



Building Their Futures:  
How Early Head Start Programs  
Are Enhancing the Lives of  
Infants and Toddlers in Low-  
Income Families

Volume I: Technical Report



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES  
Administration for Children & Families  
Administration on Children, Youth & Families  
Commissioner's Office of Research and Evaluation  
and the Head Start Bureau



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**Volume I: Technical Report**

**June 2001**

The Commissioner's Office of Research and Evaluation  
And the Head Start Bureau  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Department of Health and Human Services

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## Early Head Start Evaluation Reports

***Leading the Way:*** Describes the characteristics and implementation levels of 17 Early Head Start programs in fall 1997, soon after they began serving families.

**Executive Summary** (December 2000): Summarizes Volumes I, II, and III.

**Volume I** (December 1999): *Cross-Site Perspectives*—Describes the characteristics of Early Head Start research programs in fall 1997, across 17 sites.

**Volume II** (December 1999): *Program Profiles*—Presents the stories of each of the Early Head Start research programs.

**Volume III** (December 2000): *Program Implementation*—Describes and analyzes the extent to which the programs fully implemented, as specified in the Revised Head Start Program Performance Standards, as of fall 1997.

***Pathways to Quality and Full Implementation*** (summer 2001): Describes and analyzes the characteristics, levels of implementation, and levels of quality of the 17 Early Head Start programs in fall 1999, three years into serving families. Presents an analysis of the pathways programs followed to achieve full implementation and high quality.

***Building Their Futures: How Early Head Start Programs Are Enhancing the Lives of Infants and Toddlers in Low-Income Families:*** Presents analysis of the impacts that the research programs have had on children's development, parenting, and family development through 2 years of age.

**Summary Report** (January 2001): Synopsis of the major findings.

**Technical Report** (June 2001): Detailed findings and report on methodology and analytic approaches.

***Special Policy Report on Child Care in Early Head Start*** (fall 2001): Describes the nature, types, and quality of child care arrangements in which Early Head Start and control group children enrolled, and presents implication for public policy.

***Special Policy Report on Health and Disabilities in Early Head Start*** (winter 2002): Describes health services received by Early Head Start and control group families, and analyzes services for infants and toddlers with disabilities.

***Final Report on the Early Head Start Evaluation*** (June 2002): Presents analysis of the impacts that the research programs have had on children's development, parenting, and family development through the children's third birthday (including two to three years of program participation).

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Reports Are Available at:

[http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/core/ongoing\\_research/ehs/ehs\\_intro.html](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/core/ongoing_research/ehs/ehs_intro.html)

<http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/3rdLevel/ehstoc.htm>

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This research would not have been possible without the dedication, cooperation, enthusiasm, and patience of 17 Early Head Start program directors and their staffs. From our very first meeting (in January 1996, even before programs were selected into the research sample), and through many interactions during site visits and Early Head Start Research Consortium meetings, program staff have fully participated in this research in many ways. The contributions of several program directors are incorporated in this report. Everyone on the local and national research teams is most grateful to the Early Head Start programs for their role in making the study possible. In addition, about 3,000 Early Head Start and control group families put up with our phone calls, visits in their homes, lengthy interviews, video cameras, and child assessment materials. The tangible incentives we were able to offer were small, but we hope the families' participation left them with a sense of contributing to the growing knowledge base of Early Head Start research.

Of particular importance to everyone who stands to benefit from the information presented here is the sponsoring agency, the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). Staff members in ACYF's Commissioner's Office of Research and Evaluation (CORE) have shown unusual devotion to the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project. We especially thank Louisa Tarullo, who served as project officer from 1995 until 2000, when Rachel Chazan Cohen assumed that role. Rachel has been highly committed and effective in contributing to and reviewing all aspects of the national evaluation efforts. As chief of CORE, Michael Lopez has always been available to review, discuss, and debate the numerous evaluation issues arising along the way. Within the Head Start Bureau, Esther Kresh served as project officer for all 15 local research grants and contributed her advice and counsel to the national evaluation in many ways. Head Start Bureau and other ACYF program staff participated closely in research activities. We especially thank National Early Head Start Coordinator Judith Jerald and her colleagues Frankie Gibson, Jim Harrell, Mimi Kanda, Doug Klafehn, Ann Linehan, Edgard Perez, Tom Schultz, Mary Shiffer, Willa Siegel, Craig Turner, and Sarah Younglove. Until her untimely death in October 2000, associate commissioner Helen Taylor provided inspiration for both the Early Head Start programs and research. Olivia Golden, first as Commissioner of ACYF and later as the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, was key to the design of the program and research and contributed her wisdom in many ways throughout the project. In ACF and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Howard Rolston, Linda Mellgren, and Martha Moorehouse contributed in important ways, as did Natasha Cabrera and Jeffrey Evans at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. All of these individuals have been extremely responsive in providing suggestions, guidance, and feedback at every level from design to reporting.

