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## Head Start Participants, Programs, Families, and Staff in 2005

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Since 1965, the federal Head Start program has provided low-income 3- and 4-year-old children and their families with comprehensive early education and support services. Head Start programs focus on the “whole child” and include early education that addresses cognitive, developmental, and socioemotional needs; medical and dental screenings and referrals; nutritional services; parental involvement activities and referrals to social service providers for the entire family; and mental health services.<sup>1</sup> In 1994, policymakers authorized the Early Head Start program to address the needs of children under age 3 and pregnant women.

All Head Start programs are required to complete the Program Information Report (PIR) on an annual basis. Based on information reported through the PIR, this fact sheet describes the characteristics of Head Start children and families (including children in Early Head Start, the Head Start preschool program, and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start) and the services provided to them during the 2004-2005 program year. Key findings include:

### Participants

- Head Start served 1,054,740 children and 10,485 pregnant women at some point during the 2005 program year—6,600 fewer children and 190 fewer pregnant women than in 2004.<sup>2</sup>
- Among children enrolled in Head Start, 35 percent were white, and 41 percent were black or African-American. About 33 percent were of Hispanic origin, regardless of race.
- Seventy-one percent of children and pregnant women were from homes where English was the primary language, and 24 percent were from homes speaking primarily Spanish.<sup>3</sup>
- Increasingly, children in Head Start are receiving health insurance through public programs, even though parental employment rates have remained constant. The percentage of children with private insurance declined to 11 percent in 2005, compared to 16 percent in 2001. Most children (78 percent) had health insurance through a state-funded program such as S-CHIP or Medicaid.
- Most children (89 percent) received a medical screening as required by the Head Start Program Performance Standards. About 22 percent required follow-up treatment; of these, nearly all (91 percent) received this treatment.
- By the end of the program year, 92 percent of children had a medical home for ongoing care, and 82 percent had a source for ongoing dental care.
- Thirteen percent of enrolled children had a disability, 47 percent of whom were diagnosed prior to the Head Start year and 53 percent of whom were diagnosed during

this program year. Among those children diagnosed with a disability, 96 percent received special education and related services.

### **Programs**

- The number of Head Start slots dropped slightly in 2005 to 904,106—down from 917,423 in 2004. The federal government funded 10,000 fewer Head Start slots in 2005 than in 2004; the number of slots funded through states and other sources also dropped.
- Ninety-one percent of Head Start slots were center-based. An additional 5 percent were home-based programs, which include weekly home visits and group socialization programs. Slots in family child care homes, locally designed programs, and combination programs each comprised 1 percent of Head Start slots in 2005.

### **Families**

- In 2005, 44 percent of families included two parents, and 56 percent had a single parent.
- Seventy-one percent of Head Start families included at least one working parent, and 16 percent included a parent in school or job training.
- Among families who needed full-day, full-year child care outside the Head Start program, most (57 percent) used family, friend, and neighbor caregivers. Ten percent received care at a family child care home, 28 percent went to a child care center, and 4 percent of children received care through a public school pre-kindergarten program.
- Nineteen percent of Head Start families received TANF benefits in 2005, compared to 45 percent in 1997. The percentage of families receiving Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) increased to 49 percent in 2005, compared to 40 percent in 2002.
- Two-thirds (66 percent) of families accessed at least one support service. The number of families receiving social services (including substance abuse treatment and prevention, child abuse and neglect services, and mental health services) increased despite a decrease in the total number of families in Head Start.

### **Staff**

- Sixty-nine percent of teachers had an Associate's Degree (A.A.) or higher. Thirty-three percent of teachers had an A.A., 31 percent had a Bachelor's Degree (B.A.), and 5 percent had a graduate degree.
- Head Start teachers earned an average of \$24,608 in 2005, compared to \$24,211 in 2004. Head Start teacher salaries are similar to the national average for public and private preschool teachers, which is \$24,560. However, Head Start teacher salaries are well below the national average for kindergarten teachers—\$44,940.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a more in-depth analysis of 2005 PIR data for all Head Start programs and a fact sheet on Early Head Start, see [www.clasp.org/publications.php?id=3](http://www.clasp.org/publications.php?id=3)

<sup>2</sup> The PIR collects data on all children and pregnant women who participate at any point, including those who do not complete the year.

<sup>3</sup> Other languages accounted for 1 percent or less of the total Head Start population.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *November 2004 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates*. 2004. ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)). The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics defines preschool teachers as individuals who “instruct children (normally up to 5 years of age) in activities designed to promote social, physical, and intellectual growth needed for primary school in preschool, day care center, or other child development facility.”