



## Head Start in Michigan: Critical Support for Children and Families

### Preparing Children for Success

Head Start plays a key role in the state in providing quality early care and education, but its success is hampered by a lack of full federal funding even as demands made on Head Start programs increase. This federally funded preschool and child development program serves roughly 40,000 mostly poor children and their families annually in the state of Michigan. (The 2006 Federal Poverty Level for a single-parent family of three was \$16,242.) The program also connects families to other vital services to meet their basic needs.

There are 103 Head Start programs including 82 Head Start and 21 Early Head Start serving residents in all 83 Michigan counties. All programs are composed of multiple sites, some with several classrooms. Traditionally Head Start provided a part-day program during the school year, but more programs are broadening options to serve the needs of working parents.

The program is an essential component of early childhood education for the state's children who would not otherwise have access to formal school readiness activities. Children benefit from the early center-based social interaction and intellectual development provided by a preschool experience.<sup>1</sup> Head Start places poor children on a trajectory for success in school when they might otherwise need to play catch-up from their first day of kindergarten.

Multiple studies, including a 40-year study of Head Start participants in Ypsilanti, Michigan, indicate that participation in Head Start programs provides measurable long-term benefits to poor children includ-

ing higher IQ test scores, higher average financial earnings, and better overall health than those who did not participate in Head Start.<sup>2</sup> This evidence has helped to keep Head Start funding as a part of the federal budget for the past 43 years.

### Head Start Reauthorization 2007: Expansions Strengthen the Program

Last year the U.S. Congress passed the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. This reauthorization aims to strengthen the program in several ways by:

- Expanding eligibility limits to include up to 35 percent of children whose families are living between 100 and 130 percent of the poverty level as opposed to only children whose families are below the poverty level
- Providing more flexibility in converting to full day/full year services
- Increasing credential standards for Head Start Teachers and Assistant Teachers

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This issue brief was prepared in partnership with the Michigan Head Start State Collaboration Office and the Michigan Head Start Association. Special appreciation is accorded to University of Michigan interns Erin Stringfellow and Sara Gold for all their efforts.

<sup>1</sup> Michigan Head Start Association. [www.mhsa.ws](http://www.mhsa.ws)

<sup>2</sup> Calman, Leslie J. (2005) *Early Childhood Education for All: A Wise Investment*. New York: Legal Momentum.

## Expansions and Higher Standards: Unfunded Mandates

Unfortunately, recent appropriations have grossly under-funded Head Start programs limiting access for eligible children and families. After passing this reauthorization bill with many new requirements, the White House and Congress approved appropriations that cut Head Start funding—even before adjusting for inflation. The 2008 cut in funding amounts to an 11 percent decrease (\$893 million) in funding from the 2002 level when adjusted for inflation<sup>3</sup>. This budget ensures that Head Start programs will not have the funds to serve all eligible children and families or to pay for more credentialed teachers. In fact, some Michigan programs had already reduced enrollment to avoid compromising program quality due to flat funding.

This funding shortfall is set to continue into the 2009 fiscal year. The President's Executive Budget for FY2009 proposed a small increase (2%) in Head Start funding, not even adequate to cover cost increases due to inflation. This level of funding would mean that 14,000 fewer children will receive Head Start throughout the country—roughly 540 fewer children in Michigan will be served.

While the state has funded a preschool program for four-year olds known as the Michigan School Readiness Program (MSRP), this program is essentially a classroom-based experience rather than an extensive comprehensive program like Head Start. Head Start is obligated to provide access to oral and physical health services, including immunization, as well as social services. They conduct screenings and provide follow-up with nutrition, socialization, and mental health counseling. Traditionally Head Start targeted children in the most desperate circumstances, living in families with annual income below the federal poverty level.

In contrast, at least half of children in any MSRP program must live in families with income below 250 percent of the poverty level, and all must qualify with at least two of 25 risk factors, such as living in a single parent family. Pending state legislation is proposed to require children eligible for Head Start to be served by that program unless parents make a specific request.

