



VERMONT

BUILDING ON THE PROMISE: PROFILES OF STATE INITIATIVES TO BUILD ON EARLY HEAD START



INITIATIVE SUMMARY

Vermont's Child Care Subsidy Reserved Spaces Agreement initiative provides full-day, high quality child care services for children birth to age thirteen who are eligible for the Vermont Child Care Subsidy Program, including children served by federal Early Head Start (EHS) grantees. As a result of an administrative agency decision by the state Child Care Administrator, since 1999 the initiative has used state general revenue and Child Care and Development Block Grant subsidies to provide funds to Head Start, EHS, and other licensed child care programs to enhance access to quality child care. Depending upon the type of child care entity, participating programs are required to be nationally accredited or hold a 4 or 5 star rating in the Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS), Vermont's tiered quality rating system, or they must hold a blue or gold level PRISM certificate from the Office of Head Start, be in good regulatory standing, and have a Vermont specialized child care services provider certificate.

While the initiative builds on EHS by extending the day of services for children enrolled in existing EHS programs, the initiative has five other outcome goals for participating child care entities: enhance the quality of child care services to all children enrolled at the provider's child care program; assure the continuity and stability of child care services to eligible children; stabilize funding from the child care subsidy program to the provider's child care program for services provided to eligible children; and provide Head Start services to all children enrolled at the provider's programs (if the provider operates a Head Start program).

APPROACH USED TO BUILD ON EHS

- ✓ Extend the day or year of existing EHS services.

PROGRAM

Child and Family Eligibility (applicable to all families enrolled in the Vermont Child Care Subsidy Program)

- **Family Income:** Families must make less than 82.5 percent of the 1999 State Median Income (\$2,586/month, for a family of three or fewer).

- **Parental Work Status:** Parent must be employed and/or attending school or in job training to be eligible. In certain circumstances, families are eligible if a child is in protective services, or if a parent has a special health need, or if a family experiencing significant stress and would benefit by participating in a child care program.
- **Child Age:** Birth to age thirteen
- **Other Risk Factors:** A child is eligible if in protective services, or if a family experiencing significant stress and would benefit by participating in a child care program.
- **Length of Eligibility:** Families are approved for a one-year assistance eligibility period and re-determine eligibility annually.
- **Expectant Mothers Served:** This is not a factor for eligibility for the initiative, but some expectant mothers are served.

Number Served by State Initiative: 45 children birth to age three in FY 2007.

Number Served by Federally Funded Early Head Start: In comparison to the state initiative, federally funded EHS served 279 children birth to age three and expectant mothers (according to federal Program Information Report data for 2006).

Eligible Providers

Licensed center-based programs are eligible, including all:

- Federal Head Start grantees
- Federal Early Head Start grantees
- Private for-profit child care centers
- Private non-profit child care centers
- Faith-based child care centers
- School districts
- Community agencies

Co-pay

Parents may pay a co-pay. This amount is determined by programs with established policies that are applied to all subsidized and private-pay children. The providers with a reserved spaces agreement often provide financial assistance and may not request a co-payment.

Program Standards

- **Federal Head Start Program Performance Standards Required?** Yes, participating Head Start or EHS programs are required to meet federal Head Start Program Performance Standards for the extended day services.
- **Additional State Standards:** Participating programs must meet the agreement specifications regarding regulatory status, quality and full-day schedule. Additionally, participating programs must be nationally accredited or hold a 4 or 5 star rating in the Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS), Vermont's tiered quality rating system, or they must hold a blue or gold level PRISM certificate from the Office of Head Start, be in good regulatory standing, and have a Vermont specialized child care services provider certificate.

Do other children besides those enrolled in the EHS model benefit when services are delivered in child care settings?

Yes, if the grantee operates a Head Start or EHS program, all children must receive services meeting the federal Head Start Program Performance Standards.

Length of Day/Year

The extended day services cover a full working day, although the hours vary locally. The programs are open full-year.

