ASPE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR PLANNING AND EVALUATION | OFFICE OF HUMAN SERVICES POLICY

BRIEF
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Head Start Spending Per Slot Varies Widely Across Grants, Driven in Part by Cost of Living and Local Program Design Factors

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KEY POINTS

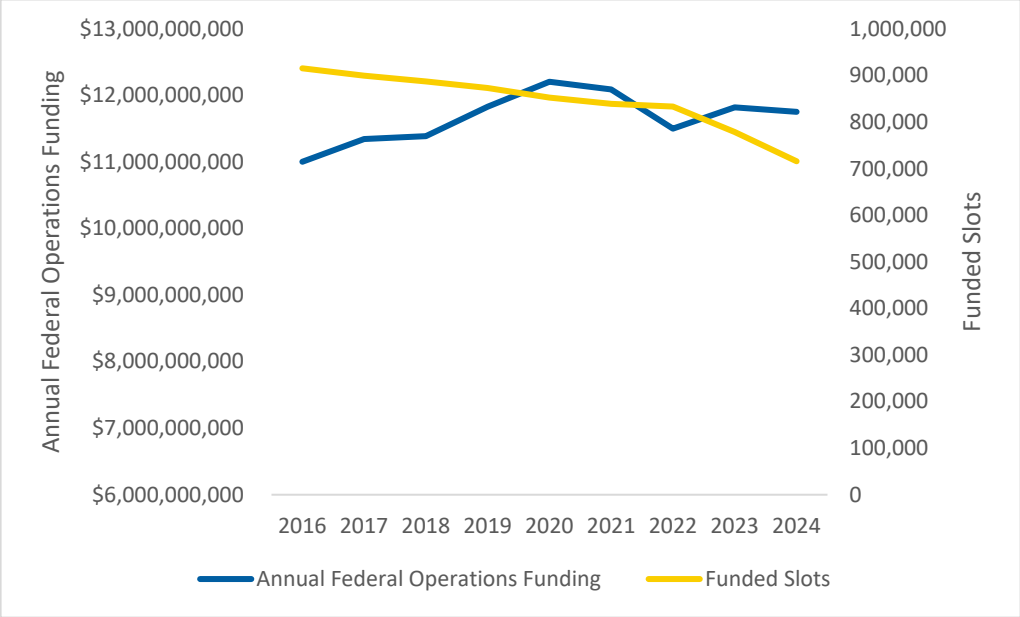
- The median amount grantees spend per slot is $20,294 in Early Head Start and $14,532 in Head Start Preschool.
- Spending per slot varies widely across both programs, as well as both across and within states; however, Early Head Start grants have larger variation in spending per slot compared to Head Start Preschool grants. There is not a clear pattern that explains across state or within-state variation in spending per slot.
- Cost of living explains some – but not all – of the variation in spending per slot.
    - Across both Early Head Start and Head Start Preschool, cost of living is positively associated with spending per slot. A 10 percent increase in relative regional prices is associated with $1,490 additional spending per slot in Early Head Start (or about 7 percent of national median spending per slot), and $2,170 in additional spending per slot in Head Start Preschool (or about 15 percent of national median spending per slot).
- Head Start program operation and design factors also explain some of the observed variation in spending per slot, though different factors are relevant to Early Head Start as compared to Head Start Preschool.
    - In Early Head Start, the largest and most persistent differences in spending per slot are associated with service delivery setting. Grants that provide only home-based services spend about 33 percent less per slot compared to grants that provide only center-based services.
    - In Head Start Preschool, service delivery setting, grantee type, and program size are major drivers of spending variation.
        - Grants that provide only center-based services spend less per slot than grants that provide services in mixed or other service delivery settings (e.g., home-based services only, both center- and home-based services)
        - Non-profit, non-community action agency grantee organizations spend $1,163 more per slot than community action agencies. School systems, in contrast, spend about $2,492 less per slot than community action agencies.
        - Larger grants, or grants with more slots, spend less per slot compared to smaller grants. For example, if Grant A is funded to serve 50 more slots than Grant B, Grant A will spend $85 less per slot than Grant B (or $4,250 less for all 50 slots, total).
- If Head Start grants that spend above the median per slot amount were to adjust their spending to a state median benchmark, Early Head Start could serve 18,430 more slots, and Head Start Preschool could serve 41,621 more slots.

BACKGROUND

Head Start provides comprehensive early learning and development, health, and family well-being services to children ages birth to five years of age. Head Start Preschool serves children ages 3 to 5 and their families, and Early Head Start serves children birth to age 3 and expectant mothers.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, the federal Head Start program was appropriated $12.3 billion.[1] The Office of Head Start (OHS) awarded $11.9 billion to approximately 1,700 grant recipients that operate Head Start programs in local communities.[i] In FY 2024, Head Start was funded to serve 715,873 children and pregnant women. Figure 1 depicts historical trends in Head Start program operations funding and total number of funded slots.

Figure 1. Annual Head Start Program Operations Funding and Funded Slots



Note: Funding was cost-adjusted to FY 2024 dollars to account for inflation using Consumer Price Index (CPI) annual averages from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The majority of Head Start slots are in Head Start Preschool. In FY 2024, Head Start Preschool made up about 70 percent of funded slots, and Early Head Start made up about 26 percent of funded slots.[ii] Approximately 62 percent of Head Start grant recipients provide both Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start services.[2] Head Start has two unique programs that serve American Indian and Alaska Native children and families (AIAN, Region XI) and children of migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSHS, Region XII). In FY 2024, AIAN Head Start programs were funded $345 million to serve 21,572 children, and MSHS programs were funded $525 million to serve 24,460 children.[3]

Head Start funding is provided directly from the federal government through grants to local communities. Qualified grant recipients include community action agencies, government agencies, school districts, and a range of private and public for-profit and not-for-profit groups, including faith-based institutions.

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[i] Head Start slots are not exclusively funded by federal grant funds. In addition to federal funding, Head Start grantee agencies must provide a 20 percent non-federal match. Programs blend, braid, and layer funds to support the total cost of slots. Throughout the brief, program spending per slot refers only to Head Start grant funds and does not include other sources of funding that contribute to the total cost or spending per slot.

[ii] This reflects Early Head Start and Head Start Preschool slots by state and includes American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) slots. Migrant and Seasonal Head Start made up the remainder of funded slots.

Each Head Start grant makes their own decisions about program operations and design based on a required assessment of local community needs. The Office of Head Start does not provide guidance on a target amount of spending per child. Therefore, spending per child may vary depending on these local decisions around program operations and design at the time of initial grant application for funding, including type of grantee organization as well as program size.

For example, Head Start services can be delivered across a variety of program options, or service delivery settings. Center-based services are located in child development centers, home-based services are mostly delivered in a family's own home, and family child care services are located in a family-based child care setting. Programs are also permitted to develop their own locally-designed option that delivers services through a combination of the above settings, based on specific community needs.

SPENDING PER SLOT VARIES WIDELY ACROSS HEAD START GRANTS, WITH LARGER VARIATION IN EARLY HEAD START SPENDING AS COMPARED TO HEAD START PRESCHOOL[iii]

Nationally, the median spending per slot in Early Head Start is $20,294 and the median spending per slot in Head Start Preschool is $14,532.

