

# Children Receiving Preschool Special Education Services

## DEFINITION

Children receiving preschool special education services is the percentage of children ages three to five who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and are receiving special education services in Rhode Island.

## SIGNIFICANCE

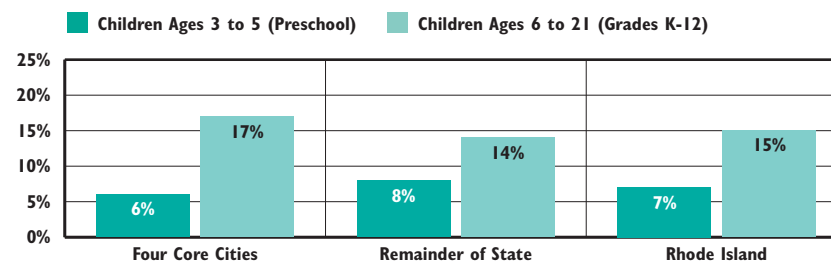
Preschool special education is an important component of the early care and education system, providing access to early learning opportunities for hundreds of thousands of preschool-age children across the U.S.<sup>1</sup> The federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* specifies that, beginning at age three, children are eligible for special education through their local school district if they have a specific disability or a developmental delay in one or more of the following areas: physical, cognitive, communication, social/emotional, or adaptive.<sup>2</sup> Children under age three are eligible for special education services through Early Intervention providers.<sup>3</sup>

Developmental delays are identified when a child does not reach developmental milestones at the same time as other children his or her age. Some young children with developmental delays are eventually diagnosed with a disability while others catch up to their peers when therapy or intervention is provided.<sup>4,5</sup>

In Rhode Island, children are eligible for special education services under the “developmental delay” category up to age eight.<sup>6</sup> As of June 2015, 41% of children in preschool special education in Rhode Island qualified under the developmental delay category, 49% had an identified speech/language disability, 6% were diagnosed with autism, and 5% had another diagnosed disability.<sup>7</sup>

Under *IDEA*, states are required to identify, locate, and evaluate all children ages birth to 21 with disabilities in the state.<sup>8</sup> Early childhood developmental screening is often the first step in identifying children who may have a disability or developmental delay and could benefit from intervention. Regular screening during the early stages of life, followed by evaluation and diagnostic assessment for children who appear to have special needs, helps children gain early access to needed services in order to prevent the occurrence of more severe problems.<sup>9</sup> In Rhode Island, school districts work to screen every child ages three through five every year through the Child Outreach screening program. Screenings are conducted in the child’s dominant language.<sup>10</sup> In the 2014-2015 school year in Rhode Island, districts completed developmental screenings for 14% of three-year-olds, 38% of four-year-olds, and 50% of five-year-olds.<sup>11</sup>

Special Education Participation Rate,  
Children Ages 3 to 5 and 6 to 21, Rhode Island, June 2015



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, June 2015 Special Education Census. Denominator for children ages three to five is the number of children ages three to five residing in each district. Denominator for children ages six to 21 is the resident average daily membership (RADM) from RIDE. RADM only includes children receiving public education services so it is not comparable to the preschool special education denominator.

- ◆ Approximately 15% of children ages three to 17 have a developmental disability. Children in low-income families are more likely to have a developmental disability than children in higher-income families.<sup>12</sup>
- ◆ In June 2015 there were 2,972 children ages three to five receiving preschool special education services, 7% of all preschool-age children in the state. Children in the four core cities are less likely to be receiving preschool special education services (6%) than children in the remainder of the state (8%). Twenty-eight percent of the students receiving preschool special education services were eligible for free or reduced price lunch, less than the state’s overall rate of 47%.<sup>13</sup>
- ◆ In June 2015 in Rhode Island, 47% of preschool-age children received special education services within an inclusive early childhood classroom along with their typically developing peers, while 17% were enrolled in a separate special education class, school, or residential facility. Other children were not enrolled in an early childhood classroom, receiving services through “walk-in” visits to a service provider (25%) or at home (1%). Another 10% were enrolled in a regular early childhood classroom but did not receive their special education services in that class.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ In June 2015, children in the four core cities were less likely to receive preschool special education services in an inclusive early childhood setting (41%) than children in the remainder of the state (50%).<sup>15</sup> Inclusion in high-quality early learning programs benefits children with and without disabilities.<sup>16</sup>

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Table 38.

