

Vermont Child Poverty Council Hearing

Vermont State House
115 State Street, Room 10
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

September 16, 2016

Testimony from Dr. Ben Allen, Director of the Head Start State Collaboration Office in the Child Development Division, Vermont Department for Children and Families

Thank you for inviting me to testify today. My testimony will cover what Head Start is, who it serves, what communities it serves, and new research on the program and its prekindergarten partnerships with Public Schools.

I have provided you with handouts:

- A copy of my testimony
- Map of Vermont Head Start and Early Head Start Service Areas
- April 2014 Report on Status of Head Start Pre-Kindergarten Partnerships in Vermont and Nationally
- August 2016 Agencies of Education and Human Services Head Start and Act 166: Statement of Preferred Practice

What is Head Start?

Head Start programs are federally funded two-generational programs designed to promote the school readiness of young children from low-income families by providing a comprehensive range of education, child development, health, nutrition, and family support services to young children and their families. The Head Start Program serves three-, four-, and five-year-old children not age-eligible for kindergarten from low-income families, and the Early Head Start Program serves pregnant women and children birth to age 3 and their families. Head Start and Early Head Start programs use research-based curriculum and the Teaching Strategies Gold development assessment aligned with the Birth to Third Grade Vermont Early Learning Standards. The federal Office of Head Start has a rigorous monitoring system which includes on-site monitoring of Head Start and Early Head Start programs. All seven Head Start and Early Head Start grantees participate in the SStep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) and are



rated as having 4 or 5 stars. Many children and families served by Head Start and Early Head Start programs participate in the Child Care Financial Assistance Program.

Who Does Head Start Serve?

Head Start programs primarily serve young children in poverty and their families. A preschool-aged child is eligible for Head Start and an infant/toddler or pregnant woman is eligible for Early Head Start if the family's income is equal to or below 100 percent of the federal poverty line which is \$24,300 for a family of four in 2016;¹ the family is eligible for Reach Up or Supplemental Security Income; the child is homeless as defined under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act; or the child is in foster care. If the family does not meet one of the above eligibility criterion, a program may enroll children who would benefit from services from families of any income up to 10 percent of its program enrollment. In addition, a Head Start program may enroll an additional 35 percent of program participants whose families do not meet the above criteria and whose incomes are below 130 percent of the poverty line, if the program meets certain enrollment priorities and other requirements. For a family of four, 130 percent of the 2016 federal poverty line is \$31,590.²

Seven Head Start grantees, the four Early Head Start grantees, and the two Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grantees received federal Head Start funding for 1,014 slots, 365 slots, and 68 slots, respectively, for a total Federal Fiscal Year 2016 enrollment of 1,447 slots.³

The 1,447 enrollment figure represents an estimated 20 percent of all Vermont Head Start and Early Head Start age-eligible children below 100% of federal poverty line.⁴

Communities Served by Head Start and Early Head Start in Vermont

Head Start and Early Head Start grantees in Vermont are administered by community-based organizations (see the Map handout).⁵ Seven community-based organizations receive federal grants from Office of Head Start to operate seven Head Start programs. Four of seven organizations receive federal grants from Office of Head Start to operate the four Early Head Start programs in Vermont. Two of four organizations receive federal grants from Office of Head Start to operate two Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership programs. The types of organizations administering the programs are:

- **Community Action Agencies:** Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO), Capstone Community Action, and Northeast Kingdom Community Action provide Head Start and Early Head Start services. CVOEO and Capstone Community Action provide Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership services. Southeast Vermont Community Action provides Head Start services.

- Mental Health Agencies: Rutland Community Programs, Inc. and United Children’s Service of Bennington County provide Head Start services.
- School District: Brattleboro Town School District/Early Education Services provides Head Start and Early Head Start services.

Research on the Head Start Program

Three sets of new research findings about the long-term outcomes from participating in the Head Start program have received national media attention this summer:

- Consistent with the prior research about Head Start’s impacts on educational outcomes, a 2016 Brookings Institution study that Head Start participants are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and receive a post-secondary degree, license, or certification.⁶
- Georgetown University researchers studied the Tulsa Community Action Project (CAP) Head Start program and reported in their 2016 study that children who participated in the program demonstrated positive impacts on their math achievement test scores in middle school and were 31 percent less likely to be retained in grade by 8th grade and 34 percent less likely to be chronically absent.⁷
- Based upon his research, Dr. James J. Heckman, Nobel Laureate in Economics has concluded, “Head Start has significant beneficial short-term effects, strong long-term effects and deserves government investment.”⁸