The median spending per slot for AIAN Early Head Start is $22,617 and AIAN Head Start Preschool is $15,077. For both programs, spending per slot in AIAN is higher than in national Head Start.

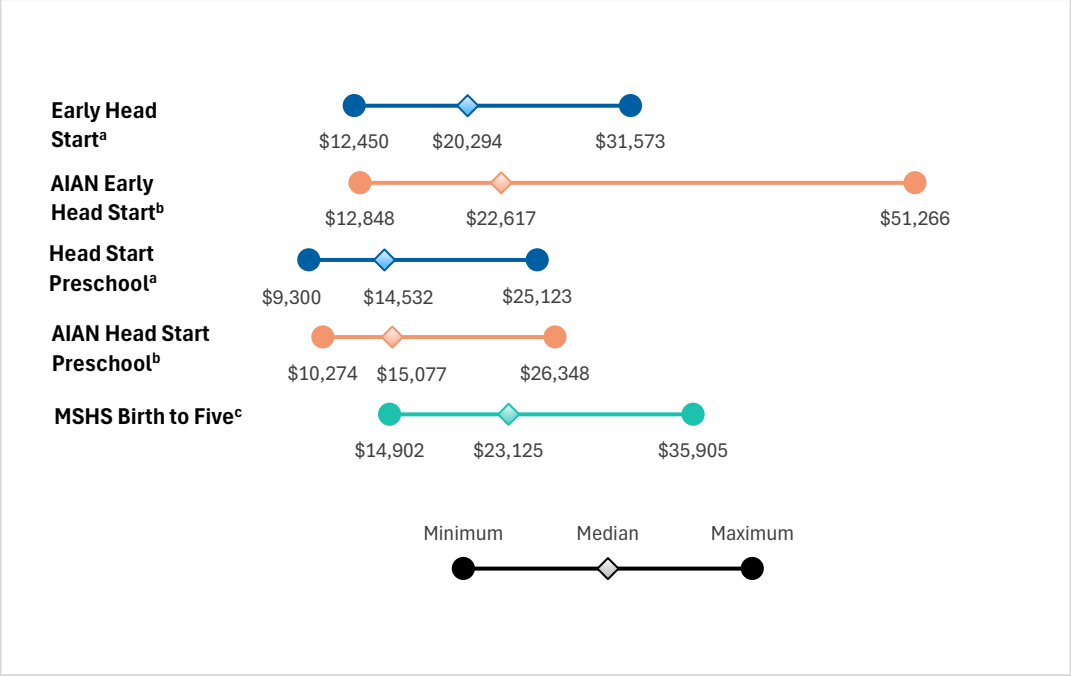
Because MSHS grants operate as birth to five programs rather than as separate Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start programs, we report only the overall median spending per slot across all MSHS grants. The median spending per slot for the MSHS program is $23,125, which is higher than all other program types.

Figure 2 depicts the range[iv] and median spending per slot for Early Head Start and Head Start Preschool, AIAN Early Head Start and AIAN Head Start Preschool, and the MSHS program.

[iii] All analyses in this brief are original analysis by authors based on data from Head Start Program Information Reports (PIR) and financial reporting. All differences reported in this brief are statistically significant at the p<.05 level or lower.

[iv] For all analyses, the minimum to maximum range represents the 5th to 95th percentiles, reflecting the typical range not including extreme values. The full range at the national level, including extreme values, for Head Start Preschool is $6,078 to $43,982 and for Early Head Start is $2,869 to $75,024.

Figure 2. Head Start Spending Per Slot, 2024



[a] *Early Head Start N = 1,330 grantees,* [b] *Head Start Preschool N = 1,325 grantees*
[b] *AIAN Early Head Start N = 77 grantees, AIAN Head Start Preschool N = 144 grantees*
[c] *MSHS Birth to Five N = 32 grantees*

SPENDING PER SLOT FOR EARLY HEAD START AND HEAD START PRESCHOOL VARIES BOTH ACROSS AND WITHIN STATES

For both programs, Vermont and Alaska were among the states with the highest median spending, and West Virginia was among the states with the lowest median spending.

Median spending for Early Head Start and Head Start Preschool varies by state.[v] See Figures 3 and 4 below, as well as Tables 2, 3, and 4 in the appendix for additional detail about state level variation.

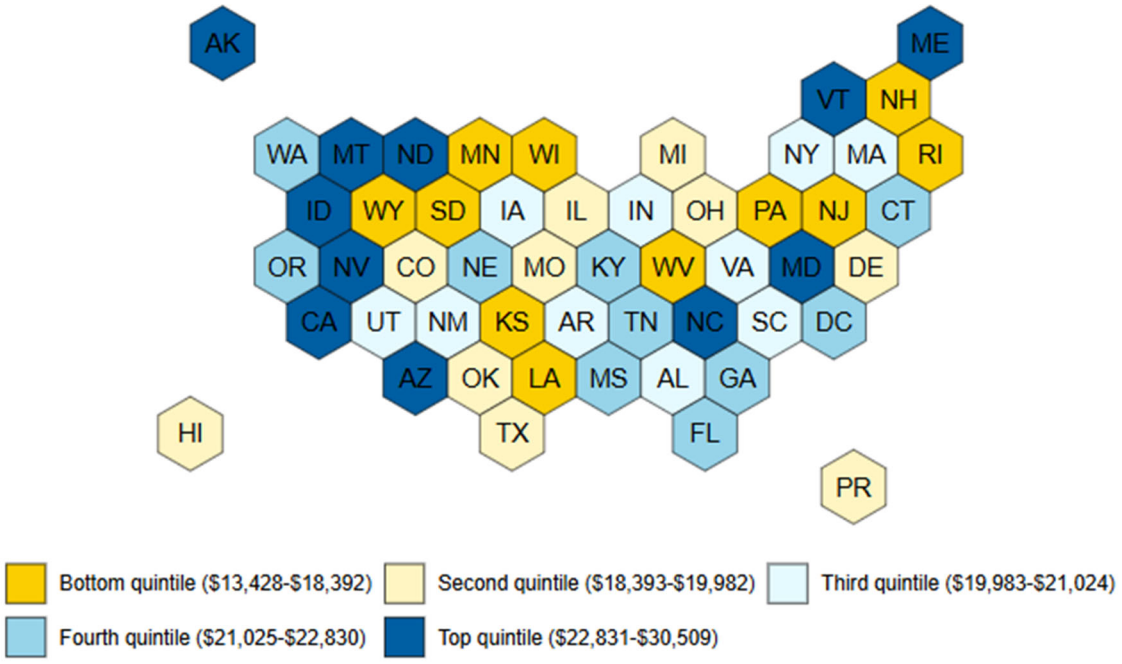
Early Head Start

States with the highest median spending per slot in Early Head Start are Vermont ($30,509), North Dakota ($27,667), Maine ($26,504), Alaska ($26,330), and Montana ($26,216).

States with the lowest median spending per slot are Kansas ($13,428), Wyoming ($15,761), Pennsylvania ($16,228), West Virginia ($16,465), and Rhode Island ($16,484).

[v] AIAN and MSHS programs were excluded from all subsequent analyses. AIAN grants are typically smaller in size, tend to have higher operational costs due to the unique characteristics of operating a program serving tribes, and as a result, introduce outliers that skew the data. MSHS grants fund birth to five programs, so it is not possible to differentiate their funding amounts and slots between Early Head Start and Head Start Preschool.

