

Illinois Head Start Children are at Risk

Fewer Children and Families Enrolled Means Loss of Opportunity

What's the Impact of Losing Services for Three and Four Year Olds in Illinois?

As the movement towards universal PreK and a coordinated early childhood system continues, where will Head Start fit in? Is Head Start just a funding source or is it a program? How do we maneuver, as a community, through these complex issues? Do we move forward with serving three and four year olds or adapt to serve younger kids? Decisions being made now impact the future of Head Start and will have consequences. The goal of this White Paper is to bring awareness to the loss of services and have a real discussion on the impact to local communities across the state of Illinois. We need thoughtful leadership and dialog to better understand the long term consequences of not serving three and four year old children and justify why the problem needs to be solved for the future of all our Illinois children and families.

Implementation of the Head Start model has proven, for more than fifty years that it is, in fact an intervention program, a “disrupter of poverty.” We know from the research what a loss of a Head Start opportunity would mean to an Illinois child and family. The loss of “true” comprehensive services, including the two-generational approach, means children do not have the Head Start advantage. We know Illinois children that participate in Head Start programs receive innumerable benefits. These advantages appear immediately, last a lifetime, and even have an effect on other generations. The effects are particularly strong amongst certain subgroups of children, particularly Hispanic and African-American children, dual language learners, children who are homeless or in foster care, those who qualify for free lunch, and those whose mothers did not graduate high school. When disadvantaged children receive high-quality birth-to-five education, such as Early Head Start plus Head Start, the return on investment can be as high as 13% annually (Garcia et al, 2016).

The advantages Head Start children experience include:

By the end of the program:

Head Start children make progress towards norms in language, literacy, and math. Head Start children, also, score at the norm on letter-word knowledge by the end of the year (Aikens et al., 2013; Bloom & Weiland, 2015).

Early Head Start children show significantly better social-emotional, language, and cognitive development. Children who attend Early Head Start and transition to Head Start are better prepared for kindergarten than children who do not attend Head Start (Love et al., 2002).

The Head Start Impact Study found Head Start children scored better than a control group of children in all measured domains of cognitive and social-emotional development (U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, 2010).

Head Start children in foster care or other non-parental care are better prepared for school (Lipscomb et al., 2013).

Head Start children have better social skills, impulse control, and approaches to learning. Head Start children, also, decrease their problem behaviors, such as aggression and hyperactivity (Aikens et al., 2013).

Obese, overweight, or underweight children who participate in Head Start have a significantly healthier BMI by kindergarten entry (Lumeng et al., 2015).

Children in Early Head Start are more likely to be immunized and have services for children with disabilities (Love et al., 2002).

Head Start children are more likely to receive dental checkups and have healthy eating patterns than non-participants. They have lower body mass index (BMI) scores and are less likely to be overweight compared to children in other non-parental care (Lee et al., 2013).

Children show additional gains in social-emotional development as a result of participating in Head Start at both three and four years old (Aikens et al., 2013).

Other generations:

Early Head Start parents offer more stimulating home environments, read more with children, use less physical punishment, and have higher levels of self-sufficiency (Love et al., 2002).

Head Start parents are more likely to increase their educational levels during their children's early years than other at-risk parents (Sabol & Chase-Lansdale, 2014).

Head Start parents invest more time in learning activities with their children, and non-resident fathers spend more days per month with their children (Gelber & Isen, 2011).

Head Start graduates report investing more in their own children; their children benefited from more positive parenting practices. Head Start graduates spent more time teaching their own children numbers, letters, colors, and shapes, more time praising their children. They also showed their children more physical affection, spent more time doing the child's favorite activities, and reported spanking their children less (Bauer & Schanzenbach, 2016).