The average Head Start allocation is \$6,700 per child compared to \$3,400 for the MSRP. The MSRP allocation only recently increased after stalling at \$3,300 for approximately seven years. To maintain the program school districts and other sponsoring organizations for MSRP programs have shouldered substantial in-kind costs, which strained local resources. In fact, for this reason some school districts have recently elected not to continue the program. Clearly state and local resources will not be able to compensate for the erosion in federal funding for Head Start.

## Policy Recommendations: Invest in School Readiness

The state of Michigan has a vested interest in advocating for a fully funded Head Start program. Michigan's state legislators have passed strict K-12 educational guidelines to prepare Michigan's students to be competitive after high school. Preparation for this success begins before students enter kindergarten. Many families in Michigan, especially during hard economic times, rely on Head Start or state-funded MSRP to ensure their children are ready to learn.

Policymakers, advocates, and concerned citizens in Michigan must make a sustained effort to:

- Urge Congress to fix the budget shortfall in Head Start by including at least \$472 million in the 2008 supplemental appropriations bill to fill the current funding gap<sup>4</sup> as well as an additional \$360 million above the prior fiscal year's funding level for each fiscal year from 2009 to 2013.
- Support state-funded early childhood initiatives to expand access to high quality preschool.
- Ensure that students are ready to undertake demanding statewide K-12 standards by advocating for adequate funding for high-quality preschool programs, including Head Start and MSRP.

Based on Head Start program data, this issue brief provides profiles of many aspects of Head Start and Early Head Start services in Michigan as well as the children and families enrolled in the program.

<sup>3</sup>Results: The Power to End Hunger. Strategic Goals- Head Start. <http://www.results.org/website/article.asp?id=347>

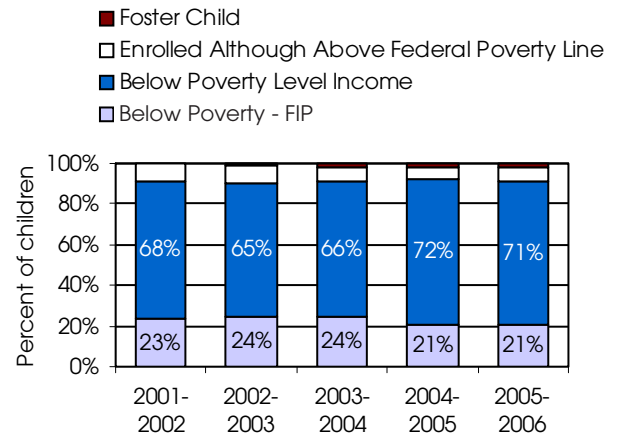
<sup>4</sup>National Head Start Association. *President's Budget Does Not Fix Head Start's "Billion Broken Promises" Funding Crisis*. February 4, 2008. [http://www.nhsa.org/press/News\\_Archived/index\\_news\\_020408.htm](http://www.nhsa.org/press/News_Archived/index_news_020408.htm)

## Who receives Head Start services?

Head Start and Early Head Start actively recruit families who receive public services. The programs maintain at least 90 percent enrollment of families with incomes below the federal poverty line. In 2006, that 90 percent (37,450 families) living below the poverty line included 8,572 families who qualified for the Family Independence Program (FIP) the cash assistance program in Michigan. These families had incomes at least 30 percent below the poverty line. The other 10 percent of Head Start and Early Head Start participants—those whose family incomes were above the poverty line—qualified for Head Start services because of their disability or foster child status.

Note: The Federal Poverty Levels in 2006 was an annual income of \$16,242 for a single parent with two children. (The poverty level is adjusted for inflation and family size/composition.)

