

Head Start: Supporting Families, Strengthening Communities

MERCER COUNTY

The numbers below reflect what's happening in your own backyard—families working hard to give their children a better future. Head Start meets them where they are, providing dependable early learning and care that helps parents stay on the job and keeps kids on track. This isn't about expanding government—it's about backing a trusted, community-based program that's been delivering for Ohio families for over 60 years.

3,443 *children under 5 years old* [5]

11% *of children under 5 years old are living in poverty* [6]

35 Pregnant women and families served by *Help Me Grow* home visiting [7]

613 Babies born in 2023 [8]

71 Children ages 0-3 receiving Part-C Early Intervention Services [9]
(as of Jan 2025)

$10,009 Estimated 2024 yearly price for infant center-based care [10]

0 Infants and toddlers are accessing *Early* Head Start [11]
(2024)

50 Children are accessing Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) and the Child Care Choice Voucher [12]
(as of December 2024)

158 Preschoolers are accessing Head Start [13]
(2024)

47% of kindergartners are demonstrating readiness [14]
(2022-2023)

- Only **15%** of *economically disadvantaged* kindergartners are demonstrating readiness [15]
(2022-2023)

833 Children under age 5 covered by Medicaid [16]
(as of July 2024)

<10 Children five years and younger are in state custody [17]
(as of Jan. 1, 2024)

A Pro-Family, Pro-Work Approach that Delivers

Head Start is already doing the job—helping parents work, preparing children for school, and filling critical gaps in care across rural and underserved communities. But in most counties, the need still far exceeds capacity. Strengthening this infrastructure is a smart, targeted investment in families and the future of our workforce. Ohio doesn't need to reinvent the wheel—we just need to fuel what's already working.

SOURCES AVAILABLE HERE

Ohio HEAD START Association, Inc.
www.ohsai.org

Groundwork OHIO
www.GroundworkOhio.org

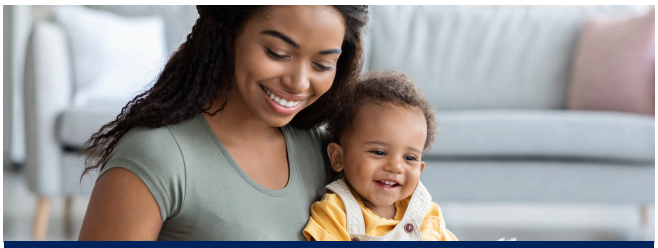
Head Start is Ohio's Foundational Early Learning Program

Ohio HEAD START Association, Inc.

Head Start and Early Head Start are essential to Ohio's early learning system—especially for children experiencing poverty and the communities that serve them. These programs don't just deliver child care. They prepare children for kindergarten, support working parents, and strengthen local economies—particularly in rural counties where few other options exist.

Head Start is Critical for Low-Income Children

Infants and Toddlers



Early Head Start helps babies grow.

128,288 Home visits conducted in 2023.

5,900 Ohio infants and toddlers are in Early Head Start (prenatal to 3).

Nearly 30% of low-income infants and toddlers enrolled in an Ohio early learning program are in an Early Head Start.

Preschoolers

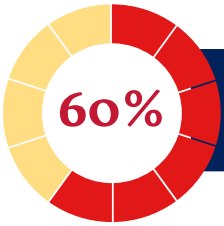


Nearly 123,000 Ohio children ages 3-5 live in poverty.[1]

Head Start serves 1 in 6 of Ohio's 3-5 year olds living in families with incomes below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level.[2]

Head Start is often the ONLY Child Care Choice in Rural Ohio

Head Start, the nation's premiere early learning program, has centers in **each of Ohio's 88 counties**.



of rural Ohioans live in a child care desert.[3]

Fortunately,

46%

of Head Start centers are in rural areas, offering the only child care option for many working families.[4]

Built for Working Families and Local Economies

Head Start delivers results—helping parents stay employed, reducing absenteeism, and preparing children for school success. Over 70% of Head Start families are working, underscoring the program's critical role in supporting labor force participation and economic stability. It's a cost-effective investment that delivers long-term savings and a stronger talent pipeline for Ohio's economy.

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