

# Holy Cross Head Start, Inc.

*Holy Cross Mission Statement: To provide comprehensive educational opportunities for eligible families and their children birth to five in collaboration with community partnerships in a safe, diverse environment.*

Holy Cross Head Start, Inc. (HCHS) is a federally funded school readiness and family development program. Holy Cross Head Start has provided early, continuous and comprehensive childhood development and family services for over 54 years. Currently, Holy Cross Head Start offers developmentally appropriate Pre-Kindergarten programming for 500, three and four year-old children. Our program focuses on school readiness, literacy, math, and social skills, integrating children with disabilities throughout the program while assisting family members in meeting their needs and achieving their goals.

Our program offers comprehensive, holistic, and supportive services to an ethnically diverse population, creating programs that are culturally and linguistically responsive to our families. Holy Cross Head Start engages a large network of community collaborators who all share the same commitment to cultural and linguistic responsiveness and that offer health, mental health, disabilities, parenting, social services, and educational programs.

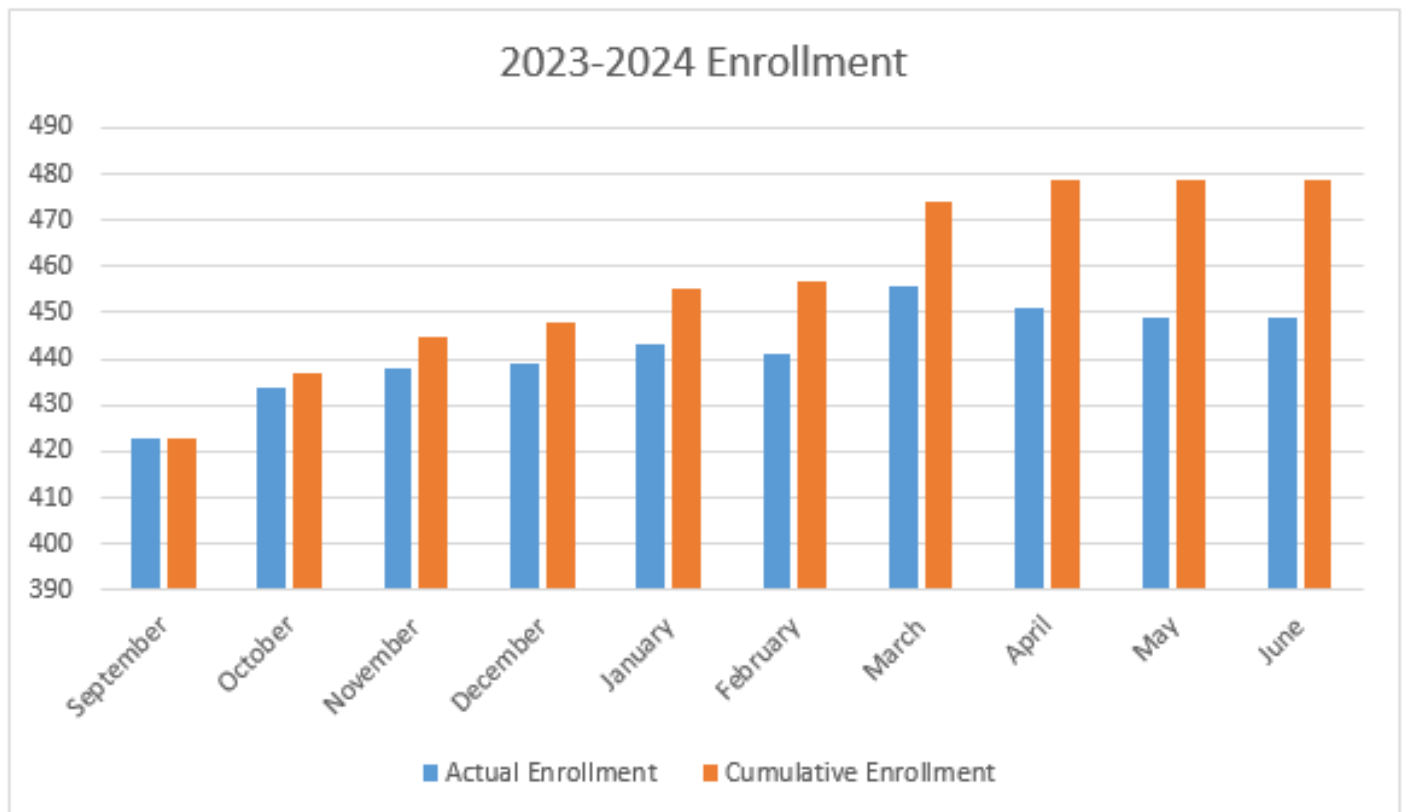


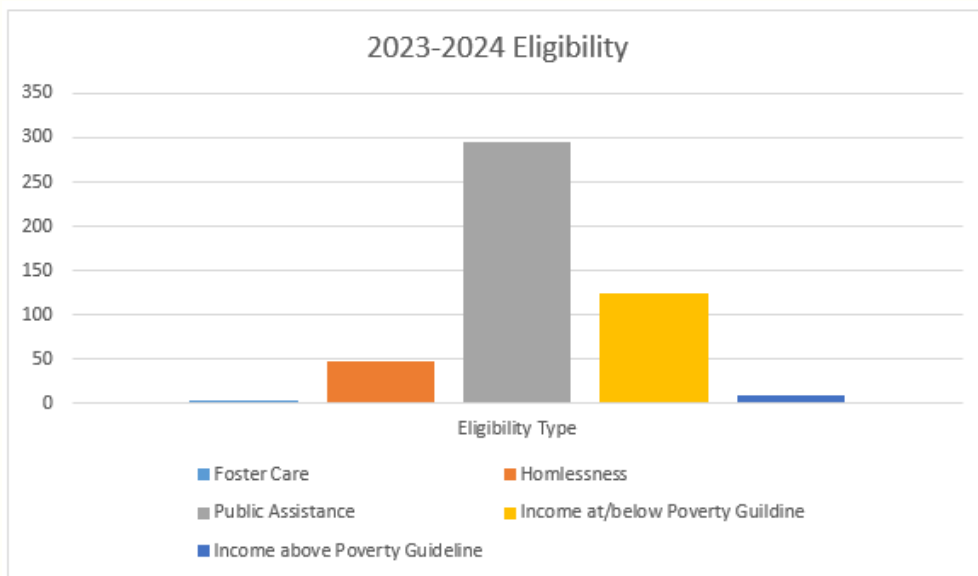
## Enrollment

Holy Cross Head Start provides services for 500 children, ages 3-4 years old, and families in Erie County, New York in the following service areas:

<b>Holy Cross Center</b> 150 Maryland St. Buffalo, NY 14201 716-852-8373	<b>Central Center</b> 89 Military Rd. Buffalo, NY 14207 716-875-1506	<b>Dewitt Center</b> 368 Dewitt St. Buffalo, NY 14213 716-424-0571
<b>North Buffalo Center</b> 203 Sanders Rd. Buffalo, NY 14216 716-464-7771	<b>Northwest Center</b> 155 Lawn Ave. Buffalo, NY 14207 716-877-5022	<b>Sheridan-Parkside Center</b> 169 Sheridan Parkside Dr. Tonawanda, NY 14150 716-876-0100

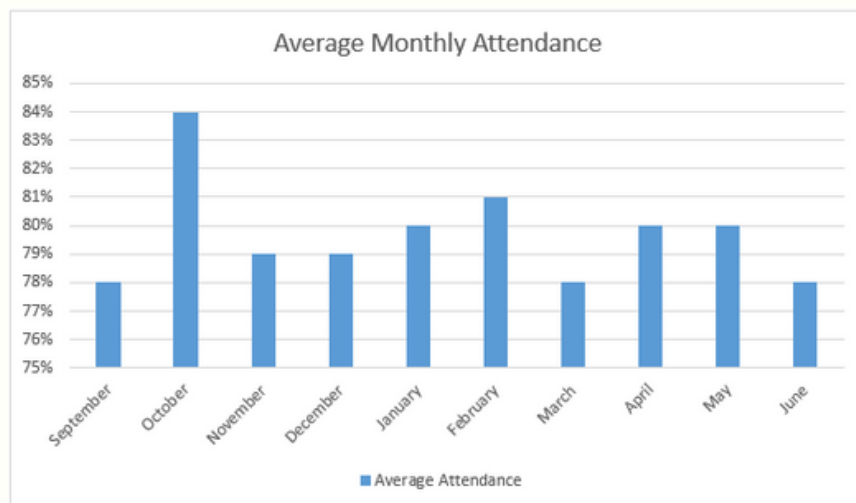
During the 2023-2024 program year, Holy Cross Head Start served 479 children from within 449 families. The average monthly enrollment was 88%. HCHS continued to strive for full enrollment during the program year, however, we still faced challenges due to staffing shortages.





