

2025 HEAD START ANNUAL REPORT



STRENGTHENING FOUNDATIONS



2025 was a year of stabilization and growth at ABCD Head Start & Children's Services.

Like almost all early childhood programs across the nation, ABCD has struggled with under-enrollment over the past five years. The driving factor was workforce shortages, exacerbated by a lack of pipeline for qualified educators and staff in the broader community, high turnover due to low compensation, and high stress levels associated with education and human services work. ABCD has combatted these challenges by creating internal qualification pipelines through education and partnerships, raising wages to be competitive with other child care providers and public school educator salaries, and improving our workplace environment and staff wellness endeavors. This work was led by a multidisciplinary team and guided by a Committee composed of staff, community partners, and parents.

In 2025, ABCD Head Start & Children's Services implemented and executed a targeted plan to reduce under-enrollment. By February 2025, both Early Head Start and Head Start exceeded the 97% enrollment threshold required by the Office of Head Start. We have sustained 97% enrollment each subsequent month, largely due to an increase in retention, as well as increased hiring rates. Retention continues to increase. 87% of our workforce was retained in 2025, an increase from 81% in the prior year. This increased retention, coupled with 56 new hires during the year, allowed us to stabilize the workforce to reach and sustain full enrollment. This stabilization allowed us to provide the incredible breadth of quality services highlighted in this report.

WHO WE ARE

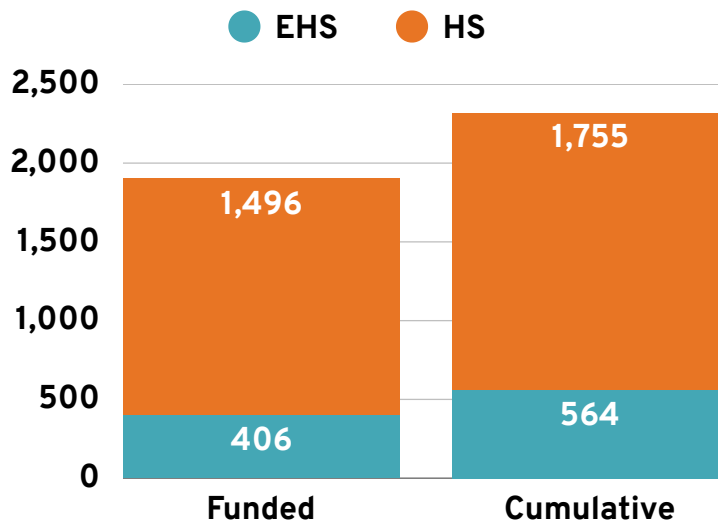
Our Mission

ABCD Head Start & Children's Services, a family development program, is committed to providing opportunities and services to eligible children and families of Boston and the Mystic Valley area. We support them with school readiness, self-sufficiency and success in life.

Since 1965 ABCD Head Start & Children's Services has served tens of thousands of children and families in Boston and the Mystic Valley area, offering comprehensive education, health, dental, nutrition and related services for children from birth to age five, as well as for pregnant mothers. Parent participation is a cornerstone of the program, with families taking an active role in their child's education, volunteering in the program, engaging in program governance and partnering with staff to work towards their goals.



In the 2024-2025 program year, ABCD Head Start centers, along with our partner programs (Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, Horizons for Homeless Children, Infants and Other People, John F. Kennedy Family Service Center, and Nurtury) had a cumulative funded enrollment of 1,902. We served children and families at our 28 centers, inclusive of 2 family child care programs, dedicated to providing services to pregnant women, children from birth through age five, and their families.



ABCD LEADERSHIP

ABCD SENIOR STAFF

Sharon Scott-Chandler, Esq.

President and CEO

Flossy Calderón

Vice President, ABCD Head Start & Children's Services



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Marie Greig, Vice Chair

Jennifer Williams, Esq., Assistant Clerk

ABCD HEAD START LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

ABCD HEAD START POLICY COUNCIL

Parents are an integral part of program planning and governance. Parents participate in meetings, committees, and groups at the center and citywide level. Family feedback and expertise are critical to the foundation and success of the program. Many parents serve as members of the Parent Policy Council. Policy Council members are responsible for the direction of the ABCD Head Start & Children's Services.

One example of strong parent leadership and program governance involvement is Carmen Rondash, whose engagement reflects a strong commitment to supporting families and strengthening program quality. He has participated in the Parent Committee, Policy Council, and Enrollment Committee, and has also supported connections with Bunker Hill Community College.

Carmen currently serves as a Public Sector representative, Chair of the Head Start & Child Care Resources and Education Committee, and a member of the Personnel Advisory Committee. Through his work at Bunker Hill Community College supporting student parents, he was also recognized as an ABCD Community Hero.

Although his family has transitioned out of Head Start, he continues to be an active and valued contributor. His leadership highlights the importance of sustained family and community engagement in guiding program decisions and supporting family success.



2024 ABCD Head Start Policy Council Officers

CHAIRPERSON

Jessica Frazier, *Harrison Avenue*

VICE CHAIRPERSON

Miranda Edwards, *South Boston*

SECRETARY

Rose Myrthil, *Dorchester*

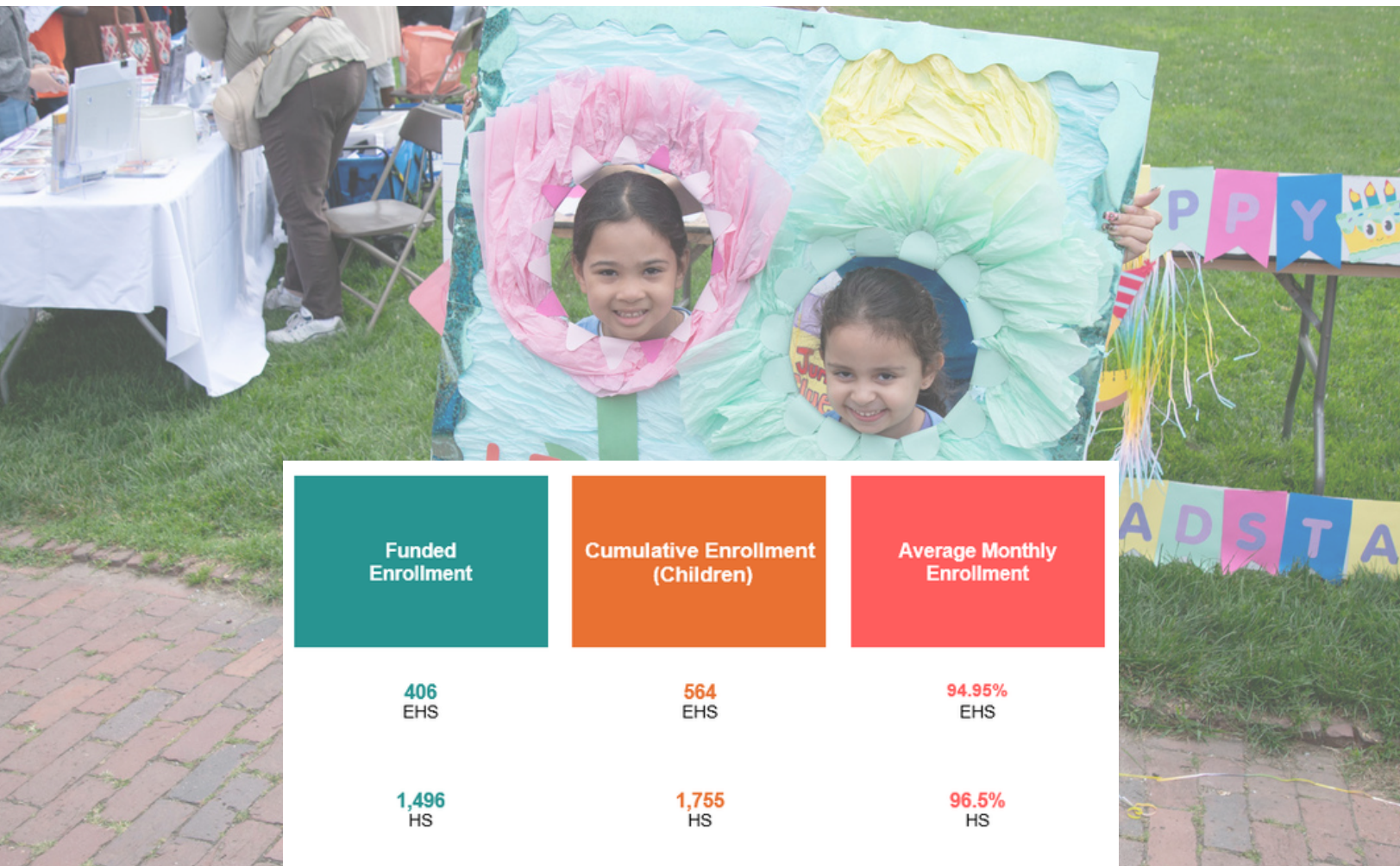
TREASURER/REPRESENTATIVE TO THE ABCD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Klarisha Williams, *Walnut Grove*



