



National Head Start Impact Study



Today's Goal

- Tell you about the National Head Start Impact Study.
 - Background & Objectives
 - Design
 - Measures
 - Recruitment and Random Assignment Status



Study Background

- In 1998, Congress determined, as part of Head Start's authorization, that DHHS should conduct a national study to determine the impact of Head Start on the children it serves.
- The research design is based on the legislative language of the Head Start Act and a set of recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Head Start Research & Evaluation.



Research Goals

- **Goal 1:** “What difference does Head Start make to key outcomes of development and learning (and in particular, the multiple domains of school readiness) for low-income children?”
- **Goal 2:** “Under what circumstances does Head Start achieve the greatest impact? What works for what children? What Head Start services are most related to impact?”



Sample Design

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- National representation—overall program impact.
- Explain variation in impact—how impact varies by child, program, and community characteristics.
- Creation of a randomized comparison group.



Grantee/DA Selection

- **Include all grantees/DAs:** excludes migrant and tribal programs, programs involved in FACES 2000, and Early Head Start children (N=1,715).
- **Create 161 geographic grantee clusters** and stratify into 25 strata.
- **Select 1 cluster per strata**, represents 355 grantees/DAs, but we sub-sampled in 3 clusters (N=261)
- **Identify eligible grantees/DAs:** telephone calls to 261 grantees/DAs; 85% determined eligible (N=223).
- **Select grantees/DAs within clusters:** combine small programs, stratify, and select (N=90, 76 grantee/DA groups).



Center Selection

- **Center Information Forms**—existing data validated and updated, as necessary, by all grantees/DAs (N=1,411 centers).
- **Initial Screening for Saturation**—dropped 168 centers (12%) leaving N=1,243. Regional Offices included in decisions.
- **Select Centers**—form 683 center groups, stratify, and select main sample of 220 center groups, 471 individual centers.



Random Assignment

- **Identify Newly-entering Children:** Start with all 3- and 4-year-old applicants, exclude returning children and very few exceptions.
- **Need Extra Applicants for Comparison Group:** extend local “enrollment line” to get an average of 11 additional children/center.
- **Randomly Select:** Average of 16 Head Start and 11 Comparison Group Children/Center, stratified by program option.
- **Total Target Sample:** 3,137 3’s and 2,541 4’s.



Field Test

- Initial sample of 8 grantees and 24 centers, 430 children
- Selected to represent a wide range of program configurations
- Recruited sites in April, May 2001
- Random assignment in summer 2001
- Two rounds of data collection
- High response rates, no major differences between treatment and control groups



Data Collection Timing and Sources

- **Fall** **Child and Family Measures**
 - Parent Interviews
 - Child Assessments
 - **Spring** **Child and Family Measures**
 - Parent Interviews
 - Child Assessments
 - Teacher's/Care Provider's Child Report Form
- Program Measures**
- Classroom/Child Care Observations
 - Director Interviews and Staff Surveys
- For 3 year olds -- 2 years HS/child care, kindergarten and first grade
 - For 4 year olds -- 1 year HS/child care, kindergarten and first grade



Procedures for Reviewing & Selecting Measures

- ✎ Selected six work groups to review measures from FACES and other large studies, identify constructs, and recommend measures
 - language and literacy (child assessments)
 - educational environment
 - socio-emotional development
 - parenting skills and activities
 - comprehensive services
 - assessing Spanish-speaking children



Criteria for Measure Selection

1. Measure outcomes for children/families that are expected to be impacted by Head Start
2. Need to have measures to obtain comparable information for children not in Head Start
3. Capability of measuring growth overtime
4. Use instruments that predict later school achievement
5. Ensure they can be administered by trained field interviewers with acceptable reliability



Criteria for Measure Selection

6. Ensure overall battery is of reasonable length and can maintain interest and performance of young children
7. Have parallel tests in Spanish and English for core subset of assessment battery
8. Maintain measures from FACES that showed significant gains against national norms in Head Start
9. Strengthen oral language component and phonemic awareness components



Language and Literacy Measures

-  Woodcock-Johnson III Letter-Word Identification
-  Woodcock-Johnson III Applied Problems
-  Woodcock-Johnson III Spelling
-  Woodcock-Johnson III Oral Comprehension
-  Developing Skills Checklist Segmenting Sentences Task
-  Story and Print Concepts



Language and Literacy Measures

-  Shortened, adaptive version of PPVT-III
-  McCarthy Draw-A-Design
-  Letter Naming
-  Abbreviated version of Leiter-R AS
-  Counting bear task



Socio-Emotional Development Measures

From Parent

- Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)
- Social Skills Rating System(SSRS)
- Developing Skills Checklist--Home Inventory

In spring, input also obtained from teacher, other child care provider

- Child Observation Record (COR)
- CBCL
- SSRS
- Adjustment Scales for Preschool Intervention (ASPI)



Parent Family Measures

Demographic characteristics

- Parent and child race/ethnicity
- Parent and child health
- Parent and child disabilities
- Household composition
- Employment
- Economic Assistance
- Education
- Housing



Parent Family Measures

-  Parenting Styles and Rules
-  Home Educational Environment
-  Parental Stress and Depression
-  Family Social Support
-  Child Care Arrangements
-  Home Health and Safety Practices
-  Use of Social Services
-  Home and Neighborhood Characteristics
-  Parent Literacy



Programs and Services

- ✎ Early Childhood Environmental Ratings Scale (ECERS-R)
- ✎ Family Day Care Ratings Scale
- ✎ Environmental Scale (Home, Fast Track)
- ✎ Arnett Scale of Lead Teacher Behavior
- ✎ Assessment Profile (Scheduling, Learning Environment, and Individualizing)
- ✎ Checklist of Teacher Directed Activities
- ✎ Comprehensive Service Provision



Recruitment and RA Status

- ✎ **Sites assigned to 2 person recruitment teams**
- ✎ **Teams made at least two on-site visits to every grantee to meet with staff, governing boards, policy councils and parents**
- ✎ **Established partnerships with grantees, study staff and regional office**
- ✎ **Hired local site coordinator for each cluster to maintain ongoing communication, conduct random assignment, and supervise data collection**
- ✎ **Cooperation from all selected grantee/DAs**
- ✎ **As of 6/25, completed 181 rounds of random assignment in 150 centers**
- ✎ **Goal was to not significantly alter existing local enrollment criteria and procedures**



Challenges

- ✎ Understanding the variations across Head Start programs
- ✎ Integrating random assignment into existing Head Start program operations
- ✎ Enrollment not necessarily a single point in time
- ✎ Program concerns about “serving the neediest”
- ✎ Ensuring staff buy in