Minnesota

Minnesota provides state funding to both Early Head Start and Head Start in order to increase access to these programs for children from birth to age 5. Any agency which receives federal Head Start funding is eligible for the state’s additional funding. Agencies may collaborate with private child care centers, public schools, and family child care homes, but all providers who receive state funds must follow the federal Head Start Performance Standards. Additionally, all program staff members receive technical assistance and training on the state’s early learning standards, Early Childhood Indicators of Progress.

Minnesota allows their Head Start programs the flexibility to allocate funds to either Early Head Start or Head Start. In recent years, programs have allocated more funds to Early Head Start programs as a means for reaching families while their children are younger. As a consequence, total enrollment in Minnesota Head Start has decreased over time. For the first time, the state was able to provide spending for Head Start programs only and not include funds allocated to Early Head Start for the 2009-2010 school year as well as for previous years.

The School Readiness Program, a second initiative supported by the state, provides services through school districts, community-based organizations, and subcontracted charter schools. This program aims to promote kindergarten readiness through several approaches, including preschool education programs, home visits, and services for children with disabilities, though individual school districts determine which services to offer. Programs must provide research-based program content, encourage parent involvement, coordinate with other local programs, and ensure that children receive appropriate screenings and referrals. However, since program enrollment and funding data for center-based preschool education services are not tracked at the state level, the School Readiness Program is not the focus of data in this profile.

Statutory changes in the 2008-2009 school year affected the operation of state-funded pre-K in Minnesota. The first change allowed programs that propose to provide Early Head Start (EHS) services to use a per-child rate up to the federal EHS average within the state, even if the program does not receive federal funding for EHS. Another change exempts some programs from strict enrollment requirements if they have been approved to serve a high-risk population, such as the homeless.
MINNESOTA HEAD START

ACCESS

Total state program enrollment.............................1,874
School districts that offer state program.............100% (counties)
Income requirement.................................90% of children must be at or below 100% FPL or receiving TANF1
Hours of operation......................At least 3.5 hours/day, 4 days/week2
Operating schedule..............................At least 32 weeks/year3
Special education enrollment.................................8,520
Federally funded Head Start enrollment.................9,867
State-funded Head Start enrollment......................1,732

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

Early learning standards ..........................................................Comprehensive
Teacher degree.................................................................BA (public); CDA (nonpublic)4......BA
Teacher specialized ...............License or certification in EC (public); ............Specializing in pre-K
training
Assistent teacher degree .........................................................Meet child care regs.4 ........CDA or equivalent
Teacher in-service ..........................................15 clock hours ..........At least 15 hours/year
Maximum class size .................................................................15
3-year-olds ...........................................................................20 or lower
4-year-olds ...........................................................................20
Staff-child ratio ......................................................1:10 or better
3-year-olds ...........................................................................2:17
4-year-olds ...........................................................................1:10
Screening/referral .................Vision, hearing, health, dental, ..........Vision, hearing, health; and
and support services ....................................................developmental; and support services5 at least 1 support service
Meals .................................................................Lunch and/or breakfast6........At least 1/day
Monitoring ..............................................................Site visits and other monitoring ..........Site visits

RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending ..........................$13,682,0747
Local match required?.......................................................No
State Head Start spending ..........................$13,682,0747
State spending per child enrolled.........................$7,301
All reported spending per child enrolled* ......................$7,301

1 State pre-K children must meet the federal Head Start income guidelines. Effective December 2007, 35 percent of enrollment may be children whose family incomes are between 100 and 130 percent FPL after priority is given to children at 100 percent or below FPL.
2 Schedules are determined locally but must be in compliance with federal Head Start regulations. Programs must operate at least 3.5 hours per day, 4 days per week, and 32 weeks per year.
3 The Head Start reauthorization that went into effect in December 2007 requires that by 2011 all lead teachers must have at least an AA degree and by 2013 at least 50 percent must have at least a BA related to teaching preschool children. Currently, about 80 percent in Minnesota Head Start programs have at least an AA and 60 percent have at least a BA in ECE or a related field. In a public school, teacher union rules require that teachers have at least a bachelor’s degree.
4 Assistant teachers in settings subject to child care regulations must work under the supervision of a teacher, be at least 18 years old, and meet one of nine combined credential, educational, and experience requirements, such as a high school diploma, 12 quarter units in early childhood or a related field, and 2,080 hours of experience. Federal Head Start requires that by 2013 all assistant teachers have a CDA or be enrolled in a program to receive a CDA, AA, or BA within two years.
5 Programs are also required to provide screenings and referrals for nutrition issues. Support services include two annual parent conferences or home visits, education services or job training for parents, parenting support or training, parent involvement activities, health services for parents and children, information about nutrition, referral to social services, and transition to kindergarten activities.
6 Federal Head Start Performance Standards require half-day programs to provide children with at least one-third of their daily nutritional needs (breakfast or lunch), and full-day programs to provide two meals or two-thirds of their daily nutritional needs.
7 All spending through this initiative is directed toward Head Start programs.