



# EARLY LEARNING FACT SHEET

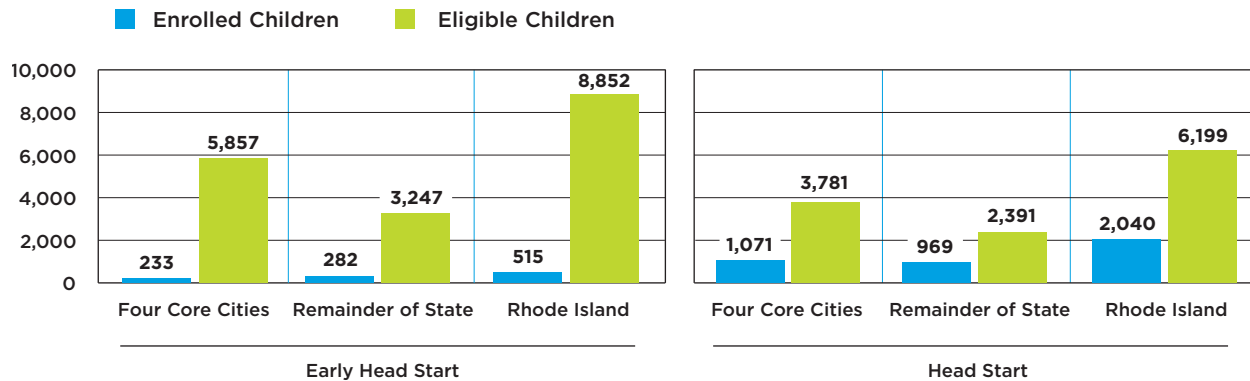
Promoting early learning and development Birth to 8

## Focus on Early Head Start and Head Start

High-quality early learning programs for infants, toddlers and preschoolers have long-lasting positive effects on how children learn and develop.<sup>1</sup> **Early Head Start and Head Start** programs are two-generation programs that provide comprehensive early education and support services to very low-income children and families (under 130% FPL or \$25,727 for a family of 3 in 2014) in order to promote school readiness. Children in families with incomes below the poverty level are prioritized for enrollment.<sup>2</sup> Rhode Island invests \$1 million in state directed resources to fund 130 Head Start slots, reducing waiting lists for the primarily federally-funded program.

Pregnant women can enroll in Early Head Start and stay in the program until their baby turns three. Families enroll in either a center-based or a home-based program to support child development. Head Start is a preschool program for low-income children ages three and four. Both Early Head Start and Head Start programs deliver early education, medical and dental screenings and referrals, nutrition services, mental health services, family engagement activities, and social service referrals for the whole family.<sup>3</sup>

### ACCESS TO EARLY HEAD START AND HEAD START, RHODE ISLAND, 2013



Source: Rhode Island Early Head Start and Head Start program enrollment data compiled by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, October 2013. Estimated eligible children is the number of children up to age five according to Census 2010 multiplied by the % of children under age six living in families with incomes below 125% of the federal poverty level (FPL) according to the Population Reference Bureau's analysis of U.S. Census 2008-2012 American Community Survey. 5-year estimates. Estimates for children living in families between 125% and 129% FPL are not available.

- As of October 2013, there were 515 pregnant women, infants and toddlers enrolled in Early Head Start and 2,040 preschool children enrolled in Head Start. Only 6% of all income-eligible children were enrolled in Early Head Start and only 33% of all income-eligible children are enrolled in Head Start.<sup>4</sup>
- Neither Early Head Start nor Head Start are funded at a level to serve all eligible children. In 2013, there were 256 eligible children and pregnant women on waiting lists for Early Head Start services and 699 eligible children on waiting lists for Head Start. No Early Head Start services were available in Woonsocket, Cumberland, Lincoln, or any towns in Washington County.<sup>5</sup>

## Early Head Start Works

Research shows that participation in Early Head Start contributes to significant cognitive, language, and social-emotional gains in participating children. Participating parents provide more emotional support, more opportunities for language and learning to their children, and are more likely to pursue education and job-training activities and to be employed.<sup>6,7</sup> Children who continue on to Head Start or another high-quality preschool program after Early Head Start have the best outcomes, including stronger early reading skills.<sup>8</sup>

## Head Start Works

Head Start is designed to address a wide variety of needs during the two years before kindergarten so that low-income children can begin school on a more equal footing with their economically advantaged peers. Head Start programs have been found to be higher quality and more effective than many other early learning programs.<sup>9,10</sup> Children who participate in Head Start show improvements in math, language, and literacy skills and have fewer behavior problems. Lasting impacts for children who participate in Head Start include reduced grade retention and special education placement and increased high school graduation rates.<sup>11,12</sup>

## Recommendations

- Ensure all Head Start and Early Head Start slots cut through the federal sequestration are restored with federal funding that was reinstated in January 2014.
- Pursue new federal funding through Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership grants to expand high quality early learning opportunities for young children in Rhode Island.
- Expand state and federal investments in Early Head Start and Head Start so that more eligible children can enroll.

## References

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<sup>2,3,4,5</sup> Children Enrolled in Early Head Start and Children Enrolled in Head Start. *2014 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

<sup>6</sup> Raikes, H.H., Chazan-Cohen, R., Love, J.M. & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2010). Early Head Start impacts at age 3 and a description of the age 5 follow-up study. In A.J. Reynolds, A.J. Rolnick, M.M. Englund & J.A. Temple (Eds.), *Childhood programs and practices in the first decade of life*. (pp. 99-118). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Early Head Start: Research Findings. (2010). *Child Trends: Early Childhood Highlights 1(2)*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.

<sup>8</sup> Love, J.M., Chazan-Cohen, R., Raikes, H. & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2013). What makes a difference: Early Head Start evaluation findings in a developmental context. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 78(1), vii-viii, 1-173.

<sup>9,12</sup> Resnick, G. (2010). Project Head Start: Quality and links to child outcomes. In A.J. Reynolds, A.J. Rolnick, M.M. Englund, & J.A. Temple (Eds.), *Childhood programs and practices in the first decade of life: A human capital integration*. (121-153). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>10</sup> Barnett, W.S. (2002). *The battle over Head Start: What the research shows*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, National Institute for Early Education Research.

<sup>11</sup> Barnett, S. & Frede, E. (2009). *Federal early childhood policy guide for the first 100 days*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, National Institute for Early Education Research.



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