

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



The Head Start Advantage

Success in Parent Advancement

Key Takeaways

1. Head Start enhances parents' education level, employment status, and income.
2. Head Start improves parents' skills, reduces parental stress, and improves overall family stability and self-sufficiency.

Measurable Impact

Seeking education

Head Start parents have steeper increases in their educational attainment by the time their child is six years old.

120,000 +

In 2017-2018, more than 120,000 Head Start parents advanced their education – from completing another grade level in school to acquiring a BA or advanced degree.

Stable family life

Head Start families have fewer family conflicts and fewer parent-child dysfunctional interactions, which in turn reduces children's aggressive behaviors.

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The Head Start Advantage: Success in Parent Advancement

Why is parent advancement important to children's success?

Family stability and well-being are strong contributors to a child's outcomes in early childhood and throughout their lifetime.

Programs like Head Start work with children for, at most, five years. Parents and other family caregivers are their children's first teachers, and the people who stand by them long after their experience in Head Start.

Research has proven the efficacy of **parent support in home visiting programs as a mechanism for improving child outcomes**. Children's early relationships with their caregivers provide the foundation for a child's later success in school and life, including the development of characteristics such as behavioral control and social skills, as well as academic achievement and lifelong well-being.

What does Head Start do to support parents?

Head Start believes strongly that parents are their children's first and most important teachers, and programs engage parents as partners in their children's learning and development.

However, Head Start children and families are at a greater risk of experiencing family instability.

To best support families in achieving stability and self-sufficiency, Head Start adopts a multigenerational approach, focusing on creating opportunities for and addressing the needs of both children and their parents.

Head Start works with all parents to set goals based on their individual strengths and needs. Goals can be anything from completing their GED to finding stable housing or accessing better career opportunities. Head Start also engages parents in understanding more about their child's development and how they can support it, as well as healthy habits for the whole family. Head Start supports families dealing with tough issues like domestic violence and substance use disorders, connecting them with resources in the community or providing direct services to support family wellbeing.

For citations, please visit go.nhsa.org/HSA



Early Head Start parents provide their children with more language and learning stimulation, spend more time reading to them, and spank their children less often.



Head Start fathers were more involved in their children's schooling than those not enrolled in Head Start. Studies show that children who report positive relationships with fathers or father figures in 5th grade score higher on various performance indicators of academic achievement.



Head Start parents exhibit lower levels of parental distress.



Early Head Start home-based programs showed positive impacts on 9 of 9 parenting outcomes, including parental supportiveness, home language and learning supports, emotional responsiveness, and family conflict when children were 24 months of age.

What is Head Start?

Head Start (HS) is a comprehensive early education program for children from at-risk backgrounds from birth to age 5. From early math and reading skills to confidence and resilience, Head Start helps children build the abilities they need to be successful in school and life. Head Start recognizes the role of parents as their child's first and lifelong educators and engages parents as equal partners.