

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.

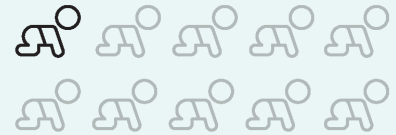
Now is the time to invest in our nation’s greatest resource—our youngest children. We must expand Early Head Start and ensure all families have the wraparound support they need during the most critical years of a child’s development—prenatal to age three—to level the playing field and build a strong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