



Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Children's Social and Emotional Skills

Select Findings from the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Study 2017

Introduction

This brief describes the social and emotional skills of children served by Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) programs (see Box 1).

This brief uses data from the MSHS Study 2017 (see Box 2) to examine the following questions:

- Are MSHS children (infants, toddlers, and preschoolers) meeting their teachers' developmental expectations for social and emotional skills?
- What are the social and emotional skills of MSHS toddlers (12 to 35 months)?
- What are the social and emotional skills of MSHS preschoolers (36 months and older)?
- What are the emotion and behavior regulation skills of MSHS preschoolers (36 months and older)?
- How can MSHS programs support children's social and emotional skills?

The [Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five](#) highlights social and emotional development as a central domain of early learning essential for school and long-term success. It defines social development as a child’s ability to create and sustain meaningful relationships with adults and other children and defines emotional development as a child’s ability to express, recognize, and manage their own emotions as well as respond appropriately to others’ emotions.

The information presented in this brief may help MSHS programs better tailor services to their children and inform professional development and training for teachers. Understanding the social and emotional skills of children participating in MSHS may inform program decisions related to child needs, strengths, and supports. This information may be important for MSHS programs to consider as they identify the best ways to serve their communities.

See Box 3 for additional information about the measures of children’s social and emotional skills highlighted in this brief.

Box 1: About Migrant and Seasonal Head Start

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) programs provide child development, family support, and family engagement services to young children and their migrant and seasonal farmworker families.

Migrant or seasonal farmworker families are those engaged in year-round or seasonal agricultural labor who may have changed their residence in the preceding two-year period. MSHS programs offer services to children from birth until they reach the age of mandatory school attendance.

Just like other Head Start programs, MSHS programs offer access to medical and dental care, nutritional services, mental health services, and other community resources. MSHS programs are designed to meet the unique needs of migrant and seasonally working families. MSHS programs usually provide bilingual services and sometimes operate in non-standard hours or in varying locations throughout the agricultural season.

MSHS programs operate in 38 states and are administered by the Regional Office for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (Region XII), located in Washington, D.C., within the Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.



Box 2: About the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Study 2017

The Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) Study provides a national picture of MSHS programs, centers, families, and children.

The MSHS Study was designed through extensive engagement and input from the MSHS community to better understand:

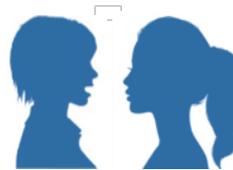


- characteristics of MSHS programs, centers, staff, families, and children;
- services that MSHS provides;
- instructional practices in MSHS classrooms; and
- MSHS supports for child, parent, and family well-being.

This brief highlights selected MSHS Study 2017 findings collected from:



Surveys of teachers
Surveys of assistant teachers



Interviews with parents

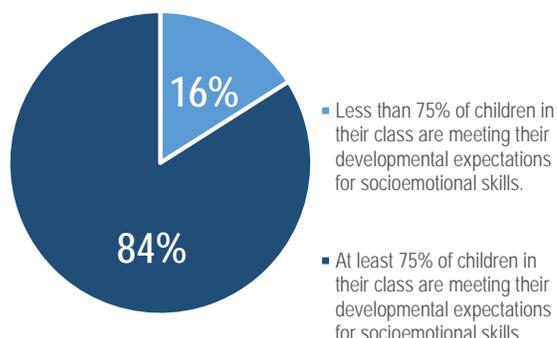


Trained assessor ratings of children

For additional findings, see the [MSHS Study 2017 Data Tables](#).



Are MSHS children (infants, toddlers, and preschoolers) meeting their teachers' developmental expectations for social and emotional skills?



Source: MSHS Teacher Survey, Table E.12.

Note: Statistics are weighted to represent all MSHS teachers in 2017.

Most (84%) MSHS teachers report that at least 75% of the children (infants, toddlers, and preschoolers) in their class **are meeting developmental expectations for socioemotional skills.**

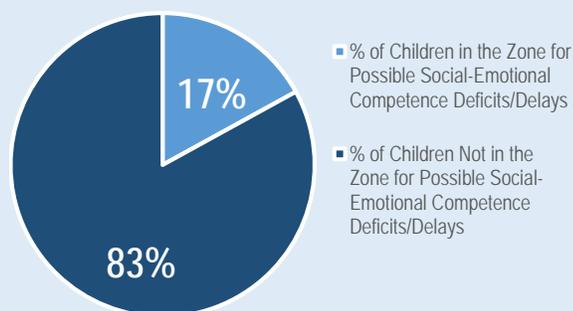
Few (16%) MSHS teachers report that less than 75% of children in their class are meeting their developmental expectations for socioemotional skills.

