

# National

## 2026 Head Start Profile



### BY THE NUMBERS

**\$12,271,820,000**

FY25 Funding

**685,296**

Total Funded Seats

**252,706**

Total Staff Employed

**463,789**

Funded Head Start Preschool Seats

**176,817**

Funded Early Head Start Preschool Seats

**20,956**

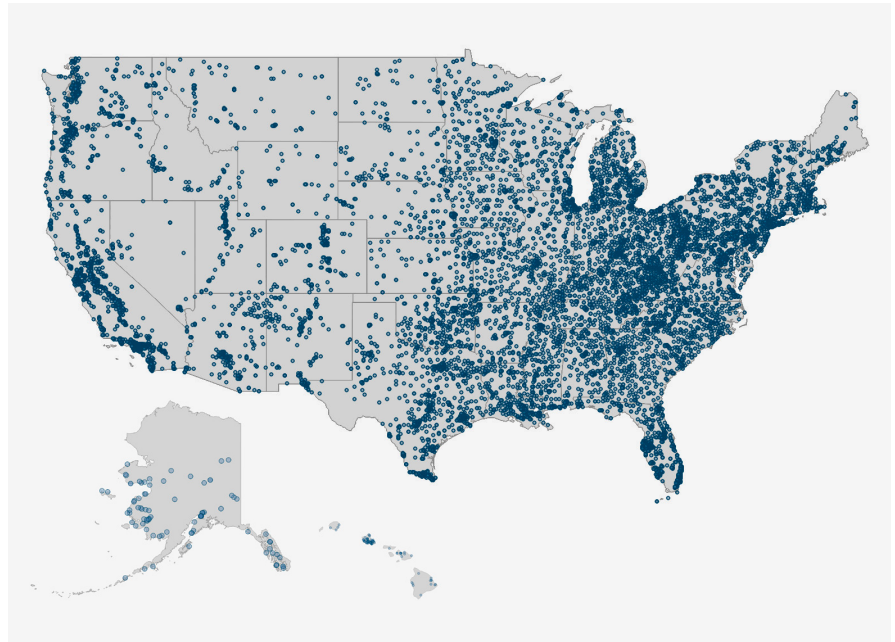
Funded American Indian/Alaska Native  
Head Start and Early Head Start Seats

**23,734**

Funded Migrant and Seasonal Head Start  
and Early Head Start Seats

**14,373**

Total Centers ▶



Looking for congressional district data? Visit [nhsa.org/locator](https://nhsa.org/locator) to view district maps.



### THE HEAD START MODEL: A PROVEN SUCCESS

#### Education

Leaning on decades of brain science, Head Start staff work with children to build the brain connections and self-confidence necessary for success in kindergarten and beyond.

#### Local Design

Acknowledging that each community has different strengths, resources, and challenges, each program is designed to reflect the traditions, priorities, and cultures of their community.

**13%  
Return On  
Investment**

Research shows that high-quality early childhood programs, like Head Start, generate an annual ROI of more than 13%.

#### Health

Providing dental, health, and mental health services and referrals, as well as healthy eating based on current nutritional best practices, and early identification of health problems, Head Start addresses critical health and nutrition needs so that children are fully ready to learn and grow.

#### Parent Engagement and Support

Believing that parents are a child's first and most important teachers, Head Start requires parent involvement in major program decision-making. Head Start works with parents to put them on a path of economic self-reliance through goal-setting, parenting training, and genuine engagement, enabling parents to join the workforce and stay working.



## NATIONWIDE, COMPREHENSIVE, MULTI-GENERATIONAL

The premise of Head Start is simple: every child, regardless of circumstances at birth, has the ability to reach their full potential.

Head Start helps children build the skills they need to be successful in school and life. Research shows that the benefits of Head Start appear to transfer from one generation to the next in a substantial way.



### Children Who Attend Head Start Are:



**More likely**  
to have  
healthy  
eating  
patterns



**More likely**  
to complete  
high school



**More likely**  
to enroll  
in and  
complete  
college

**Less likely**  
to be  
arrested



**Less likely**  
to  
experience  
poor health



**Less likely**  
to enter  
foster care



### CHILDREN

**22,549**

Foster Children Served

**13,485**

Pregnant Women Served

**384,088**

Newly Enrolled Children Completed Behavioral Screenings

**673,861**

Children Received Preventative Dental Care

**69,515**

Children Received Care for a Chronic Health Condition

**566,954**

Children Up-to-Date on Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment Screenings



### FAMILIES

**56,093**

Families Experiencing Homelessness

**9,570**

Active Duty or Military Veteran Families Served

**201,051**

Fathers Involved in their Child's Educational Experiences

**3,522,592**

Home Visits Conducted



### COMMUNITIES

**47,666**

Head Start Classrooms

**524,825**

Parents Employed, in School, or in Job Training



The National Head Start Association is committed to the belief that every child, regardless of circumstances at birth, has the ability to succeed in life. Since 1974, NHSA has worked for policy changes that ensure all income-eligible children have access to the Head Start model.

© 2026 by the National Head Start Association

For citations and additional fact sheets, visit  
[go.nhsa.org/state-profile](https://go.nhsa.org/state-profile)