Figure 3. Median Early Head Start Spending Per Slot, 2024

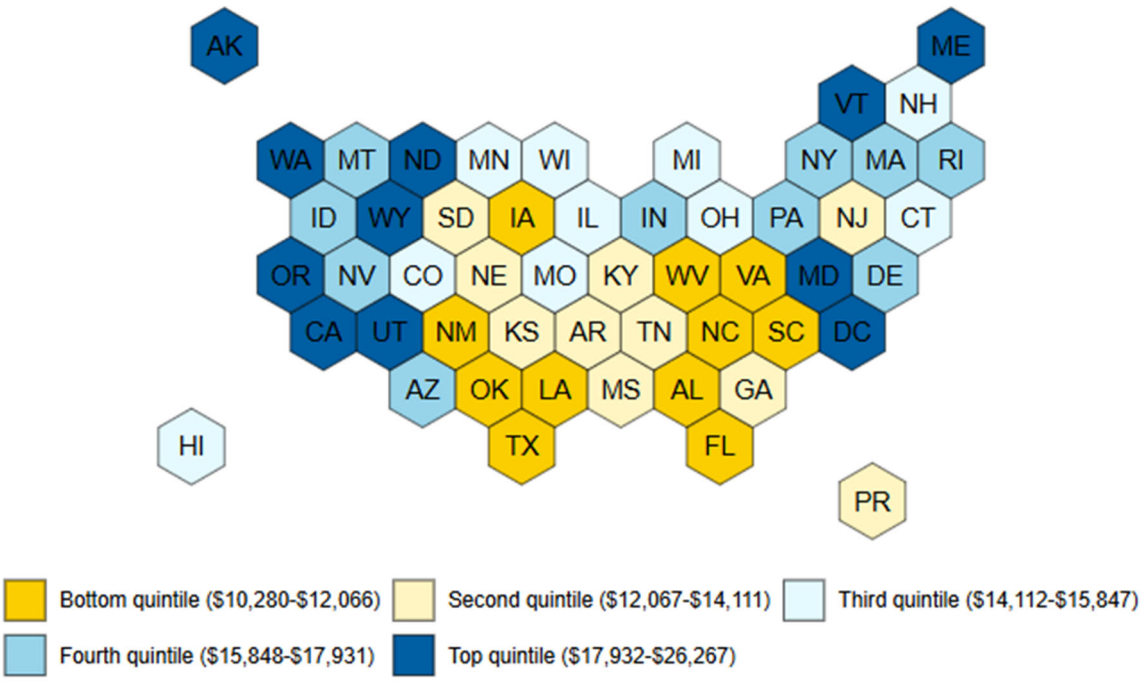


Head Start Preschool

States with the highest median spending per slot in Head Start Preschool are Oregon ($26,267), Vermont ($23,423), DC ($22,430), Alaska ($21,685), and California ($20,215).

States with the lowest median spending per slot are West Virginia ($10,280), Louisiana ($10,539), Florida ($10,900), Texas ($11,092), and New Mexico ($11,472).

Figure 4. Median Head Start Preschool Spending Per Slot, 2024



For both programs, Oregon, Washington, and DC were among the states with the highest within-state variation in median spending, and Louisiana and Nevada were among the states with the least within-state variation.

There is a range of within-state variation across the country, with some states exhibiting more variation in spending per slot within their borders than others. See Table 4 for additional detail about within-state variation.

Early Head Start

States with the most within-state variation in Early Head Start spending per slot are Oregon (range of $59,914 between minimum and maximum spending per slot among Oregon grantees), Washington (range of $30,006), Kansas ($25,613), DC ($25,529), and Maryland ($25,468).

States with the least within-state variation in Early Head Start spending per slot are South Dakota (range of $6,732), Puerto Rico ($7,915), Delaware ($8,712), Louisiana ($9,410), and Nevada ($9,612).

Head Start Preschool

States with the most within-state variation in Head Start Preschool spending per slot are DC (range of $26,678), Oregon ($18,569), Washington ($18,629), Arizona ($18,101), and Montana ($16,226).

States with the least within-state variation in Head Start Preschool spending per slot are Nevada (range of just $626), Hawaii ($3,803), Iowa ($4,636), North Dakota ($5,402), and Louisiana ($5,426).

Cross-state variation exists in other educational or early childhood settings, but there is limited consistency across programs in the states that have high or low spending compared with high or low Head Start spending.

Per child spending in public and secondary school also varies by state, but inconsistently with Head Start spending. In FY 2023, the average expenditure[vi] per pupil in the United States was $16,560.[4]

There is limited consistency in the states with high and low K-12 per-pupil expenditures compared to states with high and low median Head Start spending per slot. DC and Vermont both have high K-12 per pupil spending and high Head Start spending per slot, and Idaho has low K-12 per pupil spending and low Head Start spending per slot, but there is no other overlap in states with high and low spending.

The District of Columbia has the highest K-12 per pupil expenditure ($31,037) and Utah has the lowest K-12 per pupil expenditure ($10,265). States with the highest K-12 per pupil expenditure are DC, New York, Vermont, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. States with the lowest K-12 per pupil expenditure are Utah, Idaho, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Tennessee.

Child care prices also vary by state, but also inconsistently with Head Start spending. Variation by state is also observed in child care prices. In 2024, the national average price of child care[vii] was $15,827 for infants in center-based care and $12,437 for four-year-olds in center-based care.[5]

There is limited consistency in the states with high and low child care prices for an infant in center-based care compared to states with high and low spending for Early Head Start. West Virginia has both low child care prices and low spending per slot, but there is otherwise no other overlap in states with high prices and high spending per slot, or low prices and low spending per slot.

Massachusetts has the highest annual price for an infant in center-based care ($26,343) and Mississippi has the lowest annual price for an infant in center-based care ($7,696). States with the highest annual price for an infant in center-based care are Massachusetts, DC, Maryland, Hawaii, and California. States with the lowest annual price for an infant in center-based care are Mississippi, Alabama, South Dakota, Arkansas, and West Virginia.

This benchmarking against estimates of the price of or market rates for child care is intended to be used only to demonstrate state by state variation and should not be directly compared to Head Start spending per slot. Child care *prices* are not directly comparable to *spending per slot*, because child care prices reflect what parents can pay, which is not the same as how much programs spend per child to provide care. In addition, Head Start is required to provide a suite of comprehensive services[6] (e.g., health and wellness services, family well-being supports, connections to community services to build family economic mobility, and family engagement) that would not be accounted for in the cost of traditional child care.

TAKEN TOGETHER, HIGHER COST OF LIVING AND HEAD START SERVICE DELIVERY SETTING ACCOUNT FOR SOME BUT NOT ALL VARIATION IN SPENDING PER SLOT IN BOTH EARLY HEAD START AND HEAD START PRESCHOOL. GRANTEE TYPE AND

[vi] Expenditures include instruction, support services (i.e., instructional staff support services, pupil support services, general administration, school administration, operations and maintenance, student transportation, and other support services), food services, and enterprise operations. Expenditures include salaries and wages, employee benefits, purchased services, supplies, and equipment.

[vii] Based on survey data reported by Child Care Resource and Referral Organizations.