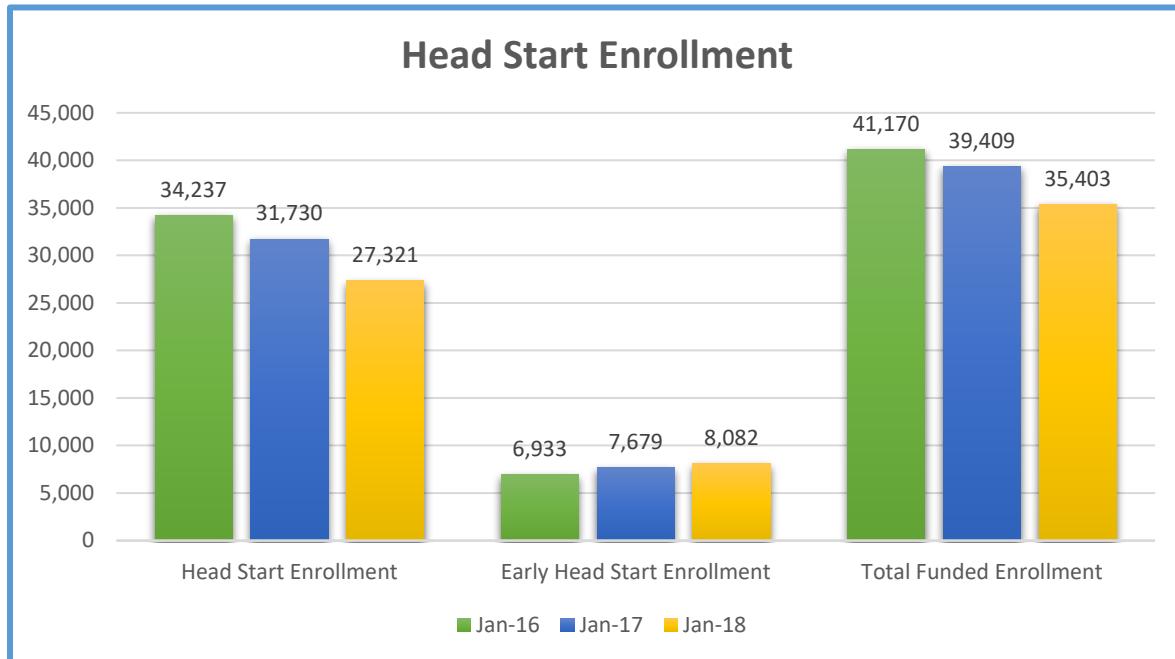
Changes in state and federal policy have huge implications for serving three and four year olds in Head Start.

In Illinois almost seven thousand eligible three and four year olds have lost access to Head Start services over the last three fiscal years (FY16 – FY18). We believe there has been a policy shift both at the federal and state level driving these changes.

What Does the Data Tell Us?

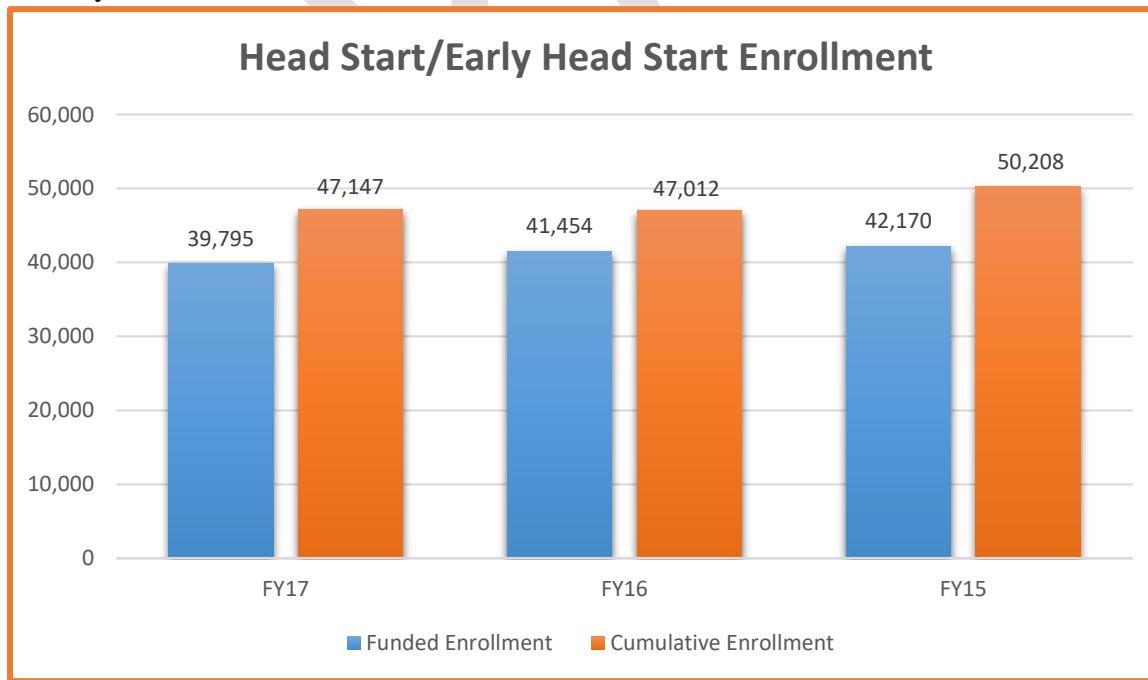
The Office of Head Start Funding Plans and the Program Information Report (PIR) both indicate a decrease in funded Head Start enrollment over the last several fiscal years. According to the Office of Head Start Funding Plan, the funded enrollment for Fiscal Year 2016 was 34,237, and in the current fiscal year (FY18), the funded enrollment is at 27,321. This is a loss of 6,916 funded Head Start slots. Although, at the same time, we have seen an increase in Early Head Start funded slots. Early Head Start funded enrollment in Fiscal Year 2016 was at 6,933, and in