PROGRAM ACCESS AND FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

From September 1, 2024 to August 31, 2025, ABCD was funded for 1,902 slots (406 Early Head Start and 1,496 Head Start) and served 2,008 families across Greater Boston and Mystic Valley. Average enrollment was 94.95% for Early Head Start and 96.5% for Head Start (95.7% combined). In response to early under-enrollment, ABCD established an enrollment committee and achieved the 97% target by winter 2025. Head Start sustained 97%+ enrollment from March through the end of the school year, and Early Head Start reached and maintained 97%+ from January through August 2025, with ongoing efforts focused on sustaining this level.



Audit

The FY25 Audit is underway by KPMG, LLC. Once presented to and approved by the Board of Directors, the results of the most recent review by the secretary and the financial audit itself will be provided.

SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS

Family Composition & Household Stability

ABCD Head Start & Early Head Start served 2,161 families and 2,312 children through Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start (HS), providing comprehensive early childhood education, family support, health, nutrition, and parent engagement services. The children and families we serve are a vibrant community, representing a multitude of backgrounds. Each child and family receives services and referrals designed to meet their unique interests, needs, and goals.

The data below reflects the characteristics of enrolled families, identified needs, and services provided during the program year.

Of the 2,161 families served:

- 62% (1,344 families) were single-parent households
- 38% (817 families) were two-parent households

Many families experienced economic hardship and accessed critical public assistance and support services:

- 74% (1,600 families) received WIC
- 71% (1,542 families) received SNAP benefits
- 28% (609 families) received TANF/TAFDC assistance
- 4% (81 families) received SSI benefits
- 21% (464 families) experienced homelessness during the program year

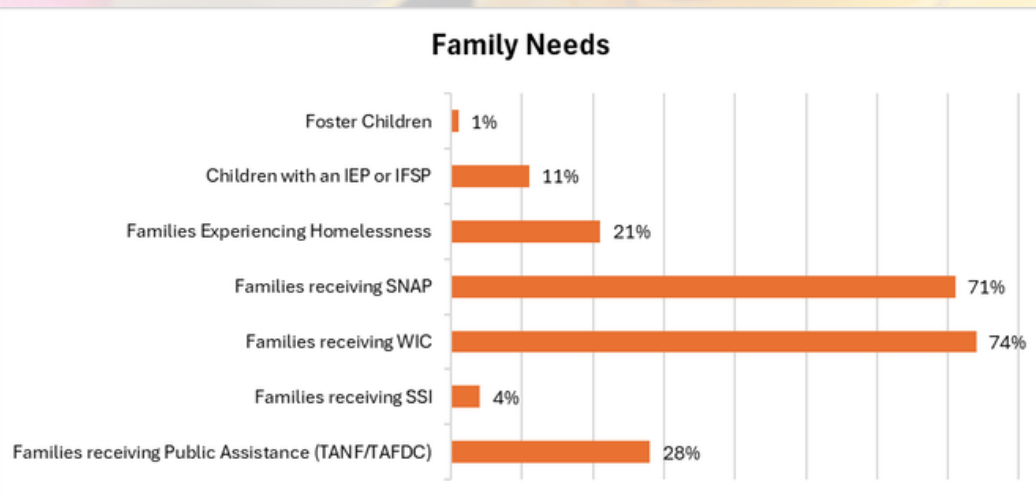
Additionally, among enrolled children:

- 11% (247 children) had an IEP or IFSP
- 1% (20 children) were in foster care

These data points reflected continued needs related to housing stability, food access, income support, and developmental services.

62%
Single-parent Families

38%
Two-parent Families



CHILD POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

ABCD served 2,312 children during the year, primarily during critical early developmental and school readiness stages. Enrollment was concentrated among children ages 2–4, including 27% age 2 (631 children), 31% age 3 (717), and 22% age 4 (517). Younger children included 7% under age 1 (158) and 12% age 1 (272), while 1% were age 5 (17).

Key enrollment trends included:

- Preschool-age children (ages 2–4) represented the majority of enrollment
- Age 3 children comprised the largest single enrollment group
- Infants and toddlers under age 2 accounted for nearly one-fifth of total enrollment
- Enrollment of age 5 children remained limited, consistent with program focus on early childhood services

