Head Start is a community-based, comprehensive early education program that gives young children from at-risk backgrounds the skills they need to be successful in school and life.

2021 National Head Start Profile

Key
- Head Start
- Early Head Start
- Head Start and Early Head Start
- Migrant and Seasonal Head Start
- American Indian and Alaska Native

Head Start’s Reach Across the United States

In their own words...

“My husband lost his job and we were evicted from our home. It is incredibly stressful to be homeless with an infant, but because of Early Head Start we were able to keep the stress away from our son. We worked at getting back on our feet—my husband took a job as a dishwasher and I worked as a secretary, which we could do knowing our son was receiving excellent care. Our son is doing great in all areas and learning social/emotional skills.”

Erin Martino, New York

Funding

$10,848,095,000

FY21 Funding

652,422

Funded Head Start Slots

36% of eligible children ages 3 - 5 had access to Head Start

163,126

Funded Early Head Start Slots

11% of eligible children under 3 had access to Early Head Start

29,252

Funded Migrant/Seasonal Slots

22,355

Funded American Indian/Alaska Native Slots

All information, except for the FY21 funding amount, is from FY18 data due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information, including citations, please visit: go.nhsa.org/Facts.
Head Start’s Model: Nationwide, Comprehensive, Multi-Generational

In the six decades since our founding, we have reached a new milestone: 37 million children have been served by Head Start. That is 1 out of every 11 Americans. Innovators and communicators, advocates and thinkers, health care heroes and teachers themselves—our alumni represent the vast and diverse fabric of our country.

When we speak with our alumni, they recall the warmth they felt from their Head Start teachers. Kind words that gave them comfort and nutritious meals that felt like home. For many, this start to their educational journey imprinted a love of learning and a sense of possibility.

From early math and reading skills, to confidence and resilience, Head Start helps children build the skills they need to be successful in school and life. Our comprehensive approach meets the needs of the whole child, addressing health and wellbeing as well as ABCs and 123s. Our success is in the stories, testimony, and experiences of our 37 million living proof points of Head Start’s impact and decades of rigorous research on how equitable access to preschool and wraparound services break the cycle of poverty in communities across the country.

Comprehensive Services Across the Country

- 24,460 fathers participated in program governance
- 63,508 parents received job training
- 4,632,050 home visits were conducted
- 111,203 children received a behavioral health treatment plan

Long-Term Impact

Head Start participants are 12% less likely to live in poverty as adults and 29% less likely to receive public assistance.

“Evidence suggests Head Start not only helps kids develop and allows parents to go to work, but it may also help at-risk kids from ending up in the foster care system.”

Head Start parents have steeper increases in their educational attainment by the time their children are six years old.

Questions? Contact us at advocacy@nhsa.org. For more information, including citations, please visit: go.nhsa.org/Facts

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