The percentage of enrolled children deemed categorically eligible or eligible based on low income was 98%.

The average monthly attendance for the 2023-2024 program year was 80%.



## Recruitment & Community Collaborations

Holy Cross Head Start recruited continuously throughout the 2023-2024 program year. We participated in many community events including wellness fairs, childcare resource fair, immigrant and refugee resource events, multiple family fun days and local bookstore and library events. We recruited in our own centers through distributing family and friend letters and sending flyers and information with visitors such as therapists, tutors and social service providers, which proves to be our most successful form of recruitment. Holy Cross Head Start continued to visit and provide informational materials to services in the community including Best Self and Neighborhood Health, as well as other locations like churches, refugee agencies and community centers.

Holy Cross Head Start continues to have strong collaborations with the following community agencies to better assist families: Buffalo State College, D'Youville College, University Pediatric Dentistry, Liberty Dental, Catholic Charities WIC, Lead 716, Lead Prevention Program, Endeavor Health Services, Lion's Club, HEAP/National Fuel, ECMC, Highmark, Boarder Community Services, Tonawanda CERT Team, Hearing and Speech of WNY, Buffalo Public School District and the Ken-Ton School District.

## Preparing Children for Kindergarten

To help prepare children and families for Kindergarten and beyond, school readiness goals were created using learning objectives from the Creative Curriculum's Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment tool. Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG) is utilized not only as a framework to guide children's learning but is also the main database used to collect, analyze, and interpret assessment data.

During this school year, the children at HCHS made a 46% increase in school readiness goals from the fall to the spring. The highest growth came in the areas of social emotional development as well as literacy development, while the main areas of need were in language development and math. The education staff focuses daily on social emotional skills by utilizing the Second Step curriculum. Language development had the lowest percentage of growth but HCHS had 25% of children who received speech services which plays a role in our language scores. To improve our language scores, the education staff will attend a professional development session with a licensed Speech and Language Pathologist to offer up strategies as well as tools to utilize in the classroom to help language development in all HCHS classrooms.

Weekly lesson plans and daily activities are created using the school readiness goals and their effectiveness is measured through daily observations of the children. The readiness goals encompass all areas of development and learning to include goals for Dual Language Learners and the diverse population HCHS serves. Three times a year teachers complete assessment checkpoints on all of their children to document their progress in each of the 38 learning objectives. The data is aggregated by the Education Coordinator and shared with the agency and community. Teachers, with the help of the Education Coordinator, use individual classroom reports to look for strengths and areas of needed improvement so that specific goals can be worked on during small and large group times as well as shared with parents during conferences.

All enrolled HCHS children are individualized for on a daily basis. Teachers meet with families at the start of the school year (or at enrollment) to begin the goal planning process. All goals are connected to a School Readiness Goal and the teachers and families meet three times during the school year to check in on the progress. Teachers use their observations entered into TSG, their class profile report from TSG, and the individual child report to identify individual growth for each child. The utilization of this report allows teachers to plan learning activities that will help to close the gap for all children not meeting expectations.



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## 2023-2024 School Readiness Growth

### Social Emotional Development

#1. Students will engage in positive and cooperative relationships with adults and peers while appropriately managing their own emotions.

Fall:  
38%

Winter:  
69%

Spring:  
85%

### Physical Development

#6. Students will demonstrate gross and fine motor control, personal care and safety and self-help skills.

Fall:  
51%

Winter:  
82%

Spring:  
93%

### Language Development

#3. Students will demonstrate an understanding of and will use a variety of words to communicate their ideas and express themselves.

Fall:  
39%

Winter:  
61%

Spring:  
78%

### Cognitive Development

#2. Students will approach learning utilizing self-regulation, initiative, curiosity and creativity.

Fall:  
40%

Winter:  
67%

Spring:  
84%

### Literacy Development

#4. Students will demonstrate phonological awareness, print and alphabet knowledge and text comprehension.

Fall:  
28%

Winter:  
63%

Spring:  
81%

### Math Development

#5. Students will develop knowledge of counting, numbers and shape recognition, inquiry and reasoning, and music and art.

