



# National Survey of Early Care & Education Technical Report

September 2015

## Which Early Care and Education Centers Participate in Head Start or Public Pre-Kindergarten?

### INTRODUCTION

This report draws on newly available data from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) to describe early care and education (ECE) centers that participate in two prominent publicly-funded ECE initiatives: Head Start and publicly-funded pre-kindergarten (hereafter, "Public Pre-K").

The NSECE Center-based Provider Data File provides information about the 129,000 centers in the U.S. in 2012 that provided ECE to children age five and under, not yet in kindergarten. Currently, the two largest sources of public funding for preschool education are Head Start and Public Pre-K.<sup>1</sup> Although a great deal is known about Head Start programs, and there are sources of information about Public Pre-K, there has been no available data source that documents how centers participating in these publicly-funded initiatives fit within the full spectrum of center-based ECE.

This report identifies the number of centers nationally that had enrollment funded by Head Start or Public Pre-K funds in 2012, and describes some characteristics of these programs. In the NSECE data, a "center" refers to all ECE services to children under age 13 years provided by one organization in a single location. An accompanying technical note<sup>2</sup> provides details on the methodology for identifying

The National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) is a set of four integrated, nationally representative surveys conducted in 2012. These were surveys of 1) households with children under 13, 2) home-based providers of ECE, 3) center-based providers of ECE, and 4) the center-based provider workforce. Together they characterize the supply of and demand for early care and education in America and permit better understanding of how well families' needs and preferences coordinate with providers' offerings and constraints. The study is funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The data for this technical report come from 7,770 center-based provider questionnaires completed in 2012 by directors or other instructional leaders of center-based ECE programs serving children birth through age 5 years, not yet in kindergarten.

<sup>1</sup> Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). *The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

<sup>2</sup> NSECE Project Team (2015). *Technical Report Supplement: Identifying Head Start and Public Pre-K Participation in NSECE Data on Center-based ECE Programs*. OPRE Report #2015-92b, Washington DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



programs as participating in these two ECE initiatives, and explains some issues pertaining to analyses of NSECE data regarding programs’ participation in Head Start and Public Pre-K.

For the purposes of this report, we designate as Public Pre-K any state- or locally-funded center-based ECE, as long as those funds are not fully embedded within a federal program such as Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), Title I, or Head Start. All analyses in this fact sheet pertain to centers serving at least one child birth through five years old, not yet in kindergarten. As described below, centers receiving Head Start or Public Pre-K funds are a group in terms of size, auspice, mix of funding, and other characteristics, as is true of the broader pool of all center-based programs serving young children nationally.

### HOW MANY ECE CENTERS PARTICIPATE IN HEAD START OR PUBLIC PRE-K?

Using NSECE data, we can classify each ECE center in the U.S. into three categories for each initiative (Head Start or Public Pre-K).<sup>3</sup> The center may:

- report at least one child whose enrollment is funded by the initiative,
- be listed in state or national records as participating in that initiative, but not currently report any children whose enrollment is funded by the initiative, or
- report no funding from the initiative and not be listed as participating in it.

A center that reports funding for at least one child from an initiative is described in this document as participating in that initiative.

Exhibit 1 reports centers’ participation in Head Start and Public Pre-K separately according to this classification. Of approximately 129,000 ECE centers, 22,300 centers report having Head Start funding to serve at least one child. A small number of centers that were listed in administrative records as offering Head Start services (1,800 centers) did not report Head Start funding for any of the children served at the time of the NSECE interview. (Some centers were not able to report on any of their funding streams.) The vast majority of ECE centers in the country report that they do not receive Head Start funding (i.e., 105,000 out of 129,000 centers nationwide).

**Exhibit 1. Indicators of Head Start or Public Pre-K Participation among ECE Centers**

	<b>Funding from Initiative Reported</b>	<b>Listed in administrative records as participating/No funding reported</b>	<b>Not listed as participating/No funded children reported</b>
Head Start	22,300	1,800	105,000
Public Pre-Kindergarten	35,700	19,200	74,400

Source: NSECE Center-based Provider Questionnaire. Totals do not match due to rounding. Estimates describe all 129,000 center-based ECE providers in 2012.

Almost 36,000 centers report receiving Public Pre-K funding. A substantial number of centers, 19,200, that are listed in administrative records as participating in Public Pre-K, do not report any current Public Pre-K funding.

