

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and
Head Start Supplemental Assistance
Program
Report on Program Operations
Fiscal Year 2021-2022



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

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Introduction

Act 45 of 2007 requires the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to provide the General Assembly with a summary of the operations of the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance programs.

In the 2021-22 fiscal year (FY):

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts assisted 23,555 students from families¹ earning up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level. Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs served 6,142 children from families earning up to 100 percent of the federal poverty level. The high-quality early education the children received in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs prepared them to enter kindergarten.

Concerning Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, Appendix A contains the program guidance used for the 2021-22 fiscal year, which outlines the eligibility and enrollment requirements for participating providers. This report also lists all participating providers, including county of residence, address, grant amount awarded, and actual enrollments.

Concerning the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program, this report contains a listing of all participating providers, including county of residence, address, grant amount awarded and actual enrollments.

The eligibility criteria for providers is based on two sections in Chapter 405 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code, 22 Pa. Code §§ 405.2 and 405.11. Grants are awarded to approved providers on a cost per-child basis for eligible students the provider proposed to serve in their grant application. In FY 2021-22, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts used a cost per child of \$8,750 per full day slot and \$4,375 per half day slot. Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program applicants request a per slot cost per child based on their proposal and needs. Applicants must justify the cost per-child amounts in their grant application to receive funding. Providers are permitted to use grant funds for the design and maintenance of a quality curriculum for students, for student transportation, for staff professional development, and for appropriate meals and snacks for students.

The FY 2021-22 state budget allocated \$242,284,000 for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, which included \$25 million for program expansion. FY 2020-21 grantees applied to maintain their FY 2020-21 funding levels through a continuation grant application. See Appendix B for the 2021-22 Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Continuation Grant Application. In addition, a competitive, Request for Application (RFA) process occurred to provide an opportunity for eligible Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts applicants to apply for

¹ [The Pennsylvania Family Engagement Birth through College, Career, Community Ready Framework: A Companion for Families](#) defines families as "...those people who have intimate, caring bonds with each other over time and who take care of a child physically and emotionally" (p. 6).

the expansion funding. Both current grantees and new applicants meeting application eligibility requirements could apply. See Appendix C for the 2021-2022 Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts expansion RFA application guidance.

The FY 2021-22 state budget allocated \$69,178,000 for the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program which included \$5 million for program expansion. FY 2020-21 grantees applied to maintain their funding levels through a continuation grant application. See Appendix D for the 2021-22 Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program Continuation Grant Application. In addition, a competitive RFA process occurred to provide an opportunity for eligible Head Start applicants to apply for the expansion funding. Both current grantees and new applicants meeting application eligibility requirements could apply. See Appendix E for the 2021-2022 Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program expansion RFA application guidance. During the expansion grant RFA, applicants applied for \$2,911,074.00 of the available \$5 million. \$100,000 was allocated for administrative needs. The remaining \$2,523,434.00 of expansion funding was used to provide all HSSAP grantees a 3.01% increase to their existing cost per child. This increase was to be used to support staff recruitment and retention efforts, and to address any other financial impacts resulting from the pandemic.

FY 2021-22 continued to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Both Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance programs were allowed flexibility in how instruction during FY 2021-22 occurred. All providers were expected to provide in-person instruction but were allowed the flexibility of initiating Flexible Instruction Plans (FIP) for pre-determined reasons and/or to submit requests for initiating a FIP for other circumstances for consideration. See Appendix F for the policy regarding the FIP flexibilities offered to programs.

The Need for High-Quality Pre-Kindergarten in Pennsylvania

The chart below shows that more than 92,119, or 56 percent, of 3- and 4-year-old children living in families earning up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) did not have access to publicly funded high-quality early childhood education (ECE) programs, such as Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program. This percentage of unserved 3- and 4- year-olds is referred to as the unmet need.

