

Head Start Preschool Participants, Programs, Families, and Staff in 2016

Introduction

Since 1965, the Head Start program has provided comprehensive early education and support services to low-income children aged 3 and 4 and their families. Focused on the “whole child,” these services include early education addressing cognitive, developmental, and socio-emotional needs; medical and dental screenings and referrals; nutritional services; parental involvement activities; referrals to social service providers for the entire family; and mental health services.

This fact sheet references data from the annual Program Information Report (PIR). The PIR collects data on all children and families enrolled in a Head Start program, including Head Start preschool, at any point during the program year. We’ve used these data to describe the children and families served by Head Start preschool and the services provided to them, during 2015-2016.¹

In 2016, the federal appropriation for Head Start was \$9.17 billion.² The Head Start preschool program served 857,198 young children ages 3 to 5 through 1,764 grantees nationwide.³

Despite the critical importance of Head Start preschool services for America’s poor children and families, only 52 percent of eligible children were served by Head Start preschool in 2016.⁴

Key Findings

Head Start PIR data provide a critical look at the array of services Head Start preschool delivers to America’s most vulnerable children and their families. Our review of 2016 PIR data produced these important findings:

- **Public health insurance plays a vital role in connecting children in Head Start preschool to health care services.** The state Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Medicaid, and other state-funded programs connected 89 percent of Head Start preschool children to health care for needed medical services, including treatment for chronic conditions and immunizations.
- **Public nutrition programs support Head Start preschool children’s nutritional needs.** The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provided benefits to 48 percent of Head Start preschool families. In addition, 44 percent of Head Start preschool children and their families received benefits from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).
- **Head Start preschool serves a diverse group of children and families.** Among Head Start preschool children, 24 percent were white, non-Hispanic; 19 percent were white, Hispanic; 30 percent were Black, non-Hispanic; 1 percent were Black, Hispanic. More than a fifth (22 percent) of children in Head Start preschool programs were from homes where Spanish was the primary language spoken by the family.⁵



Detailed findings from the 2016 PIR on Head Start preschool include:

Participants

- The majority of children in Head Start preschool programs receive health insurance through public programs. Eighty-nine percent had publicly funded health insurance through CHIP, Medicaid, a combined CHIP/Medicaid program, or other state-funded insurance. Seven percent had private insurance.
- Most children (87 percent) were up to date on a schedule of age-appropriate preventive and primary health care, according to the relevant states Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) schedule for well child care. Among them, 11 percent were diagnosed by a health care professional with a chronic condition needing medical treatment during the Head Start year. Of those children, the majority (93 percent) have received or are receiving medical treatment.
- By the end of the program year, 97 percent of children had a medical home, which is an ongoing source of continuous, accessible health care. Ninety-three percent had a source for regular dental care.
- Thirteen percent of enrolled children had a disability, more than half (57 percent) of whom were diagnosed prior to the Head Start preschool year. Among preschool children diagnosed with a disability, 99 percent received special education and related services.

- Twenty-four percent of enrolled children were white, non-Hispanic; 19 percent were white, Hispanic; 30 percent were Black, non-Hispanic; 1 percent were Black, Hispanic; 3 percent were American Indian or Alaska native, non-Hispanic; 2 percent were Asian, non-Hispanic; 4 percent were biracial/multi-racial, non-Hispanic; 6 percent were biracial/multi-racial, Hispanic; 7 percent were other, Hispanic; 3 percent were unspecified, Hispanic. Remaining racial categories comprised less than 1 percent of the participants.
- Seventy-two percent of children were from homes where English was the primary language spoken by the family; 22 percent were from homes where Spanish was the primary language spoken; and 6 percent were from homes where a language other than English or Spanish was primary. Other languages each accounted for just over 1 percent or less of the total Head Start preschool population.

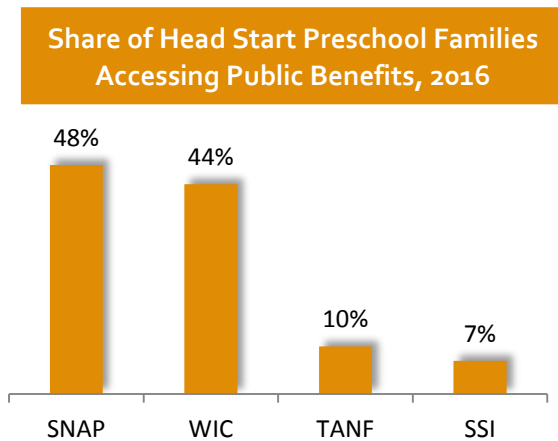
Programs

- Head Start funding provided for 762,806 Head Start preschool slots.
- Ninety-seven percent of Head Start preschool slots were center-based. Two percent were in home-based programs. Slots in family child care homes, locally designed programs, and combination programs each comprised 1 percent or less of all Head Start preschool slots.

Families

- Most Head Start preschool families (67 percent) included at least one working parent, and 17 percent of families included a parent in school or job training.
- More than half (68 percent) of families accessed at least one support service in 2016, with parenting education (47 percent) and health education (39 percent) used most frequently. Other frequently accessed services included emergency and crisis intervention, adult education, and mental health services.

- Forty-eight percent of families received SNAP and 44 percent received WIC benefits. Ten percent of families received cash assistance under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and 7 percent received Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Additionally, five percent of children in Head Start preschool received a child care subsidy.



Staff

- Among non-supervisory Head Start preschool child development staff, 26 percent were Black, non-Hispanic; 1 percent were Black, Hispanic; 39 percent were White, non-Hispanic; 13 percent were White, Hispanic; 4 percent were biracial/multi-racial, Hispanic; 3 percent were American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic; 2 percent were Asian, non-Hispanic. Remaining racial categories comprised 1 percent or less of the non-supervisory Head Start child development staff.⁶
- Twenty-eight percent were proficient in a language other than English, with Spanish being the highest. Twenty-three percent were proficient in Spanish.
- Ninety-six percent of Head Start preschool teachers had at least an associate's degree in early childhood education or a related field. Seventy-four percent of teachers had a bachelor's degree or higher in early childhood education or a related field.
- Head Start preschool teachers earned an average of \$32,341, compared to the national average for preschool teachers of \$33,300.⁷

Endnotes

¹ For more information see CLASP's fact sheets, *Early Head Start Participants, Programs, Families, and Staff in 2016* and *Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Participants, Programs, Families, and Staff in 2016*.

² Funding for Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/fiscal-year-2016-federal-child-care-and-related-appropriations>

³ This analysis includes children served in both Head Start preschool and AIAN Head Start.

⁴ National Women's Law Center calculations for Head Start based on data on Head Start funded slots in FY 2016 from Fiscal Year 2018 Administration for Children and Families Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, 77, available at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/olab/acf_master_cj_508_compmay_21_2017.pdf and data on the number of children ages three and four in poverty from

U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2017 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Detailed Poverty Tables, POV₃₄. Single Year of Age-Poverty Status: 2016, available at

<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pov/pov-34.html>

⁵ Children referred to as Hispanic in this brief are categorized as Hispanic/Latino in PIR data.

⁶ We are not including other and unspecified in this list if they are above 1 percent.

⁷ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *May 2016 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates*, 2016,

https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm