



**Early Head Start
Advocacy Toolkit**



As Head Start community members and advocates for children and families, we know you help make this bright future possible. But insufficient funding means Early Head Start is only able to serve 11% of eligible infants, toddlers, and families. Now is the time to increase funding and expand access to Early Head Start to level the playing field and make sure all families have the wraparound support they need during the most critical years of a child’s development.

That’s why we’ve created a data-backed communications toolkit that you can use to easily communicate with policymakers, policy influencers, the business community, your partners, and families about the impact of Early Head Start on your community and on our nation. Through this toolkit, we are sharing materials that help you communicate directly with policymakers and policy influencers, along with resources to help you grow new champions.

When you are addressing a particular audience or stakeholder, you want to make sure the conversation you’re having reflects their unique experiences, areas of interest, and benefits that Early Head Start support can provide. You may not need to use every talking point when engaging with an individual, so select what works best for your needs and conversation.

Table of Contents

- Audience Talking Points 3**
 - Policy Influencers & Policymakers 3**
 - Parents & Families 7**
 - Business Community 11**
 - Partner NonProfits & Organizations 15**
- Case Study Guide & Template 19**
 - Example 21**
- Social Media Guide 22**
 - Sample Facebook Posts 24**
 - Sample Twitter Posts 26**



Our mission is to coalesce, inspire, and support the Head Start field as a leader in early childhood development and education.



For policy influencers and policymakers, **combining brain development with a sense of urgency and a health-based outcome is key.** Messages related to equity and issues they care about—lower birth rates, or identifying developmental delays early—round out the messages.

Now is the time to invest in our nation’s greatest resource—our youngest children. We must expand Early Head Start and ensure all families have the wraparound support they need during the most critical years of a child’s development—prenatal to age three—to level the playing field and build a strong foundation for a brighter future.

- Early Head Start is the only federal program focused on prenatal to age three early development and learning for families from income-eligible households, with a proven impact on the lives of infants and toddlers and their families.
- By providing families with no cost, wraparound support focused on early development and learning, such as home visiting, health screenings, enriching child care, and parental education, parents are better equipped with the skills to build a strong foundation for their young children’s future.

The Need

Our youngest children are our future leaders and our future workforce, and their brains are rapidly developing right now. They only get one chance at a head start.

- Prior to the pandemic, Early Head Start only reached 11% of eligible infants and toddlers and their families. Because of COVID-19, even more children and their families have fallen behind.
- Children's brains and bodies develop more during the first three years than at any other point, setting the stage for lifelong physical, social, and emotional health.



Only **11%** of eligible children and their families had access.

- ✓ We have a unique window of opportunity—prenatal to age three—to build a child's foundational physical, mental, social, and emotional health and encourage lifelong growth and development.
- ✓ One in six children in the United States has a disability. By identifying children's developmental delays early, we can intervene early, reducing the likelihood of their disabilities worsening, decreasing the need for services later in life, and saving money that can be used to serve more infants and toddlers.

Today's families, especially income-eligible families, are struggling to support their infants and toddlers. Without access to wraparound support, our country's economic and family structures are at risk.

- Over 50% of America's income-eligible families are Hispanic or African American. There is a need to increase the wraparound support available to meet the growth among these populations.
- Investing in families is investing in our future workforce. If we hope to turn around the record low birth rate among U.S. families and eliminate a potential economic downturn, we need to support pregnant families and infants and toddlers.
- Parents, especially income-eligible parents, are better positioned to support their infants and toddlers when they have the skills and resources they need to foster their children's development.

Why Increase Funding for Early Head Start?

For over 25-years, Early Head Start has helped millions of infants and toddlers and their families thrive.

- **We meet families where they are and successfully serve the needs of diverse communities.** Early Head Start's model offers a range of locally-driven options at no cost to families, including year-round and home-based support, and robust partnership opportunities with child care partners.
- **We build a strong foundation for infants and toddlers AND their families.** When parents and families can access the wraparound support they need, they strengthen their parenting skills and their bond with their children. By ensuring young children and their families have what they need from prenatal to age three, we create a strong foundation for their future.
- Research shows that:
 - ✓ children in Early Head Start make gains in new social-emotional skills and sustain the positive impacts through at least fifth grade.
 - ✓ children also make gains in language and cognitive development.
 - ✓ families and children who had received Early Head Start services are significantly less likely to be reported to child welfare agencies—a measure of child abuse or neglect—than children and families not in the program.
 - ✓ parents who participate in Early Head Start improve their parenting skills.
 - ✓ fathers who participate in Early Head Start are more engaged in their children's lives.
- **We make sure families and young children see themselves, their culture, and backgrounds through our services and care providers.** Recognizing that families, especially Hispanic families, underutilize government assistance programs that serve families who experience poverty, Early Head Start is committed to reaching families who may not traditionally access these services. We integrate cultural competencies directly into our standards and hire child care teachers and staff and health care providers who represent the families and infants and toddlers they serve.
- **We build communities of care and foster cross-sector collaborations.** Through Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, Early Head Start programs have partnered with over 1,400 child care centers and 1,000 in-home child care providers to provide 38,000 infants and toddlers and their families quality wraparound support. By working together, we can more effectively and efficiently extend Early Head Start resources to more early learning settings.
- **We create a bridge to Head Start and kindergarten.** Our connection to Head Start allows us to continue to support children through age five. Research shows that Early Head Start infants and toddlers who continue to Head Start are more ready for kindergarten.
- **We help break the generational cycles of poverty.** Research shows that:
 - ✓ Early Head Start mothers who enrolled during pregnancy are better able to emotionally support their children, which leads to improved social-emotional health and cognitive development.
 - ✓ investing money to lift kids out of poverty, especially infants and toddlers, has enormous lifelong benefits, including improved academic performance and better health.

How it Gets Done

Only one in 10 infants, toddlers and families who should have access to Early Head Start based on their income currently do. Why? Because of insufficient funding. Increasing funding is a necessary first step to ensure all families have access to the crucial support and services they need during their child's earliest years. It's a good investment, too. For every dollar spent on early childhood education, the return is between \$4 and \$9.



- Investing money to lift kids out of poverty, especially infants and toddlers, has enormous long-term benefits:
 - ✓ Early Head Start children do better in school, they're more likely to graduate high school, and more likely to attend college.
 - ✓ They're less likely to be recipients of public assistance.
 - ✓ When they're older, their health is better.
 - ✓ They're less likely to be engaged in criminal activity, and they live longer.

- To support young children and their families through an expansion of Early Head Start, the federal government must:
 - ✓ permanently expand the number of Early Head Start spaces funded on an annual basis by 500,000; and
 - ✓ make sure all income-eligible children, prenatal to five, can access Early Head Start and Head Start services

- State governments also have a significant role to play to expand Early Head Start, including:
 - ✓ allocating COVID-19 recovery funding to expand Early Head Start and create or improve facilities; and
 - ✓ encouraging partnerships with child care programs to reach more children.

The Vision

Early Head Start helps families navigate and access the comprehensive, wraparound support they need during the most critical years of their children's development—prenatal to age three. **When all families are able to build a strong foundation for their children, we all have a brighter, healthier future.**



Healthy brain development is important to parents and families, as is the social and emotional development that happens most during a child's earliest years. **They recognize the value of helping their children learn and grow new skills to ensure their child's success.**

Our youngest children, and their families who help them grow, are our nation's greatest resource. Now is the time to level the playing field and make sure they all have the wraparound support they need during the most critical years of a child's development—prenatal to age three. We must expand Early Head Start to ensure that all families can access the support that will help them build a strong foundation for a brighter future.

- Early Head Start provides no-cost, comprehensive, wraparound support, such as home visiting, quality child care, and parental skill-building and education, to pregnant families and children from income-eligible households during the most crucial years in a child's development—prenatal to age three.
- It is the only federal program focused on prenatal to age three early development and learning for families from income-eligible households, with a proven impact on the lives of infants and toddlers and their families.
- Early Head Start strengthens families by:
 - ✓ giving parents and families early intervention support, education, and resources that build lifelong skills;
 - ✓ increasing parent and family engagement and creating closer bonds; and
 - ✓ [helping families navigate and access critical services](#), especially children and families of color who historically have faced inequitable access.

The Need

Every parent wants the best for their children, and children only get one chance at a head start—prenatal to age three.

- The window of opportunity for parents and families to build their infant’s and toddler’s foundational physical, social, and emotional health is small.
 - ✓ The first three years of a child’s life are the most critical for brain development, setting the stage for lifelong physical, social, and emotional health.
 - ✓ In a baby’s first three years of life, the brain forms more than [one million neural connections each second](#). Connections that get reinforced stay, but over time, connections that aren’t reinforced are lost.

- Rising child care costs, a lack of prenatal, pregnancy, and postpartum services, and no federal paid family leave policy make it difficult for parents and families to access quality development support, leaving their young children at a disadvantage.
 - ✓ This is especially true among families from income-eligible households. Prior to the pandemic, Early Head Start only reached 11% of eligible infants and toddlers and their families.
 - ✓ Because of COVID-19, even more children and their families are struggling [as poverty rates for children and families increase](#).

- Parents know the value of building a strong healthy physical, social, and emotional foundation; it is the key to lifelong happiness and success.
 - ✓ When all parents and children are able to access no-cost wraparound support, education, and resources to help them intervene early, strengthen their parenting skills, and support the development of children in their earliest years, we can level the playing field for all families.



Only **11%** of eligible children and their families had access.

Why Increase Funding for Early Head Start?

Through Early Head Start, there are no-cost wraparound supports available to help families build their child's foundational health.

- **Early Head Start builds a strong foundation for infants and toddlers AND their families.** When parents and families can access prenatal to age three wraparound early intervention support, education, and resources, their parenting skills and bond with their children grow stronger, ensuring their children's healthy development. Research shows that:
 - ✓ children in Early Head Start make gains in social-emotional skills, such as expressing and managing emotions, and sustain the positive impacts through at least fifth grade.
 - ✓ children also make gains in language and cognitive development, or how they think, explore and figure things out.
 - ✓ parents who participate in Early Head Start improve their parenting skills.
 - ✓ fathers who participate in Early Head Start are more engaged in their children's lives.
- **We build parents' and families' parenting skills and give them the support to put these skills into practice every day.** We offer income-eligible families no-cost wraparound support, such as full-day, high-quality child care, healthcare screenings, and home visiting, putting parents and families in a better position to pursue education and work opportunities, all of which build their child's foundational and long-term health and wellness.
- **We make sure families and young children see themselves, their culture, and backgrounds through our services and child care teachers and staff.** We integrate cultural competencies directly into our standards and hire child care teachers and staff and health care providers who represent the families and infants and toddlers they serve.
- **We create a bridge to Head Start and kindergarten.** Our connection to Head Start allows us to continue to support children through age five. Research shows that Early Head Start infants and toddlers who continue to Head Start are more ready for kindergarten.
- **We help provide equitable access to wraparound support so we can level the playing field for all families.** Research shows that:
 - ✓ Early Head Start mothers who enrolled during pregnancy are better able to emotionally support their children, which leads to improved social-emotional health and cognitive development.
 - ✓ investing money to provide early support for children and families, especially young children, has enormous lifelong benefits, including improved academic performance and better health.

How it Gets Done

Only one in 10 infants, toddlers and families who should have access to Early Head Start based on their income currently do. Why? Because of insufficient funding. Increasing funding is a necessary first step to ensure all families have access to the crucial support and services they need during their child's earliest years. It's a good investment, too. For every dollar spent on early childhood education, the return is between \$4 and \$9.



- At the local level, this means that parents and families have an essential role to play, advocating on behalf of young children prenatal to age three, along with the parents and caregivers who work so hard to foster their development.
 - ✓ Contact your local Head Start Association to learn more about how they are helping working parents and infants and toddlers in your community.
 - ✓ Contact your state and federal representatives to advocate for additional Early Head Start funding.
- At the state level, this means:
 - ✓ allocating COVID-19 recovery funding to expand Early Head Start and create or improve facilities; and
 - ✓ encouraging partnerships with child care programs to reach more children.
- At the federal level, this means:
 - ✓ permanently expanding the number of Early Head Start spaces funded on an annual basis by 500,000; and
 - ✓ making sure all income-eligible children, age prenatal to five, can access Early Head Start and Head Start services.

The Vision

Early Head Start helps families navigate and access the comprehensive, wraparound support they need during the most critical years of their children's development—prenatal to toddler. **When all families are able to build a strong foundation for their children, we all have a brighter, healthier future.**



The business community cares about **the workforce of today and building a strong, lasting workforce for tomorrow**. Business leaders recognize the critical role that families play to keep our economy going and our nation thriving.

Now is the time to invest in our nation’s greatest resource—our youngest children and the families who love and nurture them. We must expand Early Head Start and ensure all families have the wraparound support they need during the most critical years of a child’s development—prenatal to age three—to help parents and families build a strong foundation for a brighter future.

- Early Head Start provides comprehensive, no-cost, wraparound support, such as home visiting, enriching child care, and parental skill-building and education, to pregnant families and children from income-eligible households during the most crucial years in a child’s development—prenatal to age three.
- By providing infants and toddlers and their families with wraparound support focused on prenatal to age three early development and learning, parents and families are better equipped with the skills they need to build a strong foundation for their young children’s future.

The Need

Our youngest children are our future leaders and our future workforce, and their brains are rapidly developing right now. They only get one chance at a head start.

- Prior to the pandemic, Early Head Start only reached 11% of eligible infants and toddlers and their families. Because of COVID-19, even more children and their families have fallen behind.
- A child's brain develops the most in the first three years, setting the stage for lifelong physical, social, and emotional health.



Only **11%** of eligible children and their families had access.

- ✓ We have a unique window of opportunity—prenatal to toddler—to build a young child's foundational physical, mental, social, and emotional health, and support their lifelong character- and skill-building, growth, and development.
- ✓ One in six children in the United States has a disability. By identifying children's developmental delays early, we can intervene early, reducing the likelihood of their disabilities worsening, decreasing the need for later services, and saving money in the long run.

When we invest in working parents and their young children from the start, we are not only elevating child development but workforce development.

- Policies and programs that support working families are a priority among America's business leaders, and rightly so. When businesses offer policies that support working families and their infants and toddlers, such as paid maternity and paternity leave, on-site child care, or child care reimbursements, employers see increased employee retention, better health and wellness among their employees, and even a greater ability to attract talent.
- [One-third of the workforce](#) are working parents. We can't rebuild our economy without offering working parents and families the wraparound support that helps them care for their infants and toddlers.
- COVID-19 has resulted in an exodus of working parents—especially working mothers— from the workforce to care for children during child care and school disruptions. In fact, [1.8 million women](#) who left the workforce during COVID-19 have yet to return, largely because of child care needs.

Today's families, especially income-eligible families, are struggling to support their infants and toddlers. Without access to wraparound support, our country's economic and community structures are at risk.

- Investing in families and communities is investing in our future workforce. If we hope to turn around the record low birth rate among U.S. families and eliminate a potential economic downturn, we need to ensure that we provide young children—prenatal to age three—and their families with wraparound support.
- Parents, especially parents from income-eligible households, are better positioned to support their young children when they have the skills and resources to help them foster this development.

Why Increase Funding for Early Head Start?

For over 25-years, Early Head Start has helped millions of young children and their families thrive.

- **We meet families where they are and successfully serve the needs of diverse communities.** Our model offers a range of locally-driven options, including year-round and home-based support, and robust partnership opportunities with child care partners.
- **We build a strong foundation for infants and toddlers AND their families.** When parents and families can access the prenatal to age three wraparound support they need, at no cost to their family, they strengthen their parenting skills and their bond with their children.
- **By ensuring young children have what they need during those first years, we create a strong foundation for their future.** Research shows that investing money to lift kids out of poverty, especially young children, has enormous long-term, economic benefits:
 - ✓ They do better in school, they're more likely to graduate high school, and more likely to attend college.
 - ✓ They're less likely to be recipients of public assistance.
 - ✓ When they're older, their health is better.
 - ✓ They're less likely to be engaged in criminal activity, and they live longer.
- **We build parents' and families' parenting skills and give them the support to put these skills into practice every day.** We offer income-eligible families no-cost wraparound support, such as full-day, high-quality child care, healthcare screenings, and home visiting, putting parents and families in a better position to pursue education and work opportunities, all of which build their child's foundational and long-term health and wellness.
- **We build communities of care and cross-sector collaborations.** Through Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, Early Head Start programs have partnered with over 1,400 child care centers and 1,000 in-home child care providers to provide 38,000 infants and toddlers and their families quality wraparound support. By working together, we can more effectively and efficiently extend Early Head Start resources to more early learning settings.
- **We make sure families and young children see themselves, their culture, and backgrounds through our services and care providers.** Recognizing that families, especially Hispanic families, underutilize government assistance programs that serve families who experience poverty, Early Head Start is committed to prioritizing diversity. We integrate cultural competencies directly into our standards and hire child care teachers and staff and health care providers who represent the families, infants and toddlers they serve.
- **We create a bridge to Head Start and kindergarten.** Our connection to Head Start allows us to continue to support children through age five. Research shows that Early Head Start infants and toddlers who continue to Head Start are more ready for kindergarten.
- **We help break the generational cycles of poverty.** Research shows that:
 - ✓ Early Head Start mothers who enrolled during pregnancy are better able to emotionally support their children, which leads to improved social-emotional health and cognitive development.
 - ✓ investing money to lift kids out of poverty, especially young children, has enormous lifelong benefits, including improved academic performance, and better health.

How it Gets Done

Only one in 10 infants, toddlers, and families who should have access to Early Head Start based on their income currently do. Why? Because of insufficient funding. Increasing funding is a necessary first step to ensure all families have access to the crucial support and services they need during their child's earliest years. It's a good investment, too. For every dollar spent on early childhood education, the return is between \$4 and \$9.



- To support young children and their families through an expansion of Early Head Start, the federal government must:
 - ✓ permanently expanding the number of Early Head Start spaces funded on an annual basis by 500,000; and
 - ✓ make sure all income-eligible children, age zero to five, can access Early Head Start and Head Start services
- State governments also have a significant role to play to expand Early Head Start, including:
 - ✓ allocating COVID-19 recovery funding to expand Early Head Start and create or improve facilities; and
 - ✓ encouraging partnerships with child care programs to reach more children.
- The business community has a strong voice to advocate on behalf of working families and infants and toddlers.
 - ✓ Contact your local Head Start Association to learn more about how they are helping working parents and young children in your community.
 - ✓ Contact your state and federal representatives to advocate for additional Early Head Start funding.

The Vision

Early Head Start helps families navigate and access the comprehensive, wraparound support they need during the most critical years of their children's development—prenatal to age three. **When all families are able to build a strong foundation for their children, we all have a brighter, healthier future.**



Partners are a critical resource for disseminating information about Early Head Start. **Their membership, advocacy wings, and parent connections are all avenues to help share your message,** alongside their own research-based information.

Our youngest children, and their families who support and nurture them, are our nation’s greatest resource. Now is the time to level the playing field and make sure they all have the wraparound support they need during the most critical years of a child’s development—prenatal to age three. We must expand Early Head Start to ensure that all families can access these services that will help them build a strong foundation for a brighter future.

- Early Head Start provides comprehensive, wraparound support, such as home visiting, enriching child care, and parental skill-building and education, at no cost to pregnant families and children from income-eligible households during the most crucial years in a child’s development—prenatal to age three.
- It is the only federal program focused on prenatal to age three early development and learning for families from income-eligible households, with a proven impact on the lives of infants and toddlers and their families.
- Early Head Start strengthens families by:
 - ✓ equipping parents and families with early intervention education and resources that build lifelong skills;
 - ✓ increasing parent and family engagement and creating closer bonds; and
 - ✓ helping families navigate and access critical services, especially children and families of color who historically have faced inequitable access.