Children Ages 3 to 5 Receiving Special Education Services, Rhode Island, 2015

SCHOOL DISTRICT	# OF CHILDREN AGES 3-5	DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING RATES			PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION BY SETTING				
		% 3-YEAR-OLDS SCREENED	% 4-YEAR-OLDS SCREENED	% 5-YEAR-OLDS SCREENED	INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASS	% IN INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASS	OTHER SETTING	TOTAL # RECEIVING SERVICES	% RECEIVING SERVICES
Barrington	557	37%	65%	88%	10	21%	37	47	8%
Bristol Warren	897	18%	43%	49%	43	61%	27	70	8%
Burrillville	485	7%	43%	59%	39	66%	20	59	12%
Central Falls	1,164	33%	51%	72%	36	42%	49	85	7%
Chariho	682	23%	58%	64%	23	32%	49	72	11%
Coventry	1,000	14%	39%	56%	62	62%	38	100	10%
Cranston	2,673	11%	40%	63%	49	31%	110	159	6%
Cumberland	1,194	8%	41%	46%	50	56%	40	90	8%
East Greenwich	567	6%	38%	37%	*	19%	25	31	5%
East Providence	1,677	11%	35%	51%	40	30%	95	135	8%
Exeter-West Greenwich	368	24%	59%	74%	11	31%	24	35	10%
Foster	104	14%	39%	50%	*	55%	*	11	11%
Glocester	229	14%	39%	50%	11	44%	14	25	11%
Jamestown	146	36%	47%	58%	*	64%	*	11	8%
Johnston	935	23%	40%	62%	35	40%	52	87	9%
Lincoln	720	19%	53%	62%	74	80%	19	93	13%
Little Compton	89	13%	32%	59%	0	NA	0	0	0%
Middletown	847	12%	25%	36%	44	80%	11	55	6%
Narragansett	247	37%	63%	74%	25	86%	*	29	12%
New Shoreham	36	0%	40%	50%	*	100%	0	*	8%
Newport	1,145	12%	32%	31%	48	72%	19	67	6%
North Kingstown	851	27%	67%	78%	37	60%	25	62	7%
North Providence	1,080	14%	34%	58%	44	51%	43	87	8%
North Smithfield	343	25%	54%	62%	15	44%	19	34	10%
Pawtucket	3,457	10%	31%	50%	62	33%	126	188	5%
Portsmouth	577	11%	27%	50%	21	55%	17	38	7%
Providence	9,217	11%	32%	33%	227	48%	250	477	5%
Scituate	259	14%	39%	50%	13	46%	15	28	11%
Smithfield	479	29%	65%	69%	25	52%	23	48	10%
South Kingstown	787	25%	60%	77%	31	56%	24	55	7%
Tiverton	466	11%	27%	48%	21	58%	15	36	8%
Warwick	2,613	10%	28%	48%	83	44%	107	190	7%
West Warwick	1,195	12%	46%	65%	46	39%	73	119	10%
Westerly	765	36%	68%	68%	57	80%	14	71	9%
Woonsocket	2,020	12%	21%	43%	73	34%	143	216	11%
Charter Schools	NA	NA	NA	NA	12	92%	*	13	NA
RI School for the Deaf	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	0%	*	*	NA
Four Core Cities	15,858	12%	31%	40%	398	41%	568	966	6%
Remainder of State	24,013	16%	42%	57%	979	50%	968	1,947	8%
Rhode Island	39,871	14%	38%	50%	1,389	47%	1,538	2,927	7%

## Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), June 2015 Special Education Census.

\*Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These students are still counted in district totals and in the four core cities, remainder of the state, and state totals.

The denominator is the number of children ages three to five residing in each district during the 2014-2015 school year from the Rhode Island Department of Health's KIDSNET database shared with RIDE.

Due to changes in the denominator, screening rates and percentage receiving preschool special education services should not be compared with data in previous Factbooks.

2014-2015 Child Outreach screening data is from the RIDE Office of Student, Community, and Academic Supports. Foster, Glocester, and Scituate school districts collaborate to conduct Child Outreach screenings. Separate rates are not available for each of these districts so the same combined rate is used for all three districts.

Inclusive early childhood class means children receive the majority of their special education services in a general early childhood education class at a public school, Head Start program, or a community-based child care program or preschool. Data include children who are district-placed and who are parentally-placed.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Epstein, D. J. & Barnett, W. S. (2012). Early education in the United States: Programs and access. In R. C. Pianta, W. S. Barnett, L. M. Justice., & S. M. Sheridan, (Eds.), *Handbook of early childhood education* (pp. 3-21). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

<sup>2,4,6</sup> Danaher, J. (2011). *NECTAC notes: Eligibility policies and practices for young children under Part B of IDEA*. Chapel Hill, NC: National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center.

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