

Children Receiving Preschool Special Education Services

DEFINITION

Children receiving preschool special education services is the percentage of children ages three to five who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and are receiving special education services in Rhode Island.

SIGNIFICANCE

Preschool special education is an important component of the early care and education system, providing specially-designed instruction so each child can meet learning standards. The federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* specifies that children ages three to five with developmental delays and disabilities have the same right to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment as school-age children with disabilities.¹

Developmental delays and disabilities are identified when a child does not reach developmental milestones at the same time as other children his or her age. Some young children with developmental delays are eventually diagnosed with a disability while others catch up to their peers when provided with high-quality educational opportunities, therapies, or interventions.^{2,3} Routine developmental screening during the early stages of life, followed by evaluation and diagnostic assessment, helps children gain early access to needed services to prevent

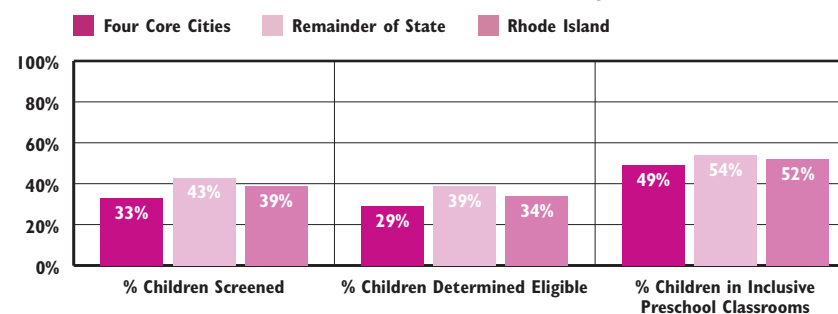
more severe problems.⁴

In Rhode Island, school districts work to screen every child age three through five every year through the Child Outreach screening program.⁵ During the 2018-2019 school year in Rhode Island, districts completed developmental screenings for 39% of children ages three to five. Preschool-age children in the core cities are still less likely to receive a developmental screening (33%) than children in the remainder of the state (43%). Of the children who were referred for evaluation based on positive screens, 34% were determined eligible for special education. Children in the core cities were less likely to be determined eligible after referral (29%) than children in the remainder of the state (39%).⁶

Approximately 17% of U.S. children ages three to 17 have a developmental disability, with higher prevalence among low-income children, children with low birthweight, and boys.⁷ Under *IDEA*, each state sets its own criteria to determine eligibility for special education services, deciding where to draw the line along a continuum of functioning to identify children who are sufficiently delayed to need special education services.⁸ In 2016, Rhode Island ranked in the top ten states for providing preschool special education services by serving 9.1% of children ages three to five compared with a U.S. average of 6.4%.⁹



Preschool Special Education Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion Rates, Rhode Island, June 2019



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2018-2019 Child Outreach Screening and Referral Rates and June 2019 Special Education Census. % children determined eligible is of those children referred for evaluation from Child Outreach screening.

- ◆ In June 2019, there were 3,156 children ages three to five receiving preschool special education services, 9% of all preschool-age children in Rhode Island. Children in the four core cities are slightly less likely to receive preschool special education services (8%) than children in the remainder of the state (9%).¹⁰
- ◆ Preschool children with disabilities who attend high-quality preschool with typically developing children and receive special education services in inclusive settings have improved outcomes.¹¹ In June 2019 in Rhode Island, 52% of preschool-age children received special education services within an inclusive early childhood classroom. Children in the four core cities were less likely to receive preschool special education services in an inclusive early childhood setting (49%) than children in the remainder of the state (54%).¹²
- ◆ Slightly less than half of the children receiving preschool special education services in Rhode Island receive services outside of inclusive preschool programs, with 13% enrolled in a separate special education preschool class or school, 19% receiving services through “walk-in” visits to a service provider, 16% enrolled in a preschool setting but receiving special education services in another location, and less than 1% in a home or hospital.¹³
- ◆ In June 2019, 46% (1,450) of the 3,156 children receiving preschool special education services in Rhode Island qualified under the developmental delay category, 43% (1,354) had an identified speech/language disability, 7% (217) were diagnosed with autism, and 4% (135) had another diagnosed disability.¹⁴

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Table 41.