The Need

Every parent wants the best for their children, and children only get one chance at a strong start—prenatal to three.

- The window of opportunity for parents and families to build their child’s foundational physical, social, and emotional health is small.
 - ✓ The first three years of a child’s life are the most critical years for brain development, setting the stage for lifelong physical, social, and emotional health.
 - ✓ In a baby’s first three years of life, the brain forms more than one million neural connections each second. Connections that get reinforced stay, but over time, connections that aren’t reinforced are lost.

→ Prior to the pandemic, Early Head Start only reached 11% of eligible infants and toddlers and their families. Because of COVID-19, even more children and their families have fallen behind.

→ Parents know the value of building a strong healthy physical, social, and emotional foundation; it is the key to lifelong happiness and success.



Only **11%** of eligible children and their families had access.

The image shows a light blue rectangular box. At the top, there are ten stylized icons of a baby crawling, arranged in two rows of five. The first icon in the top row is solid black, while the other nine are light grey. Below the icons, the text reads 'Only 11% of eligible children and their families had access.' The '11%' is in a larger, bold, pink font.

- ✓ When all parents and children are able to access prenatal to age three wraparound support, education, and resources to help them intervene early, boost their parenting skills, and support the development of young children in their earliest years, we can level the playing field for all families.

Today’s families, especially income-eligible families, are struggling to support their infants and toddlers.

- Rising child care costs, a lack of prenatal, pregnancy, and postpartum services, and no federal paid family leave policy, among other factors, all contribute to parents and families struggling to access quality development support, leaving their infants and toddlers at a disadvantage. This is especially true among families from income-eligible households.
- Working families are better positioned to support their infants and toddlers when they have the skills and resources to help them support and foster this development.

Why Increase Funding for Early Head Start

Young children develop the most from prenatal to age three and for over 25 years, Early Head Start has encouraged this development among millions of young children and their families, helping them thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

- **We build a strong foundation for infants and toddlers AND their families.** When parents and families can access no cost prenatal to age three wraparound early intervention support, education, and resources, their parenting skills and bond with their young children grow stronger, ensuring their children's healthy development. Research shows that:
 - ✓ children in Early Head Start develop new social-emotional skills and sustain the positive impacts through at least fifth grade.
 - ✓ children also make gains in language and cognitive development.
 - ✓ parents who participate in Early Head Start improve their parenting skills.
 - ✓ fathers who participate in Early Head Start are more engaged in their children's lives.
- **We elevate standards of care for infants and toddlers and their families through high-quality program standards and evaluations.** Our programs are grounded in research, from child development to cultural competencies, and we offer families high-quality wraparound support from prenatal to age three.
- **We create a bridge to Head Start and kindergarten.** Our connection to Head Start allows us to continue to support children through age five. Research shows that Early Head Start infants and toddlers who continue to Head Start are more ready for kindergarten.
- **We help break the generational cycles of poverty.** Research shows that:
 - ✓ Early Head Start mothers who enrolled during pregnancy are better able to emotionally support their children, which leads to improved social-emotional health and cognitive development.
 - ✓ investing money to lift kids out of poverty, especially young children, has enormous lifelong benefits, including improved academic performance, and better health.

How it Gets Done

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→ At the state level, this means:

- ✓ allocating COVID-19 recovery funding to expand Early Head Start and create or improve facilities; and
- ✓ encouraging partnerships with child care programs to reach more children.

→ At the federal level, this means:

- ✓ permanently expanding the number of Early Head Start spaces funded on an annual basis by 500,000; and
- ✓ making sure all income-eligible children, prenatal to five, can access Early Head Start and Head Start services.

The Vision

Early Head Start helps families navigate and access the comprehensive, wraparound support they need during the most critical years of their children's development—prenatal to age three. **When all families are able to build a strong foundation for their children, we all have a brighter, healthier future.**



Studies show that when you share a story, people are more likely to be persuaded to see your point of view—or to take action—than when they receive information alone. Additionally, real-world examples are proven to make information and statistics more easily understood, and thereby, more compelling.

This case study template and example will help you focus your storytelling, ensuring your stories are impactful as you share them with policymakers, business leaders, and your community. We've also recommended ways to share your stories to make sure they are seen by the right audiences to help inspire action.

Five Best Practices for Case Studies

To ensure your case studies make a meaningful impact, we recommend the following top five best practices:

1. **Aim for diversity at all levels** (of race and ethnicity, gender, family type, experiences) because readers are more likely to empathize and act when they identify with someone.
2. **Include images** because 90% of the information processed by the brain is visual.
3. **Incorporate direct quotes** from your main storytellers (e.g., families, providers, and partners) to ensure their voice is clear and represents the foundation of the story.
4. **Consider the impact** a story will have on the storyteller's life and ensure you're using stories (especially families' stories) as a tool for empowerment. Show your impact, but position your organization as a partner, not a savior.
5. **Keep your case study to a seven-minute read or less** (up to about 1,600 words) for maximum reader attention.