Fall:  
28%

Winter:  
57%

Spring:  
74%

Note: At the beginning of the year, it is appropriate for a student's skills and abilities to fall below widely held expectations for their age or class/grade because they may not have received instruction for that level.

## 2023-2024 Child Demographics

The breakdown of the total number of children assessed is below. The graph shows the number of children in each demographic area that met or exceeded expectations.

**Fall 2023:**

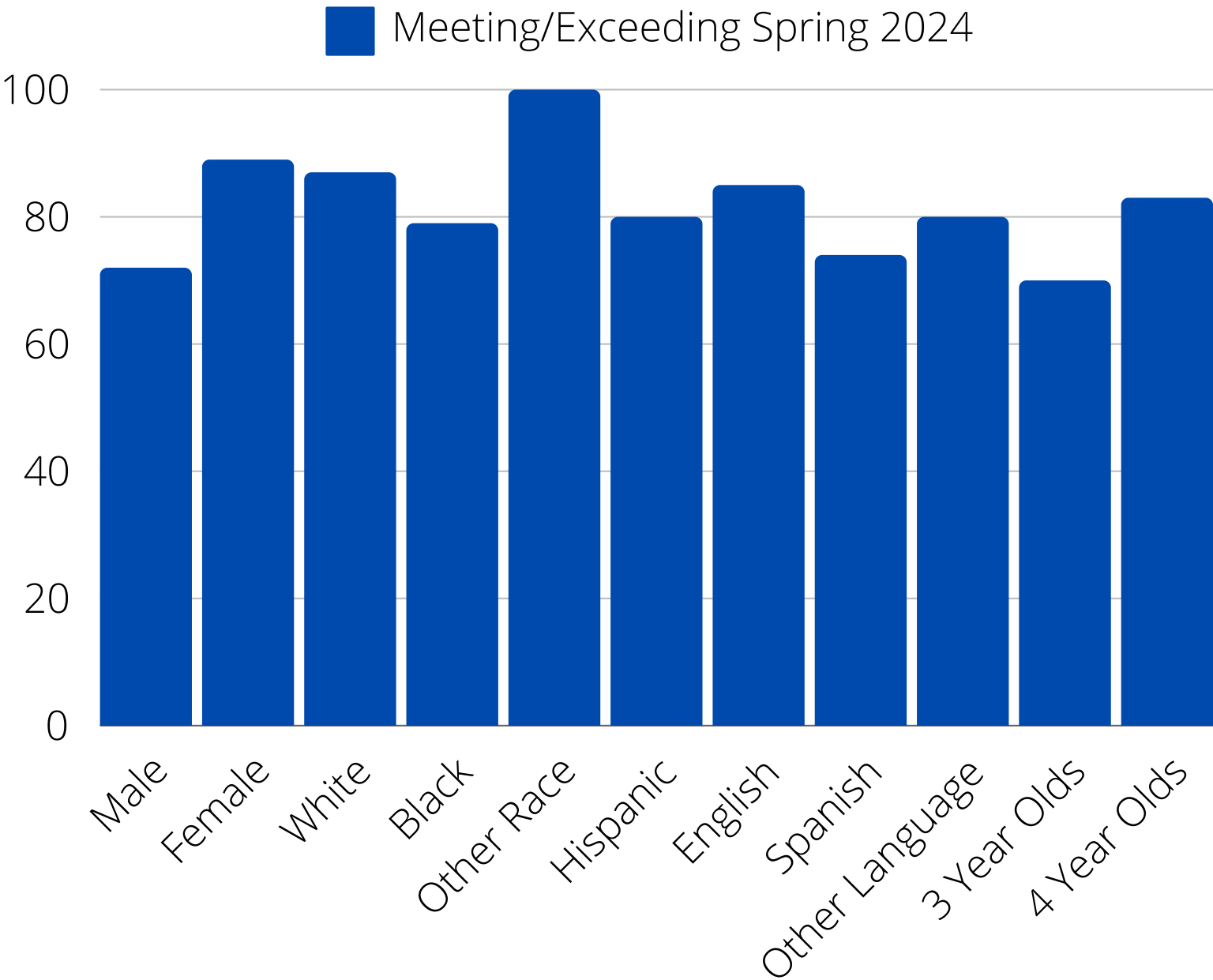
49% 3 year old's  
51% 4 year old's  
47% Male  
53% Female  
28% Dual language learners  
21.2% Students with Disabilities

**Winter 2024:**

49% 3 year old's  
51% 4 year old's  
47% Male  
53% Female  
29% Dual language learners  
24% Students with Disabilities

**Spring 2024:**

49% 3 year old's  
51% 4 year old's  
47% Male  
53% Female  
29% Dual language learners  
28% Students with Disabilities



## Enhanced Learning

This year HCHS partnered with Alice Ever After Books, CEPA Art Gallery, Buffalo Museum of Science, Aquarium of Niagara, and Buffalo Niagara Heritage Museum to bring fun and engaging hands on learning to the children.