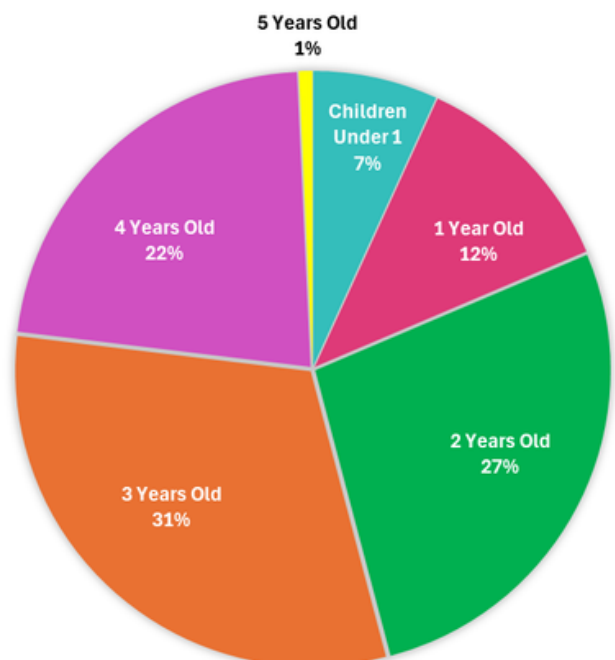
557

Early Head Start

1755

Head Start

AGE OF CHILDREN

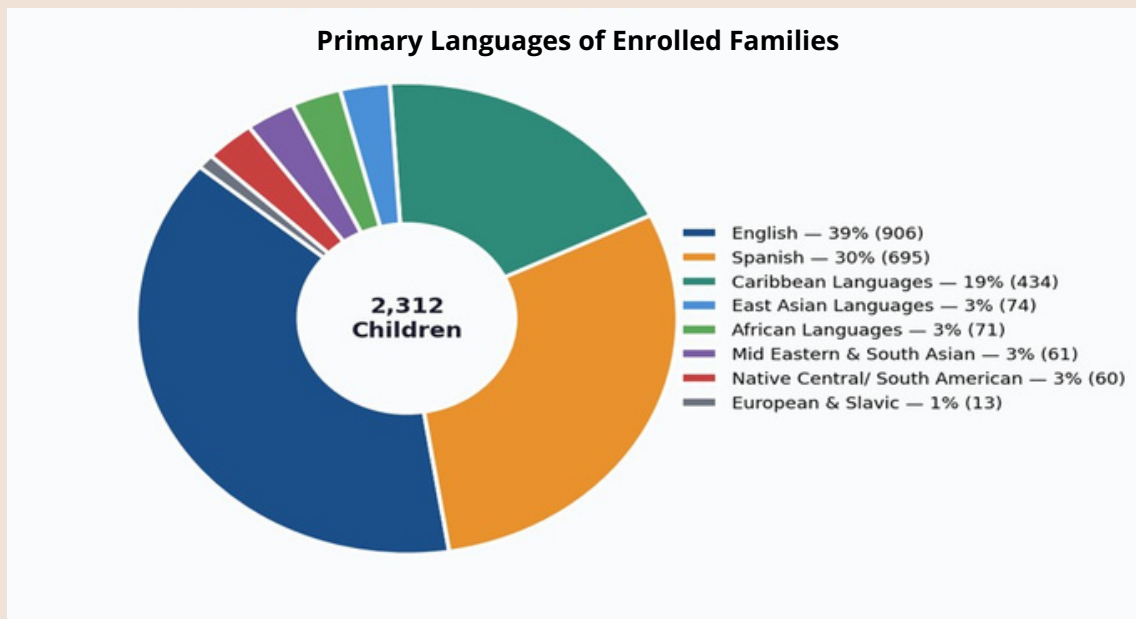


LANGUAGE CHARACTERISTICS AND DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

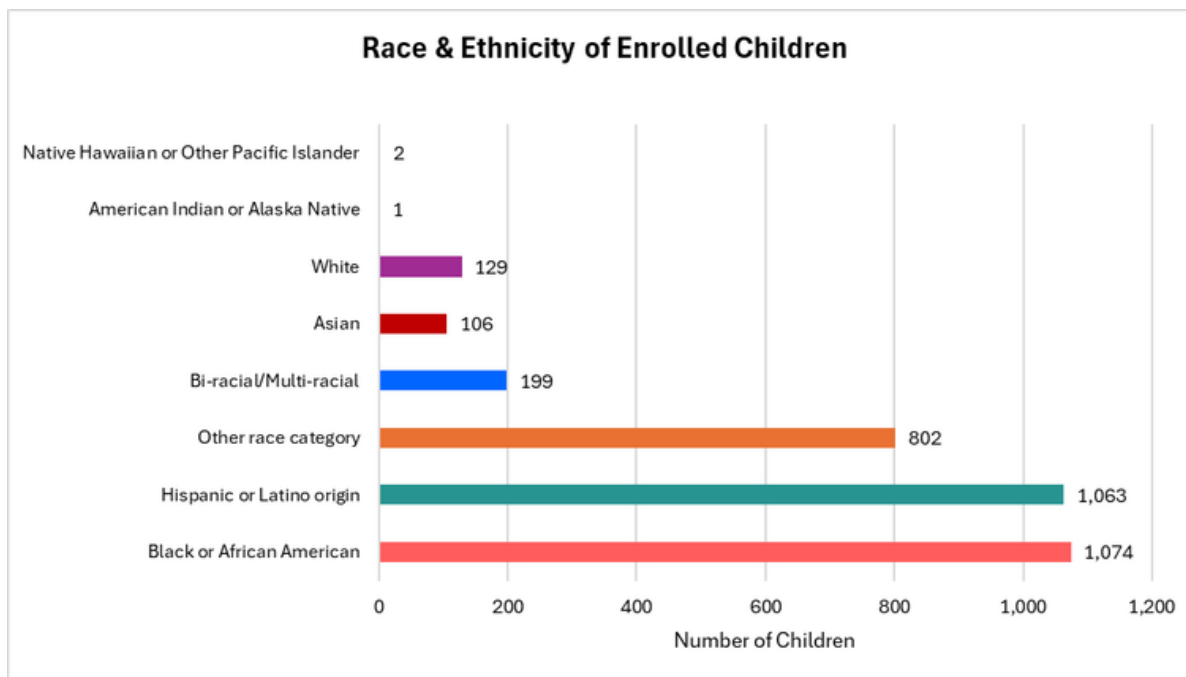
Families represented a broad range of linguistic backgrounds. Primary languages spoken by enrolled families included:

- English: 39% (906 children)
- Spanish: 30% (695 children)
- Caribbean languages: 19% (434 children)
- East Asian languages: 3% (74 children)
- African languages: 3% (71 children)
- Middle Eastern and South Asian languages: 3% (61 children)
- Native Central American, South American, and Mexican languages: 3% (60 children)
- European and Slavic languages: 1% (13 children)

In total, 67% of children (1,555 children) were identified as Dual Language Learners (DLLs), reflecting the importance of multilingual communication and individualized learning supports.



ENROLLED CHILDREN RACE AND ETHNICITY

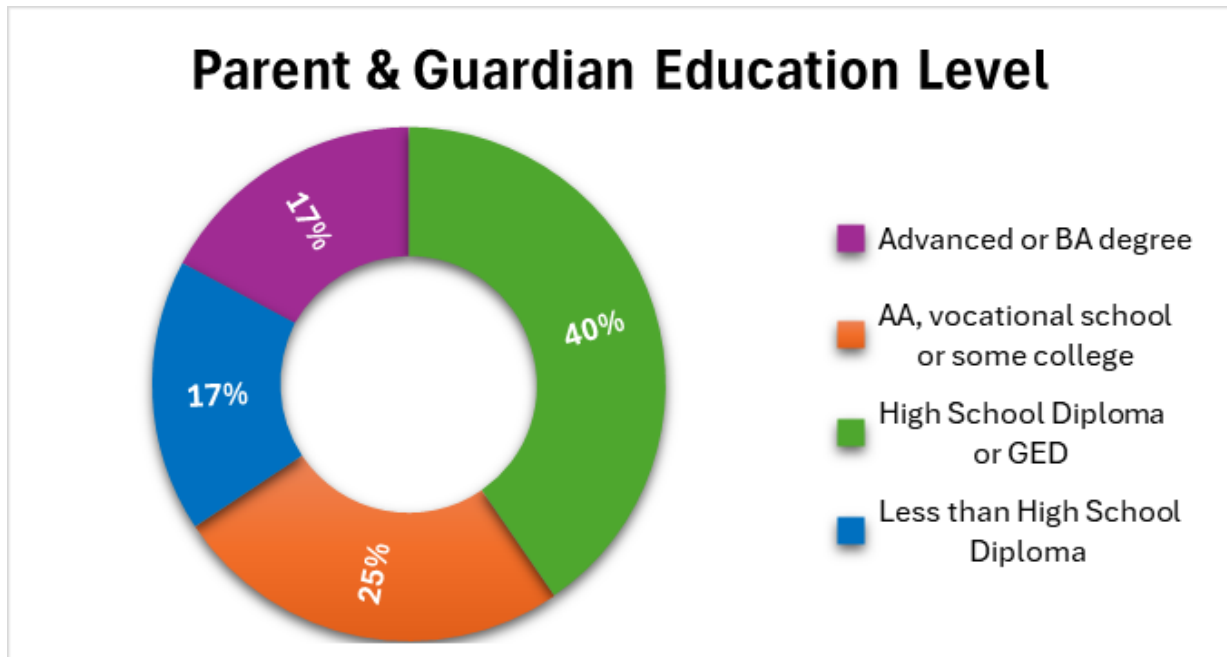


The program served children from a wide range of racial and ethnic backgrounds. Enrollment data included:

- Black or African American: 1074 children
- Hispanic or Latino origin: 1063 children
- Other race category: 802 children
- Bi-racial/Multi-racial: 199 children
- Asian: 106 children
- White: 129 children
- American Indian or Alaska Native: 1 child
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: 2 children[1]

These figures reflected the broad representation of families throughout the service area.