**More than one in five Head Start and Early Head Start participants have family incomes more than 30 percent below the poverty line.**

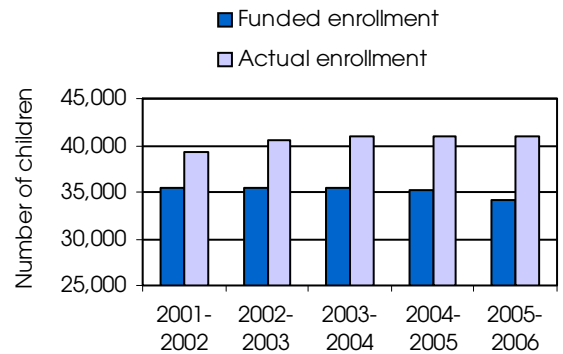


Source: Head Start Program Information Report  
Prepared by Michigan League for Human Services

## How many participants do Head Start and Early Head Start serve?

There are approximately 35,000 funded enrollment slots for Head Start and Early Head start in Michigan. Programs must remain filled in order to secure funding. As some children leave, others join during the enrollment year. This turnover in enrolled children means that the actual enrollment (total number of children served during the enrollment year) has exceeded funded enrollment consistently since 2002. Actual enrollment averages at around 40,500 children representing close to an annual turnover rate of roughly 16 percent.

**There is almost a 20 percent turnover rate for Head Start and Early Head Start Participants each year.**

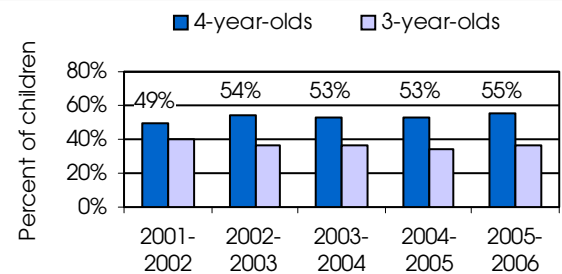


Source: Head Start Program Information Report  
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## How old are the children who participate in Head Start and Early Head Start?

Head Start serves children from age three to five with center-based programs. Early Head Start serves pregnant women and infants from birth to age three with home visits. Of the 40,000 total participants, almost all (94%) were preschool children in the center-based program. Moreover, the majority of those children were four-year-olds. In 2006, Head Start served almost 23,000 four-year-olds—mostly poor children. More than half of all Head Start participants are four-year-olds. The share of three-year-olds served in Michigan dropped between 2002 and 2006.

### The majority of children enrolled in Head Start or Early Head Start are four-year-olds.

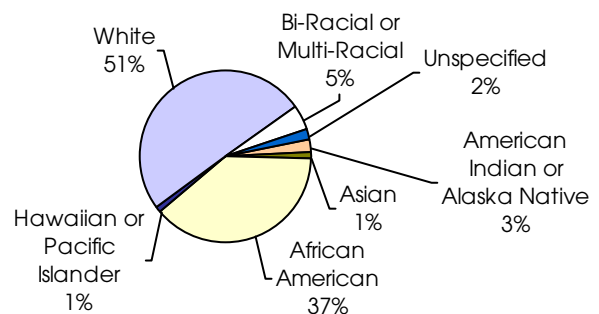


Source: Head Start Program Information Report  
Prepared by Michigan League for Human Services

## What percentage of Head Start and Early Head Start participants belong to a racial minority?

African Americans and other minority groups are overrepresented in Michigan Head Start and Early Head Start programs when compared with Michigan's child population. In 2006, 37 percent of Head Start and Early Head Start participants identified as African American, while African American children (age 0-17) made up only 19 percent of the total child population. This is not surprising as African American children in Michigan are also four times more likely to be poor than their white counterparts. In the 2006 program year, 10 percent of all participants (including pregnant women) identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino<sup>5</sup>.