<sup>3</sup> NSECE standard practice uses the term, “center-based program” to mean all ECE services to children under age 13 years provided by one organization in a single location. Because of the multiple meanings of the term ‘program’ in the context of Head Start and Public Pre-K, this document uses ‘center’ to indicate a single facility providing ECE, and ‘initiative’ to describe the Head Start and Public Pre-K funding sources. All references to centers include ECE in elementary schools as well as in community-based settings.

These could, for example, be centers in states with voucher-style Public Pre-K funding, so that a center is authorized to receive a voucher-carrying child, but may not have had such an enrolled child at the time of the interview.

For both initiatives, the largest group of centers are those not participating (e.g., 105,000 of 129,000 centers not participating in Head Start, and 74,400 of 129,000 not associated with Public Pre-K, either through currently funded enrollment or being listed in rolls of Public Pre-K providers).

Overall, 72 percent of centers reported receiving some government funding, whether from local, state, or federal sources.<sup>4</sup> Exhibit 2 examines the overlap of centers' participation in Head Start and Public Pre-K programs: to what extent do the same centers participate in both, only one, or neither? We see that 6 percent of all ECE centers report funding from both Head Start and Public Pre-K, 11 percent of centers have only Head Start-funded enrollment (but no Public Pre-K), and 22 percent of all ECE centers report receiving Public Pre-K funding (but no Head Start). Combining these three groups, 39 percent of ECE centers have some currently funded enrollment in Head Start or Public Pre-K. These centers would be subject to Head Start and relevant Public Pre-K standards for at least some portion of their services, such as a single classroom or for a designated classroom teacher. The remaining 61 percent of ECE centers do not have any funded enrollment from either initiative. Even these centers may be 'listed' as participating in Head Start or Public Pre-K, but with no currently funded enrollment, or they may participate in other publicly-funded initiatives such as the Child Care Development Fund's child care subsidies.

**Exhibit 2. Combinations of Head Start and Public Pre-K Participation among ECE Centers**

Program reports enrollment funded by ...	Number of Programs	% of all Programs
Head Start and Public Pre-K	7,800	6.0
Head Start (no Public Pre-K)	14,500	11.2
Public Pre-K (no Head Start)	28,000	21.7
Neither Head Start nor Public Pre-K	79,000	61.1

Source: NSECE Center-based Provider Questionnaire. Totals do not match due to rounding. Estimates describe all 129,000 center-based ECE providers in 2012.

Exhibit 3 describes some features of the Head Start and Public Pre-K enrollments of centers participating in these two initiatives. The NSECE definition of center can differ from other commonly used terms.<sup>5</sup> In the NSECE, one center may have multiple offerings for children. For example, in the first row of Exhibit 3, we see that among centers reporting both Head Start and Public Pre-K enrollments, Head Start funds support the enrollment of 60 percent of their children birth through age 5 years. This percentage increases to 90 percent among centers reporting Head Start but no Public Pre-K participation. The remaining children served by the center but not funded by Head Start may be from a different age group, privately funded, or funded by other public dollars. For example, we may have a community organization that operates a Head Start program and

<sup>4</sup> NSECE Team (2014). *Characteristics of Center-based Early Care and Education Programs: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE)*. OPRE Report #2014-73a, Washington DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>5</sup> The most commonly referenced data on Head Start programs come from the Program Information Report <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/data/pir>. The NSECE data are not comparable to that data source because our counts are based on single sites and all ECE services provided to children under age 13 years at those sites. PIR data are for grantees, which could include multiple sites, and describe only Head Start/Early Head Start services.

also has a private-pay preschool in the same building. This organization would appear as one center in the NSECE data, perhaps with half of its children under 5 being supported by Head Start funds. We can similarly look at the percentage of children birth through age 5 years who are funded by Public Pre-K dollars; about half of children are Public Pre-K funded in centers that report both Head Start and Public Pre-K funding, while 70 percent are Public Pre-K funded when there is no Head Start participation by the center. These proportions make clear that many centers participating in Head Start or Public Pre-K are also operating ECE programming outside of these two initiatives.