What are the social and emotional skills of MSHS toddlers (12 to 35 months)?

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF TODDLERS

Most (83%) MSHS parents report that their toddlers exhibit behaviors (e.g., follow rules, express affection with loved ones, hug or feed dolls or stuffed animals) **that do not indicate deficits or delays in social-emotional competence** and a possible need for more in-depth assessment or referral.

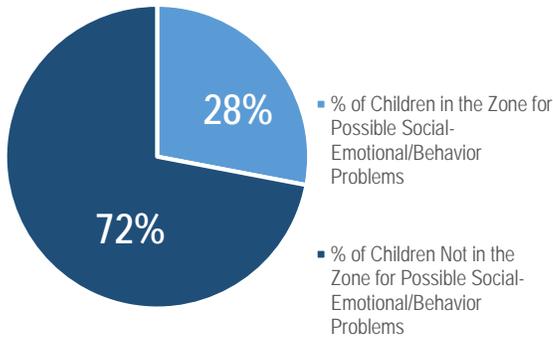
Less than one-fifth (17%) of MSHS parents report that their toddlers exhibit behaviors that may indicate deficits or delays in social-emotional competence and a possible need for more in-depth assessment or referral.



Source: Brief Infant-Toddler Social and Emotional Assessment (BITSEA), Social-Emotional Competence Subscale; Parent Report of MSHS Children 12–35 months. See Box 3 for additional information.

Note: Statistics are weighted to represent all toddlers (12–35 months old) enrolled in MSHS in 2017.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL/BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS OF TODDLERS



Over one-quarter (28%) of MSHS parents report that their toddlers exhibit some behaviors (e.g., aggression, inhibition, dysregulation) at a level that **may indicate a possible need for more in-depth assessment or referral.**

Less than three-quarters (72%) of parents report that their toddlers do not exhibit social-emotional/behavior problems at a level that may indicate a possible need for more in-depth assessment or referral.

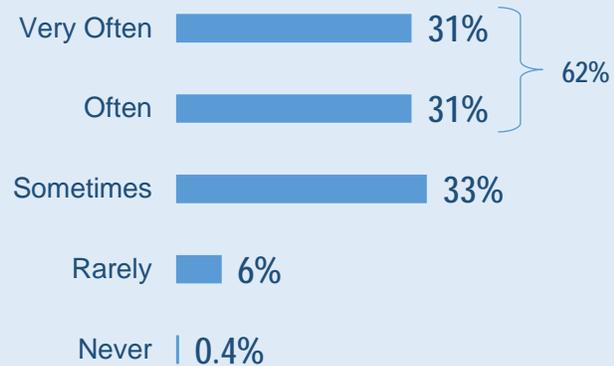
Source: Brief Infant-Toddler Social and Emotional Assessment (BITSEA), Social-Emotional and Problem Behaviors Subscale; Parent Report of MSHS Children 12–35 months. See Box 3 for additional information.
Note: Statistics are weighted to represent all toddlers (12–35 months old) enrolled in MSHS in 2017.

What are the social and emotional skills of MSHS preschoolers (36 months and older)?

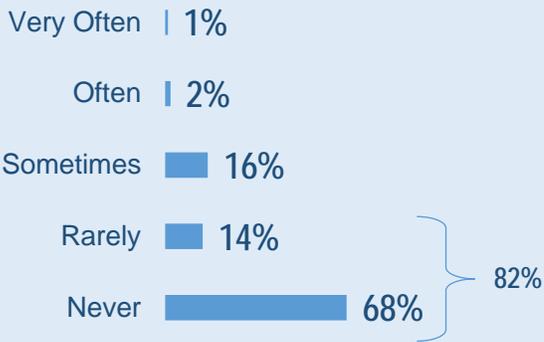
Based on parent reports, nearly two-thirds (62%) of MSHS preschoolers **share toys and other belongings** with other children often or very often.

One-third (33%) of children share toys or other belongings sometimes.

Very few (6.4%) children rarely or never share toys or other belongings.



Source: Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)—Socioemotional Scale; Parent Report of MSHS Children 36 months and older. See Box 3 for additional information.
Note: Statistics are weighted to represent all preschoolers (36 months and older) enrolled in MSHS in 2017.



Based on parent reports, most (82%) MSHS preschoolers **rarely or never seem unhappy.**

Very few (3%) preschoolers seem unhappy often or very often. Less than one-third (30%) of preschoolers sometimes or rarely seem unhappy.