### Half of all Head Start or Early Head Start participants identified as belonging to a racial minority in 2006.



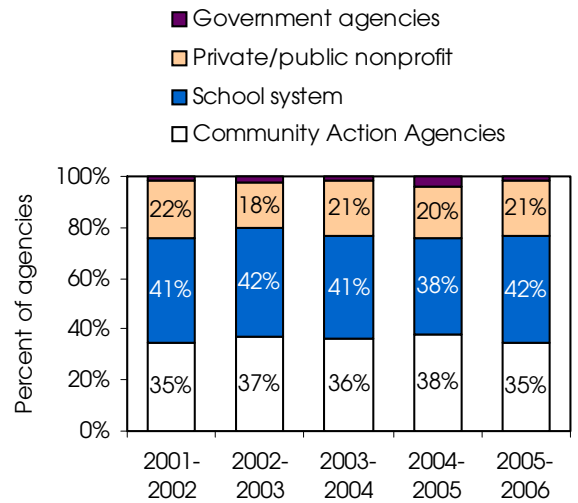
Source: Head Start Program Information Report  
Prepared by Michigan League for Human Services

<sup>5</sup> Hispanic/Latino Origin was recorded as a racial category until 2004-2005. Beginning in that year participants were able to identify themselves by race as well as by ethnicity.

## What agencies provide Head Start services?

Community Action Agencies and public and private school systems provide three-quarters of Michigan's Head Start services, while public and private nonprofits, such as hospitals and churches, provide approximately 20 percent of services. Less than five percent of all Head Start services are provided by government agencies, such as counties and cities. These percentages have remained relatively stable since 2001.

### Community Action Agencies and school systems provide most Head Start services.

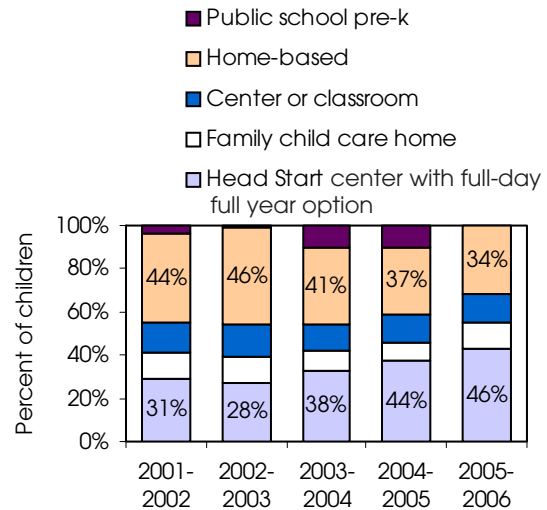


Source: Head Start Program Information Report  
Prepared by Michigan League for Human Services

## Does Head Start provide child care beyond the half-day program?

In 2006, roughly 15,000 children needed full-day full-year care. Of those Head Start provided such care for roughly 7,000. As more families have required full-day/full-year childcare, Head Start has responded by offering more full-day slots to enrolled children. From 2001 and 2006, the percentage of full day/full year care provided by Head Start rose from 31 percent to 46 percent. Other child care partners still provide the majority of child care for Head Start children. Home-based care with a relative or unrelated adult as well as in the child's own home continues to be a significant source of child care for Head Start children in Michigan.

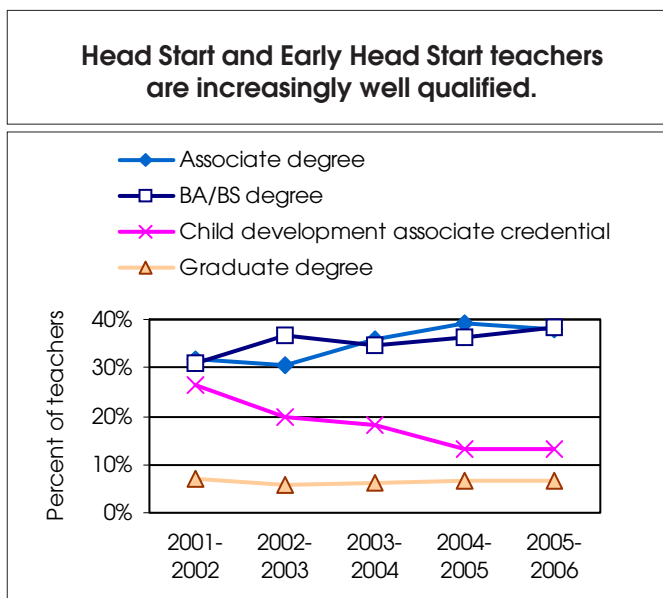
### Head Start has become a significant source of child care for children in need of full-day/full-year care.