**Exhibit 3. Head Start and Public Pre-K Enrollments among Participating Centers**

Head Start and Public Pre-K Enrollments				
Center Characteristic	Head Start and Public Pre-K	Head Start (no Public Pre-K)	Public Pre-K (no Head Start)	Neither Head Start nor Public Pre-K
Percentage of 0-5 year enrollment funded by Head Start	60	90		0
Percentage of 0-5 year enrollment funded by Public Pre-K	50		70	0
Total Head Start-funded enrollment	470,000	726,000	0	0
Total Public Pre-K funded enrollment	268,000	0	787,000	0

Source: NSECE Center-based Provider Questionnaire. Estimates describe the 129,000 center-based ECE providers in 2012.

Altogether, the centers report almost 1.2 million children in Head Start funded enrollment, and 1.1 million children in Public Pre-K funded enrollment. The NSECE data do not allow us to determine how many of these children may be funded by both programs. The number of Head Start funded children reported exceeds the number of slots funded by the federal Administration for Children and Families. The discrepancy may be due to such issues as differences in counts of children versus slots, funding of Head Start by states, timing of data reports over several months, or survey response error.

**WHAT TYPES OF CENTERS PARTICIPATE IN HEAD START OR PUBLIC PRE-K?**

Having identified centers' combinations of Head Start and Public Pre-K participation, we now turn to the characteristics of these centers. Exhibit 4 reports on the same four groups of centers as those in Exhibit 2. As we saw there, the number of centers in each group varies widely from 7,800 centers participating in both initiatives to 79,000 centers not participating in either initiative. The characteristics displayed in Exhibit 4 are primarily about the center itself, and not the care that it provides to children and their families. More detailed information about the characteristics of center-based providers is available in the brief, "Characteristics of Center-based ECE Programs" (NSECE Team, 2014), and about the care they provide in "Measuring Predictors of Quality" (NSECE Team, 2015).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> NSECE Project Team (2015). *Measuring Predictors of Quality in Early Care and Education Settings in the National Survey of Early Care and Education*. OPRE Report #2015-93, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**Exhibit 4. Characteristics of ECE Centers by Head Start and/or Public Pre-K Participation**

Center Characteristic	Head Start and Public Pre-K	Head Start (no Public Pre-K)	Public Pre-K (no Head Start)	Neither Head Start nor Public Pre-K
<b>Auspice/Sponsorship/Extent of Public Funding</b>				
Not-for-profit	54.1	73.3	45.6	49.3
For-profit	9.8!	2.8!	28.3	41.9
Sponsored by a public school district	21.3	6.4!	16.0	4.8
Predominantly public funding	83.5	73.6	49.0	10.1
Mixed public and private funding	14.8	25.8	44.6	36.2
<b>Ages Served, Hours Served, Free Care, Total Enrollments</b>				
Serving children 0 to 3 years	35.2	30.4	46.4	65.5
Serving school-age children	26.6	15.5	45.1	47.3
Open 30 hours or more	74.3	49.5	69.1	72.9
Free to all parents	62.3	86.7	42.0	10.6
Total enrollment < 25 children	22.4	24.8	20.3	21.5
Total enrollment >= 75 children	39.8	24.1	37.2	30.5

Source: NSECE Center-based Provider Questionnaire. Estimates describe all 129,000 center-based ECE providers in 2012.  
 Note: ! Interpret with caution due to sample size or standard error.

We begin with a set of characteristics about the organization and its revenue sources and sponsorship. NSECE classifies the auspice of a center as not-for-profit, for-profit, or run by a government agency (such as a city human services agency or a school district). About half of centers are not-for-profit except in the Head Start (no Public Pre-K) category, where almost three-quarters are not-for-profit. For-profit centers are permitted to participate in Head Start under very limited conditions; thus we see that no more than ten percent of centers with any Head Start participation are for-profit entities. In contrast, for-profits make up one in four centers providing Public Pre-K (without Head Start) and two in five centers not participating in either initiative. Centers may be sponsored by a public school district if a district has administrative oversight or reporting requirements or funds the center. The rates of centers being sponsored by a public school district are generally about five percent except for centers participating in Public Pre-K, either with or without Head Start. At least 16 percent of Public Pre-K funded centers are sponsored by a public school district.