## Parent Involvement

Parents from each center had many opportunities to engage in their child's learning throughout the year by participating in center wide events or volunteering in their child's classroom. Events included Fall Fest, Multi-Cultural Day and Friendship Festival. One parent at the Dewitt Center even brought in musical instruments and played for the children!

## Charter School Fair

Throughout the school year HCHS Case Managers assist families with completing Kindergarten registration paperwork and determining which school is best for their child.

HCHS hosts their annual Charter School fair each year to provide families with the resources needed to make informed decisions about Kindergarten. Nine local charter schools were on site at each of the six locations to talk to families about their schools and help families with the registration process. One hundred and forty-two families attended the fair.

During the 2023-2024 school year, HCHS helped 226 children transition to Kindergarten. 50 children planned to attend a charter school for Kindergarten, while the remaining children planned to attend public or private schools.

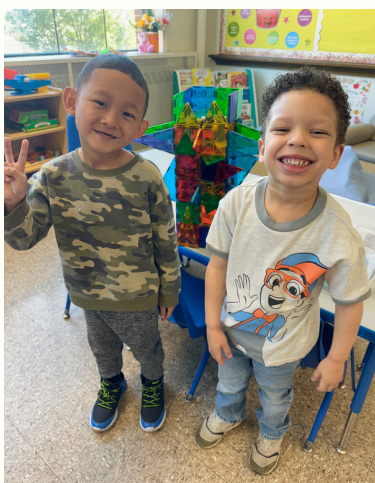


## Student Support Services

Holy Cross Head Start works closely with families to provide resources for parents who have concerns about their child's development. In order to meet the needs of each child, curriculum and instruction are individualized and classroom accommodations are made to support students within our program. Parents who have educational concerns for their children are provided with information regarding referrals, evaluations and services that are accessible through their local school district's Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE). We collaborate with school districts and evaluating agencies to assist in the CPSE process to ensure that students who qualify receive appropriate services and support. We also support families through the transition to school age special education programs and services. HCHS assisted 92 families through the CPSE process to determine if their child was eligible for services. Of that number, 77 children qualified for services. A total of 124 children were identified as a preschooler with a disability during the 2023-2024 program year.

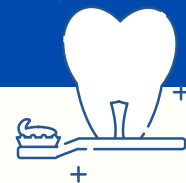
Holy Cross Head Start advocates for families of students who are experiencing trauma, mental health issues or behavioral challenges. We assess students' social and emotional development using the Ages and Stages: Social and Emotional Questionnaire. Staff work together with the Mental Health and Disabilities Coordinator and families to provide support through classroom accommodations, and if warranted, a referral for additional services is made to address concerns. We collaborate with local counseling agencies such as Endeavor Health Services to provide counseling for students and families who qualify. During the school year, HCHS assisted 15 families in obtaining counseling services for their child.

Our program's ability to assist children in developing strong social-emotional skills throughout the school day is one of our school's main advantages. Every day, all of our classrooms use the social-emotional skills curriculum known as the Second Step Early Learning Curriculum. In addition, Multiple trainings on positive behavior strategies (PBS), such as those covering Modules 1 and 2 of the Pyramid Model Program for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Young Children, have been attended by our education professionals and every classroom makes use of materials, techniques, and activities from the Pyramid Model.





## A Healthy Start



During the 2023-2024 program year:

100% of enrolled children completed all required 45 day screenings, which include hearing, vision, developmental, speech and social-emotional screenings.

100% of enrolled children had health insurance and a medical home.

100% of enrolled children received physical exams.

90% of enrolled children received dental exams.

97% of enrolled children have a dental home, however, for those without dental homes, HCHS collaborated with The Smile Team to provide on site dental screenings to children. The University at Buffalo School of Dentistry provided dental exams and Liberty Dental provided dental screenings and fluoride treatment to the children during the school year.

