

Our mission is to coalesce, inspire, and support the Head Start field as a leader in early childhood development and education.

2016 Head Start Children with Disabilities Fact Sheet

20 million

Children under age five in the U.S.

108,489

Head Start children with an Individualized Education Program (IEP)

25,374

Early Head Start children with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

Giving children with disabilities a Head Start...



IEPs and IFSPs specify the goals and objectives for children who are identified with a disability. Disabilities include “physical, cognitive, or social-emotional conditions as well as developmental delays.”

Largest number of children with IEPs/IFSPs served by Head Start

14,955 California

10,282 New York

8,662 Texas

7,700 Puerto Rico

7,423 Pennsylvania

Highest percentage of children with IEPs/IFSPs served by Head Start

25.7% Wyoming

22.7% Vermont

20.7% Puerto Rico

19.7% Maine

17.9% West Virginia



“I was a single mom with two children when I heard about Head Start. I was unemployed and not sure how I could afford child care to even go to work. Head Start diagnosed my son with a speech delay and offered speech services. I was grateful the delay was detected early so he could catch up before kindergarten, and for the opportunity to have my kids in Head Start while I got started on my career.”

Rebecca R., Florida

Ironbound Community Corporation

Newark, New Jersey

Ironbound uses specific tools in the classroom to support children diagnosed with autism, such as visual aids, eye contact, and short sentences. The program maintains a partnership with a local hospital to provide autistic children with additional services outside of Head Start. The program also partners with the local school district to provide speech therapy and other critical services.

156 children served: 28 children with an IEP or IFSP



City of Chicago

Chicago, Illinois

This Head Start grantee works with the city's Office of Diverse Learners Supports and Services to place children in instructional, blended, or regular disabilities classrooms depending on their needs. Some of the individual schools in the district also partner with local health clinics or have health clinics on site to identify and address disabilities.

21,072 children served: 2,172 with an IEP or IFSP



Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Oklahoma City CAA finds that family histories can help identify disabilities and solutions in children. For example, the agency once identified a mute child from a family in which both parents were hearing impaired.

The program also partners with Hearts for Hearing for audiology referrals and the University of Oklahoma, which sends in specialists to conduct autism screenings.

2,268 children served: 196 with an IEP or IFSP



About NHSA

The National Head Start Association is a nonprofit organization committed to the belief that every child, regardless of circumstances at birth, has the ability to succeed in life. NHSA is the voice for more than 1 million children, 200,000 staff and 1,600 Head Start grantees in the United States.

For more info, please contact us: go.nhsa.org/Contact.

For citations and other state fact sheets, please visit www.nhsa.org/Fact-Sheets



Our mission is to coalesce, inspire, and support the Head Start field as a leader in early childhood development and education.