

# Children Enrolled in Head Start

## DEFINITION

*Children enrolled in Head Start* is the number and percentage of children enrolled in a Rhode Island Head Start preschool program.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Head Start is a federally-funded comprehensive early childhood program for low-income preschool children and their families. It is designed to address a wide variety of needs during the two years before kindergarten so that low-income children can begin school on a more equal footing with their economically advantaged peers.<sup>1</sup> Head Start programs deliver early education, medical and dental screenings and referrals, nutrition services, mental health services, family engagement activities, and social service referrals for the whole family.<sup>2</sup>

Family income is strongly correlated with children's cognitive, language, and literacy skills at school entry. Before kindergarten entry, children in the highest socio-economic group have cognitive test scores that are 60% higher than the average scores of children in the lowest socio-economic group. Children in families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold are typically 18 months behind their peers at age four.<sup>3</sup>

On average, Head Start centers are higher quality than most other early care and education programs available

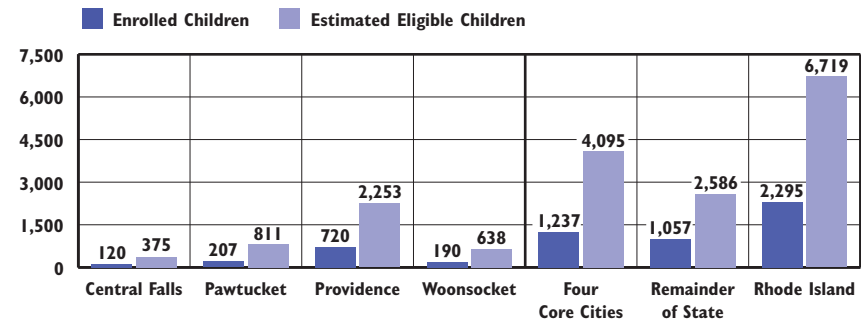
to low-income parents.<sup>4</sup> Head Start also has been found to be more effective than many other early learning programs.<sup>5</sup> Children who participate in Head Start show improvements in language and literacy skills.<sup>6,7</sup>

Lasting impacts for children who participate in Head Start have been found in reduced grade retention and special education placement and increased high school graduation rates.<sup>8</sup> However, a recent study found that improved language and literacy skills were no longer discernible by the end of third grade, perhaps due to the fact that children in the study attended elementary schools with higher levels of poverty than schools nationwide.<sup>9</sup>

For the 2014-2015 school year there were 2,284 Head Start slots in Rhode Island, with 2,154 federally-funded slots and 130 state-funded slots.<sup>10</sup> This is 143 fewer federally-funded slots than in 2012-2013.

As of October 2014, there were 2,295 children enrolled in Head Start and 532 eligible children on the waiting list. Rhode Island Head Start providers served 275 preschool children with developmental delays or disabilities, 12% of all children enrolled. Twelve percent of children enrolled in Rhode Island Head Start programs were also participating in the Child Care Assistance Program.<sup>12</sup> Head Start funding is not sufficient to provide a full-day or full-year program.<sup>13</sup>

## Access to Head Start for Low-Income Children, Rhode Island, 2014

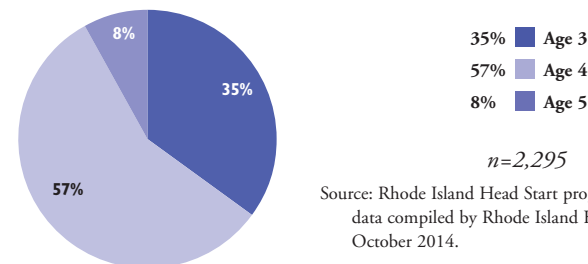


Source: Rhode Island Head Start program enrollment data compiled by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, October 2014. Estimated eligible children is the number of children ages three and four according to Census 2010 multiplied by the % of children under age six living in families with incomes below 125% of the federal poverty level (FPL) according to the Population Reference Bureau's analysis of U.S. Census 2009-2013 American Community Survey, five-year estimates. Estimates for children living in families between 125% and 129% FPL are not available.

◆ **Head Start is not funded at a level to serve all eligible children and all Rhode Island Head Start programs maintain active waiting lists of eligible children. In October 2014, Rhode Island Head Start programs served 2,295 children, 34% of the estimated 6,719 income-eligible three- and four-year old children and 10% of all children ages three and four.**<sup>14</sup>

◆ **In the four core cities, 30% of the estimated eligible children were enrolled in Head Start, compared with 41% in the remainder of the state. The estimated percentage of eligible children enrolled in Head Start for each core city is: Central Falls – 32%, Pawtucket – 26%, Providence – 32%, and Woonsocket – 30%.**<sup>15</sup>

## Children Enrolled in Head Start by Age, Rhode Island, 2014



Source: Rhode Island Head Start program enrollment data compiled by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, October 2014.

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Table 37.

Children Enrolled in Head Start, Rhode Island, 2014

CITY/TOWN	# OF CHILDREN AGES 3 & 4	# OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HEAD START	ESTIMATED % OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HEAD START
Barrington	369	2	1%
Bristol	401	25	6%
Burrillville	321	17	5%
Central Falls	699	120	17%
Charlestown	153	9	6%
Coventry	734	55	7%
Cranston	1,684	182	11%
Cumberland	810	0	0%
East Greenwich	277	6	2%
East Providence	982	108	11%
Exeter	105	5	5%
Foster	99	0	0%
Glocester	191	1	1%
Hopkinton	167	7	4%
Jamestown	102	0	0%
Johnston	528	47	9%
Lincoln	412	0	0%
Little Compton	49	1	2%
Middletown	431	43	10%
Narragansett	210	6	3%
New Shoreham	15	0	0%
Newport	514	79	15%
North Kingstown	593	27	5%
North Providence	575	58	10%
North Smithfield	218	2	1%
Pawtucket	2,053	207	10%
Portsmouth	359	9	3%
Providence	4,743	720	15%
Richmond	190	2	1%
Scituate	197	1	1%
Smithfield	343	7	2%
South Kingstown	504	15	3%
Tiverton	287	17	6%
Warren	240	26	11%
Warwick	1,579	118	7%
West Greenwich	115	1	1%
West Warwick	703	110	16%
Westerly	490	71	14%
Woonsocket	1,218	190	16%
Homeless	NA	1	NA
Four Core Cities	8,713	1,237	14%
Remainder of State	14,947	1,057	7%
Rhode Island	23,660	2,295	10%

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Head Start Programs, all children enrolled (ages three to five) as of October 2014. Children enrolled are listed by residence of child, not location of the Head Start program.

The estimated number of children ages three and four in each community is from Census 2010, Summary File 1. It is no longer possible to estimate the number of children eligible for Head Start for each city and town in Rhode Island because family income data is no longer collected in the decennial census. Family income estimates from the American Community Survey are available for most cities and towns, but estimates for many smaller towns in Rhode Island have large margins of error or are suppressed.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

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<sup>25,26</sup> Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2014.

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<sup>10</sup> Schmit, S. & Matthews, H. (2013). *Better for babies: A study of state infant and toddler child care policies*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.

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<sup>5</sup> *Child care is essential to economic recovery*. (2009). Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center.

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<sup>8,13</sup> House Fiscal Advisory Staff. (2007). *Budget as enacted: Fiscal Year 2008*. Providence RI: Rhode Island House of Representatives.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2015). Annual update of the HHS poverty guidelines. *Federal Register, 80(14)*, 3236-3237.

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<sup>14,15</sup> Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children, programs with a BrightStars rating as of January 1, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, classrooms with Comprehensive Early Childhood Education approval as of January 2015.

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