Table 1: Percent of Unmet Need by County, FY 2021-2022

County	Unmet Need*	County	Unmet Need*	County	Unmet Need*	County	Unmet Need*
Adams	65.8%	Columbia	62.8%	Lawrence	22.3%	Snyder	72.8%
Allegheny	48.0%	Crawford	59.8%	Lebanon	68.6%	Somerset	68.8%
Armstrong	59.4%	Cumberland	76.2%	Lehigh	58.1%	Sullivan	75.6%
Beaver	53.0%	Dauphin	59.8%	Luzerne	55.7%	Susquehanna	54.4%
Bedford	62.7%	Delaware	61.2%	Lycoming	58.8%	Tioga	33.8%

Berks	69.6%	Elk	69.7%	McKean	30.8%	Union	49.4%
Blair	36.4%	Erie	47.8%	Mercer	47.5%	Venango	47.0%
Bradford	46.2%	Fayette	39.4%	Mifflin	66.6%	Warren	58.2%
Bucks	55.8%	Forest	66.8%	Monroe	66.6%	Washington	50.8%
Butler	63.9%	Franklin	62.7%	Montgomery	65.9%	Wayne	51.1%
Cambria	61.7%	Fulton	65.2%	Montour	31.2%	Westmoreland	46.1%
Cameron	30.9%	Greene	41.7%	Northampton	57.1%	Wyoming	65.1%
Carbon	62.9%	Huntingdon	35.8%	Northumberland	66.3%	York	73.4%
Centre	54.8%	Indiana	43.1%	Perry	86.3%	Statewide	56.0%
Chester	59.7%	Jefferson	53.3%	Philadelphia	46.1%		
Clarion	47.4%	Juniata	49.9%	Pike	24.1%		
Clearfield	27.3%	Lackawanna	50.2%	Potter	77.0%		
Clinton	65.5%	Lancaster	73.9%	Schuylkill	62.1%		

*Unmet Need = (# of Children Ages 3-4 under 300% FPL - Total Pre-K 2021-22 Funded Slots** - CCW Children Ages 3-4 Enrolled in Keystone STARS 3 or 4) / Number of Children Ages 3-4 under 300% FPL

**Total Pre-K 2021-22 Funded Slots = Federal Preschool HS 2021-22 Funded Slots + HSSAP 2021-22 Funded Slots + PA PKC 2021-22 Funded Slots

Figure 1: Percent of Unmet Need by County

The map below shows the percent of unmet need by county in Pennsylvania.

Providing High-Quality Services to Young Children and Families

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) is committed to ensuring that all children begin school ready to learn and to succeed in their schooling careers, as lifelong learners, and as productive citizens. Research confirms what is already known—all children can tap into their innate potential to learn when they receive high-quality instruction that takes into consideration what is known about brain development and how young children learn. Early childhood education is a proven strategy that ensures a child’s readiness for school and school success.



Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs meet or exceed most quality standards recommended by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

Table 2: Comparison of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs Standards to NIEER Standards and Benchmarks

NIEER Quality Standard	NIEER Benchmark	Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Standards	Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program Standards
Early Learning Standards	Comprehensive	Comprehensive	Comprehensive
Curriculum Supports	Approval process and supports	Approval process	Approval process
Teacher degree	Bachelor’s degree	Bachelor’s degree + ECE Certification	Half of lead teachers must have a bachelor’s degree
Teacher specialized training	Specializing in Pre-K	ECE certification	Specializing in child development
Assistant teacher degree	Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or equivalent	CDA or equivalent	CDA

NIEER Quality Standard	NIEER Benchmark	Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Standards	Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program Standards
Staff professional development	At least 15 hours a year; individual PD plans; coaching	Meet requirements of Act 48 (180 hours over five years)	At least 15 hours a year; coaching
Maximum class size	20 or less	20 or less	3-year-olds – 17 or less 4-year-olds – 20 or less
Staff-child ratio	1 staff per 10 children (1:10)	1 teacher and 1 aide per 20 children (1:10)	3-year-olds – 2:17 or less (classrooms must always have two paid staff) 4-year-olds – 2:20 or less (classrooms must always have two paid staff)
Screening & referral	Vision, hearing, health, and referral	Vision, hearing, health, and referral	Vision, hearing, health, and referral
Continuous quality improvement system	Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement	Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement	Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement

Description of Assessments Used to Measure Academic Performance

In Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program classrooms, teachers are required to assess students. Teachers are most qualified to perform the assessment since they observe children in authentic environments and are familiar with each child's development and learning expectations.

The goal of early childhood assessment in Pennsylvania is to:

1. Adapt instruction to meet individualized student and group needs;
2. Understand the status of children across a broad range of cognitive and non-cognitive domains;
3. Track achievement and developmental gains over time; and
4. Inform policy by providing student outcomes in classrooms and across the state.

Program guidelines emphasize that programs should not use child outcome data to

determine placement in a program, class or special education, or to deny or exclude access to services for those children who are age eligible.