the current fiscal year (FY18), it is at 8,082. This is an increase of 1,149. The total funded enrollment for both Head Start and Early Head Start in Fiscal Year 2016 was 41,170, but in the current fiscal year (FY18), it is at 35,403. A total loss of 5,767 Head Start slots from Illinois.



Source: Office of Head Start Region V Funding Plan

The Office of Head Start Program Information Report paints a similar picture as it also indicates a steady decline in both funded and cumulative enrollment of Head Start Services.



Source: Office of Head Start Program Information Report

Illinois is not alone. Similar enrollment trends are also being recorded in the other five states in Region 5 (Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota).

What are the Policy Shifts?

We believe there are many factors contributing to the steep enrollment loss of Illinois Head Start children. First, we know shifts in federal Head Start policy have created the ability for individual grantees to do an enrollment reduction, and/or conversion of slots to Early Head Start. The development of the federal Preschool Development Grants in 2014 and the language utilized in the Obama Administration created a shift in state and federal policy across the country.

Federal Policy

The 2007 Head Start Act allowed Head Start programs to reduce enrollment and keep their funding to allow for the growing demands of providing quality. Without new funding, many programs took advantage of this opportunity to support paying health benefits, to raise salaries, and to improve overall quality. Also, the Head Start Act of 2007 provided the authority for Head Start grantees to shift funding from services for Head Start preschool aged children to Early Head Start services for pregnant women, infants, and toddlers, whether or not they currently operated an Early Head Start program. This is called conversion and allows programs to convert services from Head Start to Early Head Start. Under the Head Start Act of 2007 Section 640(f)(2)(B) and 645(a)(5), Head Start grantees may request conversion of funded enrollment slots and a proportionate reallocation of funds from Head Start to Early Head Start.

Federal policy regarding Universal PreK, services to four year olds, was supported during the eight years of the Obama Administration. While the Office of Head Start included policy for Head Start to serve younger children. The Obama Administration's movement on universal Pre-K for four year olds included three's and four's in Illinois as our Preschool For All system supports both. This shift in policy not only impacted services to four year olds but, also, three year olds in Illinois. The Preschool Development Grants awarded in 2014 have expanded services to three's and four's utilizing the same eligibility criteria as Head Start. In fact, the language in the new Head Start Program Performance Standards say 1302.14 Selection process. (3) "If a program operates in a service area where Head Start eligible children can enroll in high-quality publicly funded pre-kindergarten for a full school day, the program must prioritize younger children as part of the selection criteria in paragraph (a)(1) of this section. If this priority would disrupt partnerships with local education agencies, then it is not required." (Head Start Program Performance Standards).

