

Children Enrolled in Early Head Start

DEFINITION

Children enrolled in Early Head Start is the number and percentage of low-income infants and toddlers enrolled in a Rhode Island Early Head Start program.

SIGNIFICANCE

Early Head Start is an intensive, comprehensive early childhood program serving low-income children birth to age three, pregnant women, and their families. Early Head Start programs serve families with the greatest needs, including families living in or near poverty and families receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. The federally-funded Early Head Start program is designed to address the comprehensive needs of low-income infants and toddlers and pregnant women by providing high-quality early education, nutrition and mental health services, health and developmental screenings and referrals, and fostering the development of healthy family relationships.^{1,2,3}

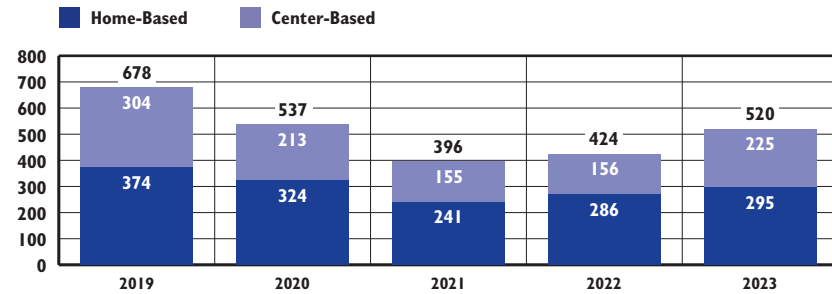
There are two different ways families participate in Early Head Start. Home-based programs use weekly home visits and twice-monthly group meetings to support child development. Children in center-based models attend a high-quality center-based early care and education program and families receive at least two home visits per year.⁴

Starting in 2014, federal Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership funding expanded access to Early Head Start by building the capacity of child care programs to meet Early Head Start quality standards, providing high-quality, full-day, full-year child care with comprehensive services to low-income infants, toddlers, and their families.⁵

In Rhode Island in 2023, 93% of children enrolled in Early Head Start or an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership were in a program that had achieved a high-quality BrightStars rating of four or five stars while only 18% of infants and toddlers enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program were in a high-quality program.^{6,7}

Early Head Start has been shown to produce significant cognitive, language, and social-emotional gains in participating children and more positive interactions with their parents. Early Head Start parents provide more emotional support, more opportunities for language development, read more to their children, are less likely to use physical discipline, and are more likely to create a stimulating environment at home. Early Head Start parents are also less likely to experience depression and more likely to be self-sufficient with higher incomes. Children who enroll in high-quality preschool after Early Head Start have better outcomes at kindergarten entry.^{8,9}

Early Head Start Enrollment, 2019-2023, Rhode Island



Source: Rhode Island Early Head Start program reports to Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, October 2019 – October 2023.

- ★ As of October 2023 in Rhode Island, there were 520 individuals (505 infants and toddlers and 15 pregnant women) enrolled in Early Head Start, up 23% from 2022 but still down 23% from 2019. An estimated 4% of the infants and toddlers in low-income families in Rhode Island were enrolled.^{10,11}
- ★ In October 2023, there were 139 Early Head Start seats in Rhode Island that did not have enrolled children because of staff vacancies, 21% of funded capacity. Statewide, there were 148 eligible children on a waiting list for Early Head Start.¹²
- ★ Of the 520 children and pregnant women enrolled in Early Head Start in 2023, 295 (57%) were participating in a home-based program and 225 (43%) were enrolled in a center-based program. Three percent of Early Head Start clients were pregnant women, 13% were infants under age one, 31% were age one, 48% were age two, and 5% were age three.¹³
- ★ In 2023, Rhode Island Early Head Start programs served children with high needs including: 66 infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities (13% of all children enrolled), 26 children who were in foster care, and 21 children who were homeless. Early Head Start programs are required to enroll children with disabilities and to screen all enrolled children to identify developmental delays and disabilities.^{14,15}

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Table 32.

