

The State of Quality Early Childhood Programs in PA

Overview

- **According to a 2012-13 Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning report:**
 - Pennsylvania has 730,000 children under the age of 5.
 - 59% of these children are from economically at-risk families (up to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)*).
 - But only 34.2% of Pennsylvania children participate in quality early learning programs, and only one in six participate in high-quality programs.

* The Census Bureau uses a set of dollar value thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. In 2015, a family of four falls into 100% of the federal poverty level if their annual income is below \$24,250.

Range of Quality Early Learning Programs

- **Home Visiting Family Support Programs.** Programs such as Nurse-Family Partnership, Healthy Families America, Parents as Teachers, and Parent-Child Home Program served 11,475 children (0-2 years old) and families (235% FPL or below for Nurse Family Partnership, with some flexibility) in the 2012-13 program year through state and federal funds.

These programs have a family-centered focus that supports families through a strength-based approach that works with both the child and parent.

Children whose mothers participated in Nurse-Family Partnership were 59% less likely to have been arrested by age 15 compared to their peers.

- **Head Start** provides comprehensive early learning services to children (3- and 4-years old) and families who are most at risk of academic failure (100% FPL or below). 33,742 children received Head Start services through state and federal funding in 2012-13.

In addition to educational programming, Head Start offers health/nutrition services, social service support to families and a strong parent involvement component.

The percentage of four-year olds with proficient academic and social skills more than tripled to 76 percent after participating in Head Start programs in 2012-13. In fact, there was a six-fold increase in the percentage of children with proficient mathematical thinking skills.

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- **Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts** provides high-quality pre-kindergarten education for at-risk 3- and 4-year olds in Pennsylvania at 300% FPL or below. In the 2012-13 program year, 11,391 children participated in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts.

The percentage of four-year olds with proficient academic and social skills tripled to 82 percent after participating in PA Pre-K Counts programs in 2012-13. School districts also report children from PA Pre-K Counts classrooms continuing school success through third grade.

- **Keystone STARS (funded under the Child Care Services appropriation)** is proven to improve the quality of child care based on an independent study and offers parents a tool to gauge the quality of the programs they choose. In 2012-13, approximately 164,762 children from birth through school-age were enrolled in Keystone STARS programs.

Child care and Head Start programs earn a STAR 1 to STAR 4 level by meeting quality standards for teacher qualifications, learning environment, family involvement, and program management.

The percentage of four-year olds with proficient academic and social skills doubled to 81 percent after participating in Keystone STARS 3 and 4 programs in 2012-13.

- **Child Care Works (funded under the Child Care Services and Child Care Assistance appropriations)** provides low-income working families with access to child care, making them more likely to retain employment and be more productive at work. In June 2013 122,254 children from birth – school age received Child Care Works subsidy.

Families must provide documentation that they meet work and educational requirements to be eligible. In June 2013 more than three-quarters (81%) of children receiving Child Care Works were enrolled in regulated child care; more than half (62%) were enrolled in Keystone STARS programs.

Children are eligible for this program from birth until the day prior to the date of the child's 13th birthday. Children with disabilities may be eligible through age 18. However, once children reach school-age, they may only receive subsidy for before and/or after school care.