

Child Care/Head Start Partnership Snapshot: What the Research Says About Financial Arrangements and Resources

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Why Partner?

Partnerships between child care and Head Start have the potential of offering children and families the best aspects of each program. Specifically, partnerships can offer parents who are working or in school full-time, accessible care. Partnerships can also provide children and families the

comprehensive services and higher quality early learning environments offered by Head Start.

What Does the Research Say about the Relationship Between Partnership Funding and Desired Results?

To achieve desired results and benefits it is important that Head Start provide funding directly to child care partners to support their costs of meeting the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

Child care center partners received an average of between **\$1,491 and \$3,371¹ per child annually from Head Start**. There was a direct relationship between the amount of funding provided by Head Start to the child care partner and the success of the partnership. In other words, **the more money provided by Head Start to the child care partner**, the greater the likelihood of success as measured by child and parent services, teacher credentials, and reports from directors regarding structural indicators of quality.

Research found that child care partners used the money to purchase the following quality enhancements:

- **Professional development.** Two thirds of partnering centers used funds to provide teachers with educational opportunities needed to meet the Head Start standards.
- **Enhancements to teacher salaries and benefits.** Sixty percent of partnering centers used funds to raise the salaries of existing teachers as an incentive to retain more highly educated teachers. Salary enhancements were viewed as important to compensate teachers who were providing more services to meet the Head Start standards.
- **Teacher and family service worker salaries.** Most of the centers directly paid teachers and family service workers who were hired specifically to offer the comprehensive services and curriculum enhancements needed to meet the Head Start standards.
- **Curriculum materials and enhancements.** More than three quarters of centers purchased curriculum and assessment

materials, books, and related supplies such as paper or art materials to offer higher quality educational experiences.

- **Equipment.** More than 70% of child care providers purchased learning center equipment (such as science centers, writing centers, etc.). Centers reported purchasing bookshelves, tables, chairs, or playground equipment.

Child care center partners reported that in addition to using funds for quality enhancements, in some instances Head Start directly purchased the quality enhancements directly.

Additional enhancements that Head Start provided (above those noted) are as follows:

- **Comprehensive child and family screenings, referrals and services.** Centers in partnership were significantly more likely to provide comprehensive child and family services than comparison providers. Child services include but are not limited to developmental, vision, hearing, and dental screening and follow up services. Family services included but are not limited to providing parents with information about adult education or training, help securing financial aid for school, and information about parenting. Head Start either supported the family service worker or partnership coordinator who arranged the services or provided direct dollars to the child care partner to support salaries of those who arranged for the services.
- **Teacher supports.** Centers in partnership were significantly more likely than comparison centers to receive teaching guidance from the center director and director supports for using a literacy-rich curriculum. Teachers were more likely to use an evidence-based curriculum and to report receiving employment benefits such as vacation and sick time in partnership programs.
- **Training.** Eighty-two percent of Head Start partners offered child care providers training on the Head Start standards and encouraged all providers to attend other Head Start trainings. Teachers at partnering centers were more likely to report access to regular professional development compared with those at non-partnering centers.
- **Monitoring.** Qualitative research found that Head Start provided a partnership coordinator who assured that the child care partner met the performance standards and assisted the partner in meeting monitoring requirements.



Process for reviewing funding is essential. Successful partnerships reported having a partnership contract that provided funds to account for fluctuations in child enrollment and subsidy funding. Partnerships that had a process of regularly reviewing the financial arrangements and accounting for the cost of providing high-quality care in the face of changing circumstances reported the greatest benefits.

¹ Per child funding is reported in inflation-adjusted dollars as of 2014. Range of funding was \$0 to over \$20,000. The high end included one-time start-up grants.