PARENT & GUARDIAN EDUCATION LEVELS



Parents and guardians represented a range of educational experiences and workforce readiness levels:

- 40% held a High School Diploma or GED (869)
- 25% completed some college, vocational school, or an AA degree (551)
- 17% held an advanced or BA degree (366)
- 17% had less than a High School Diploma (374)

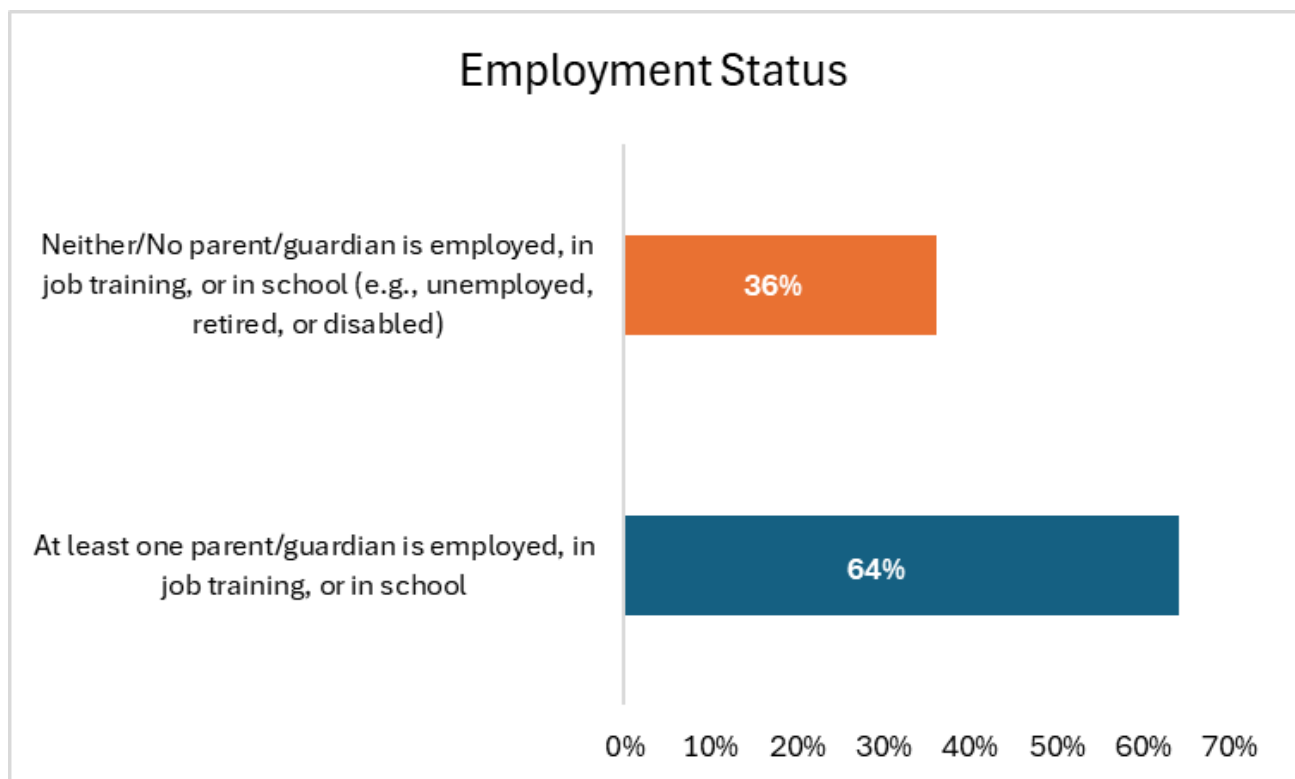
These figures demonstrated continued need for adult education, workforce development, and family economic mobility supports.

PARENT & GUARDIAN EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Family Employment Status at Enrollment:

- 64% of families had at least one parent or guardian employed, in job training, or enrolled in school (1,390 families)
- 36% had no parent or guardian employed, in training, or enrolled in school (771 families)

This data reflected the importance of employment support services, educational pathways, and stabilization resources for participating families.

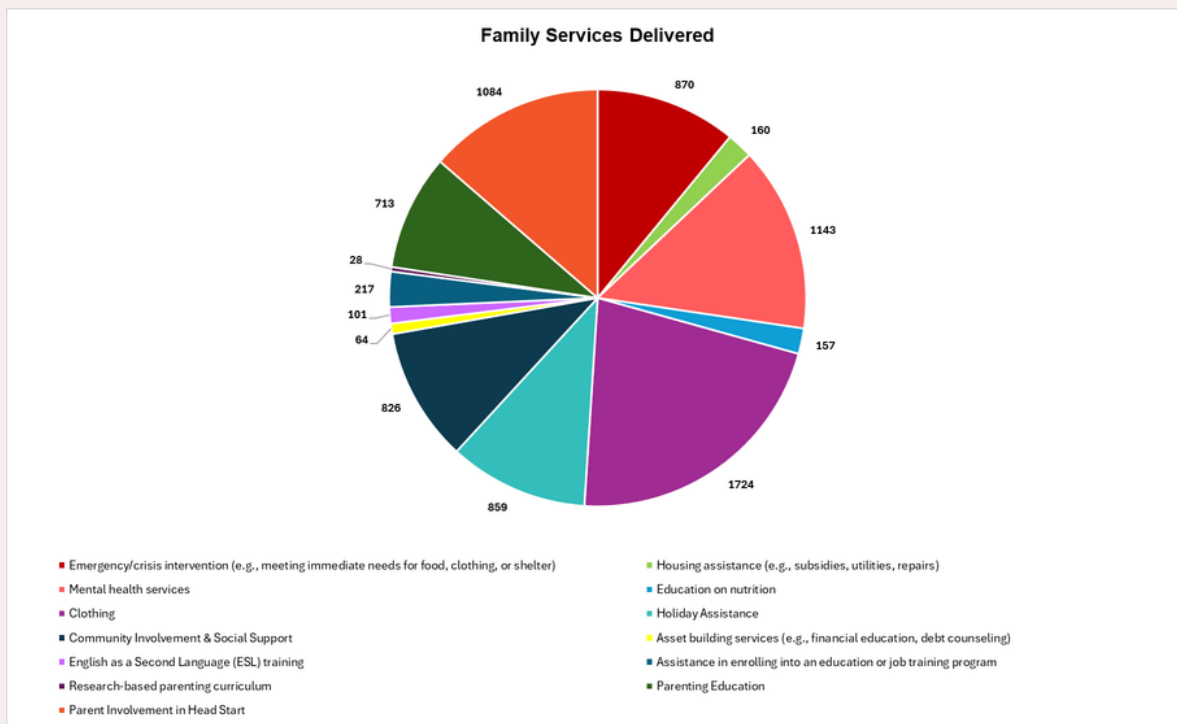


FAMILY SERVICES DELIVERED

The program provided a wide range of direct services and referrals to address immediate needs and support long-term family stability. Services delivered included:

- Clothing assistance: 1,724 families
- Mental health services: 1,143 families
- Parent involvement activities: 1,084 families
- Emergency/crisis intervention: 870 families
- Holiday assistance: 859 families
- Community involvement and social support: 826 families
- Parenting education: 713 families
- Assistance enrolling in education or job training programs: 217 families
- Housing assistance: 160 families
- Education on nutrition: 157 families
- English as a Second Language (ESL) training: 101 families
- Asset-building services such as financial education and debt counseling: 64 families
- Research-based parenting curriculum participation: 28 families

These services addressed both urgent family needs and long-term goals related to stability, education, employment, and child well-being.



