

UCCAC Head Start & Early Head Start

Bittersweet News!

So here's the bitter....

Our Assistant Program Director, Michele Conklin, after almost 30 years of service to our Head Start & Early Head Start program, is retiring as of January 2022. What can we say about Michele? Not only is she personally accomplished as you can see in our enclosed Administrative team bios, but she has been an integral part of this program!

Michele, an LPN, began as the Health Specialist and shortly thereafter became the Assistant Program Director, working integrally with the Program Director managing all services and staff within all parts of the program. She has filled this role always keeping herself current on all facets of services the program provides. She has a strong commitment to Health and Safety, quality control, strong systems development and a specific attention to excellence! She has a wonderful ability to explain health related issues in a way that both parents and staff can all understand. She has been a driving force behind the program's success!

She has also covered vacancies over the years as Health Specialist, Disabilities Specialist, Transportation Coordinator and Family/Community Partnership Specialist. Her commitment to this program is something all in our community should be aware of and we are proud of her service to our program! We congratulate her on all she has done and wish her all the best in her retirement!

And here's the sweet...

Michelle Iannotta, our current Family & Community Partnership Specialist, will be taking on the role as Assistant Program Director upon Michele Conklin's retirement. We are extremely happy about this news as Michelle is also very accomplished, started with us as a Family Worker, left to complete her Master's in Social Work and returned to fill her current position. She has trained under Michele Conklin and is fully prepared to take on this role! We welcome Michelle and congratulate her on her new position!

Dear Community Partner,

Please take a moment to read about our Administrative Team. We enjoy working together with you to make our community better for children and families!



**Head Start/Early Head Start
Program Director
Pam Wenner**

It has been an honor to serve as Ulster County Community Action's Head Start/Early Head Start Program Director for nearly 27 years. Prior to this I served as an Adoption Caseworker for 6 years at Ulster County Department of Social Services, and as the YMCA Youth Director for 11 years. I have worked with children of all ages and their families throughout my career.

As Head Start/Early Head Start Director, I oversee a team of approximately 76 dedicated Head Start and Early Head Start staff to ensure that we implement a comprehensive, quality Early Childhood Program in the Spirit of the Head Start Program Performance Standards. I work closely with and through our Head Start/Early Head Start Specialist team, consisting of an Assistant Program Director, Family and Community Partnership Specialist, 2 Education Services Specialists, and a Health Specialist to make sure that we use Research Based curriculums and Best Practice to implement our services to each of the children and families served by the Program. I work closely with Ulster County Community Action's leadership team to ensure sound fiscal management and human resource practices.

I am the communication link with the Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council and UCCAC Board of Director's to ensure that Head Start / Early Head Start policies and required approvals support quality programing. This role provides a unique opportunity to work side by side with Head Start and Early Start parents and community representatives to engage in shared decision making. I am also the primary communication link with our Program Funder's, to ensure sound program oversight. I have primary responsibility for Head Start/Early Head Start Grant writing and ensuring that our program is responsive to community needs. We look forward to your participation in this year's program!

**Early/ Head Start
Assistant Program Director
and Health Specialist
Michele Conklin**



My name is Michele Conklin and I am the Health Specialist and Assistant Program Director for both Early Head Start and Head Start. I began my association with Head Start in 1982 volunteering in my mom's Head Start program. So, I am a second-generation Head Start staff member! In 1986 I came to UCCAC, Inc. as the Head Start Health Specialist. Since that time, I have served as the Early Head Start Manager as we brought Early Head Start to this County and then as the Assistant Program Director. Two of my daughters have carried on this tradition by both working for a time in Head Start. Head Start is my family business because there is great promise in the program!

This year I continue in my dual role as the Health Specialist and Assistant Program Director. As the Health Specialist, I am responsible for assuring all our children are engaged in a system of quality health care which supports their overall health and development. Additionally, my responsibilities extends to our families, the centers, and classrooms. Through observations on-site and direct support to our family services and education staff we provide health services across all levels of our Program. As the Assistant Program Director, I also provide administrative support for our entire program.

Please reach out to me if you need additional information or support. I can be reached at mconklin@uccac.com or by phone at 845-338-8750 ext. 217.

Regards,

Michele Conklin



**Early Head Start Education Specialist
and Disabilities Specialist**

Jennifer Hammond

My name is Jennifer Hammond and I am the Early Head Start Education Specialist and Disabilities Specialist for our program. I support our Early Head Start teaching team in providing high quality care for our youngest children using the primary

caregiving model as well as High Scope Curriculum. I also work with teachers and families for those children who receiving therapeutic services at our program across Ulster County. I work close with Early Intervention and Preschool therapists to ensure children and families have the services they need to be meet developmental milestones and are school ready!

I began my Head Start career in 1999. During my years at Head Start I have been a Toddler Teacher, Education Coordinator, and Center Director. I value the Head Start approach that supports parents as the child's primary teacher and a comprehensive approach to school readiness: health and nutrition, family support and advocacy, as well as child development.

I am excited to partner with our community! You can reach me via email jhammond@uccac.com, or phone at 845-338-8750 ext. 232.



Head Start Education Specialist

Beckey Walter

My name is Beckey Walter and I am the Education Specialist for our preschool Head Start program. I began my Head Start career in 2005.

During my years here, I have taken on many different roles including home visitor, toddler teacher and preschool teacher. I have stayed with

the program because of the love and care each member of our Head Start community puts into each aspect of the program. Each piece of our program must rely on each other to be the most successful possible. This success begins with our amazing families who open their lives to us and involves the teachers, family workers and management team working together to make the most personal and successful Head Start experience possible. I, myself was a Head Start parent. My child was a special needs child and Head Start helped a great deal with making sure the program was the right fit for him and advocating for things to benefit him and make his experience the best it could be. They say it takes a village and Head Start was a wonderful, supportive addition to my village.

As the Education Specialist, I oversee the classrooms and the implementation of our Highscope curriculum. If you would like more information around areas that involve the classroom and curriculum, please reach out to me. I can be reached at bwalter@uccac.com or by phone at 845-338-8750 ext. 212.

We are so happy our program is a part of this community and look forward to partnering with you!



**Early/Head Start
Family and Community
Partnership Specialist**

Michelle Iannotta

My name is Michelle Iannotta and I am the Family and Community Partnership Specialist for our Early and Head Start program. I began my Early and Head Start career in 2015. I started as a part time Family Worker at our Rondout Center and then worked as the Early Head Start Family

Worker. I left the program in 2016 to pursue my Master's in Social Work because I wanted to have more knowledge to be able to support the families and staff in our program. I still was a substitute Family Worker before I came back full time and I returned to the program in 2018 to my current position. I deeply believe in this program and know that we can make a difference in families lives. Our goal is to have a positive impact on each of the families we work with through our program. The hope and wish is that the knowledge we share and the successes we celebrate no matter how big or small will stay with our families and the enthusiasm and positive energy will be shared and passed on for years to come.

As the Family and Community Partnership Specialist, a few of my roles are to oversee the Family Workers who work with families identifying strengths, providing and connecting to resources in the community and processing the applications for those who are interested in coming to our program. If you would like more information, please reach out to me. I can be reached at miannotta@uccac.com or by phone at 845-338-8750 ext. 202.

We look forward to continue partnering with you in serving our community!

All the best,

Michelle Iannotta, LMSW