



5,000 Police Chiefs, Sheriffs,
Prosecutors, other Law Enforcement
Leaders, and Violence Survivors
Preventing Crime and Violence

Head Start and Early Head Start

What it is: Head Start is the nation's premier school readiness program for children in poverty. Since 1965, it has provided voluntary, comprehensive education, social and emotional development and physical and mental health services for three- and four-year-olds, as well as parent involvement efforts. Early Head Start was created in 1994 to provide comprehensive child development and family strengthening services for babies and toddlers (birth to age three). Both programs are authorized under the Head Start Act, which Congress has authorized through FY 2012.

How it works: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awards competitive grants to community organizations such as local public schools, nonprofit organizations, faith-based entities and for-profit groups to operate Head Start centers at the local level.

Why it's important: Quality early childhood education programs are proven to prepare children to succeed in school and reduce later crime and violence.

- The *Journal of the American Medical Association* published a study of Chicago's government-funded Child-Parent Centers, which have served more than 100,000 three- and four-year-olds. The study showed that children who did not participate in the program were 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18. Those left out were 67% more likely to have been retained a grade in school and 71% more likely to have been placed in special education. The children who participated were 29% more likely to graduate from high school than similar kids left out of the program.

- Michigan's High/Scope Perry Preschool program found that three- and four-year-olds from low-income families who were left out of the program were five times more likely to become chronic offenders by age 27 than those who were in the program. Participation cut by more than half the percentage of children who were held back or in special education. Participants were 44 percent more likely to graduate from high school on time. By age 40, 60 percent of participants were earning upwards of \$20,000 a year, versus 40 percent of those not in the program.

- Studies show that Head Start participants have better self-esteem, motivation, behavior, academic achievement and are "held back a grade" less often than similar children not in the program. Early Head Start participants score higher on standardized assessments of cognitive development, have larger vocabularies and use more complex sentences than similarly disadvantaged peers. Long-term benefits of Head Start include not only higher graduation rates, college enrollment and income levels, but also reductions in crime. A large national survey found that children who participated in Head Start were 8.5 percent less likely to be later arrested or charged with a crime than their siblings who attended other preschool programs.

Funding Level: The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided a temporary infusion of \$2.1 billion total in FY 2009 and FY 2010 for Head Start and Early Head Start, creating 64,000 new slots, and Congress provided \$7.235 billion in funding for FY 2010. President Obama's FY 2012 Budget Request proposes an increase of \$864 million over FY 2010 to continue serving kids in the 64,000 new slots created by ARRA funding.

Overwhelming Unmet need: Head Start is so under-funded that it can only serve about half of the poor three- and four-year-olds eligible for the program, while Early Head Start serves less than five percent of the eligible babies and toddlers. In addition, four in ten Head Start families need full-day, full-year Head Start services, but less than one in ten attends year-round programs and only one in eight centers runs full-day programs.

Fiscally responsible: The High/Scope Perry Preschool program saved \$16 for every \$1 invested by reducing crime, welfare, and other costs. Eighty-eight percent of public savings are the result of reduced crime.

Legislative Recommendation: FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS recommends that for FY 2011 Congress approve President Obama's proposed increase of \$989 million over FY 2010 funding levels for Head Start and Early Head Start.

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