Source: Head Start Program Information Report  
Prepared by Michigan League for Human Services

## What credentials do Head Start teachers have?

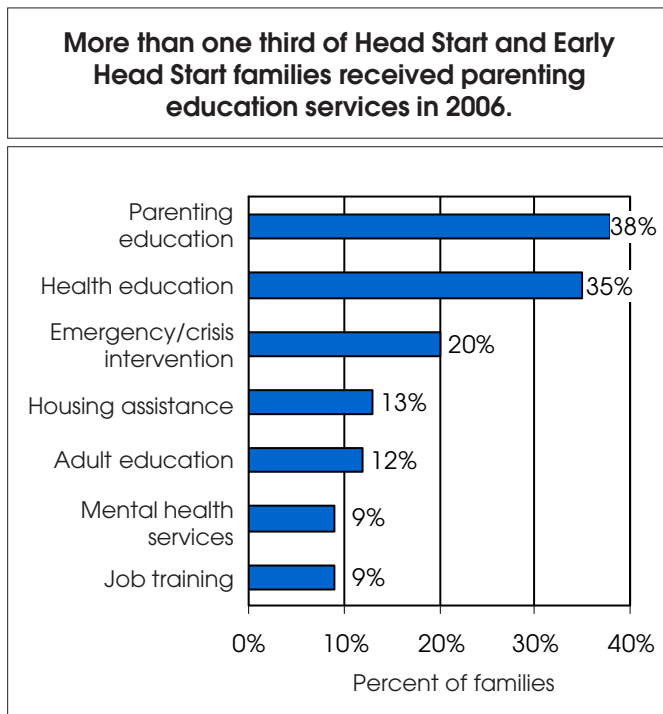
In 2006 almost half of Head Start teachers had at least a bachelors degree. More teachers are obtaining Early Childhood Education-related associate degrees and bachelor degrees. The percentage of teachers with such degrees increased from 31-32 percent to 38 percent from 2002 to 2006. Consequently, the rate of those teachers with a Child Developmental Associate (CDA) credential but no degree decreased significantly.



Source: Head Start Program Information Report  
Prepared by Michigan League for Human Services

## What other services do Head Start and Early Head Start families receive?

In 2006, two-thirds of families received at least one service with many families receiving more than one. Two of five families enrolled in Head Start received parenting education services in 2006 while one in three families received some health education. The third most-used service for Head Start and Early Head Start families in 2006 was emergency/crisis intervention which includes immediate help with food, clothing or shelter. The percentage of families receiving various services while enrolled in Head Start or Early Head Start has remained relatively steady over the past five years. Most of these services except for mental health are usually provided by Head Start staff. Mental services, however, are usually provided on-site by mental health consultants.

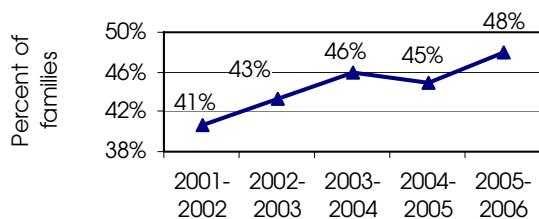


Source: Head Start Program Information Report  
Prepared by Michigan League for Human Services

## What percentage of Head Start and Early Head Start families receive WIC services?

Almost half of Head Start families received services under the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) in 2006. The rate has increased from 41 percent in 2002 to 48 percent in 2006. The expansion of Early Head Start may have been instrumental in this trend as well as the economic decline in the state.

