



Early Head Start Participants, Programs, Families and Staff in 2012

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In 1994, the federal Early Head Start (EHS) program was created to address the comprehensive needs of low-income pregnant women and children under age 3. EHS was created almost 30 years after Head Start was established in 1965 to serve low-income 3- and 4-year-old children and their families with comprehensive early education and support services. Both programs provide services focused on the “whole child,” including 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.

All Head Start programs are required to complete the Program Information Report (PIR) on an annual basis.¹ This fact sheet uses information reported through the PIR to describe the children and families served in Early Head Start and the services provided to them during the 2011-2012 program year.²

EHS spending in 2012 totaled \$1.3 billion. In 2012, the EHS program served 151,342 children

under age 3 and 16,175 pregnant women through 1,015 grantees/delegates throughout the country. The PIR collects data on all children and pregnant women who participate in Head Start at any point during the program year, including those who do not complete the year.³ Eleven percent of all federally funded Head Start slots were in EHS. Nationally, about 4 percent of eligible children were served by EHS.⁴

Key findings from the 2012 PIR include:

Participants

- Most children (86 percent) received a medical screening as required by the federal Head Start Program Performance Standards. Eleven percent required follow-up treatment, and of those children, nearly all (96 percent) received that treatment.
- By the end of the program year, 97 percent of children had a medical home for ongoing medical care, and 75 percent had a source for ongoing dental care. The percent of children with a source for ongoing dental care increased 2 percent from the previous year.
- Thirteen percent of enrolled children had a disability, 55 percent of whom were diagnosed prior to enrollment in EHS and 45 percent of whom were diagnosed during the program year.
- Ninety-three percent of pregnant women enrolled in EHS received prenatal health care and 75 percent received postnatal health care. Additionally, 91 percent of pregnant women had health insurance at the end of the program year, 40 percent received a dental examination (a decrease of 3 percent from the



previous year), and 35 percent accessed mental health interventions (a decrease of 3 percent from the previous year).

- Among participants enrolled in EHS, 44 percent were white and 25 percent were African-American. Thirty-four percent were of Hispanic origin, regardless of race.
- The age breakdown for children participating in EHS was relatively even: 29 percent of children were under age 1; 32 percent were age 1; and 35 percent were age 2.⁵
- EHS served a linguistically diverse group of participants. More than one-quarter (26 percent) of participants were from homes where English was not the primary language. Twenty-two percent of all EHS participants were from Spanish-speaking homes. Other languages each accounted for 1 percent or less of the total EHS population.

Programs

- About half (49 percent) of EHS slots were center-based. Forty-five percent of slots were in home-based programs, which included weekly home visits and group socialization programs. EHS children also received services in combination programs (3 percent), family child care settings (2 percent), and locally designed programs (1 percent) in 2012.
- The total number of funded EHS slots reported by the PIR was 110,884. The federal government funded 109,179 slots, and states and other sources funded 1,358 slots.⁶

Families

- A large proportion of EHS families accessed support in 2012. Eighty-one percent of EHS families accessed at least one support service. This is a decrease of 3 percent from the previous year. Parenting education (65 percent, down 3 percent from the previous

year) and health education (60 percent, down 4 percent from the previous year) were the most frequently accessed services in 2012.

- Other frequently accessed services included emergency and crisis intervention, adult education, and mental health services.
- Fifty-nine percent of families were single-parent families; 41 percent were two-parent families.
- Fifty-eight percent of EHS families included at least one working parent and 23 percent of families included at least one parent in school or job training.
- Nearly four of every five families (77 percent) received the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Nearly one of every five families (19 percent) received cash assistance under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program in 2012.

Staff

- More than half (57 percent) of EHS teachers and 75 percent of EHS home visitors had at least an associate's degree (A.A.) in early childhood education or a related field. The number of teachers with at least an A.A. in 2012 increased 3 percent from 2011, and the number of home visitors with at least an A.A. increased by 11 percent from 2011 to 2012. In addition, 29 percent (up 2 percent from the previous year) of teachers and 57 percent (up 11 percent from the previous year) of home visitors had a bachelor's degree (B.A.) or higher in early childhood education or a related field.
- Overall, EHS teachers earned an average of \$25,388 and EHS home visitors earned an average of \$29,664 in 2012.

¹ For more information on Head Start Program Information Reports (PIR), visit <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Program%20Design%20and%20Management/Head%20Start%20Requirements/Program%20Information%20Report>.

² For more information on the Head Start preschool program, see CLASP's fact sheet, *Head Start Participants, Programs, Families, and Staff in 2012*

³ Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), Head Start received a one-time \$2.1 billion increase in funding, including \$1.1 billion targeted for the expansion of Early Head Start. The 2010 PIR data was the first year of data that reflected the EHS expansion. Slots created from ARRA dollars have been maintained and built into the Head Start funding formula.

⁴ National Women's Law Center calculations based on data from the Office of Head Start on number of enrolled children and Census Bureau data on children in poverty by single year of age.

⁵ The total does not add up to 100% due to rounding and a small enrollment of children who are 3.

⁶ For information on state-funded Early Head Start initiatives, see [*Expanding Access to Early Head Start: State Initiatives for At-Risk Infants and Toddlers*](#)