By definition, the centers participating in Head Start or Public Pre-K are receiving public funds. Some centers are predominantly publicly funded, meaning that both of their top two revenue sources are public. Some centers have one public and one private source in their top two revenue sources. More than 70 percent of Head Start centers (with or without Public Pre-K) are predominantly publicly funded. About 50 percent of Public Pre-K with no Head Start are predominantly publicly funded. For centers participating in any combination of Head Start and/or Public Pre-K, the remaining centers are mixing public and private funds. Private funds could be tuition paid by parents, fundraising, or grants from non-governmental organizations. Among centers not participating in either initiative, 10 percent are predominantly publicly funded, and 36 percent receive a mix of public and private

funding. More than half of centers not participating in either initiative are exclusively privately funded, with no public money received.

Centers not participating in either initiative are substantially more likely to serve children 0 to 3 years old. This is consistent with the focus of both initiatives on children aged 3 through 5 years. Some Head Starts also serve children in the younger age category because of participation in Early Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, or local partnerships to provide center-based care. Centers with any Head Start funding are much less likely to care for any school-age children, although centers with Public Pre-K funding more closely resemble centers with neither Head Start nor Public Pre-K funding.

Overall, about 70 percent of centers are open at least 30 hours weekly. Only Head Start centers with no Public Pre-K differ from this rate, with just about 50 percent of them open this long.

In Exhibit 3 above, we saw that centers participating in Head Start serve many non-Head Start children as well, including both young children and school-agers. Head Start services are free of charge to eligible families. We see that almost 90 percent of centers with Head Start (no Public Pre-K) offer care free to all families served. About 60 percent of centers offering both Public Pre-K and Head Start are free to all families served. There may be individual families receiving care at no cost in other centers. Among centers not participating in either initiative, 11 percent provide care free to all families enrolled in those centers.

Head Start or Public Pre-K participation does not seem to be associated with the likelihood of a center having fewer than 25 children altogether. There are more centers with at least 75 children enrolled among Public Pre-K funded centers, although the differences are small.

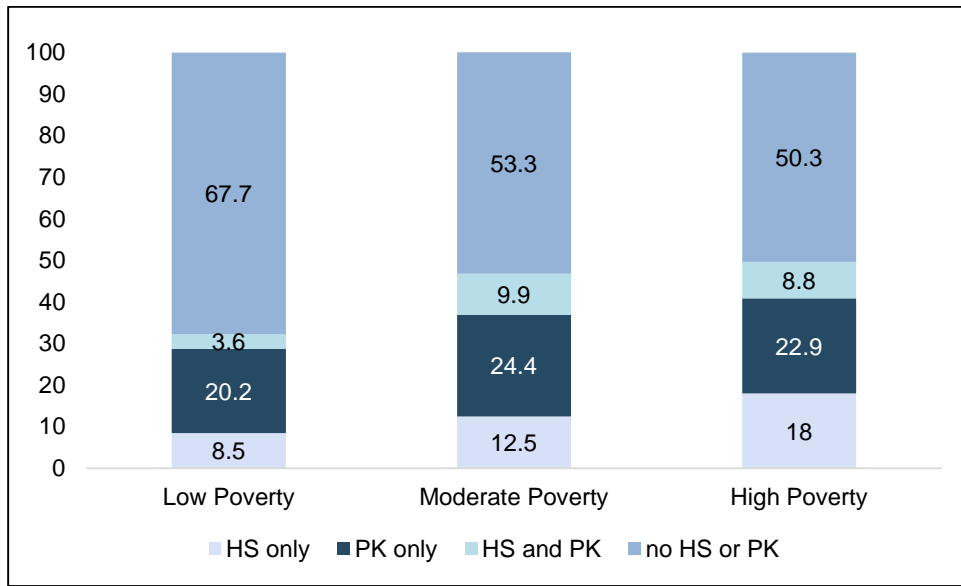
## **WHAT COMMUNITIES HAVE CENTERS THAT PARTICIPATE IN HEAD START AND PUBLIC PRE-K?**

Geographic location is one of many aspects that determine households' access to Head Start and Public Pre-K slots<sup>7</sup>. Exhibits 5 and 6 describe centers located in different types of communities by their Head Start and Public Pre-K participation.

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<sup>7</sup> Please see the NSECE summary data collection report (NSECE Project Team [2013]. *National Survey of Early Care and Education: Summary of Data Collection and Sampling Methodology*, OPRE Report #2013-46, Washington DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) for information on the NSECE sample design and its potential to describe the supply of and demand for early care and education.

