

Office of Head Start (OHS)
Summary of Teen Parents Served within Head Start

January 28, 2013

Overview of Head Start

The Head Start, a federally funded community-based program, provides high-quality, comprehensive early education and support services to low-income children and families so that children start school ready to succeed. Head Start services address child development and early learning; medical, dental, nutrition and mental health needs; parental engagement activities; and referrals to social service providers for the entire family.

There are three types of Head Start programs:

- **Head Start**, created in 1965, serves low-income families with children ages 3-5.
- **Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS)**, created in 1969, serves migrant and seasonal farmworker families with children ages birth-5.
- **Early Head Start (EHS)**, created in 1995, serves families with children under the age of 3 and pregnant women.

The Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) indicates that during fiscal year 2011 Head Start, MSHS and EHS served 1,125,209 children and 16,710 pregnant women through 2,879 programs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Outer Pacific Islands, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and tribal nations. The 2011 PIR further details the following data on the three types of programs:

Number of:	# of	# of Children Served	# of Pregnant Women Served
Program Type:	Programs		
Head Start	1,789	942,354	
Early Head Start	1,028	148,812	16,710
Migrant and Seasonal Head Start	62	34,043 Age 3-5: 16,599 Age 0-2: 17,444	
Total	2,879	1,125,209	16,710

Background on Children & Families Served

Children are eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start programs if they meet the age requirements and are from families at or below the federal poverty level, participate in public assistance program, are homeless, or are in the foster care system. Early Head Start programs that serve pregnant women are also required to provide prenatal support services to expectant mothers.

When more children are eligible for enrollment than there are funded slots, programs must follow their established selection criteria to ensure that priority is given to children whose families have the greatest risks and are most in need of services. For example, programs may choose to prioritize enrollment to children and families with key risk factors or high-needs demographic groups in their service area, such as teenage mothers.

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Current PIR data of the number of children with teen parents served in Head Start is not available; however, the 2006 PIR indicates that teens under the age of 18 comprised 20 percent of pregnant women participating in EHS.

Additionally, federally funded Head Start and Early Head Start research and evaluation projects* identify teen parents within their samples:

- The **Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES)** provides the following data on the ages of mothers when they gave birth to their child who was newly enrolled into Head Start during the fall of 2009:ⁱ

About 16 percent of mothers were 19 or under at the time of their child’s birth. “(Mother’s age at child’s birth may underestimate teenage motherhood, since the child may have siblings who were born earlier.)”ⁱⁱ

Mother’s age, in years, at the time of child’s birth	All Head Start Children in cohort*	3-Year-Olds	4-Year-Olds
17 or under	5.1 %	4.1 %	6.8 %
18-19	10.5 %	9.9 %	11.4 %
20-24	36.1 %	34.5 %	38.8 %
25 or older	48.2%	51.5%	42.9%

*Sixty Head Start programs, 129 centers, and about 3,300 children and their families participated in FACES 2009.ⁱⁱⁱ

- The **Early Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (Baby FACES)** provides the following data on the ages of parents when their child was either a newborn or about 1 year of age and enrolled in Early Head Start during the spring of 2009:^{iv}

“The proportion of teen mothers in both cohorts is high: about 29 percent of mothers with newborns are teens, and 16 percent of mothers with 1-year-olds are teens. Teen parents are more prevalent among African Americans (62 percent) in our sample than among whites (47 percent) or Hispanics”^v

Parents’ age in years	Birth Mother		Birth Father	
	Newborn cohort*	1-year-old cohort*	Newborn cohort*	1-year-old cohort*
17 or under	14.0 %	4.5 %	6.2 %	0.9 %
18-19	14.5 %	11.9 %	13.2 %	6.3 %
20-24	28.0 %	29.0 %	25.1 %	24.5 %
25 or older	43.4%	54.5%	55.5%	68.2%

*The newborn cohort = pregnant women and newborns under the age of 9 weeks. (N=194)
The 1-year-old cohort = children 10-15 months of age. (N=782)

- **Early Head Start Research and Evaluation (EHSRE)** reports that “many of the children’s primary caregivers were teenage parents (about one-third across all the [17 EHS] research programs). However, the extent to which [these 17] programs served teenage parents varied substantially, from 12 to 84 percent. In two programs, more than half of all families were headed by a teenage parent.”^{vi}

(*Refer to page 4 for descriptions of the following referenced research and evaluation projects)

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Impact of Early Head Start Services for Teen Parents

“Although the Early Head Start programs participating in the (EHSRE) were not designed specifically for teenage mothers, they served teenage mothers and had important favorable impacts on the teenage parents and their children that they served. Despite the challenges they reported in serving teenage parents, the Early Head Start research programs were able to provide substantially more services to teenage parents than they would have obtained on their own in their communities. The programs also produced a favorable pattern of impacts on participation in self-sufficiency-oriented activities among teenage parents.”^{vii}

