



## November 2013: Using Data to Tell Your Story

### Background

The mission of Head Start is a strong one, and many in our communities respond well when we tell stories of children and families who've achieved stability and gone on to great accomplishments. Yet there are also people who are most receptive to data and understand the need for Head Start better when faced with facts - for example how 39% of Mississippi children under 5 years old were living in poverty in 2012; or that annual tuition at a public college in Alaska costs 77% more than a year of infant care; or that national surveys show a teacher with a BA can make nearly five dollars more per hour in a school-sponsored program than in Head Start. In this Research Blast, you'll find information about reports and data sets released in the last few months that can help you set the context for Head Start and why it's so critical to children and families in your community and state. (See links to the KIDS COUNT data center and reports from Child Care Aware America and OPRE below to find out how your state compares for the facts above.)

As you tell your story, be sure to include how the sequester has affected your community. Earlier this month NDD United, a coalition of nondefense discretionary programs affected by the sequester, released a new report featuring Head Start cuts as well as many others: [Faces of Austerity: How Budget Cuts Have Made Us Sicker, Poorer, and Less Secure](#). In addition, NHSA released a new [sequester fact sheet](#) with state-by-state data. These are great tools for showing the data behind the impact of sequestration.

Don't forget that data from your program help to tell the *national* story of Head Start and Early Head Start! If you haven't already, be sure to take [NHSA's survey](#) about community needs assessments and waiting lists - the number of children waiting for services sends a powerful message about the need to invest and expand. You can also help shape the program as a whole by participating in research. Right now the Urban Institute is reaching out to programs about participating in a study funded by OPRE of how programs create, use, and communicate about [School Readiness Goals](#). If you're contacted, you have the opportunity to speak on behalf of Head Start programs nationally about how this process works! The study is not an evaluation and will be used to inform T/TA.

Now on to the numbers!

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## Resources

### [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#)

The KIDS COUNT Data Center, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, allows you to easily navigate census and other data about children in your state, county, and Congressional district. When describing the need for Head Start in your community, it may be effective to share the numbers of children in poverty under the age of 6 - and how they've grown over the past several years.

### Stay Up to Date!

In addition to the NHSA Research Blast, numerous research organizations regularly share research summaries and updates on their projects with their mailing lists. You may want to consider registering for updates from the following HHS-funded organizations that report on Head Start research:

- [Child Care & Early Education Research Connections](#) - a site that gathers and shares research about early learning, Research Connections also hosts regular webinars
- the [Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation](#) - the office in ACF responsible for research on Head Start and Early Head Start, which distributes updates and research funding opportunities
- the [Self-Sufficiency Research Clearinghouse](#) - a project to gather and share research about low-income families and self-sufficiency supports for policy and practice

### Upcoming Events

- **CHSA/NHSA Head Start Research Institute** - Preceding the National Head Start Association's Annual Conference in Long Beach, CA on April 28, 2014, this year's institute will focus on family outcome measures and incorporating that data into program planning. Presentations from leading researchers and the National Centers for Parent, Family and Community Engagement and Quality Teaching and Learning will provide guidance in reviewing the data you already collect and ensuring your program is "measuring what matters" as it relates to effort and effect.
- **[Head Start's 12th National Research Conference on Early Childhood](#)** - The Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE), in conjunction with the Office of Head Start, is pleased to announce Head Start's 12th National Research Conference on Early Childhood (HSRC12), July 7-9, 2014 at the Grand Hyatt in Washington, DC. The three-day conference will present the latest research and feature plenary sessions, symposia, conversation hours, posters, and informal events with the goal to encourage communication among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

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## Research

### [Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education](#)

*from the Society for Research in Child Development*

Authored by a list of prominent researchers from Universities across the country, this report summarizes the major takeaways of decades of research on preschool and Head Start. Findings support high quality instruction, professional development, increased dosage, and long-term benefits. While not specific to Head Start, this report is a great review of early childhood research and a strong statement about the potential for early learning programs to support children's healthy development in all areas.

### **[The First Eight Years: Giving Kids a Foundation for Lifetime Success](#)**

*from the Annie E. Casey Foundation*

A policy report from Kids Count, this piece looks at the development of children by third grade and how that development varies by income, race, and ethnicity. Data tables and maps in this report also include the number of young children in poverty by state, the number of 3 and 4 year olds not enrolled in preschool by state, and the relative education levels of parents in families in low-income and higher-income households. Based on the dramatic gaps in healthy development among children with different family backgrounds, the report makes a number of policy recommendations to address the gaps - including additional supports for low-income parents and expansion of the Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

### **[Parents and the High Cost of Child Care: 2013 Report](#)**

*from Child Care Aware America*

Did you know there are states where center-based infant care can cost a low-income family as much as 86% of their monthly income? The demand for Early Head Start and Head Start has always been great, but figures like these - highlighted by this survey of child care resource & referral agencies - make the case for the need and the value of our programs. There are also terrific tables of costs for infants and preschool aged children in center-based and family child care settings by state, as well as less-than-humorous comparisons between child care costs and median family income, housing costs and even college tuition. Don't miss the appendices!

### **[Early Childhood Program Participation, From the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2012](#)**

*from the National Center for Education Statistics*

These findings build on those from the Child Care Aware America report above, with data on children under five in various settings in 2012. There are also tables of parents' values in selecting early learning programs and their common learning practices with children. Data on families' use of different settings, hourly rates paid, and values is broken down by age, race, family income, home language, family structure, and parental employment. These tables are worth looking at carefully - one interesting number is that 93% of parents making less than \$20,000 a year said "learning activities" were a "very important" consideration in choosing a program - a higher percentage than any other feature. In contrast, more higher-income families considered reliability of an early learning setting "very important" than learning activities. These data and the table on home learning activities emphasize that low-income families should not be approached with an expectation of deficits; a large majority are committed to their children's

education and try to support them at home.

### [Number and Characteristics of Early Care and Education Teachers and Caregivers](#)

*from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation*

This report shares the data on teacher education, salaries, and years in the workforce from a survey of Head Start, pre-K, and child care programs conducted in early 2012. This information is particularly useful for comparisons among different settings and among teachers serving different age groups of children. Head Start's success in helping teachers get degrees stands out particularly. For all teachers serving 3-5 year olds, 45% had at least a BA degree and 62% had an AA or higher, whereas among Head Start preschool teachers in 2012-2013, 66% held a BA or advanced degree and 94% had at least an AA. The wage information for Head Start, child care, state-funded pre-K and school-sponsored classrooms also highlight gaps that may be relevant to state and local policies.

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### **Discussion Questions**

1. Mine the data! Use the reports above to find out:
    - How many children live in poverty in your state?
    - How many children in your state are not enrolled in preschool?
    - How do child care costs in your state compare to costs for rent or mortgage payments?
    - What are the most and least common learning behaviors parents in poverty engage in with their children?
    - What's the average number of years preschool teachers have been in the workforce?
  2. How does your program's situation compare to the national figures?
  3. How can these facts help explain to your community why the need for Head Start is growing?
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Do you know of other recent research that may be of interest to the Head Start field? Do you have other questions, comments or concerns? E-mail Emmalie Dropkin ([edropkin@nhsa.org](mailto:edropkin@nhsa.org)).