

## **Early Head Start Benefits Children and Families**

A national evaluation conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., and Columbia University's Center for Children and Families, in collaboration with the Early Head Start Research Consortium, found:

- That 3 year-old Early Head Start Children performed significantly better on a range of measures of cognitive, language, and social-emotional development than a randomly assigned control group.
- The parents of the 3 year-olds scored significantly higher than control group parents on many aspects of home environment and parenting behavior.
- There were impacts for parents on progress towards self-sufficiency, and for fathers specifically.

The Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (EHSREP) involved 3,001 children and families in 17 sites; half received EHS services and half were randomly assigned to a control group that did not receive EHS services. Parents and children were assessed when the children were 14, 24, and 36 months old. Families were also interviewed about their use of a wide range of services at 6, 15, and 26 months after enrollment, and when they exited the program.

### **Overall Impacts At Age 3:**

- EHS program children scored 91.4 on the Bayley Mental Development Index, compared with 89.9 for control group children, and they scored 83.3 on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, compared to 81.1 for the control group. Early Head Start children were significantly less likely than control group children to score in the at-risk range of developmental functioning as tested in both the Bayley and Peabody measures.
- EHS children engaged their parents more, were less negative toward their parents, and more attentive to objects during play.
- EHS parents rated their children as lower in aggressive behavior than control parents did.
- EHS parents were more emotionally supportive and less detached than control group.
- EHS parents were more likely to report reading to their child every day: 56.8% of EHS parents compared to 52.0% of control group.
- EHS parents were less likely to report having spanked their children in the past week (46.7% program parents vs. 53.8% control group parents. EHS parents reported a greater repertoire of discipline strategies, including more mild and fewer punitive strategies.
- EHS fathers were less likely to reports spanking their children during the previous week; 25.4% of program fathers, compared to 35.6% of control fathers.
- EHS program children were observed to be more able to engage their fathers and to be more attentive during play.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/resource/early-head-start-benefits-children-and-families-research-to-practice-brief>