

# EARLY HEAD START

## CORE MESSAGES

**Solution.** The Early Head Start approach uses federal investments and community resources to support early development and equip parents with skills for their child's future.

**Problem.** Not every child starts from the same place; nearly 19% of babies in the U.S. live below the poverty line, with their families facing systemic barriers that hinder essential resources babies need to thrive.

**Call to action.** Policymakers can support infants, toddlers, and their families during a critical time of their development by increasing investments in the Early Head Start approach.

## MAKING THE CASE

- **The Early Head Start approach.** Infants and toddlers only get one chance at a strong start in life. Early Head Start is an evidence-based program that provides those living below the poverty line with the resources they want and need to support their families' economic well-being while ensuring their young children are on a solid path toward healthy development. The approach includes investments in and expanded access to prenatal and postpartum services, early childhood education, family support within the community, community health services, and parent support and education. Components of Early Head Start include:
  - ▶ **Prenatal and postpartum services**, including health care and education on healthy fetal development, labor and delivery, postpartum recovery, parental depression, infant care, safe sleep practices, and the benefits of breastfeeding.
  - ▶ **Early childhood education** through a variety of learning experiences, including high-quality center-based programs, and family child care.
  - ▶ **Family support systems** that connect families with available community resources, including employment, transportation, housing support, and more.
  - ▶ **Health services** in the community to ensure children have access to immunizations, dental, medical, mental health, and nutritional services, as well as early identification of health problems.
  - ▶ **Family engagement** that prioritizes preparing parents as primary teachers and nurturers in the planning and implementation of services for their child's well-being and development.
- **Economic impact.** By investing in programs that support families with infants and toddlers, we can give children a healthy foundation in life and drive economic growth for communities and the families who live in those communities.

## EARLY HEAD START

- **Access.** For 25 years, Early Head Start has been a proven model that positively impacts the development, health, and well-being of young children and their families. Despite its proven benefits, only 11% of eligible infants and toddlers are currently served by Early Head Start.
- **Community impact.** Early Head Start's positive impacts on children's cognitive and language skills, behavior, immunization rates, and engagement during play are visible at a young age and extend to kindergarten entry. Research has shown that parents in Early Head Start show increased emotional support, language development, and reduced use of harsh discipline, such as spanking. Enrollment in Early Head Start also promoted parents' participation in education, training, and employment.



---

*NCIT is here to support your advocacy campaign in a variety of ways to help you plan and execute your campaign. We support advocacy campaigns by mobilizing communities, advancing science and research through communications and messaging expertise, and other forms of capacity building for organizations. We offer tools and resources, connections to partner organizations, one-on-one coaching, and training to organizations advocating for policies that impact expectant parents, infants, toddlers, and their families. Each request starts a conversation – you don't have to have all the details ready. We'll get you connected to the right person! [Connect with us here!](#)*