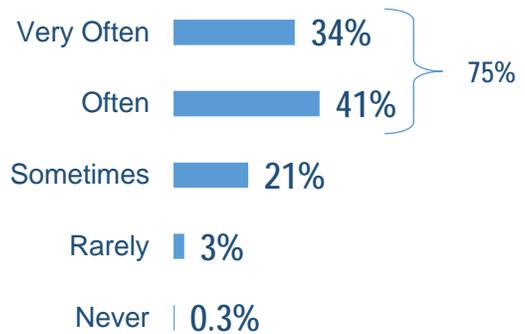
Source: Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)—Socioemotional Scale; Parent Report of MSHS Children 36 months and older. See Box 3 for additional information.

Note: Statistics are weighted to represent all preschoolers (36 months and older) enrolled in MSHS in 2017.

Based on parent reports, three-quarters (75%) of MSHS preschoolers **pay attention often or very often.**

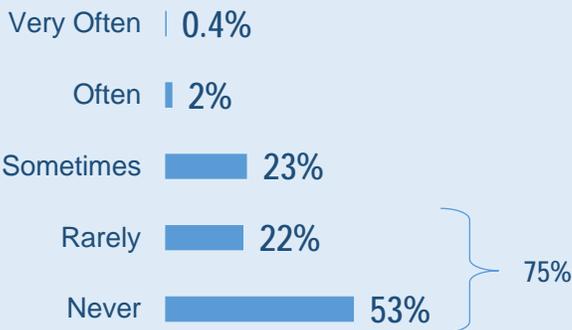
About one-fifth (21%) of preschoolers sometimes pay attention.

Very few (3.3%) preschoolers rarely or never pay attention.



Source: Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)—Socioemotional Scale; Parent Report of MSHS Children 36 months and older. See Box 3 for additional information.

Note: Statistics are weighted to represent all preschoolers (36 months and older) enrolled in MSHS in 2017.



Based on parent reports, three-quarters (75%) of MSHS preschoolers are **rarely or never physically aggressive** (e.g., hits, kicks, pushes).

Very few (2.4%) preschoolers are physically aggressive often or very often.

Nearly one-quarter (23%) of preschoolers are physically aggressive sometimes.

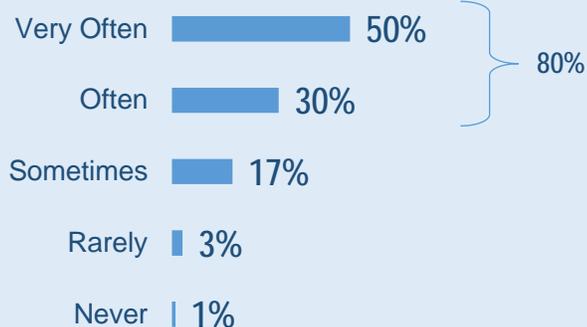
Source: Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)—Socioemotional Scale; Parent Report of MSHS Children 36 months and older. See Box 3 for additional information.

Note: Statistics are weighted to represent all preschoolers (36 months and older) enrolled in MSHS in 2017.

Based on parent reports, more than three-quarters (80%) of MSHS preschoolers **often or very often** make friends easily.

Very few (4%) preschoolers rarely or never make friends easily.

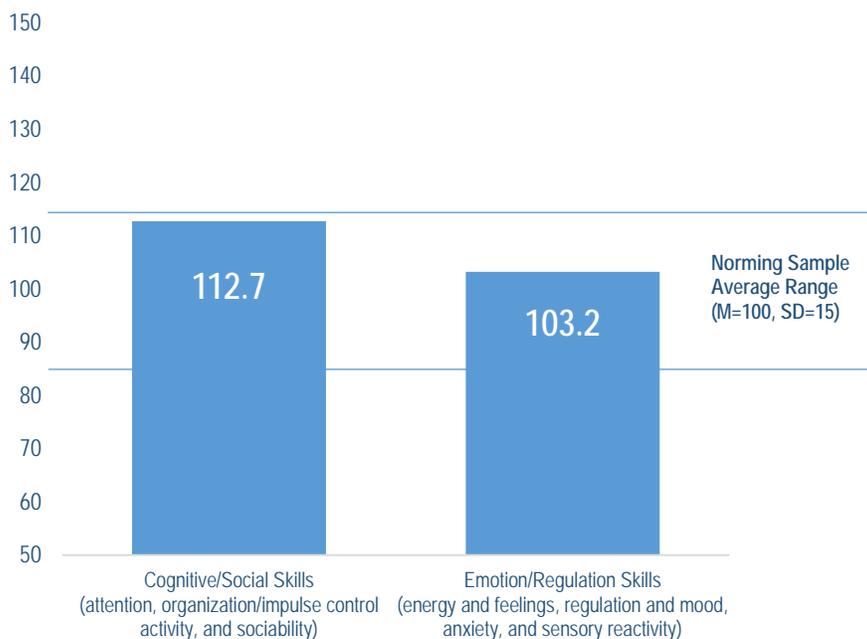
Less than one-fifth (17%) of preschoolers sometimes make friends easily.