PROGRAM SIZE ACCOUNT FOR FURTHER VARIATION IN SPENDING IN HEAD START PRESCHOOL

Head Start grants operate in the context of their communities and those local market conditions. In addition, characteristics of Head Start program operations and design – service delivery setting, grantee type[viii], and enrollment size – do not exist independent of each other. We therefore looked at these factors together to understand how they might explain the observed variation in per slot spending.[ix,x] Some additional descriptive information about median spending per slot for Head Start program operation and design and community-level factors is provided in the Appendix.

A 10 percent increase in cost of living is associated with a $1,490 increase in per slot spending in Early Head Start and $2,170 increase in Head Start Preschool.

Across both Early Head Start and Head Start Preschool, spending per slot varies widely. Cost of living explains some variation in spending per slot, but cost of living alone does not explain these differences. Adjusting for regional price levels using Bureau of Economic Affairs Regional Price Parities – a common proxy for cost of living – explains some variation in observed spending differences.

Early Head Start

In Early Head Start**,** cost of living is positively associated with spending per slot. A 10 percent increase in relative regional prices is associated with $1,490 in additional spending per slot, or about 7 percent of the national median Early Head Start spending per slot.

After controlling for cost of living, grants that operate in medium and small metro areas spend more per slot than large metro areas ($1,647 and $2,093 more, respectively). Grants that operate in rural areas are not systematically different than those in large metro areas after controlling for cost of living.

Head Start Preschool

In Head Start Preschool, cost of living is positively associated with spending per slot. A 10 percent increase in relative regional prices is associated with $2,170 in additional spending per slot, or about 15 percent of the national median spending per Head Start Preschool slot.

After controlling for cost of living, grants that operate in medium and small metro areas and rural areas non-adjacent to a metro area spend more per slot than large metro areas ($1,280, $2068, and $1,129 more, respectively).

Early Head Start grants offering home-based services spend 33 percent less than those offering center-based services, while Head Start Preschool grants that offer center-based services, are run by school districts, and have more slots spend less than their counterparts.

[viii] Grantee type refers to the primary grant recipient and does not include any delegate agency types. Delegate agency data as reported on the PIR is aggregated up to the grant recipient level. Cost of living and other community level factors are assessed based on the zip code of the primary grant recipient.

[ix] The analytic sample size used in all subsequent analysis includes 1,562 grant recipients serving 603,918 slots. The analytic sample is reduced due to missing or mismatched data between the financial reporting and the PIR.

[x] Models estimate differences in per-slot spending using multiple linear regression for Early Head Start and Head Start Preschool grantees separately. Specifications include indicators for service delivery setting, grantee type, and program size, along with controls for local socioeconomic context and geography. Contact the authors for additional detail about methodology.

After adjusting for regional cost of living factors, factors related to Head Start service delivery setting explain additional variation in per slot spending for both Early Head Start and Head Start Preschool, and both grantee type and program size explain further variation among Head Start Preschool grants.

Early Head Start

The largest and most persistent differences in per slot spending are associated with the service delivery setting. Grants that provide only home-based services spend substantially less per slot (about 33 percent, or $7,600) compared to grants that provide only center-based services. Grants that provide services in mixed settings (e.g., both center-based and home-based) spend about $1,980 less per slot than grants that provide only center-based services.

Per slot spending differences by service delivery setting do not appear to be driven by cross-state policy environments. These differences persist *within* states.

Head Start Preschool

In Head Start Preschool, multiple program operation and design factors account for variation in spending.

Center-based grants spend less. Service delivery setting still matters, but differently than in Early Head Start. Here, grants that provide only center-based services spend $1,278 *less,* rather than more, per slot than grants that provide services in mixed or other settings (e.g., home-based services only, a locally designed program option, both center-based and home-based).

There is no meaningful *within-state* difference between grants that provide only center-based services and grants that provide services in mixed or other settings. This indicates that national differences in spending per slot by service delivery setting primarily reflect *cross-state variation*, not within-state differences. State policy context may play a role in these cross-state differences.

Non-profit, non-community action agency grantees spend more, while school districts spend less: Grantee type is also a major driver in spending variation. Non-profit grantee organizations spend $1,163 more per slot than community action agencies. School systems, in contrast, spend $2,492 less per slot than community action agencies.

Larger grants spend less: Program size, or number of slots, also explains some of the variation in spending per slot. Among Head Start Preschool grants, each additional slot is associated with about $1.70 lower spending per slot, holding all other factors constant. For example, if Grant A is funded to serve 50 more slots than Grant B, Grant A will spend $85 less per slot than Grant B (or $4,250 less for all 50 slots, total). In magnitude, this is smaller than associations with service delivery setting or grantee types but still indicates meaningful economies of scale.

HOW MANY NET NEW SLOTS COULD HEAD START SERVE AT DIFFERENT MEDIAN SPENDING AMOUNTS?

At FY 2024 funding levels, Head Start is funded to serve 715,873 slots.[7] If grants were to adjust the amount of money they spend per slot, the total number of slots could change. We estimated the range of number of net new slots that could be created if grants adopted the state median per slot amount of spending. For this estimation, we assume that all grants with per slot spending above the state median per slot amount will

reduce their spending to the median.[xi] Because Head Start grants are intended to meet the unique needs of individual communities, we use the state-specific median rather than the national median, which would obscure the importance of local context. Table 1 summarizes the range of estimates aggregated to the national level. Additional state-level detail is provided in the Appendix.

Table 1. Slot Estimation Policy Scenario

	Early Head Start	Head Start Preschool
	Net New Slots (% change)	Net New Slots (% change)
Policy Scenario	18,430 (11.8)	41,621 (9.8)

Early Head Start

We estimate that current resources are equivalent to supporting 18,430 additional slots, or about an 11.8 percent increase over current slots.

Head Start Preschool

We estimate that current resources are equivalent to supporting 41,621 additional slots, or about a 9.8 percent increase over current slots.

CONCLUSION

This brief presents information on Head Start spending per slot across the country. Overall findings reflect variation in spending per slot in Early Head Start and Head Start Preschool across and within states. Early Head Start is more expensive than Head Start Preschool. This is consistent with a robust body of research demonstrating that infant/toddler care is more expensive than care for preschoolers, largely driven by the increased expenses due to a lower caregiver to child ratio.[8]

There is not a clear pattern that explains across state or within-state variation in spending per slot. While some states have high median spending per slot (Alaska, Vermont) or low median spending per slot (West Virginia) across both Early Head Start and Head Start Preschool, that pattern is not consistently held across states.

Variation across Head Start grants is permitted by Head Start statute. Head Start grants are funded directly to and designed at the local level to meet community need. Programs are tailored as appropriate to meet the needs of families in that specific community. Some models are designed to be particularly intensive based on community need.

Variation in per child spending is not uncommon in other early childhood or educational programs. Wide variation by state is seen in per pupil expenditure in public K-12 schools and in estimates of child care prices. Of note, there is not a consistent pattern of variation whereby the *same* states have high expenditures or high prices (or low expenditures and low prices) across early childhood programs.

