

# 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. The federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* specifies that children ages three to five with developmental delays and disabilities have the same right to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment as school-age children with disabilities.<sup>1</sup>

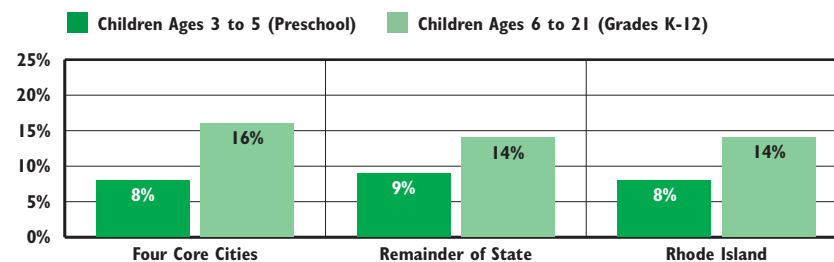
Developmental delays and disabilities are identified when a child does not reach developmental milestones at the same time as other children his or her age. Some young children with developmental delays are eventually diagnosed with a disability while others catch up to their peers when provided with high-quality educational opportunities, therapies or interventions.<sup>2,3</sup> Early childhood developmental screening is the first step in identifying children who may have a disability or developmental delay. Regular screening during the early stages of life, followed by evaluation and diagnostic assessment, helps children gain

early access to needed services in order to prevent the occurrence of more severe problems.<sup>4</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>5</sup> In the 2015-2016 school year in Rhode Island, districts completed developmental screenings for 38% of children ages three to five. Although screening rates improved from 2014-2015, preschool-age children in the core cities are still less likely to have a developmental screening (31%) than children in the remainder of the state (43%).<sup>6</sup>

Approximately 15% of U.S. children ages three to 17 have a developmental disability, with boys and children in low-income families more likely to have a disability than girls and children in higher-income families.<sup>7</sup> Under *IDEA*, each state sets its own criteria to determine eligibility for special education services, deciding where to draw the line along a continuum of functioning to identify children who are sufficiently delayed to need special education services.<sup>8</sup> As of 2014, Rhode Island served 8.9% of children ages three to five, compared with a U.S. average of 6.1%, ranking among the top states for providing preschool special education services.<sup>9</sup>

Special Education Participation Rate,  
Children Ages 3 to 5 and 6 to 21, Rhode Island, June 2016



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, June 2016 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.

- ◆ In June 2016, there were 3,050 children ages three to five receiving preschool special education services, 8% of all preschool-age children in Rhode Island. Children in the four core cities are slightly less likely to be receiving preschool special education services (8%) than children in the remainder of the state (9%).<sup>10</sup>
- ◆ Preschool children with disabilities who attend high-quality preschool with typically developing children, receiving special education services in inclusive settings, have improved outcomes.<sup>11</sup> In June 2016 in Rhode Island, 47% of preschool-age children received special education services within an inclusive early childhood classroom. Children in the four core cities were less likely to receive preschool special education services in an inclusive early childhood setting (42%) than children in the remainder of the state (50%).<sup>12</sup>
- ◆ The majority of children in Rhode Island receive preschool special education services outside of inclusive preschool programs, with 15% enrolled in a separate special education preschool class or school, 24% receiving services through “walk-in” visits to a service provider, less than 1% in a home or hospital, and another 13% enrolled in a preschool setting but receiving special education services in another location.<sup>13</sup>
- ◆ In June 2016, 41% of the 3,050 children receiving preschool special education services in Rhode Island qualified under the developmental delay category, 48% had an identified speech/language disability, 6% were diagnosed with autism, and 4% had another diagnosed disability.<sup>14</sup>

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Table 41.

Children Ages 3 to 5 Receiving Special Education Services, Rhode Island, 2016

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	550	37%	76%	87%	22	39%	34	56	10%
Bristol Warren	771	18%	46%	42%	34	49%	35	69	9%
Burrillville	418	19%	48%	67%	34	56%	27	61	15%
Central Falls	1,000	32%	51%	73%	57	44%	74	131	13%
Chariho	678	20%	53%	69%	32	40%	49	81	12%
Coventry	996	25%	48%	67%	60	63%	35	95	10%
Cranston	2,616	11%	38%	59%	66	35%	120	186	7%
Cumberland	1,208	9%	38%	56%	58	59%	40	98	8%
East Greenwich	459	14%	46%	47%	*	18%	27	33	7%
East Providence	1,498	9%	41%	56%	16	14%	100	116	8%
Exeter-West Greenwich	339	19%	65%	78%	15	42%	21	36	11%
Foster	100	21%	60%	66%	*	40%	*	*	5%
Glocester	236	21%	60%	66%	11	42%	15	26	11%
Jamestown	125	34%	63%	78%	14	82%	*	17	14%
Johnston	797	22%	49%	71%	23	29%	56	79	10%
Lincoln	639	14%	57%	67%	71	83%	15	86	13%
Little Compton	66	7%	63%	81%	*	100%	0	*	5%
Middletown	817	14%	25%	36%	34	81%	*	42	5%
Narragansett	232	34%	70%	77%	19	68%	*	28	12%
New Shoreham	36	0%	56%	46%	*	83%	*	*	17%
Newport	953	12%	40%	51%	40	70%	17	57	6%
North Kingstown	745	33%	64%	76%	48	72%	19	67	9%
North Providence	929	19%	49%	60%	35	43%	47	82	9%
North Smithfield	306	18%	47%	74%	23	56%	18	41	13%
Pawtucket	3,034	7%	33%	41%	93	45%	114	207	7%
Portsmouth	503	32%	58%	71%	24	52%	22	46	9%
Providence	8,107	16%	39%	39%	256	50%	253	509	6%
Scituate	253	21%	60%	66%	18	72%	*	25	10%
Smithfield	447	27%	68%	79%	24	53%	21	45	10%
South Kingstown	694	33%	59%	71%	22	34%	43	65	9%
Tiverton	453	13%	38%	65%	32	71%	13	45	10%
Warwick	2,525	11%	35%	53%	83	50%	83	166	7%
West Warwick	1,014	18%	55%	66%	59	43%	77	136	13%
Westerly	617	34%	70%	83%	62	79%	16	78	13%
Woonsocket	1,901	8%	25%	51%	37	17%	176	213	11%
Charter Schools	NA	NA	NA	NA	*	78%	*	*	NA
RI School for the Deaf	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	0%	*	*	NA
Four Core Cities	14,042	14%	37%	43%	443	42%	617	1,060	8%
Remainder of State	22,020	18%	47%	62%	995	50%	981	1,976	9%
Rhode Island	36,062	16%	43%	55%	1,445	47%	1,605	3,050	8%

## Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), June 2016 Special Education Census.

2015-2016 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.

\*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 2015-2016 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 Factbooks published before 2016.

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.

NA=Not applicable.

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

## References

- Hebbeler, K. & Spiker, D. (2016). Supporting young children with disabilities. *The Future of Children*, 26(2), 185-205.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Developmental screening fact sheet*. Retrieved January 18, 2016, from www.cdc.gov
- Meisels, S. J. & Atkins-Burnett, S. (2005). *Developmental screening in early childhood: A guide*. (5th edition). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

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