



OFFICE OF HEAD START

MISSION STATEMENT

Head Start promotes the school readiness of young children from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Services

Head Start and Early Head Start programs support the comprehensive development of children from birth to age 5, in centers, child care partner locations, and in their own homes, in a variety of ways.

- **Early Learning:** Teachers facilitate individualized learning experiences to promote children's readiness for school and beyond. Through planned and spontaneous instruction, relationships with adults, and play, children grow in language and literacy, early math and science concepts, and social and emotional development.
- **Health:** Children receive health and development screenings, nutritious meals, oral health and mental health support. Programs connect families with medical, dental, and mental health services, and ensure that children are receiving the services they need.
- **Family well-being:** Parents and families are supported in achieving their own goals, such as housing stability, continued education, and financial security. Programs support and strengthen parent-child relationships and engage families around children's learning and development.

Administration

Local Head Start services are delivered by about 1,700 public and private nonprofit and for-profit agencies. Head Start agencies design services for children and families that meet the needs of their local community and follow the Head Start Program Performance Standards. These agencies receive grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and are administered by the Office of Head Start (OHS). Some local communities and states contribute additional funding to expand Head Start and Early Head Start to include more children within their communities.

OHS provides oversight to the agencies that operate Head Start programs. OHS also provides federal policy direction and a training and technical assistance (T/TA) system to assist grantees in providing comprehensive services to eligible young children and their families.

OHS Director

Blanca Enriquez

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Website Link

www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs



Expected Goals

Head Start's authorizing purpose is to promote the school readiness of young children. School Readiness means children are prepared for school, families are supporting their children's learning, and schools are ready as children transition into kindergarten.

Children and Families Served

Head Start and Early Head Start programs enrolled 1,076,126 children in fiscal year 2014.

- 885,410 Head Start children
- 145,308 Early Head Start children and 14,506 pregnant women
- 24,405 American Indian and Alaska Native children (included in Head Start and Early Head Start)
- 30,902 children through Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, a birth to 5 program.

Programs provided services to children in every U.S. state, territory and in over 155 tribal communities, including 130,701 children with diagnosed disabilities, 22,712 children in foster care and 45,168 families experiencing homelessness.

BRIEF HISTORY

Head Start was founded as part of War on Poverty under the Economic Opportunity Act on 1964. Sargent Shriver led a panel of experts to develop a comprehensive child development program that would help communities meet the needs of disadvantaged preschool children. The result was Project Head Start. Since then, Head Start has grown from an eight-week demonstration project in 1965 to include full day and full year services and numerous program options. Head Start has served over 32 million children and their families in urban and rural areas in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. territories.

Law

Head Start was last reauthorized under the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 with several provisions to strengthen Head Start quality. These include alignment of Head Start school readiness goals with state early learning standards, higher qualifications for the Head Start teaching workforce, State Advisory Councils on Early Care and Education in every state, and increased program monitoring, including a review of child outcomes and annual financial audits.

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Fiscal Year Budgets (\$B)

2012	\$7.97
2013	\$7.57
2014	\$8.60