“Like other programs designed to increase self-sufficiency among disadvantaged teenage parents, the Early Head Start research programs succeeded in increasing school attendance among teenage parents. Unlike other large-scale programs, however, the programs also enhanced their children’s development. Early Head Start also provided support for children’s development if they had older parents.”^{viii}

“The evaluation of Early Head Start suggests that when programs put a high priority on providing intensive services and focus on child development while working with teenage parents on education, employment, and other issues, they can have significant impacts on the children’s progress at the same time that they improve teenage parents’ progress toward economic self-sufficiency.”^{ix}

Activities and Resources for Programs Serving Teen Parents

To support grantees in providing appropriate and effective services for pregnant and parenting teens, the Office of Head Start (OHS) provided support for the following activities and resources through the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC):

Information on Working with Teen Parents

- American Psychological Association. [10 Tips for Building Resilience in Children and Teens. Resilience Guide For Parents & Teachers](#), 2007.
- Early Head Start Tip Sheet, No. 34: [How is Working With Teen Parents Different Than Working With Older Parents?](#), 2009.

Learning Experiences for Program Staff

The Early Head Start National Resource Center (EHS NRC) on behalf of OHS developed several online learning experiences related to serving teen parents.

- [Engaging Teen Parents: Lessons from Teens about What Works for Them](#) Webcast, 2012.
- [Serving Expectant Teens: Principles for Practice, Resources, and Curricula](#) Audioconference, 2011.
- [Teen Parenting: Bridging Multigenerational Support](#) Webinar, 2011.

Additional Information on Early Head Start and Teen Parents

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). [Early Head Start and Teen Parent Families: Partnerships for Success](#). 2006.

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Description of Head Start Research and Evaluation Projects

- The **Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES)** provides descriptive information on the characteristics, experiences and outcomes of Head Start children and families, as well as the characteristics of the Head Start programs that serve them. FACES is funded from 1997-2013.^x
- The **Early Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (Baby FACES)** is a longitudinal descriptive study of a representative sample of 89 Early Head Start programs that captures family-and child-level information in addition to program-level characteristics such as program operations, services, and management and on characteristics of staff.^{xi} Baby FACES is funded from September 30, 2007 – September 29, 2012.^{xii}
- The **Early Head Start Research and Evaluation (EHSRE)** was “a rigorous, large-scale, random-assignment evaluation ... [with] a research sample (17 programs and 3,001 families) that reflects the characteristics of all programs funded in 1995 and 1996, including their program approaches and family demographic characteristics.”^{xiii}

Endnotes:

ⁱ Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE). Data Tables for FACES 2009 Head Start Children, Families, and Programs: Present and Past Data from FACES Report OPRE Report 2011-33b, December 2011, p 33.

ⁱⁱ OPRE. Data Tables for FACES 2009 Head Start Children, Families, and Programs: Present and Past Data from FACES Report OPRE Report 2011-33b, December 2011, p 33.

ⁱⁱⁱ OPRE. FACES 2009 Study Design OPRE Report 2011-9, June 2011, p. 1.

^{iv} OPRE. Learning As We Go: A First Snapshot of Early Head Start Programs, Staff, Families, and Children, February, 2011, p. 108.

^v OPRE. Learning As We Go: A First Snapshot of Early Head Start Programs, Staff, Families, and Children, February, 2011, p. 109.

^{vi} Commissioner’s Office of Research and Evaluation and Head Start Bureau (HSB). Leading the Way: Characteristics and Early Experiences of Selected Early Head Start Programs Vol. 1: Cross-Site Perspectives, December 1999, p. 24.

^{vii} OPRE and HSB. Making the Difference in Lives of Infants and Toddlers and Their Families: Impacts of Early Head Start Vol. 1: Final Technical Report, 2002, p. 349.

^{viii} OPRE and HSB. Making the Difference in Lives of Infants and Toddlers and Their Families: The Impacts of Early Head Start, Executive Summary, 2002, p. 9-10.

^{ix} OPRE and HSB. Making the Difference: Impacts of Early Head Start Vol. 1: Final Technical Report, 2002, p. 351-352.

^x OPRE. Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) *Overview* (http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hs/faces/faces_overview.html#overview accessed June 7, 2012).

^{xi} OPRE. Learning As We Go: A First Snapshot of Early Head Start Programs, Staff, Families, and Children, February, 2011, p. 6.

^{xii} OPRE. Early Head Start Family and Child Experiences Study (Baby FACES) *Overview* (http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/ehs/descriptive_study/descriptive_overview.html#overview accessed June 7, 2012).

^{xiii} OPRE and HSB. Making the Difference in Lives of Infants and Toddlers and Their Families: The Impacts of Early Head Start Vol. Final Technical Report, 2002, p. xxiii.