Source: Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)–Socioemotional Scale; Parent Report of MSHS Children 36 months and older. See Box 3 for additional information.

Note: Statistics are weighted to represent all preschoolers (36 months and older) enrolled in MSHS in 2017.

What are the social-emotional and behavior regulation skills of MSHS preschoolers (36 months and older)?

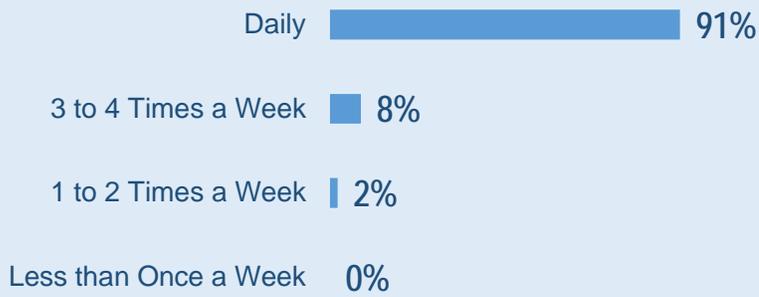


On average, MSHS preschoolers have **social and emotional skills in the average range** (i.e., within 1 standard deviation of the norming sample average) as reported by a trained assessor.

Source: Leiter-Third Edition Examiner Rating Scales; Cognitive/social composite and emotions/regulation composites; Assessor Rating of MSHS Children 36 months and Older. See Box 3 for additional information.

Note: Statistics are weighted to represent all preschoolers (36 months and older) enrolled in MSHS in 2017.

How can MSHS programs support children's (toddlers and preschoolers) social and emotional skills?



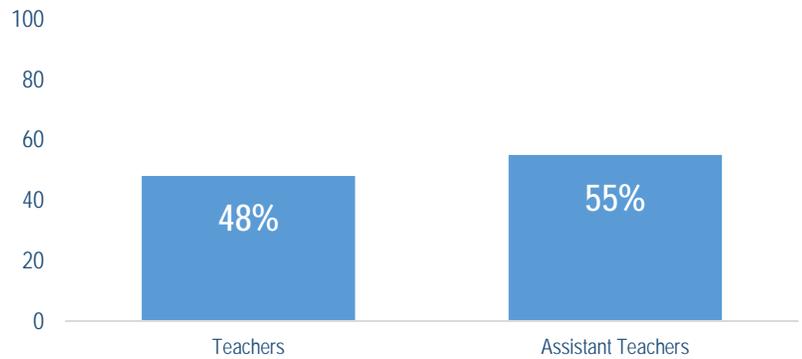
Nearly all (91%) of MSHS teachers of toddlers and preschoolers report that the children in their class **work on social-emotional skills daily**.

Few (10%) teachers report that children in their class work on social-emotional skills 3 to 4 times a week or less.

Source: MSHS Teacher Survey, Table E.14.

Note: Statistics are weighted to represent all teachers of toddlers and preschoolers (24 months and older) in MSHS in 2017.

About half of MSHS teachers (48%) and assistant teachers (55%) report that **additional training in behavior class management** would help them in their teaching.



Source: MSHS Teacher Survey, Table E.16 and MSHS Assistant Teacher Survey, Table F.14.

Note: Statistics are weighted to represent all MSHS teachers and assistant teachers in 2017.



Box 3: Measures of Children’s Social and Emotional Skills

The Brief Infant-Toddler Social and Emotional Assessment (BITSEA; Briggs-Gowan, Carter, Irwin, Wachtel, & Cicchetti, 2004) is a parent-report measure of toddlers’ social-emotional competence and social-emotional and behavior problems. It is a 42-item screener version of the longer Infant-Toddler Social and Emotional Assessment measure (Carter, Briggs-Gowan, Jones, & Little, 2003). The BITSEA assesses the development of children’s emerging social and emotional competencies (e.g., follows rules, expresses affection with loved ones, hugs or feeds dolls or stuffed animals), as well as externalizing behaviors (activity, aggression), internalizing behaviors (inhibition, separation, depression), dysregulation (sleeping, eating), maladaptive habits, and fears. The interviewer reads each of the 42 statements to the parent, and the parent reports whether the statement is not true or the behavior is observed rarely (0), somewhat true or the behavior is observed sometimes (1), or very true or the behavior is observed often (2).

