



## Fact Sheet: State Investments in Head Start and Early Head Start to Support At-Risk Children and Families

*In their most recent budgets, state lawmakers in 14 states and D.C. invested over \$355 million in state funding to expand Head Start and Early Head Start to greater than 22,000 children ages birth to five. These state funds fill critical service gaps and strengthen program quality.*

**States face an ongoing crisis of at-risk young children and families.**<sup>1</sup> In 2020, 108,078 children ages five and under entered foster care, with 20% of those less than one year old. Family homelessness is a persistent problem, with families making up one-third of the homeless population.<sup>2</sup> The opioid and fentanyl crisis has contributed to elevated childhood trauma.<sup>3 4</sup>

**There is a ready-built solution to supporting at-risk children and families: local Head Start and Early Head Start programs.** Operated by approximately 1,600 community partners nationwide, Head Start and Early Head Start (collectively referred to as “Head Start”) are comprehensive birth-to-five programs proven to strengthen families, promote school readiness, and improve child health. They specialize in serving the complex needs of young children living in poverty, children with disabilities (102,116 in the past program year), children in foster care (29,316), experiencing homelessness (50,431), or receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (346,355).<sup>5</sup>

### Limited Federal Funding, Limited Access

There are more children birth-to-five eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start than federal funding can support.

Only **36%** of eligible children, ages three to five had access to Head Start.



Only **11%** of eligible children under three had access to Early Head Start.



### State Funding Fills Access Gaps

**22,000**  
additional children served

<sup>1</sup> Annie E Casey Foundation, [Child Welfare and Foster Care Statistics](#)

<sup>2</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness, [Children and Families](#)

<sup>3</sup> The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, [Child Trauma and Opioid Use: Policy Implications](#)

<sup>4</sup> ChildTrends, [Adverse Childhood Experiences](#)

<sup>5</sup> National Head Start Association, [2022 State Fact Sheets](#)

## A Little State Funding for Head Start Goes a Long Way: 5 State Examples

Whether they commit to \$3 million or \$25 million each year, state investments in Head Start and Early Head Start are a proven way to improve outcomes for at-risk children and families. Here are five state examples that illustrate how a little extra funding for Head Start can go a long way in improving equity and opportunity for at-risk children and families.



### **Minnesota: Expanding Access for Infants and Toddlers**

Recognizing a lack of high-quality infant and toddler care throughout the state, Minnesota invests just over \$25 million each year (\$50 million over two years) to expand access to Early Head Start (and Head Start) for at-risk children, including tribal and rural communities. In the most recent year, 1,027 infants and toddlers were served with state funding.



### **Oregon: Building a Pre-K System on Head Start**

Oregon has built their well-regarded Oregon Prekindergarten (OPK) program on Head Start. Three-fourths of grantees are federal Head Start programs and they follow Head Start's performance standards. They invest almost \$170 million and serve 7,377 low-income and at-risk children, which includes over \$32 million for Early Head Start services to 1,400 infants/toddlers.



### **Pennsylvania: Meeting the Needs of Working Families**

The Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program in Pennsylvania provides state funding to Head Start preschool programs. Funds are intended for comprehensive services, including education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement initiatives aligned to the federal program requirements. The state's \$87.5 million serves over 6,600 Head Start children.



### **Missouri: Improving Child Care Quality**

Over a decade ago, Missouri saw a need to improve the quality of care for infants and toddlers. Today, \$6 million in state funding annually supports partnerships between Early Head Start programs and local child care providers to help 444 children and families, especially children with incarcerated parents, children with disabilities and pregnant women. The funding not only directly benefits 444 children, it creates a ripple effect that improves the overall quality of care for the other children in the supported child care classrooms.



### **Massachusetts: Supporting Teacher-Child Relationships**

Lawmakers recently increased annual state funding to \$16.5 million to support higher teacher salaries and help programs meet their federally-required 20% funding match. While roughly 90% is used to support staff salaries, compensation and benefits to address recruitment and retention, funds may be used to provide high quality comprehensive services, such as coaches, mental health consultants, and additional staff to lower teacher/child ratios. Supporting the Head Start workforce benefits children and families by creating more stable and caring relationships.

