

Region II Head Start Association Board Report – February 2026

The Region II Head Start Association Board of Directors met on **February 25, 2026**, to review governance priorities, regional initiatives, and updates from New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Board continues to prioritize professional development and regional collaboration, with planning underway for the **Region II Virtual Conference in March 2026** and the **Region II Regional Conference scheduled for October 26–29, 2026, in San Juan, Puerto Rico**, to be held at the Sheraton Convention Center.

State and territory reports reflected strong engagement in advocacy, program quality, and system collaboration. In **New York**, the New York State Head Start Association and the NYS Head Start Collaboration Office continue coordination related to monitoring and federal priorities, while actively participating in NHSA calls and disseminating updates statewide. NYSHSA is preparing for its annual professional development conference scheduled for **May 20–21, 2026, in White Plains**, and has conducted outreach to support participation in the Region II Virtual Conference.

In **New Jersey**, directors and staff participated in the **NHSA Winter Leadership Institute**. The delegation met with Senator Andy Kim, who received an NHSA award recognizing his support for early childhood education. NJHSA held its winter meeting with Region II TTA and NHSA’s Blair Hyatt’s (Parents Unite) support. Outreach has also begun with the new Governor’s transition team to advance mixed-delivery system collaboration and address ongoing child care funding challenges. The state’s annual conference is scheduled for **May 18–21, 2026, in Atlantic City**.

The **Puerto Rico Head Start Association** continues to focus on quality services, regulatory compliance, and interagency collaboration, including strengthening IDEA coordination, developing a standardized Head Start-to-Kindergarten transition framework, and providing governance and fiduciary oversight training. Island-wide data consolidation efforts are underway to inform planning and advocacy. Parent leadership was highlighted by the election of a new Puerto Rico Head Start Parents Association President.

In the **U.S. Virgin Islands**, programs resumed services successfully following the holiday break, with facility safety walkthroughs completed and corrective actions initiated. Emergency preparedness efforts continue, including a FEMA-supported generator installation project and updates to preparedness planning and staff training. Additional highlights include a **Territorial Head Start and Private Daycare Transition to Kindergarten event scheduled for March 10–11**, family engagement workshops, a Male Engagement Activities Day, and ongoing governance preparation with Policy Council and Governing Board partners.

Across Region II, shared priorities include strengthening enrollment in high-need communities, improving emergency preparedness and facilities, enhancing IDEA compliance and disability services coordination, supporting kindergarten transition and school readiness, expanding workforce development, elevating parent leadership and engagement, and advancing advocacy and cross-system partnerships to sustain high-quality Head Start services for children and families.