**By 2006, almost half of Head Start and Early Head Start families were receiving WIC services.**

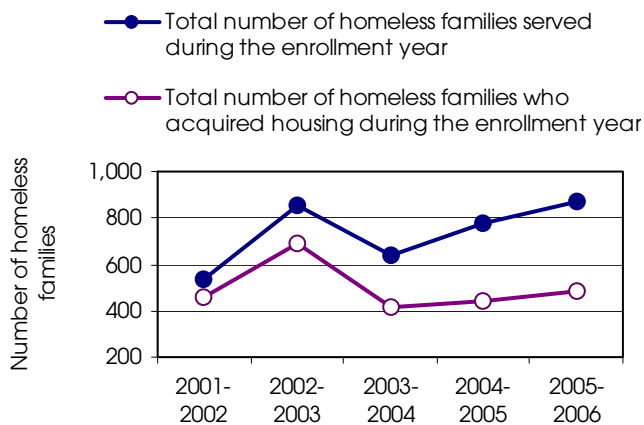


Source: Head Start Program Information Report  
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## How many homeless Head Start and Early Head Start families acquire housing during their first year of participation in the program?

The number of homeless families who received Head Start services increased from 2002 to 2006. Unfortunately, more homeless Head Start families still remained homeless at the end of the enrollment year in recent years. In 2001, 85 percent of homeless families served by Head Start and Early Head Start acquired housing, compared with only 56 percent in 2006.

**A smaller percentage of homeless families served by Head Start and Early Head Start are acquiring housing.**

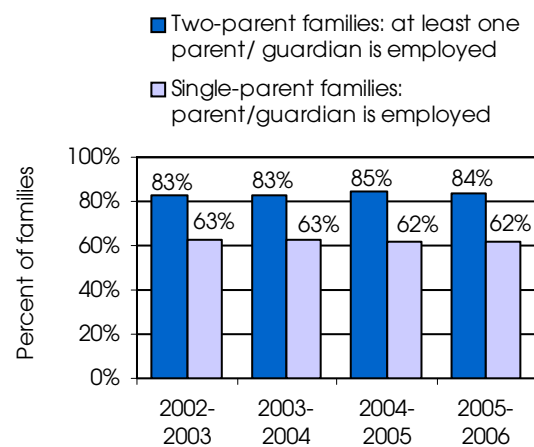


Source: Head Start Program Information Report  
Prepared by Michigan League for Human Services

## Percentage of Head Start and Early Head Start parents work outside the home?

Three out of every five families with children in Head Start and Early Head Start are headed by a single parent, and most (60%) are employed. Among two-parent families, approximately 85 percent have at least one parent working.<sup>6</sup> Three out of four (74.1%) of Head Start parents had at least a high school education in 2006.

### The majority of Head Start parents are employed.

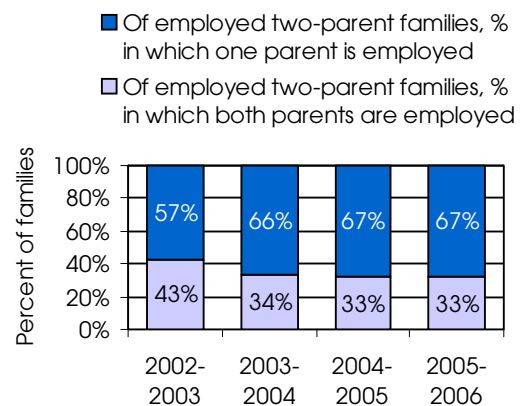


Source: Head Start Program Information Report  
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## What percentage of Head Start and Early Head Start families rely on a single income?

While most parents in Head Start and Early Head Start families work, an increasing percentage of employed two-parent families was supported by only one income. In 2003, both parents worked in 43 percent of two-parent working families; by 2006, both parents worked in only 33 percent of two-parent working families. The unemployment rate in Michigan, which remained higher than the national average over this time period, has made it much harder for those seeking work to find jobs.

