

FACT SHEET



FSU Center for Prevention & Early Intervention Policy

Child Care A Protective Factor for Vulnerable Children

Abundant evidence shows the positive correlations between quality of child care and developmental outcomes for children. Children from families who bear the burden of multiple risk factors are also the children with the greatest probability of being enrolled in poor quality programs. High quality early childhood programs have positively influenced the developmental trajectories of children whose life course is threatened by socioeconomic disadvantage, family disruption, and diagnosed disabilities. *

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RESEARCH

The **High/Scope Perry Preschool Project** tracked a group of 123 poor African American children from ages 3 to 40. The treatment group attended a half-day preschool with a degreed early childhood teacher, a weekly home visit, and monthly parent group. Follow-up research at age 27 and age 40 found large differences between those who attended the preschool and those who did not. Those who participated in the high quality early education and care program were:

- more likely to have graduated from high school (65% vs. 45%)
- more likely to be employed (76% vs. 62%)
- earning more than \$20,000 per year (60% vs. 40%)
- less frequently arrested (36% vs. 55%).

The preschool program was a prudent investment - more than \$17 was saved for every tax dollar invested.

The **Abecedarian Project** was a comprehensive education, healthcare, and family support program for poor children from birth to age 5. The control group received social and health services, but the treatment group also participated in a high-quality center-based child care program. At age 3 there was a 30-point IQ difference between the two groups. By age 15, the children who had not received the preschool program were four times more likely to have been placed in special education and almost twice as likely to have repeated a grade. Follow-up at age 21 found that the children who had attended the child care program scored significantly better on every measure of achievement including:

- higher reading and math scores
- fewer teen births
- more high school graduations
- more college enrollments.

This was the first longitudinal study of a preschool intervention that showed increased proficiency in reading and math that lasted into adulthood. The researchers attributed the improved outcomes to the fact that the participants began the program as infants. They also noted that the most vulnerable children benefited the most from the preschool program.

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RESEARCH

The Infant Health & Development Program replicated the Abecedarian study with 985 low birthweight infants. From birth to age 3, the control group received health monitoring only, while the treatment group also received quality full-day child care, home visits, and parent groups. At age 3, a comparison with the control group indicated that the children in the treatment group had:

- fewer behavior problems
- larger vocabularies
- higher cognitive ability
- better receptive language and reasoning skills
- more developmentally supportive homes
- mothers with more positive behaviors.

Early Head Start provides high quality child and family development services for pregnant women and infants and toddlers from birth to age 3. A longitudinal evaluation of the program studied approximately 3,000 children and families served at 17 EHS sites across the country during the first three years of the children's lives. Children participating in EHS programs scored higher on measures of cognitive, language, and social-emotional development than children who did not participate.

Parents who participated in EHS programs had more positive parenting, physically punished their children less, and helped their children learn better by providing more language and literacy experiences at home. Fathers in EHS were more likely to play with their children and less likely to spank them than fathers in the control group.

Fifteen years after a group of poor children participated in the **Chicago Public School Preschool for Low-Income Children**, they were compared with a group that did not. Participation in the early childhood preschool was associated with positive long-term educational and social outcomes up to age 20. Children who received preschool had:

- a higher rate of high school completion
- more years of completed education
- lower rates of juvenile and violent arrests
- lower school dropout rates.

These findings are strong evidence that established programs administered through public schools can promote long-term success.

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