

## Head Start and Early Head Start Programs

Early Head Start and Head Start programs are **free, high-quality** early childhood education programs that support the whole family. Programs run for at least 8 hours per day, and offer a safe, positive learning environment for children to learn, play, and build the skills that get them ready for kindergarten and beyond. Additionally, programs run **all year long, offering care and education during the school year and in the summertime**. The Department of Education (DOE) offers these programs through our community-based early childhood partners.

Early Head Start provides care for infants and toddlers in centers and through home visiting services. Head Start serves three- and four-year-old children. Both programs provide nutritious meals and health screenings for enrolled children, and support in accessing health services for their families. The programs also help parents and families achieve their own goals, including employment, housing, and adult education.

Head Start is funded by federal grants, which require families of children in the programs to be eligible for services. If you qualify, your child can begin a program any time during the year. Your family may qualify if one or more of the following criteria apply to you:

- Your family income falls below a certain amount (see back)
- You live in temporary housing
- You receive HRA Cash Assistance
- You receive SSI (Supplemental Security Insurance)
- You are enrolling a child who is in foster care

**The best way to find out if your family is eligible for Head Start is to contact a program directly, visit [MySchools](#) to find a program near you.** The program will ask you for one or more documents to verify your eligibility. These documents may include:

- Income Tax Form 1040
- W-2
- TANF documentation (i.e. Cash Assistance)
- SSI documentation
- Pay stub or pay envelopes
- Unemployment documentation
- Foster care reimbursement
- Written statement from employers
- Other

Eligible families are welcome to enroll in Head Start programs regardless of citizenship or immigration status. Programs may not ask for proof of citizenship or legal immigration status when applying for Head Start.



## Head Start and Early Head Start Programs

### Head Start Income Eligibility *HHS Poverty Guidelines for 2021*

PERSONS IN FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD	POVERTY GUIDELINE
1	\$12,880
2	\$17,420
3	\$21,960
4	\$26,500
5	\$31,040
6	\$35,580
7	\$40,120
8	\$44,660

*For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$4,540 for each additional person.*

*Programs may be able to enroll a small number of families that have incomes over this threshold. If you are interested in a Head Start program and your family income is higher, you are still encouraged to apply; the program will reach out if they have capacity to serve additional families.*

#### **If you are not eligible or are seeking other early childhood services**

There is a free Pre-K for All seat for all four-year-olds in New York City, and a free 3-K for All seat for three-year-olds in a growing number of communities. These programs operate for the length of the DOE school day and year. If you do not qualify for extended day/year services or are concerned about the eligibility requirements, the DOE can help you find other program options. For more information, visit [nyc.gov/prek](http://nyc.gov/prek) and [nyc.gov/3k](http://nyc.gov/3k) or call 311.

