



Executive Summary

Introduction

States and territories have increasingly worked to strengthen their early care and education (ECE) systems to more efficiently and effectively serve young children. It can still be challenging, however, to coordinate ECE systems' multifaceted funding streams, services, standards, and regulations. State and federal ECE systems provide a variety of direct services, including ECE in centers and family child care homes; state-funded pre-kindergarten (state pre-K); early intervention and early childhood special education; and Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, and Tribal Head Start. This report focuses on Head Start and Early Head Start, and their relationship to state and territory ECE systems.

Purpose

This report summarizes publicly available information about the coordination or inclusion of Head Start across various aspects of state and territory ECE systems. The findings are organized by nine topics: the agency housing Head Start Collaboration Offices, Head Start grants and enrollment, state Head Start spending, Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), state pre-K, child care subsidy policies, Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, Head Start grant-level partnerships, and integrated data systems. The report also addresses ways in which future research could help the field better understand these connections between Head Start and state or territory ECE systems.

Key findings and highlights

- The relationship between Head Start and other facets of ECE systems varies widely across states and territories. Child Trend's analysis indicates that the ways in which Head Start connects with

other ECE programs or policies vary by state or territory and that different forms of collaboration or coordination are more prevalent in some states and territories than in others. Head Start participation in QRIS and coordination with the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) are two of the most common forms of collaboration in states and territories. Indeed, Head Start programs participate in QRIS in 93 percent of states and territories that report data to the Quality Compendium (a national database of QRIS policies). Formal partnerships between state pre-K and Head Start were less common, with half of states or territories reporting these partnerships. In addition, only eight states report linking child-level Head Start data to their ECE data system.

- Collaboration is a long-term effort. There is increased national interest in strengthening alignment, coordination, and collaboration across the various components of the ECE system, including Head Start. Collaboration across agencies, services, and funding streams is complex and will take time. Future data can inform collaboration efforts among Head Start and the various aspects of state and territory ECE systems.
- Further research is needed to understand how and why Head Start is connected with state and territory ECE systems. This report provides an important initial picture of the connections between Head Start and many facets of state and territory ECE systems. It does not, however, explain why certain policies or practices are in place or how Head Start and other aspects of the ECE system connect or coordinate with one another. Similarly, we are not able to draw conclusions from these data about how well Head Start is integrated into state and territory ECE systems. Because available data used in this report tell part, but not all, of the story, further research in these areas would benefit states and territories as well as federal agencies.

Glossary

ACF: Administration for Children and Families

CCDF: Child Care and Development Fund

ECE: early care and education

ECIDS: early childhood integrated data systems

EHS-CCP: Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships

ELDS: early learning and development standards

HSCO: Head Start Collaboration Office

HSPPS: Head Start Program Performance Standards

KEA: kindergarten entrance assessment

LEA: local education agencies

PIR: Head Start Program Information Report

QRIS: quality rating and improvement systems

SLDS: statewide longitudinal data systems