**What is Head Start?**

[Wisconsin Head Start and Early Head Start](https://whsaonline.org/about-head-start/) is a federally-funded provider of developmental and educational services for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, pregnant women and their families. Head Start and its community partners work with at-risk families to remove their barriers to success and to cultivate children’s social, physical, emotional and cognitive development, so they have the abilities necessary to succeed in school and life.

Impacting children, families and communities happens one child at a time. Head Start services are evidence-based, developmentally-appropriate and family-centered. We coordinate with community organizations to better support parents in their work and child-rearing roles. Children who attend Head Start participate in a variety of learning activities, eat healthy meals and snacks, receive medical and oral health care, and play in safe indoor and outdoor environments.

Head Start includes comprehensive:

* Early childhood education and care
* Child development services for cognitive, social, emotional and physical growth
* Family development and support services

Head Start programs prepare America’s most vulnerable young children to succeed in school and in life beyond school. To achieve this, Head Start programs deliver services to children and families in core areas of early learning, health and family well-being, while engaging parents as partners every step of the way. Head Start programs serve children from low-income families, ages birth to 5.

Head Start encompasses Head Start preschool programs, which primarily serve 3- and 4-year-old children, and Early Head Start programs for infants, toddlers and pregnant women. Head Start services are delivered nationwide through 1,600 agencies that tailor the federal program to the local needs of families in their service area.

Head Start and Early Head Start programs offer a variety of service models, depending on the needs of the local community. Many Head Start and Early Head Start programs are based in schools. Other programs are located in child care centers and family child care homes. Some programs offer home-based services, where dedicated staff conduct weekly visits with children in their own home and work with the parent as the child's primary teacher.

More than 50 years ago, Head Start began as a program for preschoolers. Today 3- and 4-year-olds make up over 80 percent of the children served by Head Start programs each year. Early Head Start was created to serve pregnant women, infants and toddlers. Early Head Start programs are available until the child turns 3 years old and is ready to transition into Head Start or another pre-K program.

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Just recently, many Early Head Start programs have been funded to partner directly with existing infant and toddler child care programs, resulting in higher quality services to all children enrolled in the child care program.

Head Start programs support children’s growth and development in a positive learning environment through a variety of services, which include:

* **Early learning**: Children’s readiness for school and beyond is fostered by individualized learning experiences. Through relationships with adults, play, and planned and spontaneous instruction, children grow in many aspects of development. Children progress in social skills and emotional well-being, along with language and literacy learning, and concept development.
* **Health**: Each child’s perceptual, motor and physical development is supported to permit them to fully explore and function in their environment. All children receive health and development screenings, nutritious meals, oral health and mental health support. Programs connect families with medical, dental and mental health services to ensure that children are receiving the care they need.
* **Family well-being**: Parents and families are supported in achieving their own goals, such as housing stability, continued education and financial security. Programs support and strengthen parent-child relationships and engage families around children’s learning and development.

**Head Start in Wisconsin**

Wisconsin has 29 grantees offering Head Start and Early Head Start services. Nine tribal grantees offer Head Start and Early Head Start. One migrant grantee offers Head Start and Early Head Start. These grantees serve children and families in 286 programs located throughout the state.

**Children served by Wisconsin Head Start and Early Head Start programs**

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| --- | --- |
| Total Head Start and Early Head Start funded enrollment | 16,437 |
| Head Start (ages 3-5) funded enrollment | 13,497 |
| Early Head Start funded enrollment | 2,940 |
| Tribal program enrollment | 1,121 |
| Children served through migrant and seasonal program | 457 |
| Children served through the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership Enrollment | 827 |

For additional details on Head Start in Wisconsin, visit

<https://whsaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/HS18-WISCONSIN-HEAD-START-FACTS-TRIFOLD_3-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf>

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