FUNDING AND SUPPORTS

Sources and Budget for Fiscal Year 2007 (unless otherwise noted)

\$7.5 million from primarily state general revenue and Child Care and Development Block Grant subsidy funds to fund Reserved Spaces Agreements for children birth to thirteen.

What support and technical assistance does the state offer?

The state provides support and technical assistance to participating programs around continuity of care, specifically for children who have irregular attendance in child care as a result of family circumstances, and around serving children with special needs. The state may also provide early childhood mental health consultation funding and services as part of the state's Children's Integrated Services efforts.

What incentives are there for child care providers to participate?

Participating programs have a stability of funding through the Reserved Spaces Agreements, which allows them to focus on continuity of care and to serve children with special needs and circumstances.

GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION

What state agency administers the funding for this initiative?

Vermont Department for Children and Families, Child Development Division

How does the funding flow to local providers?

A Request for Proposals (RFP) was originally issued to existing Head Start, EHS, and parent-child centers throughout the state and the process was expanded to include other licensed child care providers. New grantees have not been funded for five years, and current grantees receive continuation funding each year if the agreement requirements are met.

Grantees receive their funding by submitting a bi-weekly attendance invoice to the Child Development Division through a web-based information management system.

Can a child in the state initiative also have a child care subsidy?

Yes, a child must be eligible to receive a child care subsidy to be eligible for the state initiative.

Does the state coordinate with federally funded Head Start agencies to conduct any of the activities?

Yes, coordination happens at the state and local level.

Does the state coordinate with the Head Start - State Collaboration Office to conduct activities?

The Head Start - State Collaboration Office is co-located within the same office as the Child Development Division and the two agencies work closely to plan the initiative, select programs to participate, monitor program quality, and provide technical assistance and professional development. The two agencies are also working to ensure that the Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS) quality rating system is aligned with national accreditation standards and federal Head Start Program Performance Standards.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

What state agencies are responsible for monitoring, and how often is on-site monitoring conducted in a year?

The Child Development Division licensing unit monitors all licensed child care centers annually, which includes the EHS sites. The manager of the state initiative conducts a six and twelve month review of program data, including utilization rates and other agreement criteria. Additionally, the STARS quality rating is renewed annually as well as the program's child care license.

Are there specific measurement tools used to monitor services provided?

The Child Development Division uses information from its web-based information management system.

Are programs also monitored by federal agencies?

Participating EHS and Head Start programs are monitored by the Office of Head Start every three years using the federal review process.

Has the state evaluated the effectiveness of the state EHS initiative?

The Child Development Division annually monitors grantees according to the expected outcomes of the initiative, and plans to implement a formal evaluation of the initiative in 2008-2009.

Are state funded programs required to report data to the state?

The Child Care Division requires that participating grantees submit an annual report on how they are meeting the outcomes of the initiative, as well as reporting on compliance with state licensing standards, maintenance of national accreditation, STARS accreditation, and Head Start Program Performance Standards (if Head Start or EHS grantee); assurance of parental involvement in program and policy development and implementation; coordination of services with the Child Development Division's Children's Integrated Services, local school districts, other related prevention and early intervention services; participation in the regional

Building Bright Futures Council; and assurance that all children in the child care program have access to Head Start services, where applicable.

SOURCES

Interviewed

[Kathleen Paterson](#), Assistant Director, Vermont Department for Children and Families, Child Development Division; June 2007 (updated July 2008)

Online Information

- The Vermont Department for Children and Families has websites on the [Child Development Division](#) and the [Step Ahead Recognition System](#) (STARS). They have also made available a sample [Reserved Spaces Agreement](#).
- The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) has individual [state profiles](#) analyzing the Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) data from 2006.

*This profile was written by [Elizabeth DiLauro](#), ZERO TO THREE, and [Rachel Schumacher](#), Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), as part of the **Building on the Promise: State Initiatives to Expand Access to Early Head Start and Their Families** report.*

To download the full report and view other state profiles, visit

<http://www.zerotothree.org/stateEHS> or http://childcareandearlyed.clasp.org/state_ehs.html.