

### **Office of Head Start Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)**

On November 20, 2023, the Office of Head Start (OHS) released a NPRM titled *Supporting the Head Start Workforce and Consistent Quality Programming*. The document is close to 100 pages and would make sweeping changes to the Head Start Performance Standards. There is a four page summary attached to my report. Below is a list of a few of the highlights:

- Increase teacher salaries to be on parity with K-3 public school teachers
- Have grantees provide affordable mental health supports for staff
- Make Head Start and Early Head Start pay comparable
- Cap the maximum number of families in a Family Advocate's caseload at 40
- Clarify which safety incidents need to be reported to OHS
- Adjust family incomes for eligibility for high housing costs

We are now in a sixty-day comment period that will end January 19, 2024. I am a member of a National Head Start Association working group that is studying the NPRM. We will come to a consensus on strategies for comments. Much of the changes recommended by the NPRM are welcome. The workforce supports are particularly welcome, if funding for Head Start increases substantially. Some of the other changes look like they may increase administrative burdens. I believe the grantees will push back on some of them. I will keep the WNCSource Board informed on the strategies and opportunities to comment.

### **Revised Change in Scope**

The NPRM certainly confirms the direction that OHS is wanting grantees to move. They want us to increase staff pay so that we can attract and keep qualified employees. We have also received direct communication from OHS that they want us to have a plan that puts WNCSource at 97 percent enrollment. With this in mind, we asked to have our latest Change in Scope (CIS) returned to us to make needed changes, so that we can realistically reach 97 percent enrollment. We are currently making the changes and they will be presented at the December 14 Board meeting.

### **Developmental Daycare Update**

WNCSource early childhood education and human resources staff have been meeting with Helping Hand staff. It does look like most of their staff are looking forward to working for WNCSource. We have also invited Helping Hand staff to attend the Winter Luncheon.