Cost of living explains some – but not all – of the variation in spending per slot. Across both Early Head Start and Head Start Preschool, higher cost of living (as measured by regional price levels) is positively associated with more spending per slot. The magnitude of that relationship is greater for Head Start Preschool. Other

[xi] To control for cost-of-living differences, including wages, rent, and prices, we converted spending per slot in nominal dollars to spending per slot in real dollars using regional prices. After this adjustment, a dollar represents the same purchasing power everywhere. To estimate the number of net new slots, we calculated the amount of real spending that would be available in the policy scenario. We then translate that savings into number of additional slots using the state median per slot amount. This does not account for any additional costs that would be incurred by a grant if slots were to increase.

geographic factors, such as urbanicity, explain some of the spending per slot differences for Early Head Start only.

These results indicate that program operation and design decisions that are made prior to the awarding of a Head Start grant explain some of the observed variation in spending per slot. In Early Head Start, differences in spending per slot are associated with the service delivery setting. Grants that provide only home-based services spend about 33 percent less per slot compared to grants that provide only center-based services. In Head Start Preschool, service delivery setting, grantee type, and program size are major drivers of spending variation. Grants that provide only center-based services spend less per slot. Non-profit, non-community action agency grantee organizations spend more per slot, and school systems spend less per slot as compared to community action agencies. Larger grants, or grants with more slots, spend less per slot compared to smaller grants.

In Early Head Start, per slot spending differences by service delivery setting do not appear to be driven by cross-state policy environments. These differences persist *within* states. Conversely, for Head Start Preschool, there is no meaningful *within-state* difference between grants that provide only center-based services and grants that provide services in mixed or other settings. This indicates that national differences in spending per slot by service delivery setting primarily reflect *cross-state variation*, not within-state differences. State policy context – including funding environments, pre-K expansion, wage structure, administrative practices, and other policy choices – may play a role in these cross-state differences and are beyond the scope of this analysis.

Currently, the Office of Head Start does not set guidelines for per slot spending. If the Office of Head Start were to adopt a spending benchmark for programs – which might reduce spending per slot in some grants – additional slots could potentially be supported. In practice, grants would also need to account for other costs that might be incurred if they were to scale up in size, including changes to staffing costs or classroom space, which are not included in our estimates. It is also important to note that slots are not funded exclusively by Head Start grant funds. Early childhood education programs blend, braid, and layer funding to support the total costs of program services. Most Head Start programs (94 percent) receive funding from other federal, state, local, or private sources, as required by the non-federal match requirements in the Head Start Act.[9,10] This brief does not account for the additional sources of funding that contribute to the overall cost or spending per slot. Future research could use cost modeling to more comprehensively estimate the number of slots that could be added in practice at various per slot spending amounts or with additional sources of funding.

Overall, this brief describes the variation in spending per slot across Head Start grants, and the multiple factors that account for some – but not all – of that variation. Notably, this brief does not assess the relationship between spending per slot and any features of quality or child or family outcomes. Future research could explore the relationship between spending, quality, and outcomes; look more granularly at the role of delegate agency or center-level location; or identify additional factors that could account for variation in spending.

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APPENDIX. SUMMARY STATISTICS ON MEDIAN HEAD START SPENDING PER SLOT AND FACTORS THAT ACCOUNT FOR VARIATION IN SPENDING

Table 2. Median Head Start Spending per Slot, by State, 2024

	Early Head Start (state rank)[i]	Head Start Preschool (state rank)[i]
National	$20,294	$14,532
AK	$26,330 (49)	$21,685 (49)
AL	$20,274 (27)	$11,987 (10)
AR	$20,245 (26)	$12,314 (14)
AZ	$24,564 (46)	$17,731 (41)
CA	$23,094 (43)	$20,215 (48)
CO	$19,442 (18)	$14,702 (26)
CT	$22,584 (41)	$15,000 (28)
DC	$22,513 (39)	$22,430 (50)
DE	$19,183 (15)	$17,619 (39)
FL	$21,596 (35)	$10,900 (3)
GA	$21,752 (36)	$12,213 (12)
HI	$19,977 (21)	$14,543 (25)
IA	$20,065 (23)	$12,031 (11)
ID	$25,082 (47)	$17,625 (40)
IL	$19,289 (17)	$15,503 (30)
IN	$20,354 (28)	$16,077 (33)
KS	$13,428 (1)	$13,683 (19)
KY	$21,155 (33)	$13,330 (16)
LA	$18,267 (11)	$10,539 (2)
MA	$21,018 (31)	$16,291 (35)
MD	$23,686 (44)	$17,982 (42)
ME	$26,504 (50)	$18,022 (43)
MI	$19,664 (20)	$15,082 (29)
MN	$17,798 (9)	$14,525 (24)
MO	$19,229 (16)	$14,423 (23)
MS	$21,029 (32)	$12,271 (13)
MT	$26,216 (48)	$16,612 (37)
NC	$22,893 (42)	$11,943 (9)
ND	$27,667 (51)	$19,347 (46)
NE	$21,783 (37)	$13,953 (21)
NH	$17,116 (6)	$15,811 (31)
NJ	$17,584 (7)	$13,896 (20)
NM	$20,235 (25)	$11,472 (5)
NV	$24,452 (45)	$15,873 (32)
NY	$20,224 (24)	$16,101 (34)
OH	$18,976 (14)	$14,351 (22)
OK	$18,899 (12)	$11,906 (8)
OR	$22,484 (38)	$26,267 (52)
PA	$16,228 (3)	$16,457 (36)
PR	$18,948 (13)	$13,504 (17)
RI	$16,484 (5)	$16,710 (38)

SC	$19,992 **(22)**	$11,681 **(6)**
SD	$17,623 **(8)**	$12,893 **(15)**
TN	$22,556 **(40)**	$13,581 **(18)**
TX	$19,534 **(19)**	$11,092 **(4)**
UT	$20,422 **(29)**	$18,035 **(44)**
VA	$20,558 **(30)**	$11,842 **(7)**
VT	$30,509 **(52)**	$23,423 **(51)**
WA	$21,534 **(34)**	$20,079 **(47)**
WI	$18,005 **(1)**	$14,774 **(27)**
WV	$16,465 **(4)**	$10,280 **(1)**
WY	$15,761 **(2)**	$18,433 **(45)**
National	$20,294	$14,532

Table 3. Lowest and Highest Median Spending per Slot, by State, 2024

Early Head Start		Head Start Preschool	
National	$20,294	*National*	$14,532
Lowest Median Spending			
KS	$13,428	WV	$10,280
WY	$15,761	LA	$10,539
PA	$16,228	FL	$10,900
WV	$16,465	TX	$11,092
RI	$16,484	NM	$11,472
NH	$17,116	SC	$11,681
NJ	$17,584	VA	$11,842
SD	$17,623	OK	$11,906
MN	$17,798	NC	$11,943
WI	$18,005	AL	$11,987
Highest Median Spending			
VT	$30,509	OR	$26,267
ND	$27,667	VT	$23,423
ME	$26,504	DC	$22,430
AK	$26,330	AK	$21,685
MT	$26,216	CA	$20,215
ID	$25,083	WA	$20,079
AZ	$24,564	ND	$19,347
NV	$24,452	WY	$18,433
MD	$23,686	UT	$18,035
CA	$23,094	ME	$18,022