Children Ages Birth to Three and Pregnant Women Enrolled in Early Head Start, Rhode Island, 2023

SCHOOL DISTRICT	# OF CHILDREN <AGE 3	% LOW-INCOME CHILDREN IN DISTRICT	ESTIMATED # LOW-INCOME CHILDREN <AGE 3	# ENROLLED IN HOME-BASED EARLY HEAD START	# ENROLLED IN CENTER-BASED EARLY HEAD START	# ENROLLED IN EARLY HEAD START	ESTIMATED % OF LOW-INCOME INFANTS AND TODDLERS ENROLLED IN EARLY HEAD START
Barrington	412	7%	29	0	0	0	0%
Bristol	375	32%	120	1	3	4	3%
Burrillville	388	34%	132	4	5	9	7%
Central Falls	937	94%	881	35	5	40	5%
Charlestown	157	19%	30	0	1	1	3%
Coventry	893	30%	268	2	6	8	3%
Cranston	2,271	44%	999	0	21	21	2%
Cumberland	1,097	19%	208	0	3	3	1%
East Greenwich	353	6%	21	1	1	2	9%
East Providence	1,237	49%	606	2	16	18	3%
Exeter	158	12%	19	0	1	1	5%
Foster	113	26%	29	0	0	0	0%
Glocester	250	13%	33	0	1	1	3%
Hopkinton	196	19%	37	1	0	1	3%
Jamestown	90	7%	6	0	0	0	0%
Johnston	703	45%	316	5	4	9	3%
Lincoln	531	26%	138	0	0	0	0%
Little Compton	73	13%	9	0	0	0	0%
Middletown	520	31%	161	4	2	6	4%
Narragansett	175	14%	25	0	0	0	0%
New Shoreham	14	19%	3	0	0	0	0%
Newport	606	68%	412	9	15	24	6%
North Kingstown	729	20%	146	2	0	2	1%
North Providence	914	39%	356	15	9	24	7%
North Smithfield	286	19%	54	0	1	1	2%
Pawtucket	2,652	55%	1,459	44	18	62	4%
Portsmouth	441	14%	62	2	3	5	8%
Providence	6,323	78%	4,932	133	37	170	3%
Richmond	234	19%	44	0	0	0	0%
Scituate	244	16%	39	1	1	2	5%
Smithfield	445	11%	49	1	3	4	8%
South Kingstown	501	19%	95	5	7	12	13%
Tiverton	351	27%	95	3	0	3	3%
Warren	243	32%	78	1	1	2	3%
Warwick	2,146	38%	815	13	34	47	6%
West Greenwich	159	12%	19	0	0	0	0%
West Warwick	900	41%	369	9	20	29	8%
Westerly	496	34%	169	2	0	2	1%
Woonsocket	1,469	48%	705	0	7	7	1%
Four Core Cities	11,381	69%	7,853	212	67	279	4%
Remainder of State	18,701	30%	5,610	83	158	241	4%
Rhode Island	30,082	44%	13,236	295	225	520	4%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Early Head Start Programs, children enrolled as of October 2023. Children enrolled are listed by residence of child, not location of the Head Start program.

The estimated number of low-income children under age three is based on the number of children under age 3 according to Census 2020, Table PCT12 multiplied by the percentage of students who qualified for free or reduced-price lunch (at or below 185% of the federal poverty level) in each city or town's school district. Free and reduced-price lunch data are from Rhode Island Department of Education, 2023-2024 school year.

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

References

- ¹ Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center. *What is Early Head Start and why is it important?* Retrieved March 15, 2024, from www.pn3policy.org
- ² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (2024). *Eligibility: Determining need and meeting expectations.* Retrieved March 15, 2024, from eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov
- ^{3,8} Shaffner, M. & Cole, P. (2021). *Early Head Start: An essential support for pregnant women, infants, and toddlers.* Washington, DC: Zero to Three.
- ⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center. (2018). *Early Head Start program options.* Retrieved March 15, 2024, from eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov
- ⁵ Schumacher, R., Bernhard, K., Wallen, M., Reidt-Parker, J., & Kohler, C. (2020). *Expanding high-quality child care for infants and toddlers: Lessons learned from implementation of Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships in states.* Chicago, IL: The Ounce of Prevention Fund.
- ^{6,10,12,13,14} Rhode Island Early Head Start program reports to Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, October 2019 - October 2023.

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