All providers were required to report child outcomes within an approved on-line assessment system. Providers selected from the following approved on-line child assessment tools to report child outcomes:

- Assessment Technology Incorporated: Galileo®
- Cognitive ToyBox, Inc.
- Desired Results Developmental Profile
- Frog Street AIM Observational Assessment
- HighScope: COR Advantage
- LifeCubby: The Vine Assessment™
- National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)/Early Learning Scale (ELS)
- Pearson: THE WORK SAMPLING SYSTEM®
- Pearson: THE WORK SAMPLING SYSTEM® for Head Start
- My IGDIs™: Profile of Preschool Learning and Development Readiness (ProLADR)
- Teaching Strategies LLC: Teaching Strategies GOLD®

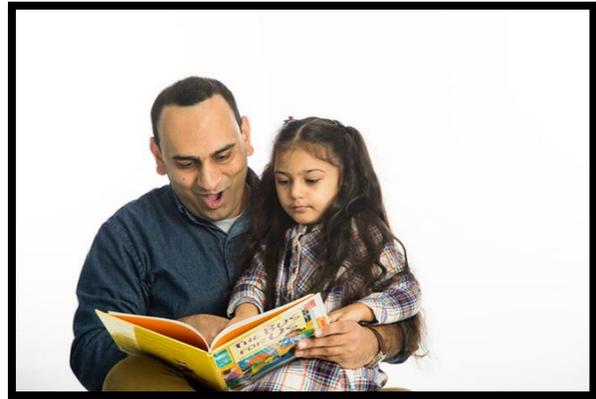
Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Overview

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts provides high-quality pre-kindergarten education for 3- and 4-year-olds in Pennsylvania who are lacking opportunity. Eligible children are age three through kindergarten entry age and live in families earning up to 300 percent of the FPL (\$79,500 for family of four). In 2021-22, there were 23,355 children served in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts in 67 counties by 259 lead agencies at 918 locations.

Criteria to Determine Grant Fund Amounts

PDE awarded grants to approved providers on a per-child basis, in an amount set by the PDE, for each eligible student served by an approved provider. Half-day programs were required to provide a minimum of 2.5 hours per day of instructional activities for at least 180 days per year. For 2021-22, the cost per child rate

for half-day programs was \$4,375 per child. For 2021-22, full-day programs were required to provide a minimum of five hours per day of instructional activities or services for at least 180 days per year. The cost per child for full-day programs was \$8,750 per child.



Summary of Application Process for Grant Funds

Initial applicants for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts were selected for a five-year period beginning in FY 2007-08 and ending in FY 2011-12. An additional year of continuation funding was offered for the FY 2012-13. Pennsylvania held a competitive grant process to select eligible grantees for a second five-year grant period beginning with FY 2013-14. Another competitive grant process was held in the spring 2018 to select eligible grantees for a third five-year grant period beginning FY 2018-19.

In addition to continuation grants, expansion grants were awarded in FY 2014-15, FY 2015-16, FY 2017-18, FY 2019-20, and FY 2021-22. Due to a budget impasse in FY 2015-16, expansion funding was allocated at 25 percent. FY 2015-16 amounts were annualized in FY 2016-17. Due to the pandemic, expansion funding was not awarded in FY 2020-21. See Appendix G, for information on expansion grant applicants, application scores, and expansion allocations.

Total Amount of Grant Funds Paid to Approved Providers

As shown in Appendix H, in 2021-22, \$217,122,927 in grant funds were paid to providers and used to manage state level administrative and information technology support for the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program.

Summary of Allowable Uses of Grant Funds Under the Program

Funds may only be used for costs associated with providing program services to eligible students enrolled in the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program. Funds may not be used for local administrative or indirect costs. See Appendix A for more information on program regulations. See [Program Impacts due to COVID-19](#) for more information on spending impacts and flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic. See Appendix L: COVID-19 Impact on Enrollment for more information on spending flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Approved Providers and Enrollments

See Appendix H.

Financial Summary of Total Expenditures of Each Provider

As of September 2022, total FY 2021-22 provider expenditures were being reconciled and thus are not available. Appendix H contains grant funds paid in FY 2021-22. It is anticipated that there will be a minimal portion of funding returned due to related under enrollment, however it is anticipated, that the majority of allocated funding will be expended.

Enrollment Goals

Children are considered enrolled when an intake meeting between the parent or legal guardian and the school has been completed, the necessary information has been gathered, and the child has been identified as a candidate for a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts slot. Classroom start dates may differ if this enrollment has been completed prior to the start of the year.