### More two-parent families are supported by only one income.



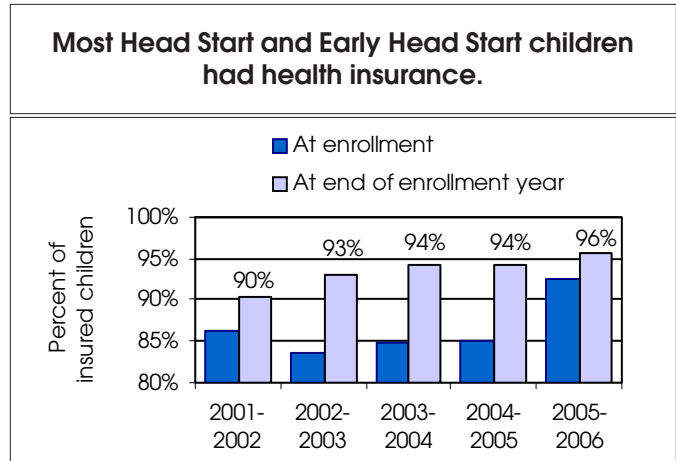
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<sup>6</sup>Data from 2001-2002 are not included, as that year employment status and job training/education were included as one category. The employment rate may have been underestimated if participants were recorded as attending job training or school, even if they were also employed.



## Do Head Start and Early Head Start children have health insurance?

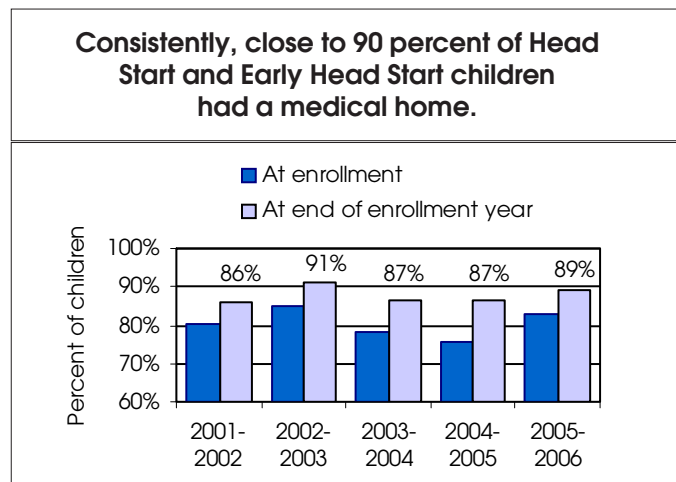
Health insurance coverage is key to accessing health care. The Head Start program made substantial progress in helping children attain coverage between 2002 and 2006. The overall rate of health insurance coverage for children rose from 90 percent in 2002 to 96 percent in 2006.



Source: Head Start Program Information Report  
Prepared by Michigan League for Human Services

## Do Head Start and Early Head Start children have medical homes?

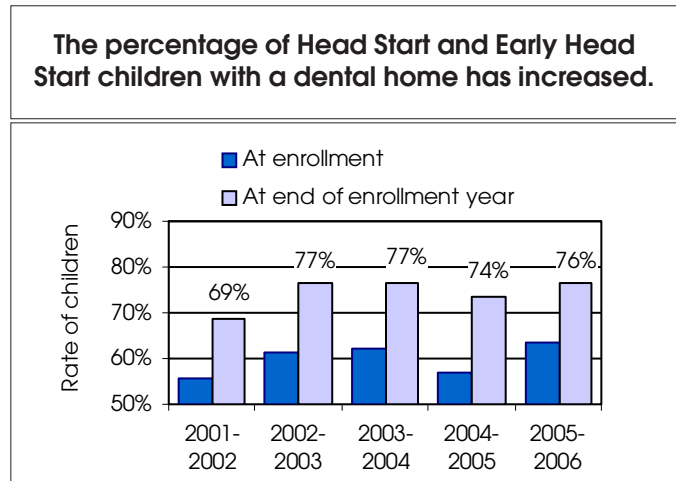
Having a medical home—defined as an ongoing source of continuous, accessible medical care—is a key strategy to ensuring healthy children. Healthy children are more likely to succeed in school. Children without access to primary and preventative care tend to miss more school and suffer unnecessarily from preventable or controllable medical conditions such as diabetes or asthma. Consistently, by the end of the program year, roughly 90 percent of Head Start and Early Head Start children were up-to-date on a schedule of preventive and primary health care, including all appropriate tests and physical examinations.