Program data reflected significant community needs related to housing, food access, economic stability, child development, and family support services. Families actively engaged in program opportunities and utilized a wide range of supports to strengthen family well-being and child outcomes.

High service utilization, strong parent engagement, and ongoing economic challenges highlighted the continued need for comprehensive services and sustained funding across the region.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND PROGRAM GOVERNANCE

Head Start and Early Head Start featured intensive parent engagement in all aspects of the program and comprehensive services. Caregivers had opportunities to participate in program planning, design, and evaluation through Parent Committees and the Parent Policy Council. Families also strengthened the home-to-school connection by volunteering in classrooms and participating in activities that supported learning at home.

During the 2024–2025 program year, 4,859 volunteer hours were recorded and 1,022 volunteer opportunities were completed. Opportunities included parent coffee hours, parent breakfasts and lunches with children, information sessions, committee meetings, classroom volunteering, and participation in program governance activities.

These activities supported strong family engagement and meaningful participation in the program community.

PROGRAM IMPACT

Program data demonstrated substantial community need related to housing, food access, economic stability, child development, and family support services. Families actively participated in program opportunities and utilized a wide range of services designed to strengthen family functioning and support child outcomes.

The combination of high service utilization, strong parent engagement, and ongoing economic need underscored the importance of continued funding to sustain and expand comprehensive services for children and families across the region.

VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION

4,859

Volunteer Hours Recorded

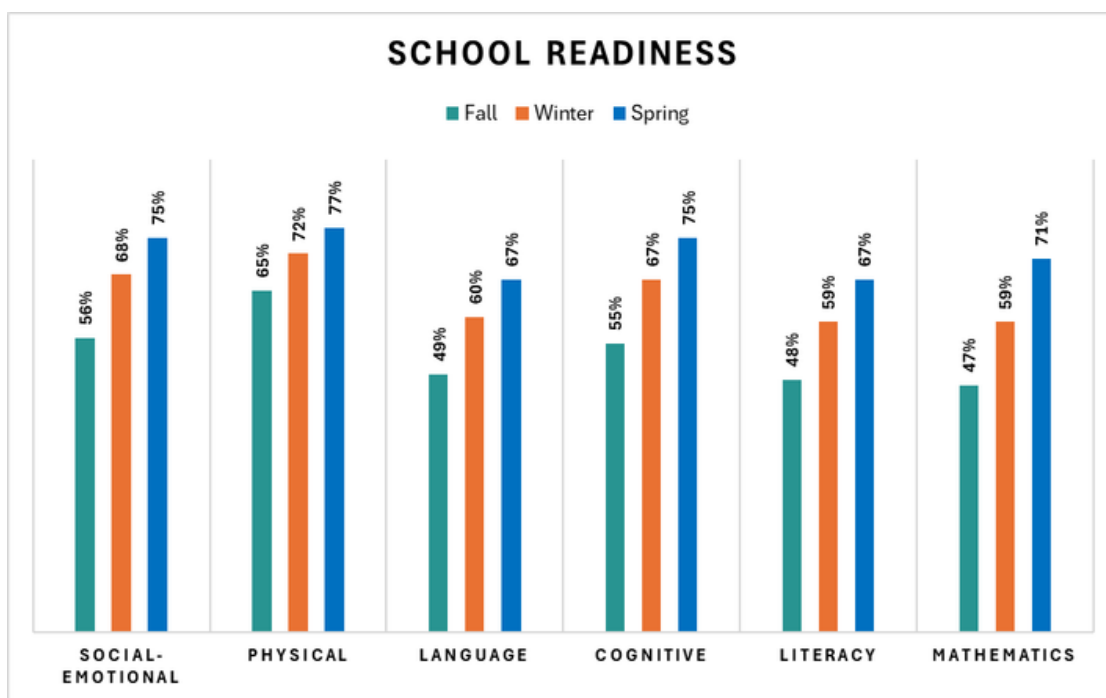
1,022

Volunteer Opportunities
Completed

SCHOOL READINESS

The agency's efforts to prepare children for kindergarten and school readiness are at the core of our educational philosophy. Through instruction and ongoing screening and assessment utilizing the Ages and Stages Questionnaires, Creative Curriculum, or Focus on Pre-K Curriculum, and the corresponding Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) assessment system, staff observe, document, and record children's progress in essential learning domains. Education is individualized to each child's needs, and children with special learning considerations are supported by staff in many capacities.

Parents are engaged in every aspect of their child's education through screening, home visits, parent-teacher conferences, and progress reports held at quarterly intervals.

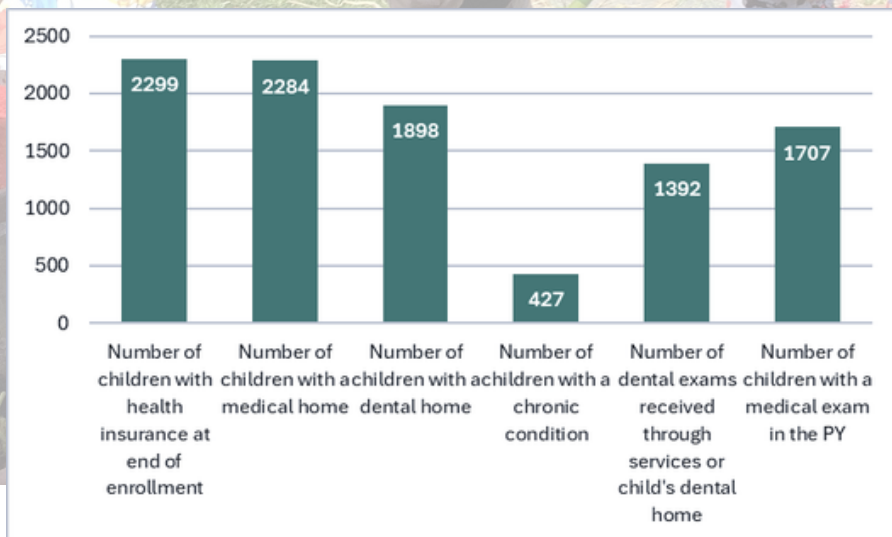


Transitions into and out of all program options are carefully planned and executed to ensure that children, families, staff and where applicable, receiving programs or schools, are fully prepared to be successful and thrive in their next educational setting, including Kindergarten. Family Advocates work closely with all families during the transition out of Head Start to ensure they are active participants in the process and are fully informed about the child care and educational setting options available to them that best meet their needs. During the program year, staff supported 267 transitions between programs and educational settings, including 39 transitions from Early Head Start to Head Start and 228 transitions from Head Start to kindergarten.

