

Centre County Early Childhood Education Profile 2008-2009

Helping children reach their promise through quality early education

Quality early learning and child development play a major role in a child's future success in school and in life. Pennsylvania's early childhood initiatives provide families with access to reliable, quality early learning opportunities. Listed below are some ways in which these programs touch your county.

Children in Centre County are at Moderate-Low risk of school failure.¹

Research has shown that children affected by risk factors such as poverty, family status, or poor school system, are at higher risk of entering school behind their peers, struggle in school, or drop out altogether. When at-risk children have access to quality early education before age five, these children can often make up for setbacks in their development, enabling them to enter kindergarten on par with their peers.

There are 6,227 children under age five living in Centre County. Of those:

- 34.3% live in low-income households. (2000 US Census defines "low income" as below 200% of federal poverty level, which was equivalent to \$34,058 for a family of four in 2000)
- 9.3% live in families whose mother has less than a high school degree.

12.9% of 3rd graders in local school districts scored below proficient on PSSA in Reading in 2009.

Quality early education can bridge the achievement gap before it begins.

Research has also shown that at-risk children who receive quality early education can catch up to their peers in cognitive and social emotional development before they reach kindergarten, so they are ready to succeed in school and in life. These benefits last a lifetime.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts provides high quality pre-kindergarten education for 3 and 4 year olds in Pennsylvania which is free to families, with a focus on children at risk of academic failure. First year reports show children are learning, parents are engaged, and programs are offering quality services. In 2008-2009, 11,841 children participated in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts.

- 98 3&4 year olds are being served by 3 lead agencies and their partners in Centre County.
- 3.95% of Centre County's 3&4 year olds participate in PA Pre-K Counts.

Keystone STARS is proven to improve the quality of child care based on an independent study and offers parents a tool to gauge the quality of the programs they choose. Child care and Head Start programs earn a STAR 1 to STAR 4 level based on quality standards for teacher qualifications, learning environment and program management. The higher the STAR level, the higher the quality early learning experience for young children. In 2008-2009, approximately 155,400 children from birth through school-age were enrolled in Keystone STARS programs.

- 70% of Centre County's regulated child care centers participate in Keystone STARS.
- 63.6% of Centre County's children under age five are enrolled in Keystone STARS child care programs with 7.0% enrolled in STAR 3 and STAR 4 programs.

Child Care Works provides low-income working families with reliable access to child care, making them more likely to retain employment and be more productive at work.

In 2008-2009, approximately 60,402 children under age five received Child Care Works subsidy on a monthly average.

- Approximately 289 children under age five in Centre County receive Child Care Works subsidy on a monthly average.
- Approximately 75 children under age five were on waiting lists for Child Care Works in Centre County in May 2009.

¹ You can find out more about how each county's risk level is determined in the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) Reach and Risk Report at www.nda.state.pa.us

Early Intervention serves children from birth to age five with disabilities/ developmental delays and their families. Early Intervention builds upon the natural learning occurring in a child's early years and promotes collaboration among parents, service providers, early childhood educators and others involved in the child's life. Approximately 61,633 children under age five received Early Intervention Services in 2008-2009.

- 592 children (7.5%) under age five in Centre County received Early Intervention Services in 2008-2009.

Pennsylvania Nurse-Family Partnership helps low-income, first-time parents experience healthy pregnancies, learn how to take good care of their babies, and make plans for the future. Home visits by registered nurses promote the physical, cognitive and social-emotional development of the children and provide general support as well as instructive parenting skills to the parents. Services are provided to families prenatally until the child reaches two years of age. In 2008-2009, Nurse-Family Partnership served 4,179 children in 38 counties

- 73 children in Centre County were served by Nurse-Family Partnership in 2008-2009, which represents about 1.95% of children under age three in this county.

Head Start provides comprehensive early learning services to children and families who are most at risk of academic failure. 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 involvement component, supports to children with disabilities. In 2008-2009, 35,311 children received Head Start services through state and federal funding.

- 186 children (3.0%) under age five in Centre County are served by Head Start.

More investment is needed in quality early education if Pennsylvania is to secure a brighter future for its children, families and communities

Every child benefits from a quality early education. Approximately 37.0% of children under age five in Centre County have access to publicly funded quality early childhood programs.

The benefits of early education extend throughout communities in better school performance and lower special education and remediation costs. As these children become adults, communities benefit from a higher skilled workforce and lower public costs for public assistance, crime control and lost taxes.

Make a smart investment in Pennsylvania's future: support Pennsylvania's early childhood initiatives.

Distributed by:
Smart Start-Centre County
P.O. Box 853
State College, PA 16804-0853
814.238.0331
www.smartstartcc.org
info@smartstartcc.org