How to Write a Case Study

1. **Determine your “main character,”** or the person, family, or organization whose story will be the focus of your case study. Interview them for direct quotes and experiences to include.
2. **Interview “secondary characters”** as needed. This could be a leader at your organization, a provider, another family—whoever makes the story complete.
3. **Request and receive photos.** (Whenever possible, ensure there are infants and toddlers in the photos!)
4. **Draft the case study** and share with everyone included for their feedback.
5. **Incorporate feedback,** then share a final draft with everyone included.
6. **Share the case study.** Post it online and direct constituents and stakeholders to the case studies through your marketing channels. Ideas to promote case studies:
 - ✓ **Running the stories in any newsletters you send.** Nonprofit newsletters are seeing [higher open rates](#), and nearly [90%](#) of Americans over 15 use email.
 - ✓ **Create three to four social media posts** and share them on your channels, with a link to the case study. Policymakers use Twitter the most. Parents use Facebook—[75% logging on daily](#).
 - ✓ **Pitch the case study to local media** as part of a “trend” piece on Early Head Start’s impact.
 - ✓ **Incorporate case studies into any presentations you give.**
 - ✓ **Ask providers and partners to run the case study on their own websites** (with credits and links to you) or in their newsletters. Creating social media posts to share with your partners so they can post about your case studies on their social media channels.

Sample Questions to Ask

FOR FAMILIES

- How did you find out about Early Head Start?
- How has Early Head Start helped you as a parent?
- How has Early Head Start helped your child/children?
- Has there been anything surprising you’ve learned from the program?
- What do you wish other families and parents knew about Early Head Start?
- What do you wish policymakers knew about Early Head Start?

FOR PROVIDERS/PARTNERS

- Why is Early Head Start important to the families you serve?
- Tell us about the impact that Early Head Start has had on your community.
- What is the need like in your community for Early Head Start? Please be as specific as possible.
- How would you be able to expand or grow your work with increased funding?
- What do you wish policymakers knew about Early Head Start?

Case Study Example:

Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP

September 14, 2021

Seattle Mother Becomes an Advocate for Other Parents After Early Head Start ‘Holistically Lifted Our Family Up’

Seattle mother of two Galena White, who is autistic, signed up for Early Head Start when she was pregnant with her first daughter. She worried someone would try to take her children away and wanted someone to witness and support her parenting.

“I didn’t always know that I was autistic, but I have always had great anxiety and difficulty forming and keeping relationships,” Galena says. “I used to worry that I would be a terrible mother, or that someone would take my children away because of my mental illness. I wanted someone to witness my parenting and keep me on a good track. I wanted to have evidence that I was a good parent to keep anybody who doubted me from taking my children away.”

Galena says Early Head Start has changed both her children’s lives and her own. Her daughter’s speech delay has disappeared, and Galena has had an opportunity to care for herself and family in an entirely different way.

“I have been able to leave the children at school and complete medical treatments I needed. I’ve been encouraged to broaden the activities our little family does together. My husband and I are spending more time together,” Galena says. “I’m also starting a business that may someday pull our little family out of poverty! All of that was helped along by Early Head Start.”

And with the support and confidence that Galena has gained, she has been able to pay it forward. Not only has she been volunteering throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to help those who are losing their homes, Galena is learning how to become an advocate for other parents by participating in the Parent Ambassador program of the Washington State Association of Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP).

As a parent ambassador, Galena wants to help other families get the Early Head Start education they need, the same support that made a difference for her and her family.

Galena—and other parent ambassadors—are critical advocates to ensure that all families have access to these resources and support, says April Messenger, program administrator for the Parent Ambassador program. April says her favorite thing to do is to help parents have a voice in the policymaking process at local, state, and national levels.

“When it comes to the policy level, we have a saying: ‘nothing about us, without us.’ Parents need to be in the rooms where policies are being made,” April says.



The Parent Ambassador program, now in its 14th year, is a year-long training program where parents with children under nine can learn the basics of government, civics, and advocacy. Participants in the program receive college credit when they complete the year.

The program started in Washington but has now expanded to eight states. And April—who herself is a program alum—is the program’s first dedicated staff member.

Participants in the program—particularly parents in Early Head Start—focus on policies that increase child care availability and affordability. Last year, parent ambassadors in Washington successfully campaigned to increase the number of ECEAP slots funded by Washington State for children aged three and four.

April says the Parent Ambassador program is particularly important for Early Head Start parents, who may be finding their voice as parents and advocates.

For Galena, Early Head Start has not only provided child care but also improved her parenting and “holistically lifted our family up.”

“I think that every family deserves access to the same resources that helped me through these very formative years,” she says.



Social media is a critical tool not only to share information, but also to garner interest in and support for specific initiatives.

[Seventy-five percent](#) of parents log onto Facebook daily and [95%](#) or more of U.S. senators and representatives use Facebook and Twitter. Plus, these two platforms are [trusted sources](#) for general and political news, which means social media presents EHS members and stakeholders a key opportunity to reach our target audiences.

