



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



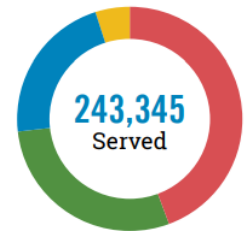
## Unpacking How Comprehensive Services in Early Head Start Lead to Impacts for Children & Families

**Dr. Rachel Chazan Cohen**, Associate Professor  
*University of Connecticut, Human Development and Family Sciences*

### Early Head Start Background

Early Head Start is a federally funded, two-generational program serving low-income pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and their families. In the most recent program year, Early Head Start served 243,345 children and pregnant women, and is growing.

First authorized in 1994, programs must provide comprehensive services to address economic, health and psychosocial stressors in low-income families. Examples of comprehensive services include parenting support, health and mental health services, education and job training.



- 4.8% Pregnant Women
- 21.9% Under Age One
- 29.0% Age One
- 44.3% Age Two

### New Research Explains Early Head Start's Impact

The Congressionally-mandated [Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project Study](#) (EHSREP) was a rigorous longitudinal study that offered conclusive evidence of Early Head Start's impact on a wide range of outcomes (see box on page 2). Yet, it left unexplained much of *how* those results were achieved. To fill this gap, our new analysis of EHSREP data looked at *how* service use at age 2 led to impacts for children and families at age 3<sup>1</sup>, leading to two key new findings:

**NEW FINDING #1:** At age 2, Early Head Start families report *receiving many more services* than the control group.

**NEW FINDING #2:** *Specific comprehensive services* provided by Early Head Start *lead to specific impacts* for children *and* families.

#### Supports for Families & Pregnant Women

<b>15,912</b> Parents Educated on Postpartum Care	<b>10,340</b> Pregnant Women connected with a Medical Home
<b>86,146</b> Health Education	<b>9,976</b> Substance Abuse Prevention
<b>23,090</b> Adult Education	<b>20,450</b> Housing Assistance
<b>71,553</b> Emergency or Crisis Intervention	<b>24,585</b> Assistance Enrolling in Education or Job Training Program

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that these are for the overall sample, and we know that impacts vary for different groups of families. Future analyses will look at how services and outcomes are linked for different groups of families, for example those who receive different program options in Early Head Start.

**NEW FINDING #1: At age 2, Early Head Start families report receiving many more services than the control group.**

Specifically, Early Head Start families were more likely to receive services related to:

- Employment
- Education/Job Training
- Early Intervention
- Case Management
- Child Care
- Dental Care
- Group Parenting Education
- Home Visiting
- Immunizations
- Parenting Education
- Transportation

**NEW FINDING #2: Specific comprehensive services provided by Early Head Start lead to specific impacts for children *and* families.** In summary, because Early Head Start helps families to access the following services, there are significant benefits to children and families, both.

**Early Head Start's Positive Impacts:**

- At the end of the Early Head Start program, when children were 3, positive modest sized impacts were found for children and families.
- Children benefited across every domain of child outcomes assessed, including language, cognition, social emotional and health outcomes.
- Families benefited across a range of parenting, family well-being and self-sufficiency outcomes.

*Source: Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project Study*

**Early Head Start Service Provided**

**Positive Results**

Education and job training services



**Positive impacts for child social emotional and cognitive as well as positive parenting behaviors that are supportive of children's learning and development and family self-sufficiency.**

Surprisingly, employment services resulted in fewer positive impacts. Helping parents get a better job, rather than any job, results in positive impacts.

Positive parenting and providing parents information on child development knowledge



**Parenting services are especially important in leading to positive impacts.** Interestingly, parenting support provided through case management, group parenting education and home visiting are *all* effective.

Early intervention services



**Positive cognitive and language outcomes for children.** This is an important finding as it provides strong causal support for early intervention.

Increased hours of child care



**Positive impacts on children's cognitive development and parent support of learning and development.**

**Appreciation from Dr. Cohen:** Thank you to the children and families who participated in the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project as well as the Early Head Start Research Consortium, which included representatives from 17 programs participating in the evaluation, 15 local research teams, the evaluation contractors, and the Administration for Children and Families. Thank you also to the Early Head Start Comprehensive Services Workgroup.