## Nutrition

All children that attend Holy Cross Head Start receive 1/2 to 2/3 of their daily nutritional needs while in program. All meals follow the nutrition guidelines of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and are low in sugar and high in vitamins. Parents and caregivers have the opportunity to participate in menu planning and can review and make suggestions to the meals that are served to their children. Nutrition staff collaborate with teaching staff to teach and model healthy eating activities in the classroom.

During the 2023-2024 program year, Holy Cross Head Start served:

Breakfast - 54,224

Lunch - 54,891

Snack - 53,476



The Health Service Advisory Committee meets quarterly throughout the school year to discuss health and nutrition issues relevant to the community and the families enrolled at HCHS. The committee is comprised of health professionals within the community, HCHS staff and parents. The information shared among members helps to drive decision making within the program and also provides the program with valuable resources.

# Overview of Head Start Funding & Budget

Fiscal Year March 1, 2023-February 28, 2024

## Head Start Funds received:

Head Start Grant Award	5,262,124
Head Start T&TA	60,690
<i>Total</i>	<i>5,322,814</i>

## Other private and public funds received:

Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)	780,286.97
Universal Pre-K (UPK) through the Buffalo Public Schools	1,177,266.00
Cavity Free Kids through the Health Foundation of Western and Central NY	3,500.00
<i>Total</i>	<i>2,355,251.61</i>

*\*Other funds are expended in personnel costs, fringe benefits, equipment and supplies.*

## Proposed Head Start budget:

Personnel Costs	3,442,466
Fringe Benefits	889,493
Travel	3,000
Equipment	0
Supplies	121,283
Contractual	0
Construction	0
Other	866,592
<i>Total</i>	<i>5,322,814</i>

## Audit Results:

An annual audit is conducted by Cohen & Company on compliance for each major program and on internal control over compliance required by the Uniform Guidance each year. Our Fiscal Year ending February 28, 2024 audit is still in progress.

## Board of Directors

The Board of Directors works closely with the Executive Director, Mr. Cortland Purks, to oversee the program. The Board is made up of people from various professional and community backgrounds. The Board meets quarterly each year and participates in the annual Self-Assessment, Community Assessment, Strategic Planning and Federal Review for the agency.

Mrs. Maria Cruz-Torres, *President*

Ms. Ada Collado, *Vice President*

Ms. Nelly Perez Garcia, *Treasurer*

Mr. Daniel Figueroa

Mrs. Delilah Ventura

Mr. Carmen Gentile

Ms. Fatima Sharif

Ms. Maria Aguero de Manunta

Mr. Michael Muscarella

Ms. Nadira Durant Morales, *Policy Council Chairperson*

## Policy Council

The Policy Council is comprised of parents of currently and formerly enrolled children from each center. They meet monthly and are responsible for supporting program operations, including, but not limited to, recruitment, selection, enrollment, applications for funding, budget planning, program personnel policies and bylaws for the operation of the Policy Council. The Policy Council is also responsible for participating in the annual Self-Assessment and using the yearly program data to drive decision making for the program.



## Professional Development

Holy Cross Head Start had the opportunity to send staff members to the annual National Head Start Conference in Portland, OR in April. Miss Mariette and Miss MaryClaire proudly represented the agency and brought back valuable resources to use in their daily work.



## Leadership Team

**Cortland Purks**

*Executive Director*

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**Angela Rizzo**

*Human Resources Manager*

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*Director of Center Operations*

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*Social Services Coordinator*

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**Katie Robinson**

*Holy Cross Main Center Director*

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**Tara Wilson**

*Parkside Center Director*

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**Janice Crews-Dearing**

*Chief Financial Officer*

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**Katie Adamczak**

*Director of Program Operations*

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**Lindsay Kilijanski**

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**Christine Tedesco**

*Health Coordinator*

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**Chloe Morgan**

*Mental Health/Disabilities Coordinator*

[cmorgan@holycrossheadstart.org](mailto:cmorgan@holycrossheadstart.org)

**Katie Cipollone**

*Northwest Center Director*

[kmcgee@holycrossheadstart.org](mailto:kmcgee@holycrossheadstart.org)

**Amy Rosen**

*Central Center Director*

[arosen@holycrossheadstart.org](mailto:arosen@holycrossheadstart.org)