HEALTH

ABCD Head Start recognizes the strong connection between child well-being and learning by prioritizing access to nutrition, health, and dental services. During the 2025 school year, 99% of children had health insurance, 98% had a medical home, and 82% had a dental home. A total of 1,392 dental exams were completed through program services or children's dental providers. Nutrition education, including participation in the garden program, also supports healthy habits by helping children build connections to food, wellness, and hands-on learning.

In response to family interest in adult mental health support, ABCD Head Start convened its Health and Mental Health Advisory Committee with 72 participants, including parents, staff, and partners from Boston Public Health Commission, Boston Medical Center, Vital Connections, Northeastern University Bouve School of Nursing, as well as Head Start families and staff. The meeting highlighted current mental health supports, resources such as the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Help Line, and strategies to improve resource access, information sharing, and connections to behavioral health services. This work complements ongoing efforts across classrooms, centers, and community partnerships to ensure children and families have access to the mental health resources and services they need.



WORKFORCE

ABCD Head Start & Children's Services committed to expanding staff growth and wellness efforts, which resulted in increased retention and stable hiring of highly qualified candidates. These efforts were multi-pronged and highlights include:

- 171 staff wellness workshops were offered during the program year, with all staff attending at least 3-4 sessions
- In September 2024 we launched a new, week-long onboarding for all newly hired Educators at the Central office. Teaching staff receive a comprehensive week-long training, led by a Coach/Mentor dedicated to doing this specific work and supporting staff as they transition into their role. The training plan is accompanied by internal resource lists, suggested timelines for ongoing onboarding in the initial weeks and entire first year of hire.
- Increased investment in financial support of staff degree, credential and training that supports career growth
- Agency efforts through wellness resources provided by Harvard-Pilgrim Health Care Plan, and a newly launched “Manager’s Lunch and Learn” series

The program employed a total of 652 staff members, including 251 teachers and 70 teacher assistants across Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start (HS). A total of 94 education staff received intensive coaching during the program year, supporting ongoing professional growth and instructional quality.

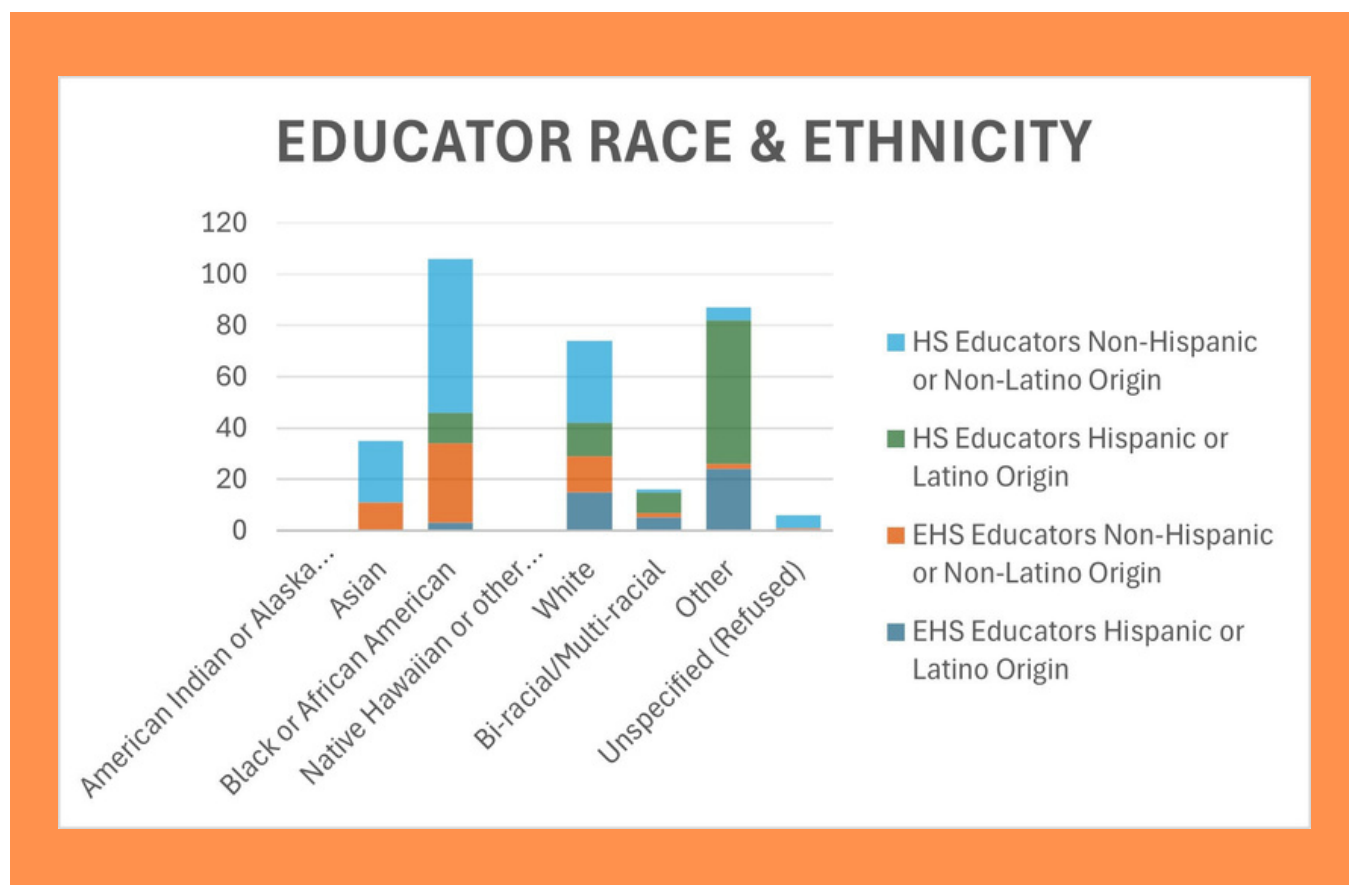


EDUCATOR RACE & ETHNICITY

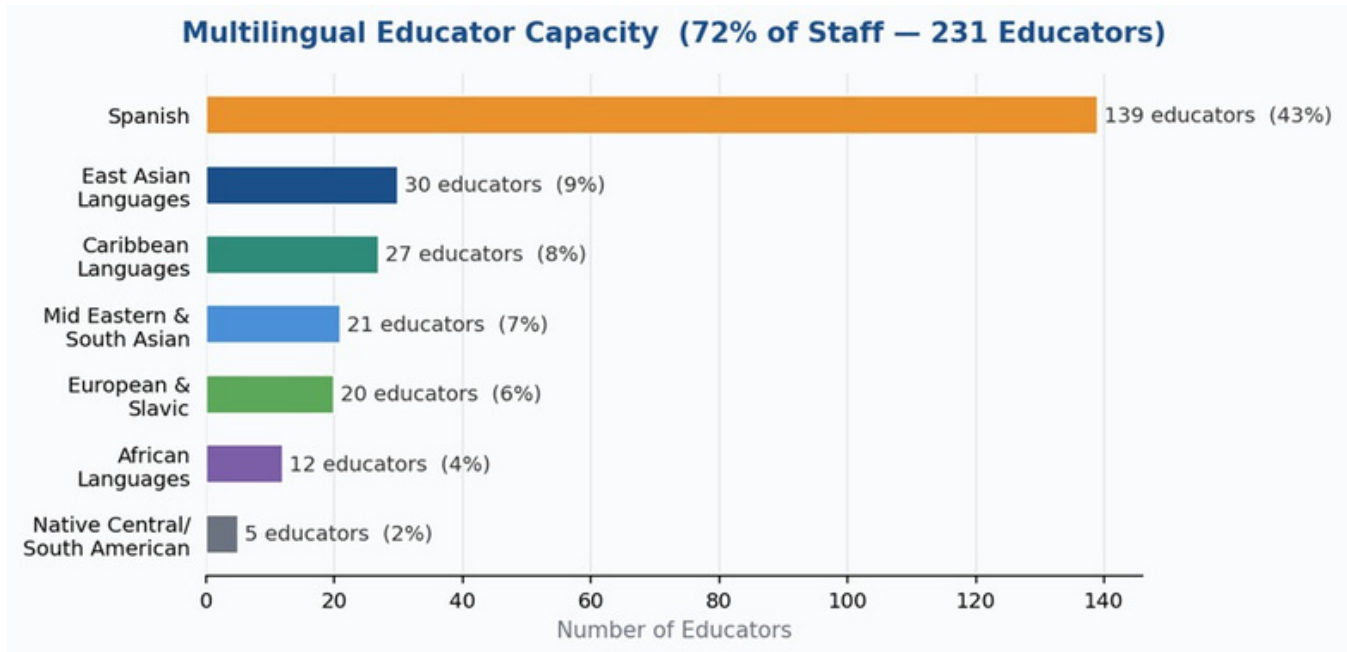
The educator workforce reflected a broad range of racial and ethnic backgrounds across EHS and HS programs. Among the 324 educators reported:

- 91 identified as Black or African American
- 80 identified within the “Other” race category and Hispanic or Latino origin
- 46 identified as White
- 35 identified as Asian
- 16 identified as Bi-racial/Multi-racial
- 6 staff members declined to specify race/ethnicity

This data reflected a workforce representing multiple backgrounds and experiences.



MULTILINGUAL EDUCATOR CAPACITY



A significant portion of educators were proficient in languages other than English. Of the educators reported, 72% (231 staff) spoke at least one additional language. Languages represented included:

- Spanish: 139 educators (43%)
- East Asian languages: 30 educators (9%)
- Caribbean languages: 27 educators (8%)
- Middle Eastern and South Asian languages: 21 educators (7%)
- European and Slavic languages: 20 educators (6%)
- African languages: 12 educators (4%)
- Native Central American, South American, and Mexican languages: 5 educators (2%)

This multilingual capacity supported communication with families and strengthened culturally responsive learning environments.

EDUCATOR QUALIFICATIONS

The program maintained a highly qualified education workforce across EHS and HS classrooms.

This data reflected the program's ongoing investment in workforce development, credential attainment, and educational advancement for teaching staff.

Between September 1, 2024 and August 31, 2025, ABCD Head Start welcomed 52 new staff members across our program. These individuals brought valuable experience, dedication, and passion for supporting children and families in our communities. Their contributions strengthened classrooms, family engagement efforts, and overall program operations. Together, these staff members reflect the commitment, compassion, and dedication that support ABCD Head Start's mission of serving children and families across the community.

Among EHS and HS Teachers Combined

6%

Held advanced degrees

40%

Held bachelor's degrees

42%

Held associate degrees

12%

Held a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential

HS Teacher Assistants

44%

Held a CDA credential

47%

Were actively working toward required qualifications

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Between September 1, 2024, and August 31, 2025, ABCD Head Start welcomed several new staff members across our program. These individuals brought valuable experience, dedication, and passion for supporting children and families in our communities. Their contributions strengthened classrooms, family engagement efforts, and overall program operations.

Highlighted below are a few of the staff members who joined the program this year and what they shared about their experience working at ABCD Head Start:

Together, these staff members reflect the commitment, compassion, and dedication that support ABCD Head Start's mission of serving children and families across the community.



Morgan Herring
Deputy Director,
Business Operations

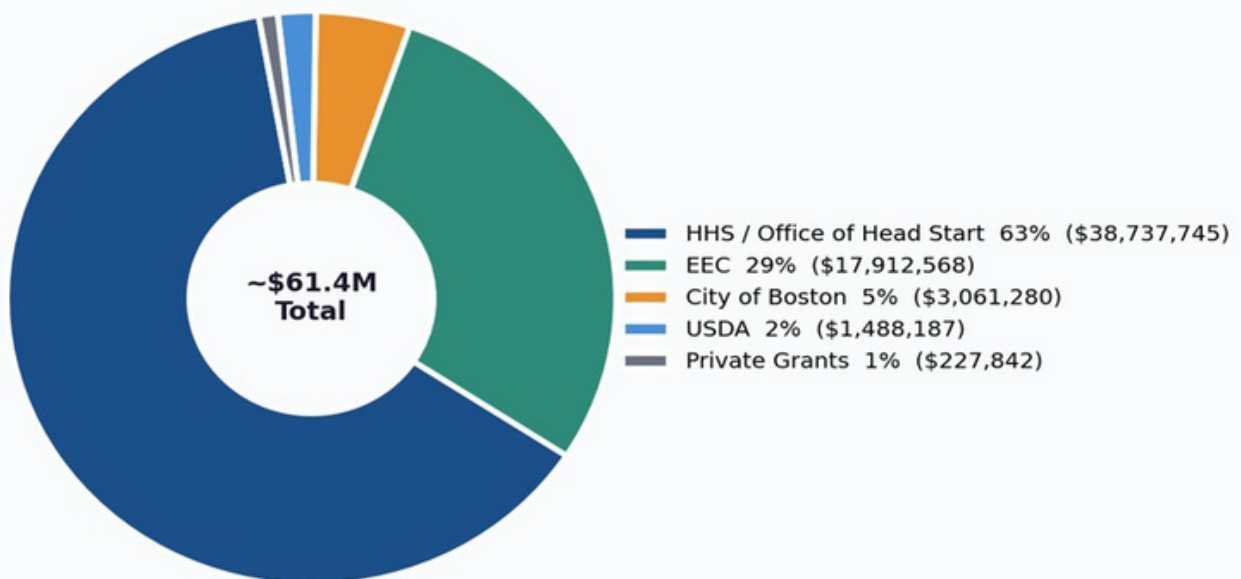
Morgan joined ABCD Head Start on November 18, 2024, bringing experience in finance, grants management, and project management, with a passion for building strong systems that create meaningful impact. Drawn to Head Start's mission of expanding opportunities for children and families, she saw an opportunity to apply her operational and financial expertise in a way that directly supports school readiness, family well-being, and program quality. By helping strengthen the systems behind the work, fostering collaboration across teams, and supporting sustainable growth, Morgan contributes to ensuring that ABCD Head Start can continue creating opportunities and lasting impact for the communities it serves.

BUDGET EXPENDITURES AND PROPOSED BUDGET

FY25 Budget

In 2025, ABCD's Head Start program was awarded nearly \$61 million in public funding, primarily through the Office of Head Start (Department of Health and Human Services). Additional funding was received from the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the City of Boston via the Office of Early Childhood and Boston Public Schools. The program also received \$227,842 through four small private grants. The privately funded grants cover a period that does not align with the organization's FY25 fiscal year; however, the full grant amounts are presented in total below, which cover multiple fiscal years. These grants are time-limited, and support three projects; two were utilized to make much needed improvements to our Malden Playground (Franklin Square House Foundation and a match from the Mayor of the City of Malden), one supported a community-responsive and culturally aligned program surrounding mental health processes, self care strategies, and behavioral health (Vitals CnXs), the other supporting a clinical intervention for caregivers (Brown University, Boston Medical Center).