**Exhibit 5. Percentage of Centers in Low, Moderate, and High Poverty Areas, by Head Start and Public Pre-K Participation**



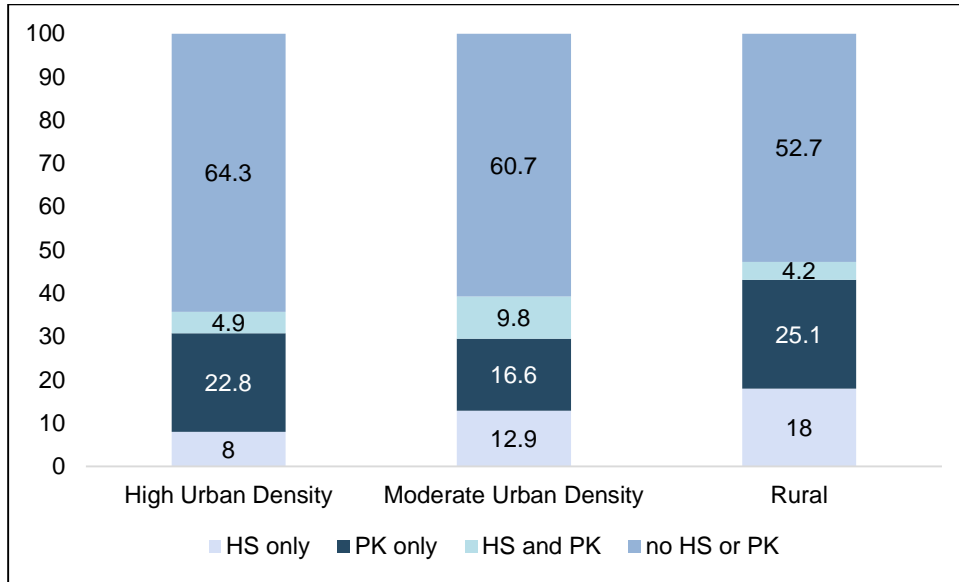
Source: NSECE Center-based Provider Questionnaire. Estimates describe all 129,000 center-based ECE providers in 2012.

Low poverty communities have less than 13 percent of their population in poverty.<sup>8</sup> High-poverty communities have at least 20 percent of their population in poverty. Moderate-poverty communities fall between these two. Approximately 30 percent of centers in low-poverty communities participate in Head Start or Public Pre-K. In both moderate- and high-poverty communities, the proportion of centers participating in Head Start or Public Pre-K is higher, closer to 50 percent.

Exhibit 6 considers the urbanicity of communities. Communities in which 85 percent or more of the total population is urban are designated as high density urban, and those with less than 30 percent urban are designated as rural. Remaining communities (with percent urban between 30 and 85) are designated as moderate density urban). In both moderately and highly urban communities, the percentage of centers participating in Head Start or Public Pre-K lies between 30 and 40 percent. In rural communities, just about 50 percent of centers participate in Head Start or Public Pre-K.

<sup>8</sup> Populations in poverty are adjusted for proximity to the geographic center of the community and for census tract population under age 18.

**Exhibit 6. Percentage of Centers in Urban and Rural Areas, by Head Start and Public Pre-K Participation**



Source: NSECE Center-based Provider Questionnaire. Estimates describe all 129,000 center-based ECE providers in 2012.

## CONCLUSION

Newly released data from the National Survey of Early Care and Education provide a unique opportunity to understand Head Start and Public Pre-K offerings within the context of all center-based ECE to children age five and under. These two prominent initiatives involve almost 40 percent of all ECE centers nationally. Most centers receiving any Head Start or Public Pre-K funding are also serving young children through other ECE services such as parent-funded preschool. In fact, 25 percent of centers with Head Start (but no Public Pre-K) funding and 45 percent of centers with Public Pre-K (but no Head Start) funding are also supported with private funds. Fewer than one in five centers with Head Start or Public Pre-K funding are operated by a public school district. The NSECE data indicate that ECE centers nationally are a diverse group in terms of size, auspice, mix of public/private funding, and other characteristics; the same can be said for centers receiving any Head Start or Public Pre-K funds.

## SUGGESTED CITATION

National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2015). Which Early Care and Education Centers Participate in Head Start or Public Pre-Kindergarten? OPRE Report #2015-92a, Washington DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/national-survey-of-early-care-and-education-nsece-2010-2014>.

