

Puerto Rico

NO PROGRAM

Puerto Rico has preschool education programs that are funded by grants from various areas. This description shows how Puerto Rico, which operates as a single school district, supports several early childhood education initiatives.

Early childhood preschool programs are administered by the Administration for Care and Integral Development of Childhood (ACUDEN, Spanish acronym) and the Department of Education has authority over early childhood special education. There are seven levels of education in Puerto Rico, and Level One is nursery school for children under age four, which is optional and consists of Early Head Start, Head Start and other prekindergarten programs. Level Two is compulsory preschool, also known as kindergarten, which is mandatory for 5-year-olds.

ACUDEN is the grantee that receives federal funding for Head Start and Early Head Start Programs, which operates in Puerto Rico through nine delegated agencies. In 2024-2025, these programs served 1,908 families and 1,994 children (1,571 in Head Start and 423 in Early Head Start). There is an active multi-sectoral regulatory council for Head Start, which has representation from various sectors and meets every two months.

ACUDEN is also the lead agency for the Child Care Program funds. The agency guarantees the provision of and access to comprehensive care and development for the neediest children from their early formative stages, and encourages the participation of fathers, mothers, caregivers, and relatives in the educational and formative process. Through the Child Care Program, ACUDEN funds 105 service providers and more than 319 centers, serving more than 10,739 children.

In addition, Puerto Rico was awarded a PDG B-5 grant for the purpose of updating early childhood planning efforts in Puerto Rico. Through this grant, Puerto Rico successfully disseminated the Needs Assessment, developed Early Learning Guidelines, held Virtual Wellness Cafes for more than 5,000 participants, and provided professional development opportunities to early childhood professionals, among other activities.

Through the efforts of the PDG B-5 Project, the Multisectoral Council for Early Childhood was reactivated. The Council has developed public policies in the areas of health, education, security, and family well-being. It has also been able to expand the services offered by ACUDEN through partnerships with government agencies and non-governmental organizations to create and offer inclusive and efficient services for children. As part of its service expansion strategies, the Council has developed training programs for parents, educators, and social workers about the importance of early development and the role of the family in the education of children.

The objectives of PDG B-5 primarily focused on developing a variety of workshops, certifications, and orientations, with the purpose of promoting best practices to optimize the development and well-being of children in child care centers. These activities enabled ACUDEN to meet its strategic plan and achieve a successful project closure.

ACUDEN has been implementing the instrument Centros del Futuro (Centers of the Future), a multisectoral aspiration aimed to ensure children develop in environments that foster their full and optimal growth. The instrument outlines a series of criteria to assess the quality of services, operations, and the environment in early childhood care and development centers in Puerto Rico. During the 2024 cycle, 112 centers participated.

As part of ACUDEN's ongoing efforts to strengthen and elevate the quality of services provided to children, during the program year 2024-2025, several strategic initiatives were implemented, including the Child Care 100 x 35 Program and the Effective Quality

(continued)

ACCESS RANKINGS	
4-YEAR-OLDS	3-YEAR-OLDS
None Served	

RESOURCE RANKINGS	
STATE SPENDING	ALL REPORTED SPENDING
None Served	

TOTAL BENCHMARKS MET
No Program

PUERTO RICO

ACCESS

Total state pre-K enrollment	0
School districts that offer state program	NA
Income requirement	NA
Minimum hours of operation	NA
Operating schedule	NA
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4	12,372
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4	16,110
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4	Not reported

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

NO PROGRAM

Improvement Program (EQUIP). Through the Child Care 100 x 35 Program, ACUDEN expanded the availability of child care services across the island with a primary focus on communities identified as child care deserts. This initiative provided funding and technical assistance to 66 entities to increase service capacity. Similarly, EQUIP provided financial support to 256 child care centers to implement facility improvements and acquire essential equipment necessary to meet established health and safety standards.

As the lead agency for early childhood in Puerto Rico, ACUDEN remains committed to the continuous pursuit of innovative initiatives that promote and enhance the quality of services offered to children and families.

RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending	\$0
Local match required?	NA
State Head Start spending	Not reported
State spending per child enrolled	\$0
All reported spending per child enrolled*	\$0

* Pre-K programs may receive additional funds from federal or local sources that are not included in this figure.

† Head Start per-child spending includes funding only for 3- and 4-year-olds.

‡ K-12 expenditures include capital spending as well as current operating expenditures.

SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED