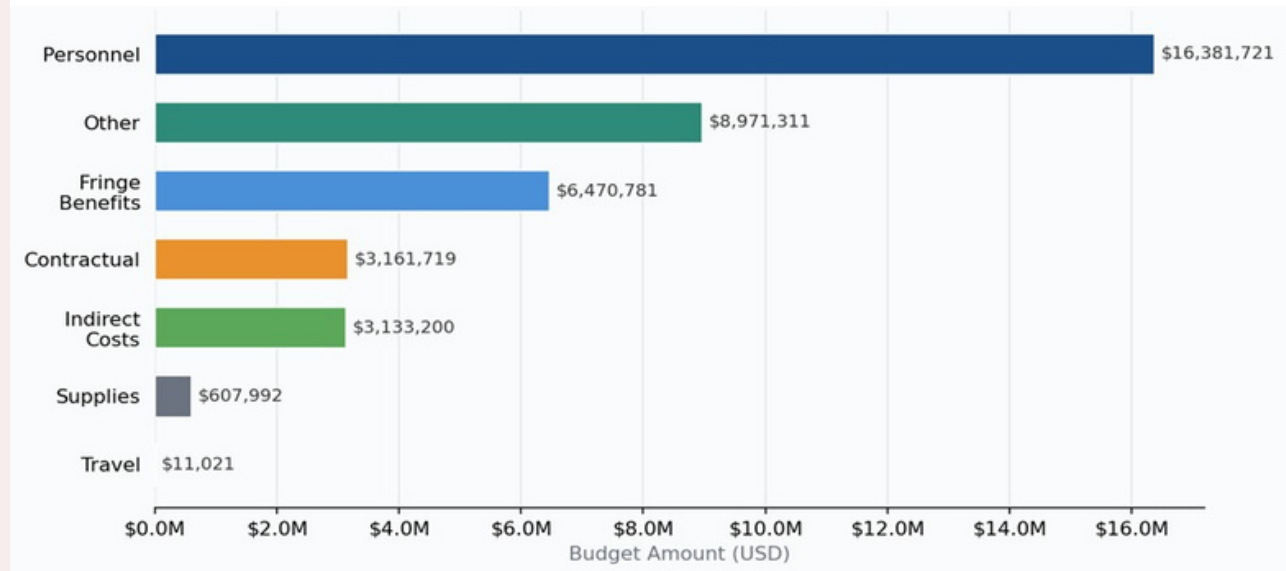
FY2025 Funding Sources



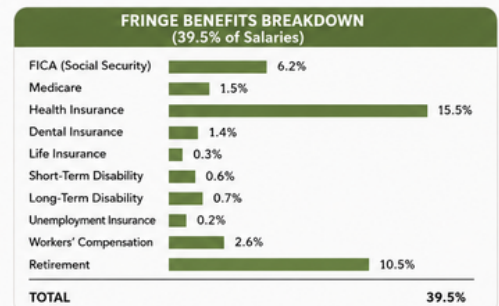
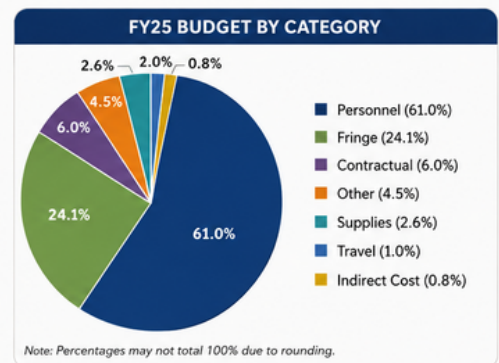
BUDGET CATEGORIES & EXPENDITURE FRAMEWORK

The budget for ABCD Head Start & Early Head Start FY2025 was created in accordance with the expense categories designated in Head Start Enterprise System (HSES). The broad category headers are defined below with additional sub-categories identified in the table.

OHS Budget Expenditures by Category (Total: \$38,737,745)



	PERSONNEL	Personnel costs include the gross salaries of all budgeted staff positions, including those that are currently filled and those that have not yet been hired. This allows for turnover and hiring during the school year. The agency budgets salary increases and cost of living adjustments (COLA).
	FRINGE	The average fringe benefit rate is calculated by the agency at 39.5%. Items included in the fringe calculation are listed in the chart to the right.
	CONTRACTUAL	Head Start & Early Head Start partners with vendors to provide administrative, health, and educational services. Administrative services include tax services and legal consultants. An annual financial audit of the agency is completed by KPMG, LLP with a proportional share of the cost being paid by Head Start. Other services include our partnership agreements with child care providers. Those partners include: Horizons for Homeless Children, Infants and Other People, Nurtury, Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, and the John F. Kennedy Family Service Center.
	OTHER	This broad category captures most items associated with facility management. The subcategories include depreciation, rent, utilities, insurance, maintenance and repairs, local travel, nutritional services, volunteers, and professional development.
	SUPPLIES	Supplies are purchased through approved vendors selected in accordance with Uniform Guidance Procurement Standards and ABCD's Procurement policies. Expenses are designated as office supplies, supporting office administration. Child & Family Service supplies consist of items that support socialization and education in the classroom, such as books, toys, and arts & crafts materials. Food Services supplies include items such as plates, cutlery, and other kitchen supplies. Other supplies cover items costing between \$300- \$5,000 that include but are not limited to computers, laptops, tablets, and kitchen equipment.
	TRAVEL	Staff Out of Town Travel costs are budgeted for staff to travel to relevant conferences, such as national and regional conferences for additional training. Travel is inclusive of per diem costs, accommodations, airfare, and ground transportation. ABCD utilizes the GSA rates by location to inform per diem costs and mileage reimbursement.
	INDIRECT COST	The indirect cost rate is based on ABCD Head Start's negotiated rate of 8.8% of all direct costs.



Budget percentages are illustrative and based on ABCD Head Start's FY25 budget. Actual percentages may vary.

A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



As ABCD Head Start & Children's Services entered a new program year in 2025, we took time to reflect on the accomplishments, growth, and resilience that have shaped our program over the past several years. Building on the foundation established during our previous five-year cycle, we continue to strengthen our commitment to children, families, staff, and the communities we serve.

Throughout this past year, our success has been made possible through the collective efforts of agency leadership, central office staff, program leadership teams, educators, family advocates, support staff, and the many community partners who work alongside us every day. Together, we have continued to expand access to high-quality early childhood education, comprehensive family services, and community-based resources that support the well-being and long-term success of children and families.

Our partnerships with families, service providers, higher education institutions, and community stakeholders remain central to our mission. These collaborations help ensure that families receive meaningful support, opportunities for engagement, and connections to the services they need to thrive. At the same time, we remain committed to investing in our workforce by supporting professional growth, fostering collaboration, and creating environments where dedicated staff can continue to excel in service to children and families.

As we look ahead, ABCD Head Start & Children's Services remains focused on continuous improvement and innovation. Guided by feedback from families, staff, and community stakeholders, we will continue advancing key priorities through 2029, including strengthening learning environments that support children's social-emotional growth and development; promoting the mental wellness of children, families, and staff; deepening family partnerships and engagement opportunities; reimagining professional development systems; and cultivating a workplace culture that attracts, supports, and retains highly qualified professionals.

I am proud of all we have accomplished together and remain excited for the opportunities ahead. Thank you for your continued partnership, dedication, and commitment as we work together to build an even brighter future for the children and families we serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Flossy".

Flossy Calderón

Vice President, ABCD Head Start & Children's Services



abcd

**HEAD START &
CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

178 Tremont Street, Boston MA 02111 | Bostonabcd.org