

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

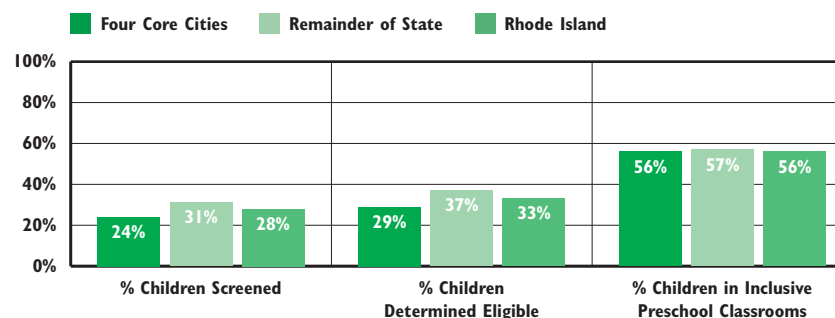
Developmental delays and disabilities are identified when a child does not reach developmental milestones at the same time as other children his or her age. Some young children with developmental delays are eventually diagnosed with a disability while others catch up to their peers when provided with 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 2019-2020 school year in Rhode Island, districts completed developmental screenings for 28% of children ages three to five, down from 39% the previous year (pre-pandemic). Preschool-age children in the core cities were less likely to receive a developmental screening (24%) than children in the remainder of the state (31%). Of the children who were referred for evaluation based on positive screens, 33% 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 (37%).^{6,7}

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.⁸ Under *IDEA*, each state sets its own criteria to determine eligibility for special education services, deciding which children are sufficiently delayed to need special education services.⁹ In 2017, Rhode Island ranked in the top ten states for providing preschool special education services by serving 9.7% of children ages three to five compared with a U.S. average of 6.6%.¹⁰

Preschool Special Education Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion Rates, Rhode Island, June 2020



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2019-2020 Child Outreach Screening and Referral Rates and June 2020 Special Education Census. Percent children determined eligible is of those children referred for evaluation from Child Outreach screening.

- ◆ In June 2020, there were 2,904 children ages three to five receiving preschool special education services (8% of all preschool children). Children in the four core cities were slightly less likely to receive preschool special education services (7%) than children in the remainder of the state (8%).^{11,12}
- ◆ Preschool children with disabilities who attend high-quality preschool with typically developing children and receive special education services in inclusive settings have improved outcomes.¹³ In June 2020 in Rhode Island, 56% of preschool-age children received special education services within inclusive early childhood classrooms, up from 52% the previous year.¹⁴
- ◆ More than four in 10 children receiving preschool special education services in Rhode Island received services outside of inclusive preschool programs, with 11% enrolled in a separate special education preschool class or school, 19% receiving services through “walk-in” visits to a service provider, 13% enrolled in a preschool setting but receiving special education services in another location, and less than 1% in a home or hospital.¹⁵
- ◆ In June 2020, 47% (1,364) of the 2,904 children receiving preschool special education services in Rhode Island qualified under the developmental delay category, 42% (1,228) had an identified speech/language disability, 7% (200) were diagnosed with autism, and 4% (112) had another diagnosed disability.¹⁶

Children Receiving Preschool Special Education Services

Table 41.

Children Ages 3 to 5 Receiving Special Education Services, Rhode Island, 2020

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	637	11%	45%	71%	45%	15	26%	42	57	9%
Bristol Warren	742	6%	36%	42%	28%	34	53%	30	64	9%
Burrillville	478	7%	38%	45%	30%	26	52%	24	50	10%
Central Falls	1,067	8%	44%	52%	35%	81	65%	44	125	12%
Chariho	644	9%	38%	39%	28%	35	48%	38	73	11%
Coventry	1,022	8%	34%	48%	30%	66	67%	32	98	10%
Cranston	2,746	7%	31%	47%	29%	93	48%	101	194	7%
Cumberland	1,274	3%	37%	49%	30%	51	57%	38	89	7%
East Greenwich	520	8%	37%	38%	29%	31	97%	*	32	6%
East Providence	1,493	5%	27%	48%	27%	76	77%	23	99	7%
Exeter-West Greenwich	357	8%	45%	36%	29%	*	28%	21	29	8%
Foster	108	8%	44%	48%	35%	*	80%	*	10	9%
Glocester	295	8%	44%	48%	35%	*	25%	21	28	9%
Jamestown	106	15%	58%	65%	45%	*	100%	0	*	6%
Johnston	885	8%	34%	54%	32%	55	80%	14	69	8%
Lincoln	798	10%	53%	58%	44%	57	71%	23	80	10%
Little Compton	67	5%	27%	30%	21%	*	50%	*	*	9%
Middletown	787	8%	35%	37%	27%	19	63%	11	30	4%
Narragansett	197	11%	67%	71%	51%	33	92%	*	36	18%
New Shoreham	34	0%	21%	71%	26%	*	100%	0	*	3%
Newport	1,000	9%	23%	26%	20%	34	72%	13	47	5%
North Kingstown	845	8%	47%	62%	40%	47	66%	24	71	8%
North Providence	1,028	5%	28%	42%	26%	37	43%	50	87	8%
North Smithfield	333	8%	54%	54%	38%	13	38%	21	34	10%
Pawtucket	2,925	5%	24%	40%	23%	127	51%	124	251	9%
Portsmouth	527	18%	51%	51%	39%	18	42%	25	43	8%
Providence	8,023	4%	26%	35%	22%	235	55%	193	428	5%
Scituate	302	8%	44%	48%	35%	11	46%	13	24	8%
Smithfield	503	16%	61%	67%	47%	27	52%	25	52	10%
South Kingstown	656	11%	50%	58%	41%	14	34%	27	41	6%
Tiverton	449	8%	30%	43%	27%	15	47%	17	32	7%
Warwick	2,524	4%	23%	32%	20%	104	56%	82	186	7%
West Warwick	1,071	8%	30%	45%	28%	56	79%	15	71	7%
Westerly	623	16%	52%	63%	43%	69	51%	65	134	22%
Woonsocket	1,726	4%	26%	54%	26%	126	59%	88	214	12%
Charter Schools	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	*	100%	0	*	NA
RI School for the Deaf	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	0%	12	12	NA
Four Core Cities	13,741	5%	27%	39%	24%	569	56%	449	1,018	7%
Remainder of State	23,051	8%	36%	47%	31%	1,069	57%	804	1,873	8%
Rhode Island	36,792	7%	33%	44%	28%	1,639	56%	1,265	2,904	8%

Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), June 2020 Special Education Census.

2019-2020 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 2019-2020 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 and related services in a general early childhood class in a public school, a Head Start program, RI Pre-K, or a community-based child care program.

NA=Not applicable

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

References

^{1,3,13} Hebbeler, K. & Spiker, D. (2016). Supporting young children with disabilities. *The Future of Children*, 26(2), 185-205.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *Facts about developmental disabilities*. Retrieved January 18, 2021, from www.cdc.gov

⁴⁵ *Rhode Island's guidelines for implementing Child Outreach screening*. (2018). Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Education.

⁶ Rhode Island Department of Education, 2019-2020 Child Outreach Screening Rates and Referral Rates.

(continued on page 186)