

Since 1965, the Head Start program has served low-income 3- and 4-year-old children and their families with comprehensive early education and support services. 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 (including Head Start preschool programs, Early Head Start, and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start) are required to complete the Program Information Report (PIR) on an annual basis.<sup>1</sup> 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.

This fact sheet uses information reported through PIR to describe the children and families enrolled in the Head Start preschool program and the services provided to them during the 2012-2013 program year.<sup>2</sup>

The 2013 appropriation for Head Start was just over \$8 billion.<sup>3</sup> The Head Start preschool program served 932,164 young children through 1,777 grantees nationwide in 2013.<sup>4</sup> Eighty-five percent of all federally funded Head Start slots were in Head Start preschool programs. Nationally, about 42 percent of eligible children were served by Head Start.<sup>5</sup>

Key findings from the 2013 PIR include:

## Participants

- Most children (89 percent) received a medical screening as required by federal Head Start Program Performance Standards. Thirteen percent required follow-up treatment, and of those children, the majority (94 percent) received treatment.
- The majority of children in Head Start preschool programs receive health insurance through public programs. Eighty-eight percent of children had publicly funded health insurance through Children’s Health Insurance Programs (CHIP), Medicaid, a combined CHIP/Medicaid program, or other state-funded insurance (up 4 percent from the previous year), while 7 percent had private insurance in 2013.
- By the end of the program year, 97 percent of children had a medical home for ongoing care, and 93 percent had a source for ongoing dental care. The percentage of children with a medical home was up two points from 2012. However, the percentage of children with a dental home dropped two points from the previous year.



- Twelve percent of enrolled children had a disability, about half (52 percent) of whom were diagnosed prior to the Head Start year. Among those preschool children diagnosed with a disability, almost all of them (99 percent) received special education and related services.
- Among children enrolled in Head Start preschool programs, 41 percent were white and 31 percent were African-American. Thirty-six percent were of Hispanic origin, regardless of race.
- Seventy-two percent of children in Head Start preschool programs were from homes where English was the primary language, and 23 percent were from homes speaking primarily Spanish. Other languages each accounted for 1 percent or less of the total Head Start preschool population.
- Five percent of children in Head Start programs in 2013 received a child care subsidy.

## Programs

- In 2013, the total number of funded Head Start preschool slots was 816,953.
- Ninety-six percent of Head Start preschool slots were center-based. Two percent were in home-based programs, which included weekly home visits and group socialization activities. Slots in family child care homes, locally designed programs, and combination programs each comprised 1 percent or less of all Head Start preschool slots in 2013.

## Families

- Fifty-nine percent of families with children in Head Start preschool were single-parent families, and 41 percent included two parents.
- Most Head Start preschool families (63 percent) included at least one working

parent, and 14 percent of families included a parent in school or job training.

- Seventy-four percent of Head Start preschool families accessed at least one support service in 2013, with parenting education (48 percent) and health education (45 percent) accessed most frequently. Other frequently accessed services included emergency and crisis intervention, adult education, and child abuse/neglect services.
- The percentage of families receiving benefits from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) was 55 percent in 2013. Fifteen percent of Head Start preschool families received cash assistance under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program in 2013—a decrease of 2 percent from the previous year.

## Staff

- Ninety-five percent of Head Start preschool teachers had at least an associate degree (A.A.) in early childhood education or a related field—2 percent increase from 2012. In addition, 67 percent of teachers had a bachelor's degree (B.A.) or higher in early childhood education or a related field—a 5 percent increase from 2012.
- Head Start preschool teachers earned an average of \$29,650 in 2013—well below the national average for preschool and kindergarten teachers (\$38,040 in 2013).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For more information on Head Start Program Information Reports (PIR), visit

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/data/pir>.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on Early Head Start, see CLASP's fact sheet, *Early Head Start Participants, Programs, Families, and Staff in 2013*.

<sup>3</sup> This allocation includes the \$1.3 billion spent for Early Head Start.

<sup>4</sup> Note: During the 2012-2013 school year, federal budget cuts, known as sequestration, went into effect resulting in

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reduced funding for Head Start and other programs. Some Head Start programs managed sequestration by reducing the number of children served while others cut back program schedules or made other cuts in their budgets.

<sup>5</sup> National Women's Law Center calculations based on 2012 data from the Office of Head Start on number of enrolled children and Census Bureau 2012 data on children in poverty by single year of age.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *May 2013 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates*, [http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_nat.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm).