



WHO HAS ACCESS TO EARLY HEAD START HOME-VISITING AND CENTER-BASED SERVICES?

A CSCH Brief by Delaina Carlson, Kyle DeMeo Cook, and Caitlin Lombardi

This brief is part of a series about Early Head Start. Additional briefs are available at the [CSCH website](https://csch.uconn.edu).

Background

Early Head Start (EHS) is a federally-funded program that utilizes a two-generation approach to support children and families. The program serves pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers who are experiencing low-income. EHS offers two primary types of services to families: (1) home-visiting and (2) center-based care and/or family child care. Some programs offer only one service delivery model, while others offer both types of services.¹

Extensive evaluation of EHS has shown that it has positive impacts on children and families.² Yet, less is known about which components of the program yield the greatest benefits. One of these mechanisms is the service delivery model. Across the United States, families are offered and receive different services based on local availability and family and child needs.

Our study asked three main questions:

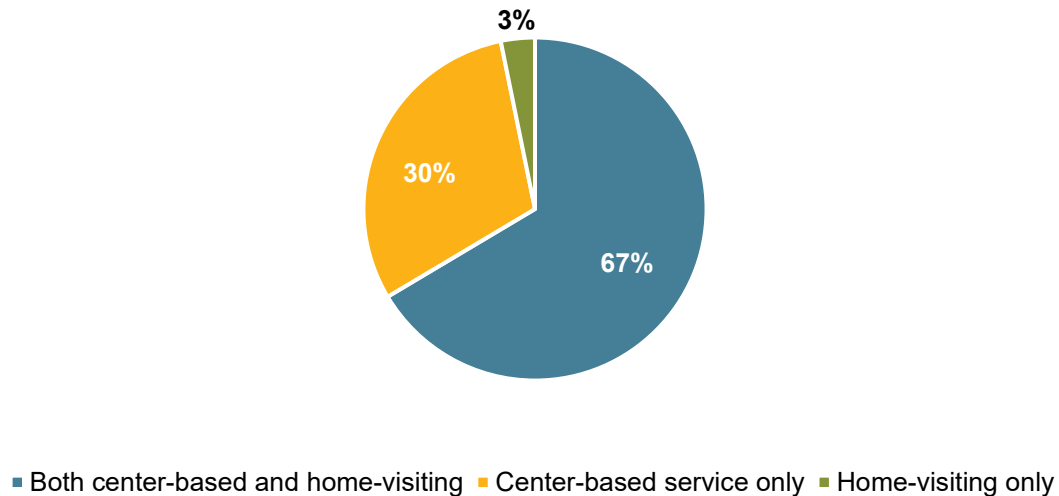
1. Do program and community characteristics predict whether an EHS program offers center-based care only, home-visiting only, or both services to families?
2. Do child and family characteristics predict whether a family is enrolled in an EHS program that offers center only, home-visiting only, or both services?
3. Among families that are enrolled in an EHS program that offers both center and home-visiting options, do child and family characteristics predict whether a family is receiving center-based care compared to home-visiting as their primary service?

Research Methods

This study analyzed data from the Early Head Start Child & Family Experiences Study 2018 (Baby FACES 2018) dataset.³ Baby FACES 2018 collected information on a nationally representative sample of children attending EHS in Spring 2018, as well as their program directors, center directors, families, teachers and home visitors.³ This study used data representing 469 program directors and 2,350 families. Analyses were conducted using descriptive statistics and multinomial logistic regression.

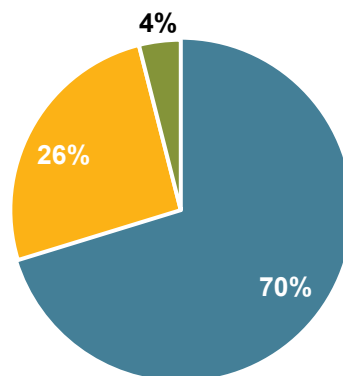
Key Findings

What services do Early Head Start programs have available for families?



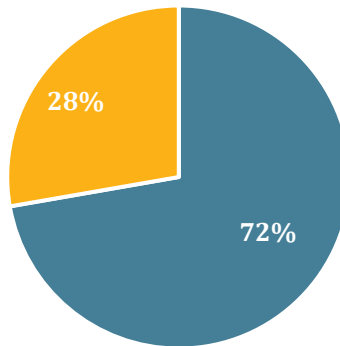
Children attended programs that offered:

- Both center-based and home-visiting services
- Center-based services only
- Home-visiting services only



When attending a program that offered both service delivery types:

- Children who were enrolled in center-based services
- Children who were enrolled in home-visiting based services



Predictors of Service Delivery & Receipt:

➤ Significant predictors of an EHS program's service delivery model:

- **Program size** – Larger programs offered both service delivery types more often than center or home-visiting services only.
- **Organizational Climate** – Programs that reported more positive organizational climate were more likely to offer center-only services or both service delivery models as opposed to home-visiting.
- **Participation in EHS-Child Care Partnership program** – Programs that partnered with other child care programs were more likely to only offer center-based services compared to both or home-visiting only.

➤ Significant predictors of the type of service offered to and received by a family:

- **Race/ethnicity** –
 - Black children were more likely to be in a program that offers center-based services only as compared to a program that offered both service types.
 - When participating in a program that offered both services, Latine children were more likely to be enrolled in centers compared to White children.
- **Child needs** –
 - Children with higher problem behaviors who were enrolled in programs that offered both service types were more likely to be in center-based programs compared to home-visiting.
 - Children with special needs were more likely to be in home-visiting compared to center services.

- **Parent marital status –**
 - Single parent families were less likely to be in a program that offered home-visiting only as compared to both. When enrolled in a program that offered both services, these children were more likely to be in center programs.
- **Parent educational status –**
 - Parents with a college degree were more likely to be in a program that offers center-based services only and when enrolled in a program that offered both, these families were more likely to be receiving center services relative to home-visiting.
 - Parents with less than a high school education (compared to with a high school education) were less likely to be in a program that offered home-visiting only compared to both.
- **Parent employment status –**
 - Working parents or those in job training were more likely to be in a program that offers center-based services only as compared to both.

Implications

Findings suggest that there are key differences between the child, family and program characteristics that are associated with the EHS program-type offered to and received by families.

Policies and programs in ECE settings can consider the processes they use to determine the types of services that families receive and how they meet family needs.

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For more information about this research, see the full journal article available at: Cook, K. D., Lombardi, C., & Carlson, D. (2026). A national look at Early Head Start services available to and experienced by families and children. *Child & Youth Care Forum*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-026-09943-2>

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Data Availability Statement: The data used in this study are available through a restricted use data license from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research Child and Family Data Archive.³

¹ Office of Head Start (2019). *Early Head Start services snapshot 2018-2019*. Retrieved from <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/no-search/service-snapshot-ehs-2018-2019.pdf>

² e.g. Love, J. M., Chazan-Cohen, R., Raikes, H. H., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2013). What makes a difference: Early Head Start evaluation findings in a developmental context. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 8(1), 1– 173.

³ Vogel, C., Xue, Y., Atkins-Burnett, S., and Cannon, J. (2020). *Early Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (Baby FACES) Spring 2018* [United States]. Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2020-10-26. <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR37666.v2>