Children Ages 3 to 5 Receiving Special Education Services, Rhode Island, 2019

SCHOOL DISTRICT	# OF CHILDREN AGES 3-5	DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING RATES				PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION BY SETTING				
		% SCREENED 3 YEARS BEFORE K	% SCREENED 2 YEARS BEFORE K	% SCREENED 1 YEAR BEFORE K	% SCREENED AGES 3 TO 5	INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASS	% IN INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASS	OTHER SETTING	TOTAL # RECEIVING SERVICES	% RECEIVING SERVICES
Barrington	581	35%	64%	89%	62%	19	38%	31	50	9%
Bristol Warren	790	21%	48%	49%	40%	40	49%	41	81	10%
Burrillville	493	9%	50%	72%	43%	24	51%	23	47	10%
Central Falls	1,048	22%	56%	84%	54%	85	66%	44	129	12%
Chariho	588	25%	52%	68%	48%	43	52%	39	82	14%
Coventry	1,009	23%	55%	64%	46%	60	65%	32	92	9%
Cranston	2,739	12%	40%	58%	36%	102	53%	91	193	7%
Cumberland	1,224	11%	45%	65%	41%	53	58%	38	91	7%
East Greenwich	501	16%	49%	58%	41%	29	94%	*	31	6%
East Providence	1,515	13%	44%	59%	38%	41	36%	72	113	7%
Exeter-West Greenwich	339	25%	50%	56%	45%	*	29%	20	28	8%
Foster	116	18%	49%	62%	44%	*	78%	*	*	8%
Glocester	295	18%	49%	62%	44%	10	32%	21	31	11%
Jamestown	114	44%	67%	80%	64%	*	63%	*	*	7%
Johnston	886	22%	51%	74%	51%	58	78%	16	74	8%
Lincoln	747	22%	58%	63%	49%	58	73%	22	80	11%
Little Compton	60	10%	36%	75%	39%	*	67%	*	*	10%
Middletown	805	13%	28%	30%	24%	16	31%	36	52	6%
Narragansett	208	56%	77%	86%	73%	36	97%	*	37	18%
New Shoreham	30	53%	100%	63%	66%	*	100%	0	*	3%
Newport	922	14%	37%	44%	31%	38	75%	13	51	6%
North Kingstown	868	29%	67%	82%	60%	51	66%	26	77	9%
North Providence	1,073	16%	45%	57%	39%	39	38%	64	103	10%
North Smithfield	340	29%	62%	72%	53%	17	46%	20	37	11%
Pawtucket	2,884	13%	38%	58%	36%	158	55%	131	289	10%
Portsmouth	517	34%	53%	76%	56%	13	37%	22	35	7%
Providence	8,065	10%	33%	41%	28%	252	55%	206	458	6%
Scituate	270	18%	49%	62%	44%	*	29%	22	31	11%
Smithfield	463	32%	70%	69%	56%	22	54%	19	41	9%
South Kingstown	648	26%	69%	76%	57%	18	35%	34	52	8%
Tiverton	449	16%	42%	63%	41%	21	51%	20	41	9%
Warwick	2,672	10%	38%	53%	33%	113	54%	96	209	8%
West Warwick	1,058	20%	45%	62%	41%	64	45%	77	141	13%
Westerly	623	39%	63%	76%	60%	67	83%	14	81	13%
Woonsocket	1,747	8%	40%	63%	37%	53	22%	185	238	14%
Charter Schools	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	15	68%	*	22	NA
RI School for the Deaf	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	0%	15	15	NA
Four Core Cities	13,744	11%	37%	50%	33%	548	49%	566	1,114	8%
Remainder of State	22,943	19%	48%	62%	43%	1,086	54%	919	2,005	9%
Rhode Island	36,687	16%	44%	57%	39%	1,649	52%	1,507	3,156	9%

Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), June 2019 Special Education Census.

2018-2019 Child Outreach screening data is from the RIDE Office of Student, Community, and Academic Supports. Foster, Glocester, and Scituate school districts collaborate to conduct Child Outreach screenings. Separate rates are not available for each of these districts so the same combined rate is used for all three districts.

*Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These students are still counted in district totals and in the four core cities, remainder of the state, and state totals.

The denominator is the number of children ages three to five residing in each district during the 2018-2019 school year from the Rhode Island Department of Health's KIDSNET database shared with RIDE.

Due to changes in the denominator, screening rates and percentage receiving preschool special education services should not be compared with data in Factbooks published before 2016.

Inclusive early childhood class means children receive the majority of their special education services in a general early childhood education class at a public school, a Head Start program, or a community-based child care program or preschool. Data include children who are district-placed and who are parentally-placed.

NA=Not applicable

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

References

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- Meisels, S. J. & Atkins-Burnett, S. (2005). *Developmental screening in early childhood: A guide*. (5th edition). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

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