## States and D.C. Invest \$355 Million Annually to Support 22,000 Children

State funding for Head Start and Early Head Start is generally highly-flexible. The most common uses for these funds are:

- expand slots to serve more children
- improve quality, e.g. ratios and hours of service
- increase staff compensation
- assist programs in meeting the 20% federal match

	Head Start Funds	Early Head Start Funds	Additional HS Children	Additional EHS Children
AK	\$6,835,000		125	Not applicable
AL	\$5,046,902	Not applicable	1,713	Not applicable
CT	\$5,083,238		256	8
D.C.	\$5,000,000***	\$2,136,745****	250	297
IA	Not applicable	\$575,000	Not applicable	57
MA	\$16,500,000		Not applicable	Not applicable
MD	\$3,000,000		Not applicable	Not applicable
ME	\$3,087,734		488	
MN	\$25,100,000		829	1,027
MO	Not applicable.	\$6,000,000	Not applicable	444
OK	\$13,800,000*		Not applicable	2,667
OR	\$136,500,000**	\$32,000,000**	5,962	1,415
PA	\$87,558,727	Not applicable	6,642	Not applicable
RI	\$1,390,000	Not applicable	130	Not applicable
WI	\$6,264,100*****		368	98
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$355,000,000+</b>		<b>22,000+ Children</b>	

\*Oklahoma directly invests \$1,800,000 in Head Start programs through a line-item and \$12,000,000 in Early Head Start through a public-private partnership, the Oklahoma Early Childhood Program.

\*\*Reflects the entire allocation for Oregon Pre-Kindergarten (OPK) funds; of the 30 OPK grantees, 26 are Head Start programs and all grantees follow Head Start guidelines.

\*\*\*Approximately \$5,000,000 and only represents District of Columbia Public School Head Start slots.

\*\*\*\*Early Head Start is funded through the Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

\*\*\*\*\*HS and EHS Child Count is an estimate based on programs' initial grant applications.

## Head Start and Early Head Start Have a Multi-Generational Impact



### Stronger Families

Families in Early Head Start have more positive parent-child relationships, more stable and healthy homes, and less child welfare involvement.



### Improved Health

Head Start children are more likely to have hearing and vision screening, be covered by health insurance, receive dental care and be immunized.



### Economic Self-Sufficiency

In the most recent program year, 79,340 families received assistance in enrolling into an education or job training program.

To view this research, visit: [go.nhsa.org/advantage](https://go.nhsa.org/advantage)

## Easy to Fund

The 14 states that support Head Start lean on the existing federal infrastructure:

- Minnesota offers a cost-per-child level of support that reflects federal rates.
- State grantees in Alaska remain eligible for funding if they are in good standing federally.
- Iowa, like many other states, has modest application and data collection requirements.

Most states support Head Start through a general fund line-item, but a few states access other revenue:

- Maine directs a portion of their tobacco settlement funds to support Head Start.
- Oklahoma invests in Head Start through their Department of Commerce budget.
- Oregon lawmakers issued a new business sales tax to fund new education investment.

### The Families First of Minnesota Story

There are many barriers to running a high-quality Early Head Start program. State supplemental funding for Early Head Start has allowed [Families First of Minnesota](#) to address common barriers and expand access through improvements to center locations, teacher salaries, transportation, and program flexibility—to meet community needs. Almost 10% of Families First's \$9 million annual budget is provided through state supplemental funding.

**"If [you are] truly committed to addressing the achievement or opportunity gap in your state, then providing funding for Head Start programs to serve more at-risk, eligible population would be a definitive way to address the issue."**

— Sandy Simar, Families First of Minnesota Head Start and Early Head Start Director

Read the full interview: [go.nhsa.org/MN-EHS](https://go.nhsa.org/MN-EHS)

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