- The BITSEA *Social-Emotional/Behavior Problems Scale* is a measure of social-emotional and behavioral problems constructed from 31 (of the 42) items. Items are summed to arrive at the Problem Scale raw score. Cut scores for determining the Zone for Possible Social-Emotional/Behavior Problems are set at the 25th percentile of the scale raw score. If a child’s raw score is equal to or greater than the cut score for the child’s age group and gender, then the child’s score is in the Zone for Possible Social-Emotional/Behavior Problems. A score in this zone may indicate a possible need for more in-depth assessment or referral. The study team used the publisher’s cut score table to arrive at the designation.
- The BITSEA *Social-Emotional Competence Scale* is a measure of social-emotional competence that comprises 11 (of the 42) items. Items are summed to arrive at the Social-Emotional Competence Scale raw score. Cut scores for determining the Zone for Possible Social-Emotional Competence Deficits/Delay are set at the 15th percentile of the scale raw score. If a child’s raw score is equal to or less than the cut score for the child’s age group and gender, then the child’s score is in the Zone for Possible Social-Emotional Competence Deficits/Delays. A score in this zone may indicate a need for more in-depth assessment or referral. The study team used the publisher’s cut score table to arrive at the designation.
- See Table A.13 in the [MSHS Study 2017 Data Tables](#) for additional information about the raw scores, reliability, and range in the MSHS Study 2017.

The **Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)–Socioemotional Scale** is a parent-report measure of preschoolers’ socioemotional skills. The MSHS Study 2017 team asked parents 31 items adapted from those included in the ECLS-B, a national study of children born in 2001 (Najarian, Snow, Lennon, & Kinsey, 2010). The scale drew 20 items from the Preschool and Kindergarten Behaviors Scales–Second Edition (PKBS-2; Merrell, 1994), 8 items from the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS; Gresham & Elliott, 1990), 2 from the Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES), and 1 created for the ECLS-B. For each item, the interviewer asked the parent to state the frequency of the observed skill or behavior. Response options are Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, or Very Often. This brief highlights findings from 5 of the 31 items.

See Table A.16 in the [MSHS Study 2017 Data Tables](#) for additional information about the findings presented in this brief, as well as findings from all 31 items included in the MSHS Study 2017.

The Leiter-Third Edition Examiner Rating Scales (Roid, Miller, Pomplun, & Koch, 2013) measure preschoolers' emotional and behavioral regulation. The instrument is composed of eight subscales that ask an assessor to rate the child's attention, activity level, self-regulation, and sociability during the direct child assessment session. Items within subscales are rated as 0=Rarely/Never, 1=Sometimes, 2=Often, and 3=Usually/Always. The subscales are (A) Attention, (B) Organization/Impulse Control, (C) Activity Level, (D) Sociability, (E) Energy and Feelings, (F) Regulation and Mood Regulation, (G) Anxiety, and (H) Sensory Reactivity. In addition, the assessor completes a checklist of seven Severe Behaviors. Raw scores were computed by summing the item scores within each subscale. The MSHS Study 2017 created the Cognitive/Social Composite raw score by summing the raw scores from subscales A, B, C, and D. The study team created the Emotions/Regulations Composite raw score by summing the raw scores from subscales E, F, G, and H.

The norming sample consisted of 1,603 children at least 3 years old. The sample was drawn from 36 states in all 4 U.S. Census regions (Northeast, Midwest, South, and West) and stratified on the basis of age, gender, race/ethnicity, education level of parent/adults, geographic region within the United States, and community size (Roid, Miller, Pomplun, & Koch, 2013). Scaled scores for the composites were developed using the publisher's table; composite scaled scores have a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. The norming sample average range is +/- 1 standard deviation of the norming sample average.

See Table A.18 in the [**MSHS Study 2017 Data Tables**](#) for additional information about the constructed scale scores highlighted in this brief as well as information about the individual raw and scaled scores.





This brief was prepared by Allison Walker, a Contract Associate Analyst to the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) with Business Strategy Consultants and Jenessa Malin, a Social Science Research Analyst in OPRE. This brief relies on data collected and analyzed as part of the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Study 2017 conducted by Abt Associates in partnership with Catholic University of America and Westat. The ACF Project Officer is Wendy DeCoursey. For additional information visit: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/migrant-and-seasonal-head-start-study>

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