Social Media Tips

When sharing on social media, keep the following in mind:

→ **Understand your audience and messenger**

- ✓ The Early Head Start Rising Advocacy Toolkit is meant to help you connect with stakeholders who can either directly influence policy or those who can advocate for increased funding for Early Head Start. Recognize who you are trying to reach, with what message, and who is best positioned to deliver that message.
- ✓ For example, a first-hand anecdote from a family can help build an understanding of Early Head Start's impact—something that could easily resonate among any audience. However, a business leader might need additional information about how Early Head Start works on the ground so they can better understand the potential financial impact on their community. This more detailed conversation might be better with the program director as the main messenger.

→ **Include an image or video**

- ✓ Research shows that including a photo of a child or person in your social media posts or other messaging can help people better connect with your message. [A study](#) by the University of California San Diego found that a single image has the power to sway people and change behavior, unlike words alone.
- ✓ If a picture is worth a thousand words, the exchange rate for video is even higher. People today spend an average of [16 hours a week](#) watching online videos across social and online platforms. And according to Google, [six out of 10 people](#) prefer online video platforms to traditional TV. People go online to watch videos, and they're incredibly persuasive, with videos being [shared more](#) than static graphics, photos, and images, giving them a [greater ROI](#).

✓ Pro Tip

If you're looking to customize your social media post to a specific individual or organization, first look at their website (e.g., Congressional member page, organization's website, etc.). Many times, they will list their social media information from their website.

→ **Pick the best time to publish**

- ✓ Getting your content seen is the number one priority when it comes to reaching and motivating your audiences to take action. Posting at the optimal time and days of the week can increase the likelihood that your content will be noticed. Below are several of the [best times](#) to post on Facebook and Twitter according to Sprout Social's research arm. We've broken out two industries with similar interests and content to Early Head Start—healthcare and education.

HEALTHCARE



FACEBOOK

Monday – Friday, at 11 AM



TWITTER

**Mondays, 9–12 PM;
Tuesdays, 8 AM–1 PM**

Best day to post: Tuesday

Worst day to post: Sunday

EDUCATION



FACEBOOK

Tuesday – Thursday, at 10 AM

Best day to post: Tuesday & Wednesday



TWITTER

Monday 6–9 PM; Thursday, at 10 AM

Best day to post: Monday

Worst day to post: Sunday

→ **Stick to the ideal character count**

- ✓ Every social media platform has a character count limit for its posts. But to increase engagement, it's also important to know the [ideal character count](#) for social media posts. This could improve your chances of getting people to read or engage with your posts.



FACEBOOK

Ideal character count per post: < 50
63,206 character count limit



TWITTER

Ideal character count per post: 240-259
280 character count limit per post

Share these social media posts with your audience. Click on the graphics to [download](#).

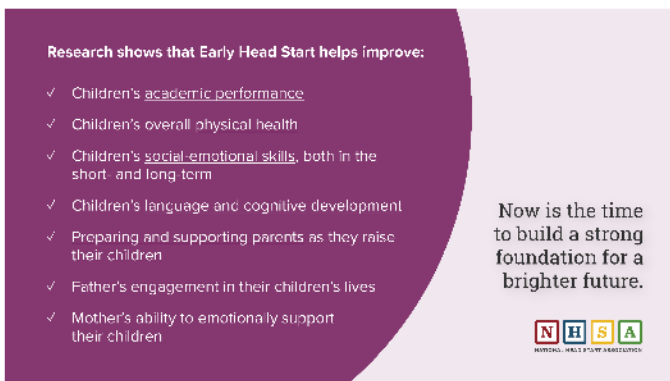
Facebook Posts



- Now is the time to invest in our nation's greatest resource—our youngest children. Download the Early Head Start Rising Advocacy Toolkit to learn how you can give all families, infants, and toddlers a head start. go.nhsa.org/EHS-advocacy



- Every parent wants what's best for their child. But the window of opportunity to build a strong foundation for their child is small. It's time we recognize the challenges that so many families face and give every eligible family access to the quality Early Head Start support that sets children up for success. go.nhsa.org/EHS-advocacy



- For over 25-years, Early Head Start has helped millions of young children and their families thrive. But Early Head Start only reaches 11% of eligible infants and toddlers and their families. [\[@ insert name of the individual or organization you're trying to reach\]](#), will you help give every eligible family the chance at a head start? The time for increasing Early Head Start funding is now! go.nhsa.org/EHS-advocacy




- Only one in 10 income-eligible infants and families have access to Early Head Start support. Why? Because of insufficient funding. [\[@ insert name of individual you're wanting to reach\]](#), it's time we increase Early Head Start funding and give every income-eligible family a head start. go.nhsa.org/EHS-Facts

Research shows that Early Head Start helps improve:

- ✓ Children's academic performance
- ✓ Children's overall physical health
- ✓ Children's social-emotional skills, both in the short- and long-term
- ✓ Children's language and cognitive development
- ✓ Preparing and supporting parents as they raise their children
- ✓ Father's engagement in their children's lives
- ✓ Mother's ability to emotionally support their children

Now is the time to build a strong foundation for a brighter future.




