



WSA Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP

Serving ECEAP, Head Start, Migrant Head Start, Tribal Head Start and Early Head Start Programs and Families



Head Start and ECEAP Programs See 37% Jump in the Number of Homeless Children Being Served since Start of Recession in 2007;

One Out of Every 12 Children Served Is Homeless

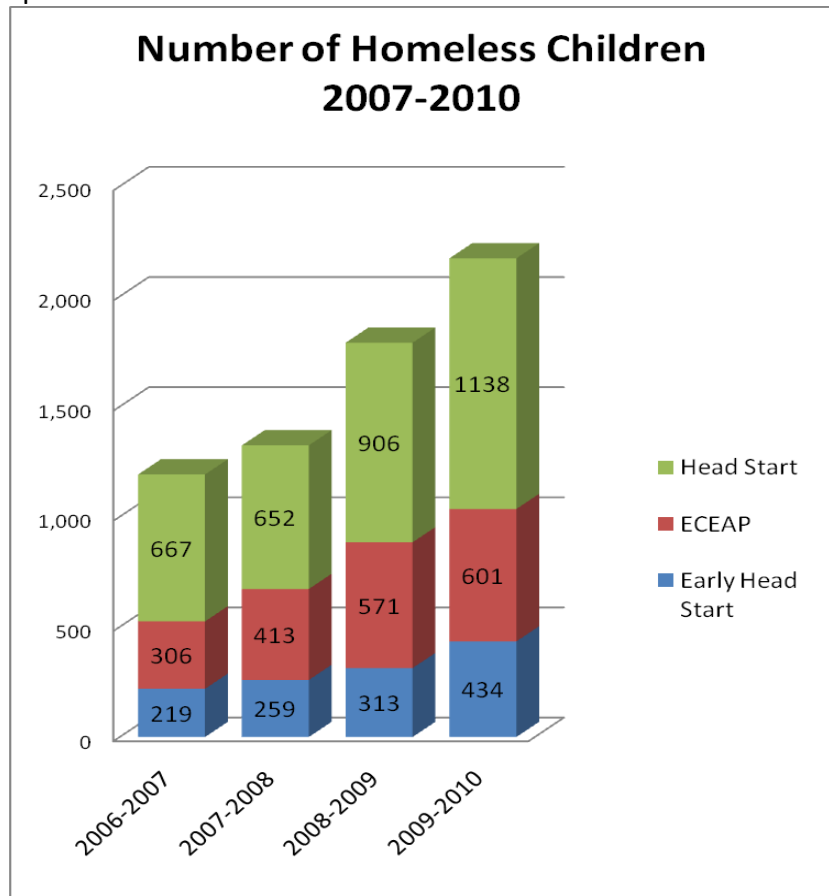
3/28/2010, Bellevue, Washington

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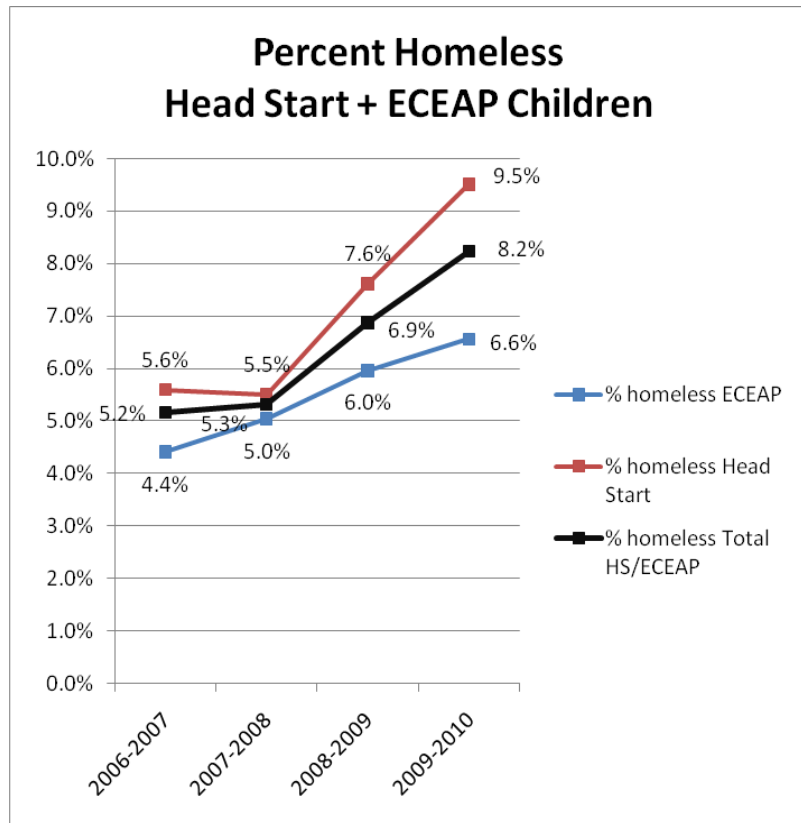
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On March 6th, CBS's [60 Minutes](#) ran a story about the huge increase in homeless children in Florida. As a result, WSA decided to look into how this increase has affected Head Start and ECEAP programs in Washington. The results, compiled from the Washington State Department of Early Learning and the Office of Head Start, show a shocking increase in homeless children in our programs. The numbers are quite stark:

- ✓ During the 2009-2010 school-year **Head Start and ECEAP programs in Washington served 1,739 homeless children** out of total of 21,128 children, and **Early Head Start served an additional 434**. During the 2006-2007 school-year, 973 HS/ECEAP children were homeless.
- ✓ During the 2009-2010 school-year 8.2% of the children enrolled in Head Start & ECEAP programs were homeless. 4 years ago, only 5.2% were homeless – a **37% increase in homeless children**.