**Monica Roman**

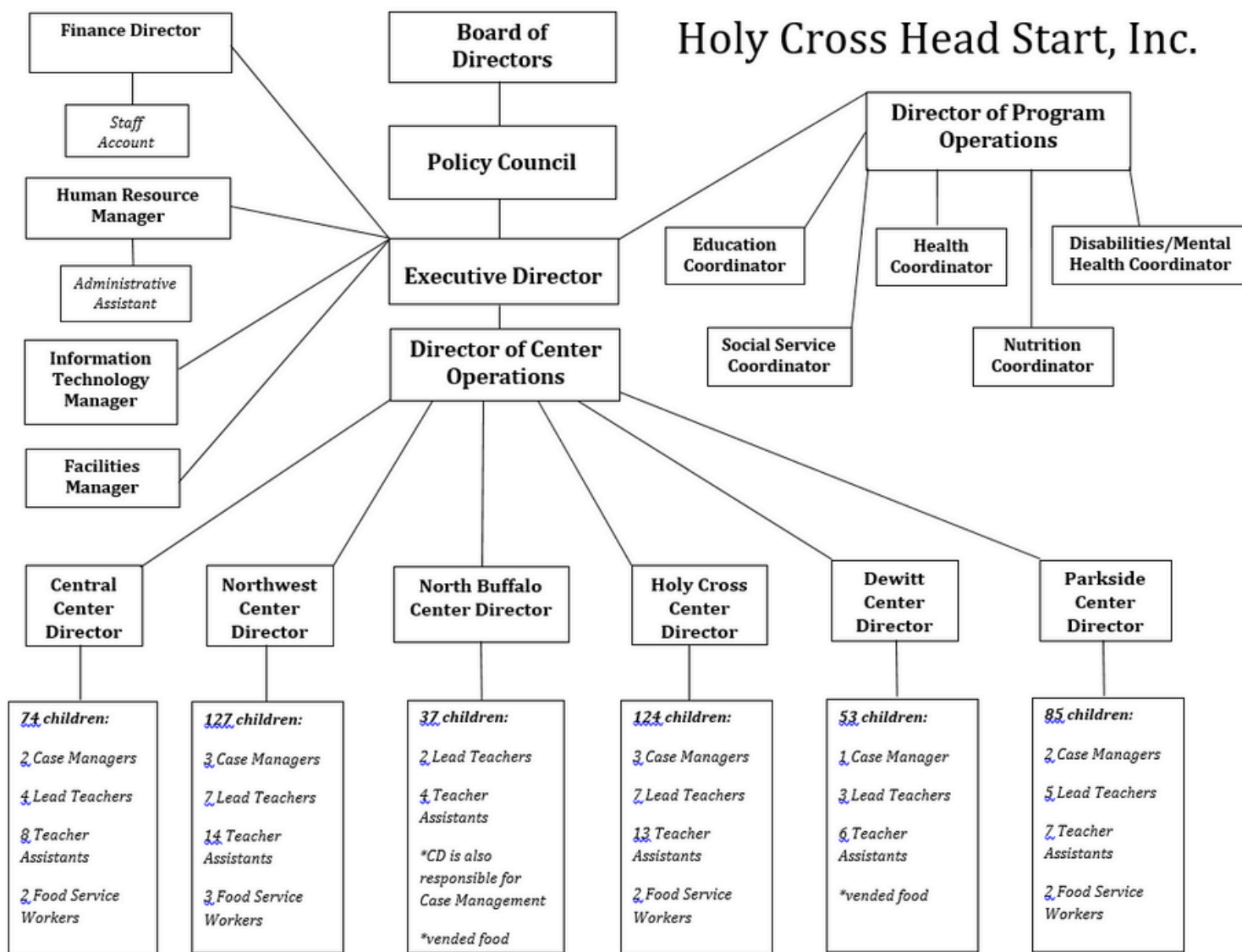
*North Buffalo Center Director*

[mroman@holycrossheadstart.org](mailto:mroman@holycrossheadstart.org)

Positions listed as of September 2023

## Organizational Chart

### Holy Cross Head Start, Inc.



Organizational Chart as of September 2023

#### Contact Info:

Administrative Office  
150 Maryland St.  
Buffalo, NY 14201  
716-852-8373  
arizzo@holycrossheadstart.org  
www.holycrossheadstart.org