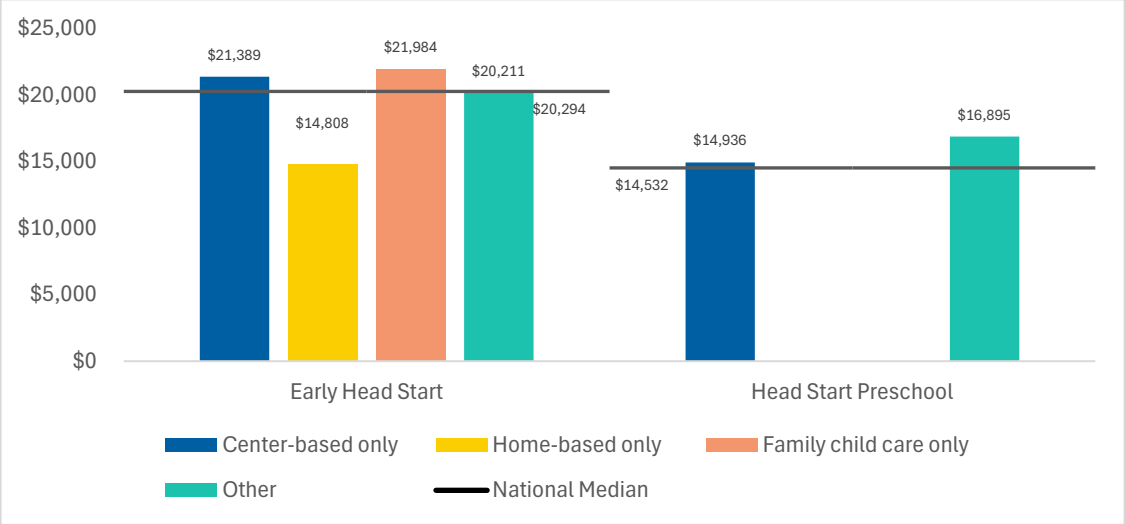
Table 4. Within-State Variation in Spending Per Slot, 2024

Note: Cells shaded in blue represent the states with the most within-state variation. Cells shaded in yellow represent those with the least within-state variation.

	Early Head Start		Head Start Preschool	
	Minimum	*Maximum*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*
AK	$14,663	$32,689	$19,063	$27,353
AL	$15,256	$29,574	$9,209	$17,147
AR	$15,519	$33,066	$8,434	$23,910
AZ	$16,231	$35,505	$12,255	$34,435
CA	$16,217	$36,292	$14,287	$29,470
CO	$12,085	$29,046	$9,047	$27,072
CT	$15,072	$30,402	$10,874	$22,054
DC	$10,239	$35,769	$6,078	$36,721
DE	$13,007	$21,719	$10,252	$20,055
FL	$15,241	$31,413	$9,262	$18,265
GA	$15,151	$30,975	$9,213	$21,769
HI	$11,201	$26,000	$14,037	$17,988
IA	$10,273	$25,719	$9,428	$16,243
ID	$17,024	$30,148	$15,802	$32,513
IL	$11,375	$26,536	$9,363	$20,645
IN	$10,743	$25,664	$10,641	$21,622
KS	$2,869	$28,483	$10,670	$24,437
KY	$15,213	$39,809	$9,774	$24,445
LA	$14,704	$24,114	$8,159	$15,116
MA	$14,302	$27,549	$11,810	$28,436
MD	$13,121	$38,589	$9,496	$24,591
ME	$17,913	$32,673	$13,978	$27,557
MI	$11,947	$32,524	$11,488	$21,668
MN	$14,116	$25,439	$11,576	$19,529
MO	$13,551	$29,107	$11,604	$21,782
MS	$16,600	$33,299	$10,066	$18,669
MT	$11,482	$29,684	$12,127	$30,513
NC	$16,035	$38,178	$9,609	$20,229
ND	$17,378	$33,651	$11,839	$20,562
NE	$8,481	$30,538	$8,999	$23,548
NH	$15,880	$32,085	$13,502	$22,612
NJ	$13,369	$26,462	$12,125	$22,303
NM	$11,052	$32,650	$10,479	$20,081
NV	$21,083	$30,695	$15,328	$15,954
NY	$12,584	$29,731	$11,087	$25,711
OH	$11,683	$30,780	$10,582	$20,085
OK	$13,793	$24,419	$7,844	$24,335
OR	$15,111	$75,024	$17,500	$40,148
PA	$10,049	$26,695	$11,928	$24,994
PR	$15,010	$22,925	$9,585	$20,085
RI	$14,894	$37,936	$12,812	$23,904
SC	$15,952	$27,052	$8,234	$26,332
SD	$14,009	$20,741	$9,547	$24,452

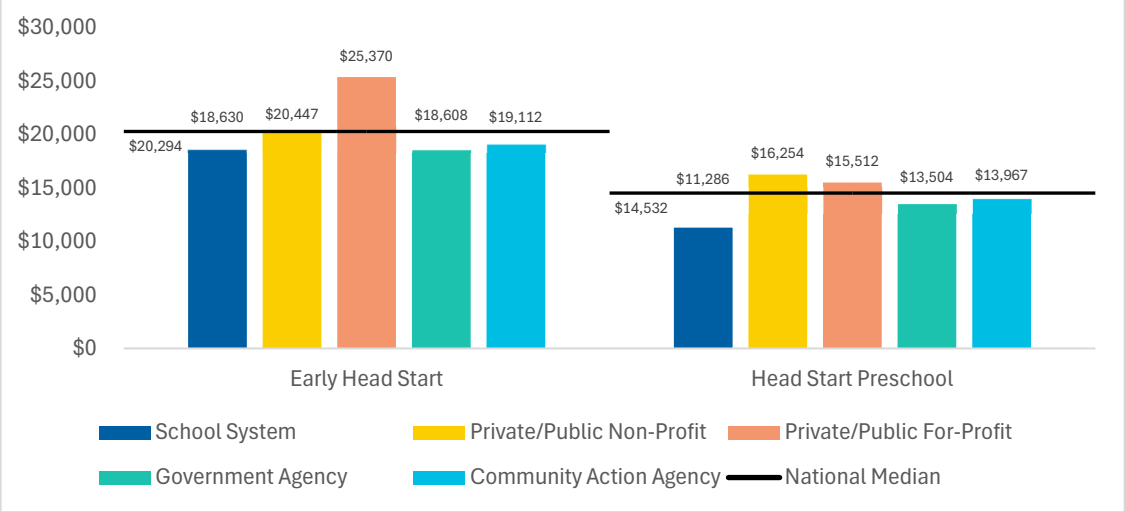
TN	$14,178	$34,083	$10,605	$19,669
TX	$14,505	$27,824	$8,441	$19,226
UT	$9,348	$31,007	$13,022	$24,887
VA	$13,448	$37,030	$9,085	$16,575
VT	$25,604	$39,385	$16,150	$28,721
WA	$14,824	$44,830	$16,124	$35,916
WI	$11,977	$25,924	$10,654	$19,582
WV	$6,774	$26,522	$8,300	$16,422
WY	$12,238	$25,525	$14,555	$22,089

Figure 5. Median Spending Per Slot, by Service Delivery Setting, 2024[xii]



Note: Other includes grants that provide a combination of program options (e.g., center-based and home-based) or the locally designed program option. For Head Start Preschool, Other also includes grants that provide only the home-based program option. Center Based Only Early Head Start N = 435, Head Start Preschool N = 979; Home-Based Only Early Head Start N = 139; Family Child Care Only Early Head Start N = 7; Other Early Head Start N = 603, Head Start Preschool N = 222