This project is unique in having the presence of a special individual who has shown uncommon devotion to carrying out the vision of the advisory committees that set in motion the plans for the Early Head Start program and its evaluation. While serving as a Society for Research in Child Development Executive Branch Policy Fellow at ACYF from 1994 to 1996, Helen Raikes led the ACYF team that created the Early Head Start evaluation design. Beginning at the outset of the evaluation contract in September 1995, she has served unstintingly as project monitor for the national study. Helen has inspired and guided the national evaluation team;

vigorously participated in the many consortium, steering committee, and workgroup activities; and interacted closely with the national team through every phase as we worked through decisions on sites, measures, data collection strategies, analytic approaches, and dissemination activities. We are extremely proud to acknowledge her imprint on every element of the research, the analysis, and the report.

An essential element in the Early Head Start Research Consortium, the 15 local research teams, has been instrumental in facilitating the completion of the research reflected in this report. In addition to conducting their own investigations, local researchers were partners in the research process. They assisted us during the implementation study, actively participated in some dozen consortium meetings, and engaged with us in lively debates about measures, data collection procedures, analysis methods, and the interpretation of findings. In addition to conducting complex data collection activities, they contributed invaluable information on the local context of the programs they work with, and provided feedback on our draft reports. Many wrote up some of their local research for inclusion in this volume. The full membership of the consortium is more completely acknowledged in Appendix F.

The authors of this report are grateful to our many colleagues at MPR and Columbia, whose work has been essential in enabling us to achieve this milestone. We list all contributing colleagues in Appendix F, but here acknowledge many of the key individuals. John Burghardt, Stuart Kerachsky, Mark Dynarski, Lorenzo Moreno, and Chuck Metcalf have lent their expertise in design and data analytic approaches at various stages of the research. Undergirding the research has been an outstanding team responsible for overseeing the field data collection. All of us owe much to Susan Sprachman, who, from early 1996 through late 1998, led the effort to create the field versions of many complex measures, design and carry out training of dozens of data collection staff from the 17 sites, and develop the system for tracking the 3,000 families. In fall 1998, Welmoet van Kammen assumed the leadership role for data collection oversight and worked closely with the local research teams and their data collection staffs to ensure the highest-quality data possible. Welmoet and Susan were supported by their dedicated colleagues, Cheryl DeSaw, Sharon DeLeon, Chake Dereyen, David Eden, Linda Gentzik, Bea Jones, Barbara Kolln, Linda Mendenko, Rosiland Page, Margo Salem, Barbara Schiff, Ben Shen, and Andrea Sleeper. Our systems analyst, Anne Bloomenthal, worked with great care to build the many cross-site data files used in these analyses and provided the site-level files for the local research teams and workgroups, enabling them to participate in the data analysis. Many researchers and programmers worked during these years to ensure accurate statistical analysis; we thank R. J. Cao, Dexter Chu, Jennifer Faerber, Veronica Holly, Miriam Loewenberg, Alyssa Nadeau, Charles Nagatoshi, Tim Novak, Linda Rosenberg, Rachel Sullivan, Xiaofan Sun, and Cheri Vogel. Jeanne Bellotti, Julius Clark, and Don Lara have been instrumental in maintaining the data collection subcontracts with the local research teams.

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## DEDICATION

We dedicate this report to two special individuals who were devoted to Early Head Start—both the program and the research—and who worked tirelessly for many years to see their dreams realized. Susan McBride, associate professor of human development and family studies at Iowa State University, served as principal investigator for the ISU research team from the project’s beginning in 1996 until her death in 2000. She was an active member of the consortium, serving at various times on the consortium steering committee, the data collection committee, the theories of change workgroup, the father studies workgroup, and the longitudinal studies group. Closest to her heart, however, were the disabilities workgroup and studies of the home-visiting process, to which she actively contributed.

Helen Taylor was the Associate Commissioner for Head Start within the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families until her death in October 2000. With clear vision, she nurtured, guided, cajoled, and inspired Head Start and Early Head Start programs to do their best and never to lose sight of their primary mission—supporting children’s development. She continually stressed the need for high-quality programs and insisted on holding programs accountable for delivering on their promise. Helen’s leadership inspired all of us to carry out an evaluation as rigorous and as meaningful as her own high standards.

Both Susan and Helen are greatly missed, but their spirit and legacy continue to infuse the ongoing work of the programs and the research.

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FIGURE I.1  
KEY EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF EARLY HEAD START





















































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































