

Children Enrolled in Head Start

DEFINITION

Children enrolled in Head Start is the percentage of eligible 3 and 4 year old children enrolled in the Head Start preschool program as of October 1, 2002.

SIGNIFICANCE

Head Start is a comprehensive early childhood program for low-income preschool children and their families.¹ Children are eligible for Head Start if their family's income is below 100% of the federal poverty line; the family receives SSI or is enrolled in the Family Independence Program; or the family is using supportive services that are federal TANF benefits, such as transportation vouchers, subsidized child care, or job training. Children in foster care are also Head Start eligible. Up to 10% of the children served by Head Start can be in families that do not meet these eligibility guidelines, especially if the child has a special need.^{2,3}

The Head Start program is designed to provide low-income children with the socialization and school-readiness skills they need to enter public schools on an equal footing with more economically advantaged children. Head Start performance standards require that programs deliver a high-quality early childhood education program; involve parents in program policy and planning; provide at least one nutritional meal per

day; identify children's individual nutritional needs; ensure that each child has an ongoing source of health care; perform or obtain health, developmental and behavioral screenings; and make arrangements for mental health professionals to be available to identify mental health concerns and help locate needed treatment.⁴

Children in poor families are at greater risk for developmental delays and learning disabilities; have a greater prevalence of health and nutrition problems; and are more likely to have serious accidents, require special education, perform below grade level at school, drop out of school and earn less as adults.⁵ The Head Start program succeeds in narrowing the gap between disadvantaged children and other children in vocabulary, writing, math skills, and social skills, with the greatest gains among the most disadvantaged children.⁶ Long-term improvements include reduced rates of grade retention and need for special education services and increased rates of high school graduation.⁷



Comprehensive Child Care Networks

- ◆ Because Head Start is available to only half of Rhode Island's lowest-income children, resources were appropriated under Starting R^Ight (Rhode Island's 1998 child care law) to create Comprehensive Child Care Networks in underserved communities.
- ◆ Comprehensive Child Care Networks are based on Head Start performance standards and provide a developmentally-appropriate education program; transition assistance among programs and schools; health and mental health services; support for children with disabilities; nutrition services; family education and empowerment; and services that expand community linkages and partnerships.^{8,9}
- ◆ Comprehensive Child Care Networks began providing services in 2001. As of January 1, 2003 services were being provided to 260 children. The goal is to serve 300-350 children by the end of fiscal year 2003.¹⁰ Children in the lowest-income families are prioritized for services to ensure that the most disadvantaged children receive the services they need to start school ready to learn.¹¹



Early Head Start

- ◆ Early Head Start is a federally-funded program designed to provide high-quality child and family development services to low-income families with infants and toddlers. Early Head Start has demonstrated positive impacts on children including improved cognition, language development, and social-emotional functioning. The program improves parenting and promotes parental progress as evidenced by increased rates of participation in education, training and employment.¹²
- ◆ In Rhode Island, as of October 2002, there were 367 families and 409 children receiving Early Head Start services.¹³

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Table 24. Percent of Eligible Children Ages 3 and 4 Enrolled in Head Start, Rhode Island, 2002

CITY/TOWN	ESTIMATED ELIGIBLE CHILDREN AGED 3&4	NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HEAD START	% OF ELIGIBLE 3&4 YEAR OLDS ENROLLED
Barrington	10	3	30%
Bristol	50	20	40%
Burrillville	36	25	69%
Central Falls	280	91	33%
Charlestown	6	10	100%
Coventry	51	40	78%
Cranston	147	228	100%
Cumberland	34	5	15%
East Greenwich	28	7	25%
East Providence	139	86	62%
Exeter	25	1	4%
Foster	0	2	NA
Glocester	15	6	40%
Hopkinton	15	4	27%
Jamestown	0	1	NA
Johnston	55	45	82%
Lincoln	24	5	21%
Little Compton	3	0	100%
Middletown	30	36	100%
Narragansett	17	9	53%
New Shoreham	1	0	0%
Newport	218	127	58%
North Kingstown	87	28	32%
North Providence	63	45	71%
North Smithfield	16	1	6%
Pawtucket	598	198	33%
Portsmouth	24	11	46%
Providence	2,075	914	44%
Richmond	7	3	43%
Scituate	9	4	44%
Smithfield	5	12	100%
South Kingstown	31	26	84%
Tiverton	15	28	100%
Warren	15	18	100%
Warwick	133	158	100%
West Greenwich	7	0	0%
West Warwick	209	143	68%
Westerly	56	57	100%
Woonsocket	455	237	52%
<i>Core Cities</i>	<i>3,835</i>	<i>1,710</i>	<i>45%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>1,156</i>	<i>924</i>	<i>80%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>4,991</i>	<i>2,634</i>	<i>53%</i>

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Head Start Programs, children enrolled on October 1, 2002.

The denominator is the estimated number of eligible children based on the number of three and four-year-old children in each community times the poverty rate for children under 5 in that community, according to Census 2000.

Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick, and Woonsocket.

References for Indicator

^{1,4} *Head Start Fact Sheet* (2001). Washington, DC: Administration for Children and Families.

² Administration for Children and Families, Program Instruction: Receipt of Public Assistance and Determining Eligibility for Head Start (Log No. ACYF-PI-HS-99-06), 7/29/99.

³ Head Start Program Regulations and Program Guidance (45 CFR 1304, 1305).

⁵ Sherman, A (1997). *Poverty Matters: The Cost of Child Poverty in America*. Washington, DC: The Children's Defense Fund.

⁶ *Head Start FACES: Longitudinal Findings on Program Performance (Third Progress Report)* (January 2001). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

⁷ Barnett, W.S. (2002). *The Battle Over Head Start: What the Research Shows*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, National Institute for Early Education Research.

⁸ Article 11 Relating to the Starting Right Initiative, Section 42-12-26.

^{9,11} *Certification Standards for Comprehensive Child Care Services Networks (December 1999)*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Center for Children and Families, Office of Child Care.

¹⁰ Rhode Island Department of Health and Human Services, January 1, 2003.

¹² *Making a Difference in the Lives of Infants and Toddlers and Their Families: The Impacts of Early Head Start (Executive Summary)* (June 2002). Washington, DC: Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services.

¹³ Rhode Island Early Head Start Programs, children enrolled on October 1, 2002.