Two years ago, I authored a national report about Head Start Prekindergarten Education Partnerships (see the handout). My report’s two major conclusions are:

- 1) The large extent to which States provide funding to Head Start programs through state-funded prekindergarten funding streams and/or make appropriations to supply state-funded Head Start and
- 2) Head Start programs, Public Schools, and preschool-aged children and their Vermont families benefit from these partnerships.⁹

Table 1: Head Start-Public School Prekindergarten Education Partnerships during the 2015-2016 School Year

	Total Sites	Public School-Based Sites	Head Start-Based Sites
Head Start-Public School Prekindergarten Education Partnerships Sites	32	21	11
Head Start Grantees	7	6	6
Public Schools (School Districts/Supervisory Unions/Supervisory Districts)	22	15	9
Total Enrolled Children	781	482	299
Head Start-Enrolled Children	582	296	286
Non-Head Start Enrolled Children	199	186	13
Total Classrooms	49	29	20
Percentage of Classrooms Serving Both Head Start-Enrolled and Non-Head Start-Enrolled Children	53%	72%	25%

The preliminary results of the 2015-2016 school year survey about Vermont Head Start-Public School Prekindergarten Education Partnerships are:

- Seven Head Start grantees and 22 Public Schools partnered at 32 individual sites to serve 781 children in 49 classrooms. The same Head Start grantee may partner with the same Public School at multiple sites. A site may consist of multiple classrooms. Of 32 buildings at these sites, public schools owned 21 and Head Start programs owned 11.
- Of 781 children, 75 percent were Head Start-enrolled and 25 percent were non-Head Start enrolled.
- Public School-based prekindergarten partnership settings provide the highest proportion of socioeconomically heterogeneous classrooms: 72 percent compared with 25 percent for the Head Start-based settings (see the data highlighted in light blue in Table 1).
- Taking into account this pattern and upon the request of the Vermont Head Start Association, the Agencies of Education and Human Services jointly published in August 2016 their Head Start and Act 166: Statement of Preferred Practice (see the handout).

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2016). *U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines Used to Determine Financial Eligibility for Certain Federal Programs*. Retrieved in September 2016. Available at <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start. (2016). *Head Start Program Performance Standards*. 45 CFR Chapter XIII. RIN 0970-AC63. Retrieved in September 2016. Available at <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/new-policy>. The Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office calculated \$31,590 by multiplying \$24,300 by 1.30.

³ The federal Administration for Children and Families/Office of Head Start Region I Office supplied the Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office with the slots figures on May 12, 2016. Launched nationally in 2015, the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Program is designed to bring together the best of Early Head Start and child care programs by layering Early Head Start, child care, and other funding streams to provide comprehensive and continuous services to low-income infants, toddlers, and their families. The Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Program enhances and supports early learning settings to provide full-day, full-year, seamless, and comprehensive services that meet the needs of low-income working families and those in school; increase access to high-quality, full-day child care (including family child care); support the development of infants and toddlers through strong relationship-based experiences; and prepare them for the transition into Head Start and other preschool settings.

⁴ The Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office calculated 20 percent by dividing 1,447 by 7,167 children under age 6 below 100% of FPL from the 2010-2014 five-year American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, (Table B17024).

⁵ In the Map handout, the Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership enrollment figures are combined as Early Head Start.

⁶ Bauer, L. and Schanzenbach, D. (August 2016). *The Long-Term Impact of the Head Start Program*. The Hamilton Project. The Brookings Institution. Retrieved in September 2016. Available at http://www.hamiltonproject.org/papers/the_long_term_impacts_of_head_start.

⁷ Phillips, D., Gormley, W., and Anderson, S. (2016). The Effects of Tulsa's CAP Head Start Program on Middle-School Academic Outcomes and Progress. *Developmental Psychology*, 52 (8): 1247-1261.

⁸ Heckman, J. (2015, December 1). *Early Childhood Education: Making Sense of All the Research*. Retrieved in September 2016. Available at <http://heckmanequation.org/content/early-childhood-education-making-sense-all-research>.

⁹ Allen, B. (2014, April). *Status of Head Start Pre-Kindergarten Partnerships in Vermont and Nationally*. Report of the Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office, Child Development Division, Vermont Department for Children and Families. Retrieved in September 2016. Available at http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/CDD/Reports/FINAL%20Status_of_Head_Start-Pre-Kindergarten_Partnerships_in_Vermont_and_Nationally.pdf.