Source: Head Start Program Information Report  
Prepared by Michigan League for Human Services

## Do Head Start and Early Head Start children have dental homes?

The rate of children enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start who had a dental home—defined as an ongoing source of continuous, accessible dental care—increased substantially after 2002. Consistently, by the end of the program year, roughly 75 percent of children received a professional dental examination.

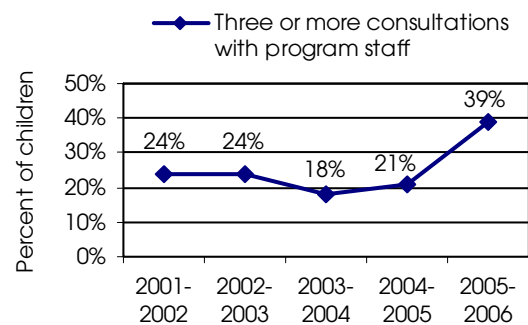


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## Do Head Start and Early Head Start children have access to mental health consultations?

In 2006, roughly 13 percent of participating Head Start and Early Head Start children received mental health services, compared with 20 percent in 2004. Although the total percentage of Head Start and Early Head Start children who required mental health consultations decreased, the percentage of those children who required multiple (three or more) consultations almost doubled—rising from 21 percent in 2004 to 39 percent in 2006. The 2006 revision of the Head Start and Early Head Start mental health protocol could account for this change.

### Of the children who needed mental health consultations, the percentage who required three or more consultations has risen.

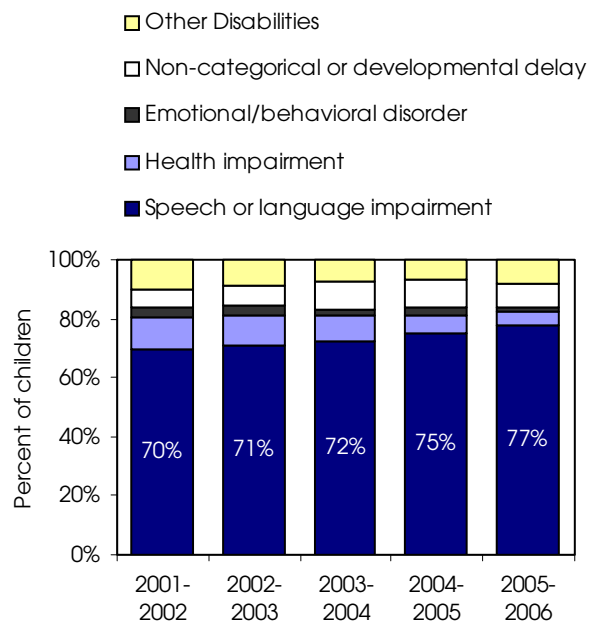


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## What types of disabilities are Head Start and Early Head Start children diagnosed with?

For each of the past five years, 11-12 percent of all enrolled children were diagnosed with a disability by the end of the enrollment year. Approximately one-half of those were diagnosed at the time of enrollment, and the other half during the year. In 2006 almost four of every five were diagnosed with a speech or language impairment. One in 10 had a non-categorical or developmental delay.

### Most children with a disability had a speech or language impairment.



Source: Head Start Program Information Report  
Prepared by Michigan League for Human Services