Nationally, many states and localities have increased their funding of public Pre-K and are now able to serve children currently or previously served by Head Start. In conducting their community assessment, Head Start grantees may find that the needs of the communities they serve have changed. Declining population throughout our state has also added an additional level of difficulty of meeting funded enrollment. Head Start and Early Head Start must report monthly enrollment and attendance. The consequences for under enrollment are serious for Head Start programs and have led to a reduction in enrollment and funding by the Office of Head Start.

State Policy

The Illinois State Board of Education received the federal Preschool Development (PDG) Grant in 2014. The Preschool Development Grant – Expansion Grant (PDG/EG) was awarded to Illinois, as part of a four year grant, to enhance its infrastructure to provide high-quality preschool programs and to expand high-quality full day preschool programs for four year olds in high-need communities. Eighteen communities were originally selected to participate in the first phase of the Preschool Expansion Grant, and in FY19, others will also be eligible to provide Preschool for All Expansion (PFAE) services. The Illinois PFAE grants mirror Head Start requirements regarding services to children and families. In fact, Illinois has established similar eligibility requirements causing competition in many communities. These PFAE grants are geared to four year olds, but in a state like Illinois where our Preschool For All system serves both three's and four's, we have seen growth in services for both three's and four's. The PFAE eligibility criteria consists of the following:

“If a child presents with any one of these selection factors (numbers 1-4) the family should be considered the highest priority and be directly enrolled in the Preschool Expansion program or placed at the top of the waiting list” (PFAE FY19 RFP).

1. Homeless (McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act)
2. Current or recent child welfare involvement (ward of state, foster care, intact family services, TPSN)
3. Child has an IEP for more than itinerant speech services or is referred for special education evaluation
4. Family income at or below 50% FPL and/or receiving TANF

During our state budget fiasco, funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) was decreased and we are now just trying to “dig our way out.” The funds for the ECBG fund the state’s Preschool for All program, which provides part-day Pre-K to three and four year olds and the Preschool for All Expansion program. The ECBG, also, provides funding for programs serving infants and toddlers (Prevention Initiative). After several years of cuts, the ECBG received a \$21 million restoration in FY16 and a \$79 million increase in FY17, bringing us back to 2009 funding levels, while also meeting the state’s obligation for the federal Preschool Expansion Grant funding. An additional \$50 million increase in FY18 was funded to meet the Preschool for All Expansion grant obligations.

ECBG Funding

	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18 Proposed
Appropriation	\$300,192,400	\$293,438,100	\$314,238,100	\$393,738,100	\$443,738,100
Change from Prior Year	\$0	(\$6,754,300)	\$20,800,000	\$79,500,000	\$50,000,000
	0.00%	(2.25%)	7.09%	25.29%	12.70%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education Fiscal Year 2018 Proposed Budget

ECBG Service Level

	FY16	FY17 (est)
Downstate Illinois Projects		
Birth to 3 Prevention Initiative	148	148
3-5 Preschool for All (PFA)	455	451
0-3 Children Served		
Downstate	7,849	8,811
Chicago Public Schools	5,481	6,538
Total 0-3 Children Served	13,330	15,349
3-5 Children Served		
Downstate Preschool for All	54,690	53,231
Chicago Public Schools	18,428	21,191
Total 3-5 Children Served	73,118	74,422

Source: Illinois State Board of Education Fiscal Year 2018 Proposed Budget

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) includes a new competitive Preschool Development Grant (PDG) program that has a strong emphasis on coordination and collaboration. The full details are still being discussed at the federal level. But in general, it now aims “to assist states to develop, update, or implement a strategic plan that facilitates collaboration and coordination among existing programs of early childhood care and education in a mixed delivery system across the state designed to prepare low-income and disadvantaged children to enter kindergarten and to improve transitions from such system into the local educational agency or elementary school that enrolls such children” (ESSA, Sec. 9219(a)(2)).