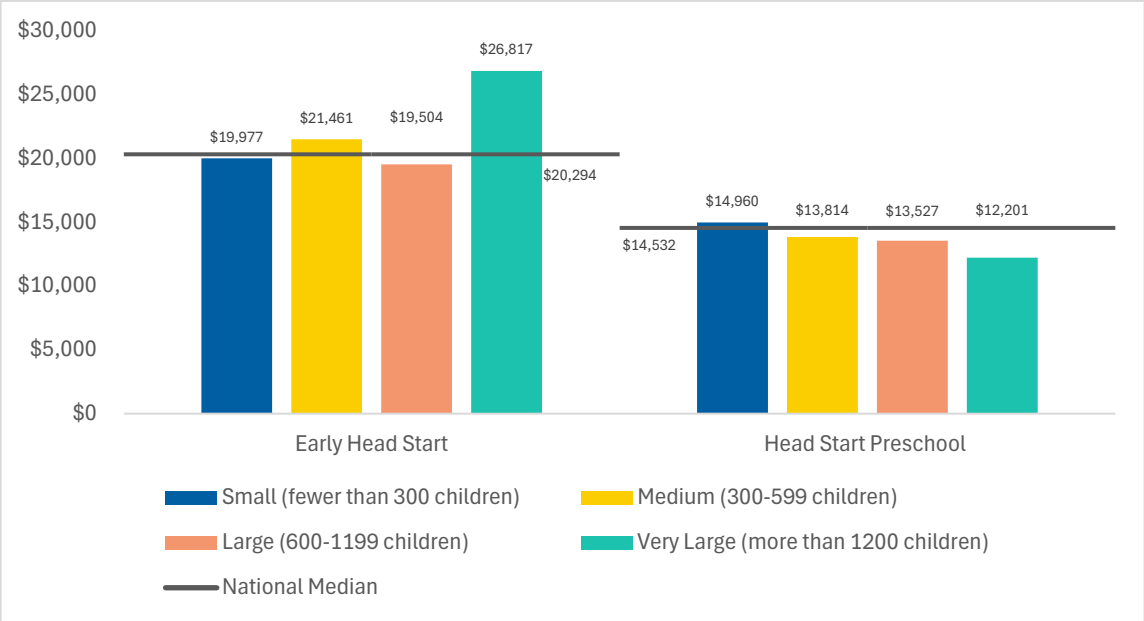
Figure 6. Median Spending Per Slot, by Grantee Type, 2024



Note: Grantee type refers to the primary grant recipient and does not include any delegate agency types. Community Action Agency Early Head Start N = 424, Head Start Preschool N = 465; Government Agency Early Head Start N = 98, Head Start Preschool N = 95; Private/Public For Profit Early Head Start N = 14, Head Start Preschool N = 6; Private/Public Non-Profit, Non-Community Action Agency Early Head Start N = 569, Head Start Preschool N = 423; School District Early Head Start N = 101, Head Start Preschool N = 211

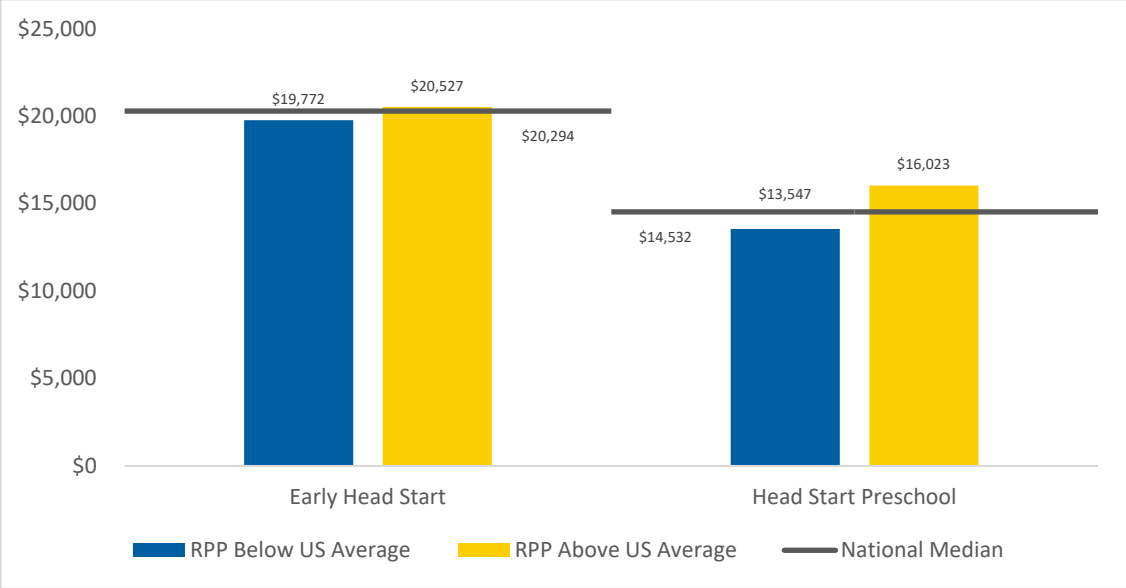
[xii] Figures 5 through 9 present the summary statistics for Head Start program operations and design factors and community factors, with the national median included as a reference point.

Figure 7. Median Spending Per Slot, by Program Size, 2024



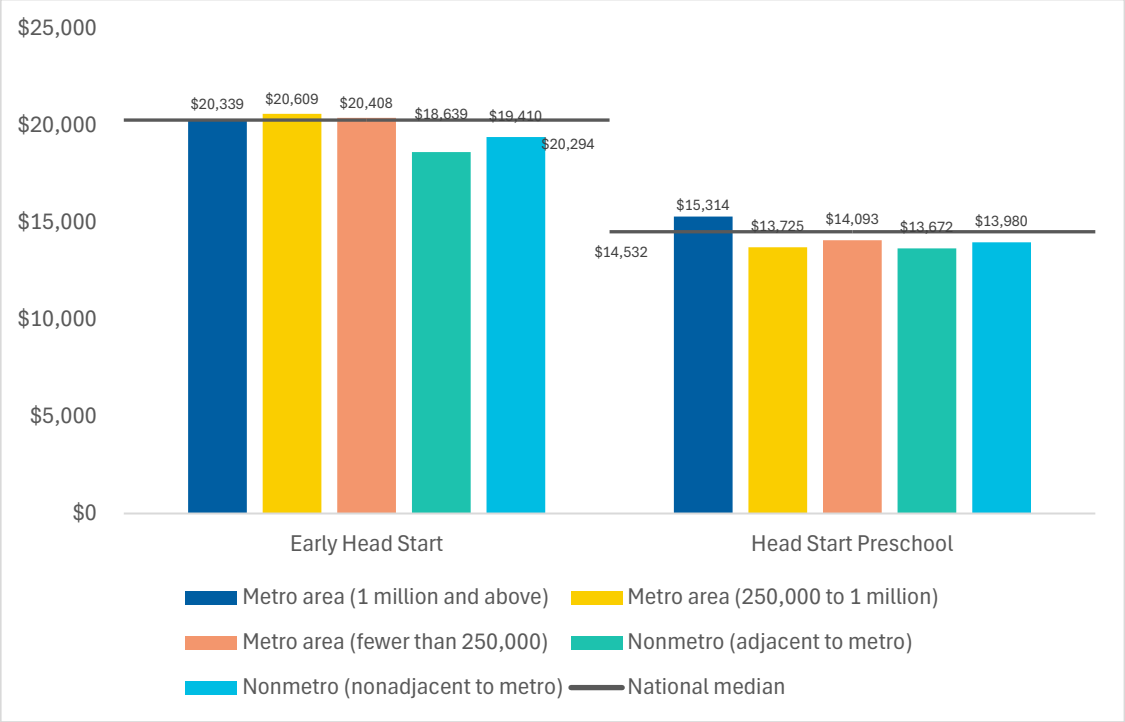
Note: Small Early Head Start N = 1,105, Head Start Preschool N = 750; Medium Early Head Start N = 88, Head Start Preschool N = 279; Large Early Head Start N = 12, Head Start Preschool N = 121; Very Large Early Head Start N = 2, Head Start Preschool N = 51

