

A Success in Progress

Submitted by Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority

Kara was a struggling single mother of two boys. She was unemployed and living with her mother. Kara wanted both boys to attend the extended duration site at Dandridge so she could seek employment.

After both boys started Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority Head Start, I noticed there had been several mornings Kara was late dropping them off. I pulled her to the side and asked how things were going, and she explained that she had to move out of her mother's home and was living with a friend in Morristown. After talking about how that is a long drive for her each day, she said, "They need to be in school, so here we are!" I gave her some low-income housing information. A few weeks later she reported that she and the boys were number six on the waiting list to get an apartment, and she is staying with her grandmother until they get their own place.

One day, Kara came in to the site and said her son was misbehaving, and she needed help. I sent in a referral for her to talk with Kristen Mahoney. She was so happy to get the individualized meeting offered her through our mental health consultant. Because Head Start provided Kara support with her child's behavior, she feels more confident as a parent and is hopeful she will not have to seek further assistance once she moves.

Later in the year, Kara came in and decided she wanted to fill out an application to work for Head Start. She needed a job, and we needed help! We were able to work with her schedule to suit the needs of her children. Since she was able to choose her hours as a Head Start substitute, she was also able to take her children to doctor's appointments and follow-up screenings Head Start requires to make sure her children were healthy in every way.

At some point, Kara also mentioned to me she wanted to go back to school. She came to the Head Start Parent Fair, and I sent her to talk to a representative from Walters State and the Tennessee Reconnect program. She wanted to major in criminal justice but was afraid that Walters State didn't offer that program. The next morning, Kara came into the office with her eyes sparkling. She said she had checked with Walters State and they offered a criminal justice program. She said she was going to apply for college and Tennessee Reconnect was going to help pay for her schooling.

Kara is now working, saving money for her deposit on an apartment, and applying to further her education all because Head Start gave her the support, outreach tools, and confidence she needed to become successful in life.

DCEA Head Start/Early Head Start helps break the poverty cycle by educating parents and children and looking at the whole family and their needs. We're empowering families and helping them become successful!