



Early Head Start Center-based Program



SCHOOL READINESS STARTS HERE.



What is the ABCD Early Head Start Center-based Program?

The Early Head Start center-based program provides early childhood education to infants and toddlers. The program focuses on school readiness, physical wellness, and the cognitive and social-emotional development of children from infancy until they are ready to transition to preschool. It features a family development approach that offers comprehensive services for children as well as their families. There are multiple ABCD Head Start & Children's Services programs throughout the city of Boston. Each program has various hours based on family needs and eligibility.

Each location features the following comprehensive services:

Education:

Our educational program is designed to meet each child's individual needs, while simultaneously valuing each community's ethnic, cultural and linguistic characteristics. Each child receives a variety of learning experiences that foster physical, intellectual, social, and emotional growth. Classroom curriculum builds on the interests of the children and offers intentional learning opportunities. By partnering with each family, our goal is to prepare every child for the transition to preschool and help foster sustained success throughout their educational career.

Early Head Start provides special education services in an inclusive classroom setting. There are specialists on staff dedicated specifically to supporting the education of children with special needs, as well as their families. Goals on a child's Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) are incorporated into the

child's Early Head Start education experience. For children who have IFSPs, our staff works closely with their Early Intervention program as well as the child's parent to ensure the services identified are being provided.

Physical and Mental Health & Nutrition:

Children receive annual hearing, vision and nutrition screenings, and appropriate services and referrals at the program. Resources to support their child's health are offered to families when needed. A healthy, well-rounded menu is served each day. These "family style" meal times are designed to be a learning opportunity filled with language modeling, social interaction and introductions to new foods. Our programs work with each family to ensure their cultural dietary needs are valued and special diets are accommodated. Health and nutrition staff members offer families information and a variety of opportunities to learn about healthy living while engaging in their child's physical development.

A mental health professional is available to every Early Head Start program to provide mental health services for children and their families. Ongoing training and support ensures high quality classroom environments that foster success, safety and wellness for each child.





Family Support:

Family service staff works with each family to build a partnership to achieve parent-developed goals. They provide resources and referrals, crisis intervention, and services for families that reflect their needs and interests. Opportunities are provided for parents to connect with each other, with the program, and with their community at large, with a focus on supporting healthy family development, leadership and employment skills.

Parent Engagement & Program Governance:

Parent engagement is an essential part of our program. Early Head Start partners with parents to support their child's learning. Parents can be part of program planning by participating in meetings and providing feedback on the services provided. Many parents serve as members of the Parent Policy Council and/or Parent Committees, where they have a voice in decision making and program design. Parents also engage in their child's learning by volunteering in the program or classroom, attending field trips, participating in classes, groups, or workshops, and carrying out educational activities that are an extension of classroom learning in their own home.

How do I apply?

If you have a child between 4 weeks and 2.9 years old you may qualify for either our six hours a day or 10 hours a day program. We accept applications on a rolling basis throughout the year. To schedule an appointment to complete an application you can:

- Call or visit your local ABCD Early Head Start program.
- Call our Central office at 617-348-6388.
- E-mail us at headstart@bostonabcd.org

At the appointment to complete your application you will be asked to provide the following documentation:

- Proof of your child's age: Birth certificate, baptismal, certificate passport or hospital record;
- Proof of residency: Utility bills, rental agreement/receipt, statement from a shelter, credit card statement or bank statement indicating your living address;
- Proof of family income: Income tax forms, pay stubs, TANF/TAFDC letter, SSI letter, worker's compensation or unemployment statements, child support or alimony agreements that reflect that family's annual income from all sources.



What should I expect if my child is accepted?

You will be notified by phone and mail if your child is accepted. There are a few additional requirements you should know about before your child enrolls.

The custodial parent/guardian(s) of all infants and toddlers accepted into the Early Head Start program must meet with the program Health Manager and Nutritionist to complete a health and nutrition interview before your child attends classes.

You can expedite the enrollment process by providing the program with the following information as soon as possible:

- A copy of your child's immunization records, most recent physical exam (dated within the last 12 months) and a Tuberculosis Risk Assessment. These documents may be required before s/he can attend classes.
- A copy of your child's most recent dental exam. Children are required to have a dental exam within 90 days of enrollment. If your child does not have a dentist you can consent to dental care at the program through our Mobile Dental Service.
- If your child has a health issue or special condition there will be additional forms that must be completed before they enroll. Contact program staff to learn more about the forms that you and your child's doctor will have to complete.
- If your child has special needs, it is helpful to provide the program with a copy of your child's IFSP.



Once your child's paperwork is submitted to the program, you can expect the following:

Home Visits:

Your child's teaching team will contact you to schedule a home visit before or soon after your child's enrollment. The purpose of this home visit is to learn about your child's interest and activities, to complete the Ages and Stages assessment forms, and to discuss what you would like your child to achieve during their time in Early Head Start. We do these activities in the home because it is the place where your child is most comfortable and allows us to get to know you and your family in a familiar atmosphere.

Throughout the program year, staff will schedule home visits with you at times that are convenient for your family so that we can support your goals for your child and your family, review your child's progress in the classroom, and plan on how you will be involved in the program and your child's education.

Program Orientation:

Each family is scheduled to attend an orientation at their local program to ensure that you are informed about the services that you will be offered and how you can be involved in your child's education. The orientation is an opportunity for parents to meet program staff, learn about program policies and procedures, and hear about all the exciting engagement opportunities that we offer!

Phase-In:

Whenever possible we ask that a custodial parent/guardian accompany their child for an introduction to their classroom. This is a short visit to ensure that you and your child are comfortable and ready to transition into school.

Ongoing Parent Engagement and Partnerships with Staff:

We support and encourage parent participation in all aspects of our program. We encourage parents to volunteer in the classrooms or program, and attend field trips and other school events and activities. Furthermore, we host regular meetings, workshops and other parent education opportunities that we hope parents will take part in. Most importantly, we partner with families on a one-to-one basis to support the goals that you have for your child and your family.

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For more information, contact:

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617.348.6388



**Head Start & Children's Services is a program of
Action for Boston Community Development**

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