Figure 8. Median Spending Per Slot, by Regional Price Parity (RPP), 2024



Note: RPP values above the US average are more expensive than the average. RPP values below the US average are less expensive than the average. RPP Below US Average Early Head Start N = 735, Head Start Preschool N = 773; RPP Above US Average Early Head Start N = 472, Head Start Preschool N = 428

Figure 9. Median Spending Per Slot, by Urbanicity, 2024



Note: Metro area (1 million and above) Early Head Start N = 483, Head Start Preschool N = 392; Metro area (250,000 to 1 million) Early Head Start N = 243, Head Start Preschool N = 228; Metro area (fewer than 250,000) Early Head Start N = 151, Head Start Preschool N = 163; Nonmetro (adjacent to metro) Early Head Start N = 189, Head Start Preschool N = 251 Nonmetro (nonadjacent to metro) Early Head Start N =137, Head Start Preschool N = 163

Table 5. Early Head Start Slot Estimation Policy Scenario, By State

	Early Head Start		
			Policy Scenario
	Median Per Slot Spending (Real Dollars)	Current Slots	Net New Slots at Benchmark (% change)
AK	$25,747	314	28 (9)
AL	$22,534	2,721	234 (9)
AR	$23,416	2,279	227 (10)
AZ	$23,278	2,823	249 (9)
CA	$20,088	18,267	2,420 (13)
CO	$18,901	2,483	291 (12)
CT	$21,602	1,080	112 (10)
DC	$22,888	1,542	144 (9)
DE	$18,526	444	46 (10)
FL	$20,628	9,470	718 (8)
GA	$21,285	3,646	410 (11)
HI	$18,393	612	18 (3)
IA	$22,763	1,808	91 (5)
ID	$26,937	543	44 (8)
IL	$19,925	9,289	1,225 (13)
IN	$22,076	2,322	178 (8)
KS	$14,926	1,791	422 (24)
KY	$22,772	2,611	246 (9)
LA	$21,299	2,734	193 (7)
MA	$18,864	2,080	223 (11)
MD	$23,866	1,731	356 (21)
ME	$27,296	699	47 (7)
MI	$20,199	5,261	651 (12)
MN	$18,531	2,088	291 (14)
MO	$21,547	3,767	324 (9)
MS	$23,776	3,435	314 (9)
MT	$29,050	552	33 (6)
NC	$23,705	4,513	764 (17)
ND	$31,237	314	18 (6)
NE	$23,984	1,633	69 (4)
NH	$15,340	319	63 (20)
NJ	$16,334	3,247	684 (21)
NM	$22,071	1,873	134 (7)
NV	$25,104	776	44 (6)
NY	$18,158	11,074	956 (9)
OH	$20,414	5,350	640 (12)
OK	$20,013	3,363	787 (23)
OR	$18,890	1,740	460 (26)
PA	$17,073	5,968	839 (14)
RI	$16,343	610	125 (21)
SC	$21,916	2,412	107 (4)
SD	$20,004	493	29 (6)

TN	$22,622	2,279	324 (14)
TX	$20,343	13,255	1,364 (10)
UT	$20,590	1,343	136 (10)
VA	$21,041	2,765	307 (11)
VT	$31,021	431	11 (3)
WA	$19,638	2,924	507 (17)
WI	$18,216	2,309	284 (12)
WV	$18,481	1,055	116 (11)
WY	$16,795	358	127 (35)

Note: Current slots reflect the smaller analytic sample described in a footnote on page 7. In the Policy Scenario, we assume that all grants with per slot spending over the state median per slot amount will reduce their spending to the median.

Table 6. Head Start Preschool Slot Estimation Policy Scenario, By State

	Head Start Preschool		
			Policy Scenario
	Median Per Slot Spending (Real Dollars)	Current Slots	Net New Slots at Benchmark (% change)
AK	$21,346	761	42 (5)
AL	$12,922	7,994	732 (9)
AR	$16,932	2,784	270 (10)
AZ	$17,205	8,523	463 (5)
CA	$17,622	34,971	3,641 (10)
CO	$15,068	5,074	391 (8)
CT	$12,809	3,163	204 (6)
DC	$20,646	424	26 (6)
DE	$17,015	1,013	54 (5)
FL	$10,889	27,030	2,178 (8)
GA	$11,956	13,633	1,368 (10)
HI	$13,442	1,745	22 (1)
IA	$13,554	4,905	254 (5)
ID	$19,437	1,559	308 (20)
IL	$16,482	14,339	1,041 (7)
IN	$16,095	8,061	1,106 (14)
KS	$15,164	4,522	602 (13)
KY	$14,546	9,737	1,098 (11)
LA	$11,973	11,782	1,361 (12)
MA	$15,666	7,433	1,006 (14)
MD	$17,531	5,050	304 (6)
ME	$18,114	1,735	125 (7)
MI	$15,295	15,797	1,165 (7)
MN	$15,059	6,571	558 (8)
MO	$14,838	8,638	1,390 (16)
MS	$13,831	13,787	1,439 (10)
MT	$18,365	1,633	232 (14)
NC	$12,882	12,835	1,484 (12)
ND	$21,581	1,117	25 (2)
NE	$15,439	2,859	261 (9)
NH	$14,170	1,023	186 (18)
NJ	$12,355	5,804	1,082 (19)
NM	$12,692	3,925	542 (14)
NV	$16,367	585	0 (0)
NY	$14,962	30,754	1,823 (6)
OH	$15,560	17,938	1,316 (7)
OK	$13,195	6,883	523 (8)
OR	$24,932	3,049	282 (9)
PA	$16,905	17,101	1,665 (10)
RI	$16,567	1,502	234 (16)
SC	$12,279	8,066	976 (12)
SD	$14,636	1,818	142 (8)

TN	$14,874	12,300	715 (6)
TX	$11,347	45,658	5,595 (12)
UT	$18,038	3,601	476 (13)
VA	$11,826	7,695	1,129 (15)
VT	$24,239	639	38 (6)
WA	$18,662	5,106	762 (15)
WI	$16,114	5,662	477 (8)
WV	$11,451	6,509	464 (7)
WY	$20,268	929	40 (4)

Note: Current slots reflect the smaller analytic sample described in a footnote on page 7. In the Policy Scenario, we assume that all grants with per slot spending over the state median per slot amount will reduce their spending to the median.

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