



Head Start & Early Childhood Education

The Benefits of Childcare Programs

Since **Head Start**'s beginnings over 50 years ago, it has shown a significant impact not only on **educational achievement** but also on **long-term health and wellbeing**: increasing homeownership, reduction in substance use and dependency, reduction in likelihood to go to prison, and so much more. Early childhood education also **allows parents to work during the day while their children are safely learning** outside the home. Although the holistic benefits of childcare are well documented, access to affordable childcare for many families with low incomes is out of reach. **Community Action Agencies (CAAs) work to improve access through Head Start and Early Head Start** programs and work to increase the number and affordability of various childcare provider options across the state. All CAA Head Starts are 4-Star Parent Aware rated.

Administering Head Start & Early Head Start

Along with MN's Tribal Nations and four other organizations, **most CAAs provide Head Start for their communities**. Head Start and Early Head Start, which serve 3 to 5-year-olds and birth to 3-year-olds respectively, are no-cost federal and state funded programs that **provide kindergarten readiness** for families with low incomes. But Head Start is so much more than early childhood education. Through Head Start, CAAs provide **family support; parent engagement; social support; immunizations; and dental, mental and physical health care**. Head Start also provides parents with advocacy and leadership opportunities. For more information visit [MN Head Start Association](#).

Improving Access to Childcare Providers

Child Care Aware – Some CAAs work with this [nonprofit](#) to help new childcare providers get licensed and provide support and trainings to existing providers to **improve the quality and number of providers available**.

Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) – Some CAAs work with their counties to administer CCAP. This program uses state and federal **funding to pay for childcare costs for qualifying families** with low incomes.

Early Learning Scholarships – These Pathway 1 & 2 **scholarships provide funding for eligible 3 & 4-year-olds** from families with low incomes to help achieve kindergarten readiness. Some CAAs run this program in their regions.

About Community Action

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 created the Community Action Network of national and local organizations that connect millions of people, with low and moderate incomes, to essential services. The network works to build community resiliency and helps people move out of poverty. In Minnesota, 24 Community Action Agencies and 11 Tribal Nations serve all 87 counties across the state, providing poverty solutions through programs and services including: homeless prevention and housing assistance, utility bill assistance, healthcare enrollment, food and nutrition services, Head Start early childhood programming, financial asset building, regional transit, and more.

- Over **16,500 children** enrolled in **MN Head Start/Early Head Start**.
- **97%** Head Start children up-to-date on **immunizations**
- **99%** had access to **medical care** and **88%** had access to **dental care**

Source: 2019 MinnCAP Annual Report