Help all income-eligible families give their child a head start and a brighter future.

"My husband lost his job and we were evicted from our home. It is incredibly stressful to be homeless with an infant, but because of Early Head Start we were able to keep the stress away from our son. We worked at getting back on our feet—my husband took a job as a dishwasher and I worked as a secretary, which we could do knowing our son was receiving excellent care. Our son is doing great in all areas and learning social/emotional skills."

— Early Head Start Parent




- For over 25-years, Early Head Start has helped millions of young children and their families thrive. But Early Head Start only reaches 11% of eligible infants and toddlers and their families. [\[@ insert name of the individual or organization you're trying to reach\]](#), will you help give every eligible family the chance at a head start? The time for increasing Early Head Start funding is now! go.nhsa.org/EHS-advocacy

- When all families are able to build a strong foundation for their children, we all have a brighter, healthier future. It's time we give every eligible family access to Early Head Start and the support that helps build infants' and toddlers' social, emotional, and academic foundation. go.nhsa.org/EHS-advocacy

It's time to give every eligible infant, toddler, and family a head start.

For every dollar spent on early childhood education, the return is between

\$4 – \$9.

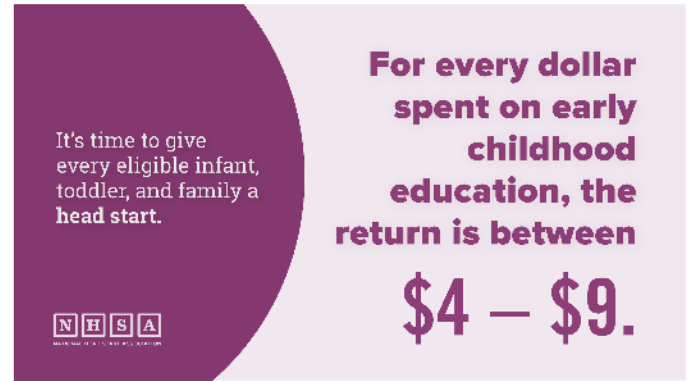


- Increasing funding is a necessary first step to ensure all families have access to the crucial support and services they need during their child's earliest years. It's a good investment, too. Let's all come together, invest in our future, and increase access to Early Head Start for every eligible family! [\[@ insert names of individuals or organizations you're trying to reach\]](#) go.nhsa.org/EHS-Facts

Twitter Posts



- Only one in 10 infants, toddlers and families who should have access to #EarlyHeadStart based on their income currently do. Why? Because of insufficient funding. [@name of individual or organization you're trying to reach], let's come together and give every family a head start! #EarlyHeadStartRising go.nhsa.org/EHS-Facts



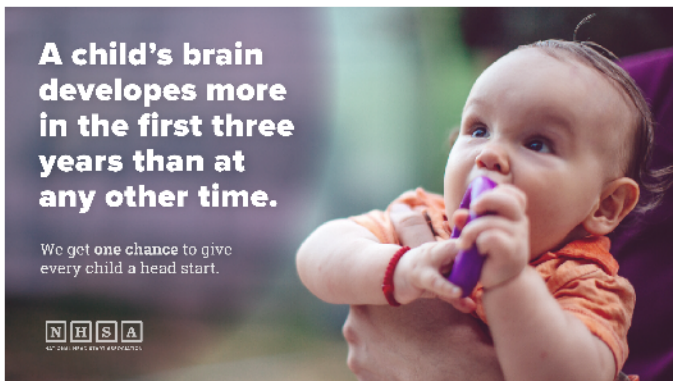
- Increasing #EarlyHeadStart funding gives all families access to the support and services they need during their child's earliest years. [@insert names of individual or organization you're trying to reach], let's make a good investment! #EarlyHeadStartRising go.nhsa.org/EHS-Facts



- #EarlyHeadStart is the only federal program focused on #prenatal to age 3 early development and learning for families from income-eligible households. All eligible families deserve this support. It's time we increase funds for Early Head Start TODAY! #EarlyHeadStartRising go.nhsa.org/EHS-Facts



- Now is the time to invest in our nation's greatest resource—our youngest children. Learn how YOU can support America's families, infants, and toddlers through #EarlyHeadStart. #EarlyHeadStartRising go.nhsa.org/EHS-Facts



- Every parent wants what's best for their child. But many families still struggle with child care, health care, and other essential support. Every family and child deserves a head start. #EarlyHeadStart #EarlyHeadStartRising go.nhsa.org/EHS-advocacy

- When all families are able to build a strong foundation for their children, we all have a brighter, healthier future. Download the #EarlyHeadStartRising Advocacy Toolkit so you can help give every eligible family a head start. go.nhsa.org/EHS-advocacy



- For over 25-years, #EarlyHeadStart has helped millions of young children and their families thrive. But Early Head Start only reaches 11% of eligible infants and toddlers and their families. [\[@ insert name of individual or organization you're trying to reach\]](#), will you be an #EarlyHeadStartRising advocate? go.nhsa.org/EHS-advocacy