backbone Agency (BBA) for the WNC-TRC project. The Twelve Backbone organizations are nonprofits and government departments in Henderson, Polk and Transylvania Counties. This project, funded by the Dogwood Health Trust, will allow the BBAs “to enhance their resilience efforts through additional training, organizational capacity building and coaching, and implementation support.”

WNCSource has been learning about trauma and resiliency for several years. This project will accelerate our journey in becoming a trauma resilient organization. This is a three-year project. February 7 – 9, key WNCSource staff will be spending all day learning more about the project. In March a baseline survey will be completed by all agency staff. Over the next three years our growth, along with the other BBAs, should have us well on the way to having trauma resilient communities.

The cost for WNCSource to do this without the Dogwood Health Trust’s support would have tens of thousands of dollars. At the end of the three years WNCSource will be better equipped to recognize trauma. It will also give us a toolkit to deal with trauma in our clients and employees. This is the beginning of our journey and I am excited to see where it takes us.



Office of Head Start Full Enrollment Initiative

Many Head Start grant recipients around the country are under enrolled. This was the case before the covid 19 pandemic and it has gotten worse since then. Before the pandemic WNCSource was never under enrolled. Other programs were under enrolled due to higher minimum wages and changing demographics. Most of the under enrollment in the country now is due to staffing shortages. The staffing shortage is certainly the main reason for WNCSource’s under enrollment.

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Within the next thirty days I expect to receive a letter from the Office of Head Start (OHS) that will put WNCSource on a one-year plan to reach full enrollment. OHS wants us to succeed in reaching full enrollment. They will offer technical assistance to help us get there. Of course, we have already taken many steps to attract and retain staff, and reach full enrollment:

- Applied for and received changes of scope decreasing our full enrollment
- Offered hiring and retention bonuses for staff
- Implemented several paid trainee programs
- Raised pay on January 1, 2023 for sixty teachers and other front line staff
- Increased outreach to local and regional colleges with Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs
- Established an ECE Apprenticeship Program with Blue Ridge Community College
- Applied for and received a five-year grant \$987,000 grant from the Dogwood Health Trust to support teacher recruitment efforts
- Hired a full time Children's Services employee recruiter that starts February 15, 2023
- Increased advertising from \$1500 per position to \$4500 in the last three years

These are just a few of the actions we have taken. We are certainly open to suggestions from OHS.

If we do not reach full enrollment by early in 2024, there will be consequences. It is possible that some of our grants would be reduced. That money might go to other grant recipients that are fully enrolled. That is a worst case scenario and one we will work diligently to avoid.

OHS sees WNCSource as a stellar grantee. Our recent Focus Area 2 review with no areas of concern supports this. The OHS staff that work with us sing our praises. They want us to succeed, but they will want to see substantial progress towards full enrollment.