- ✓ During the 2009-2010 school-year **one out of every 12 children enrolled in Head Start and ECEAP programs were homeless**. This means that in Washington state, every classroom on average has one or more children that are homeless.
- ✓ Currently, there are **175 homeless children on the waitlist for ECEAP** services, but unable to receive them because of a lack of funding.
- ✓ Early Head Start, which serves pregnant mothers and children 0-3 years old, has an even higher incidence of homelessness – **in 2009-2010 14% of Early Head Start children were homeless**.
- ✓ Over 40% of children in shelters are under 5 years old, and according to the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth ([NAEHCY](#)), **in 2000 only 15% of homeless children participated in preschool, compared to 57% of all low-income children**



According to research compiled by the [Family Housing Fund](#), homeless families and children face challenges that go beyond those of other low-income families. Homeless families often have little access to health and dental care, leading to health issues in children and lower vaccination rates. Homeless preschool children are more likely to experience major developmental delays and emotional and behavioral problems. Often they are separated from their parents, which can cause long-term negative effects. Homeless children experience high levels of stress, trauma, and constant change, leading to a higher incidence of mental disorders. They experience more physical health problems, hunger, and behaviors like hoarding and aggression. Despite all these challenges, homeless pre-schoolers are *less* likely than others their age to receive services.

Head Start and ECEAP programs provide a unique opportunity for homeless families to provide stability for their children, while accessing the resources needed to improve their situation. Families move into housing more quickly, and in the meantime children are in a nurturing environment, receiving the nutrition and health interventions they need, and are being prepared for kindergarten.

In Washington, Governor Gregoire has proposed cutting 662 children from the ECEAP program, and the U.S. House of Representatives has proposed a budget that would eliminate 3000 Head Start and Early Head Start children from the program in Washington State.

Reports from Head Start and ECEAP Programs

Cathy Garland, Director of Early Learning, Children's Home Society (Walla Walla/King County)

“With the state and federal budget cuts, we hear a lot about how we all have to share the sacrifice, but these children and families don’t have anything left to give. In CHSW’s Early Head Start program we’ve seen a large increase in homeless children since the recession began. These children and their families benefit from being involved in our program - we work with families get them into temporary housing and develop a plan to be able to afford a place to live. We partner with King County Work Training to provide families with education and employment skills they need to be self-sufficient, and we make sure that the children are in a safe place and getting what they need to develop and grow.”

Carly Derrick, Health and Family Services Manager, United Indians Head Start

“We are seeing families whose time in transitional housing is running out and they are still unable to secure employment that would allow them to afford other housing. We are seeing an increase in parents reporting anxiety and depression related to unemployment, fear of eviction, and homelessness. Teachers are seeing signs of anxiety and stress in the children who are part of these families pretty regularly. Many children don’t have enough food to eat, or even basics like a winter coat and shoes that fit. And access to reliable transportation is also much lower than we have seen in the past, making it difficult for parents to follow through with appointments of all kinds (housing, medical, employment). We help families apply for housing, unemployment, food stamps, WIC. We provide donations of food, clothing, baby items, and other necessary items to families on a weekly basis and have started new partnerships with grocery stores who host food drives and schools hosting coat drives to help meet some of the basic needs of our children and families.”

Marcy Maki, Head Start Center Director Martin Luther King Jr. Day Home Center, Seattle

“We do everything we can to provide our homeless children the extra attention they need. We often give them some toys and books and other things that they can truly ‘own’ and not have to share with other children as is the case in the shelters they are living in. Because many homeless parents often are dealing with mental health issues, we connect them with resources in their community and provide their children with any assistance and help they might need.”

Connie Mueller, Director of Early Learning, Kitsap Community Resources, Bremerton

“The number of homeless families we serve has increased. We provide these families with very intensive social services and try to help them find housing. Unfortunately, the number of shelter beds available is not meeting demand. So our agency created a ‘safe park’ where homeless families living in their cars can park. It is gated and patrolled and has shower facilities.”

Eula Motelet, ECEAP Parent, Tacoma

“My daughter Phoebe attends the ECEAP program in Clover Park. When I enrolled my daughter in ECEAP my husband had just lost his business, and as a result our family was living in a motel in Lakewood. ECEAP helped me find stable and affordable housing and now we rent an apartment. Family advocates at my daughter’s program ensured that Phoebe had a stable environment during this very difficult and chaotic time for us. The program has done a phenomenal job teaching Phoebe all her letters and numbers, making sure that she has nutritious meals, and taking care of a dental problem that had previously been untreated. ECEAP helped us get back on track, and has helped Phoebe really thrive.”

About WSA

The Washington State Association of Head Start/ECEAP (WSA) is a statewide organization composed of representatives from ECEAP, Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant/Seasonal Head Start, and Native American Head Start. The association has been in existence since the late 1960's, and was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1986. The organization advocates for Head Start and for ECEAP in Olympia and in Washington DC. You can visit our web site at www.wsaheadstarteceap.com

If you would like to talk to a Head Start or ECEAP program in your area, we would be happy to facilitate that . Contact Katy Warren at 206.291.2021 or Joel Ryan at 253.486.9077.