Grantees are required to maintain full enrollment and report enrollment in Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks (PELICAN), the data system used for managing Pennsylvania's state-funded early learning programs. When a child withdraws from Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, the program has 20 instructional days to fill the vacant slot. Maintaining waiting lists ensures vacant slots are filled immediately.

See [Program Impacts due to COVID-19](#) for more information on enrollment flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic. See Appendix L: COVID-19 Impact on Enrollment for more information on spending flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Students Served Through Child Care Works (Child Care Subsidy) and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program

See Appendix H for information on Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts children also served in Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program or Child Care Works, Pennsylvania's subsidized child care program.

Per Act 24 of 2011, PDE no longer collects information on Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts children served in Federal Head Start and private pay child care, or the total number of children enrolled in Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program, Federal Head Start, Child Care Works, or private pay child care at each entity.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Evaluation

Funded by the William Penn Foundation, the University of North Carolina's School of Education and Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute conducted both an impact and an implementation study of the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program from 2018 through 2020.

The impact study examined the effects of participation in the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Program on children's early academic, social, and executive functioning skills in kindergarten. The findings show there were positive effects on children's language and math outcomes with meaningful differences in months of learning gains. For more information visit:

[PA Pre-K Counts Impact Study Executive Summary](#)

[PA Pre-K Counts Impact Study Final Report](#)

The implementation study was designed to examine local variations in the statewide implementation of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts in relation to the program regulations and early learning standards. The study used surveys, interviews, and review of administrative data. For more information visit:

[PA Pre-K Counts Implementation Study Executive Summary](#)

[PA Pre-K Counts Implementation Study Final Report](#)

Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program Overview

Head Start provides comprehensive early learning services to children and families who lack opportunity. Federal and state funding supports this program in Pennsylvania. In addition to educational programming, Head Start offers health/nutrition services, social service support to families, and a strong parent/family involvement component.

Eligible children are those age 3 to 5 years who live in families earning up to 100 percent of the federal poverty level (\$26,500 for a family of four), identified as foster children, or live in families experiencing homelessness. Up to 10 percent of enrollment slots can be used to support at-risk children whose families exceed the income guidelines. In 2021-22, there were 6,142 children served in state-funded Head Start by 41 lead agencies in 49 counties.

Providers were permitted to use grant funds for the design and maintenance of a quality curriculum for students, for student transportation, for staff professional development, and for appropriate meals and snacks for students. Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program design must follow the federally approved program models and includes both classroom and home visiting models. Each grantee offers the model that best meets their local community need. See Appendix D for the 2021-22 Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program continuation grant application and Appendix E for the 2021-22 Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program expansion grant application, Appendix I for details on the expansion grant applicants, grant scores, and funding allocations, and Appendix J for details on FY 2021-2022 grantees.

Summary of Allowable Uses of Grant Funds Under the Program

Funds can only be used for the costs associated with providing program services to eligible students enrolled in the program. Funds may not be used for administrative or

indirect costs. See [Program Impacts due to COVID-19](#) for more information on spending impacts and flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic. See Appendix L: COVID-19 Impact on Enrollment for more information on spending flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Program Impacts due to COVID-19

During FY 2021-22, programs were expected to return to full, in-person instruction and to maintain full enrollment but were allowed continued flexibility in instructional design. See Appendix F: Policy on FIP planning.

Enrollment data was tracked throughout the fiscal year for both programs. Enrollment data showed that even with flexibility for remote learning, many grantees remained under-enrolled in FY 2021-22. In response, PDE issued Announcement PKC 21-#002; HSSAP 21-#002 (see Appendix K) to explain how under-enrolled grantees would be identified. Identified grantees had the opportunity to submit narrative detailing the impacts of COVID-19 on their enrollments and submit budget revisions detailing how unspent funds would be reallocated to support program goals. Staff from the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) reviewed all submissions. The most cited reasons for under-enrollment included the following:

- Prioritizing virtual learning with older school-age students;
- Appropriateness of virtual learning for prekindergartners;
- Hybrid/remote schedules did not work for families;
- Not comfortable with in-person instruction or with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) restrictions (e.g., masking);
- Staff shortages;
- CDC restrictions limited class sizes; and
- Family demographics changed due to pandemic (e.g., unemployed, relocating, taking care of elderly family members).

Appendix L: Covid-19 Impact on Enrollment details the identified under-enrolled grantees, percentage under-enrolled, and which grantees retained full funding.