

HEAD START

Head Start began operating in 1965 under the general authority of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Head Start provides a wide range of services to primarily low-income, preschool-aged children, and their families. Most of the enrolled children are 3- and 4-year olds; however, the 1994 reauthorization legislation (P.L. 103-252) established the Early Head Start portion of the program, which serves pregnant mothers and children under age 3. Head Start's goals are to improve the social competence, learning skills, and health and nutrition status of low-income children so that they can begin school on an equal basis with their peers from higher-income households. The services provided include cognitive and language development; medical, dental, and mental health services (including screening and immunizations); and nutritional and social services. The program is administered by the Administration for Children and Families of the Department of Health and Human Services, which provides grants directly from the Federal government to local entities. Head Start strongly emphasizes the involvement of families and the local community to assure that programs are responsive to the unique needs of each community.

The Head Start program was most recently reauthorized in 2007 (for FY2008-FY2012), with the enactment of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act (P.L. 110-134). The law allows for expansion in Head Start program eligibility. Under prior law and accompanying regulations, at least 90% of children enrolled by each Head Start grantee were to come from families with income at or below the official federal poverty guideline or from families receiving welfare assistance. Up to 10% of the children could be from families whose incomes exceeded the poverty guideline. Regulations also require grantees to reserve at least 10% of their slots for children with disabilities. The 2007 reauthorization law added provisions to further expand eligibility by making homeless children categorically eligible and allowing grantees to fill up to 35% of their slots with children from families with incomes between 100% and 130% of the poverty line, provided they are not given higher priority than children below the poverty line or homeless children.

In fiscal year 2007, 908,412 children were served in Head Start Programs (of whom 61,788 were served by Early Head Start). Federal Head Start funding in fiscal year 2007 totaled almost \$6.9 billion. Table 15-33 provides historical data on participation in and funding of the Head Start Program, while Table 15-34 provides characteristics of children enrolled in the program since 1980.

**TABLE 15-33--HEAD START ENROLLMENT AND
FEDERAL FUNDING, FISCAL YEARS 1965-2007**

Fiscal year	Enrollment	Appropriations (in millions of dollars)
1965 (summer only)	561,000	96.4
1966	733,000	198.9
1967	681,400	349.2
1968	693,900	316.2
1969	663,600	333.9
1970	477,400	325.7
1971	397,500	360.0
1972	379,000	376.3
1973	379,000	400.7
1974	352,800	403.9
1975	349,000	403.9
1976	349,000	441.0
1977	333,000	475.0
1978	391,400	625.0

TABLE 15-33--HEAD START ENROLLMENT AND
FEDERAL FUNDING, FISCAL YEARS 1965-2007

Fiscal year	Enrollment	Appropriations
		(in millions of dollars)
1979	387,500	680.0
1980	376,300	735.0
1981	387,300	818.7
1982	395,800	911.7
1983	414,950	912.0
1984	442,140	995.8
1985	452,080	1,075.0
1986	451,732	1,040.0
1987	446,523	1,130.5
1988	448,464	1,206.3
1989	450,970	1,235.0
1990	548,470	1552.0 ¹
1991	583,471	1,951.8
1992	621,078	2,201.8
1993	713,903	2,776.3
1994	740,493	3,325.7
1995	750,696	3,534.1
1996	752,077	3,569.3
1997	793,809	3,980.5
1998	822,316	4,347.4
1999	835,365	4,658.2
2000	857,664	5,266.2
2001	905,235	6,199.1
2002	912,345	6,536.6
2003	909,608	6,667.5
2004	905,851	6,774.8
2005	906,993	6,843.1
2006	909,201	6,785.8 ²
2007	908,412	6,887.9

¹ After sequestration.

² In addition, the FY2006 Defense Appropriations Act (P.L. 109-148) appropriated \$90 million in Head Start funding to be used specifically to address needs arising from the Gulf Coast Hurricanes. Of the \$90 million appropriated, a total of \$74 million was actually awarded, based on grantee requests.

Source: Office of Head Start, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

TABLE 15-34--CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HEAD START,
SELECTED FISCAL YEARS 1980-2006

Fiscal Year	Disabled (%)	Age of Children Enrolled (%)				Enrollment by Race (%)				
		5 and older	4	3	Under 3	Native American	Hispanic	Black	White	Asian
1980	12	21	55	24	0	4	19	42	34	1
1982	12	17	55	26	2	4	20	42	33	1
1984	12	16	56	26	2	4	20	42	33	1
1986	12	15	58	25	2	4	21	40	32	3
1988	13	11	63	23	3	4	22	39	32	3
1990	14	8	64	25	3	4	22	38	33	3
1991	13	7	63	27	3	4	22	38	33	3
1992	13	7	63	27	3	4	23	37	33	3
1993	13	6	64	27	3	4	24	36	33	3
1994	13	7	62	28	3	4	24	36	33	3
1995	13	7	62	27	4	4	25	35	33	3
1996	13	6	62	29	4	4	25	36	32	3
1997	13	5	60	30	4	4	26	36	31	3
1998	13	6	59	31	4	3	26	36	32	3
1999	13	5	58	33	4	3	27	35	31	3
2000	13	5	56	33	6	3	29	35	30	3
2001	13	4	54	35	7	4	30	34	30	2
2002	13	5	52	36	7	3	30	33	28	3
2003	13	5	53	34	8	3	31	32	28	2
2004	13	5	52	34	9	3	31	31	27	2
2005	13	4	52	34	10	5	33	31	35	2
2006	12	4	51	35	10	4	34	31	40	2

Source: Office of Head Start, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.