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) ESSA Plan includes important key components that could support or impact Head Start/Early Head Start services. It includes:

- Developing K-2 quality indicators
- Whole child perspective in plan
- Pre-K to third literacy initiative

In addition, as reported in the ISBE ESSA plan, they believe that parent, family, and community engagement is a cornerstone of effective schools and a critical element for a child’s education and well-being in order to ensure that the needs of the whole child are met. ISBE has an intra-agency collaborative team charged with developing greater cohesiveness and efficiency in this work. This team has developed a shared definition for family engagement: Meaningful family engagement is based on the premise that parents, educators, and community members share responsibility for the academic, physical, social, emotional, and behavioral development of youth. This helps to frame the supports developed for ISBE, LEAs, and other key stakeholders. Family engagement is fostered through a deliberate process that is embraced throughout the school. It empowers adults to jointly support student growth, addresses any barriers to learning, and ensures college and career readiness. Foremost, effective family engagement systems, policies, and practices are mindful of diverse school-communities that are rich in language, culture, and school experiences. They are responsive to student and family needs.

Also included in ESSA are a number of strategies that ISBE will be developing to continue and strengthen for young children and their families. Early Care and Education (ECE) providers can receive recognition of their work in family and community engagement from Early Childhood's Continuous Improvement Quality Rating System. This recognition boosts their quality rating and informs families of their quality practice. This gives families more opportunities to make informed decisions about their child's learning environment and the kinds of support they may receive as their child's first teacher.

ISBE, which has received a Preschool Expansion Grant, will work across the agency and in communities to build stronger systems and local capacity of ECE providers and families to better coordinate supports and increase confidence and opportunities for meaningful engagement. ISBE is a key stakeholder on the Illinois Early Learning Council that, as a public-private partnership created by Public Act 93-380, strengthens, coordinates, and expands programs and services for children, birth to 5, throughout Illinois. There is a dedicated committee for family and community engagement that is working in partnership with ISBE to implement a strategic plan to support hard-to-reach families, help families achieve self-sufficiency goals, and support schools in better coordinating the transition for families when their children enter elementary school. ISBE is, also, developing a framework for families in partnership with families, community resources, and faith-based partners because the agency recognizes that families are an integral part of a child's success from cradle to career. This work will align supports for children and families in efficient ways so community resources are strategically organized to support student success, thereby creating a focus on the whole child, integrating academics, services, supports, and opportunities. ISBE acknowledges the impact community resources and faith-based partners have in helping families become partners and leaders in supporting schools as well as their child's learning and healthy development. ISBE acknowledges the impact of the community school model as it embeds family engagement as a core pillar for school and student success. Community schools strengthen opportunities for schools and partners from across the community to come together to educate and support students and families in building thriving communities. Family and community engagement is one of the central foci of the work of the Health and Human Services Transformation agenda and an integral part of the overall effort to build internal capacity and coordination for services targeting impacts for children and families statewide. ISBE, in partnership with the Governor's Office, will work to build stronger pathways for communication with families, community resources, and faith-based partners to optimize the efficacy of the work.

Recommendations:

1. Raise awareness of the loss of services for three and four year old Head Start children and their families.
2. Establish a "think tank" to have the important conversation so we better understand the long term consequences and determine the right options moving forward.
3. Develop better agreements with LEA's by utilizing the ESSA language, the requires local education agencies receiving Title 1 funds to develop agreements with Head Start and other early

childhood providers, to drive coordination and collaboration. This new federal requirement represents an important opportunity for better coordination between school districts and Head Start.

4. Fully recognize that Head Start is a Two Generation program and build understanding of the true cost of this model.
5. Support dual outcomes for both children and their parents.
6. Explore the true cost of quality. Educate and advocate for the true cost of quality.

Conclusion:

With so much at stake how can we let this go? The current trends of universal preschool, the growth of Preschool For All, and the lack of adequate funding create unprecedented circumstances. As a Head Start community, we need to discuss the stark realities, put all the issues on the table, and strategize our options for the future. We hope this paper stimulates discussion and assists the community with moving forward.

Sources:

Office of Head Start, Region V Head Start/Early Head Start Funding Plan

Office of Head Start Program Information Report

New Early Childhood Coordination Requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). A Toolkit for State and Local Educational Agencies, Head Start Programs, and the Early Childhood Field. National Head Start Association and Council of Chief State School Officers

Illinois State Plan, Every Student Succeeds Act.

Illinois State Board of Education, Early Childhood Block Grant, Preschool for All Expansion Request for Proposal for FY19.