

Who is Missing from Federal Childcare, Education and Family Support Policies and Programs? Much of the Family

Child Care Development Block Grants (CCDBG) is a child care program and Head Start is an early education and comprehensive family support services program. Both are federally funded and designed primarily to support children and families with low incomes. [Disparate Access: Head Start and CCDBG Data by Race and Ethnicity](#), a recent report by the Center for Law and Social Policy (February 2016) highlights disparities in participation rates between children of different races and ethnicities. The numbers also indicate that participation rates are oftentimes dismal. These programs are intended to support the growth and development of children from low-income families through quality schooling and child care and by assisting parents in accessing resources needed for their families. Therefore, it is important to assess them in ways that incorporate fathers and reflect the context of today’s families, which often include two parents engaged in a child’s life who do not live in the same household. And, in practice, programs serve very low numbers of eligible children and mothers and reflect racial and ethnic disparities. CFFPP’s current projects are particularly focused on four specific states, therefore much of the analysis below highlights Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and Wisconsin.

Head Start and Early Head Start provide federal funds to local providers, and target [families with children ages 0-4, 90+% of whom have incomes below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level \(FPL\)](#). CLASP reports that in the 2011-13 period, Head Start served 43% of eligible children and Early Head Start served 5%. CCDBG operates differently. In this program, the federal government provides grants to states. States distribute money to local programs that provide care to children, ages 0-13, for parents who are working or in school. Income eligibility is determined by state and can be up to 85% of State Median Income (SMI), which, across states, ranged from 119% to 205% of the FPL. During the 2011-2013 period, 13% of eligible children were served through CCDBG. The racial and ethnic breakdown for these programs as reported by CLASP is reflected below.

Percentage of Eligible Children Served by Program and Race or Ethnicity

	Black	Hispanic/ Latino	Asian	American Indian/ Alaskan Native
Early Head Start	6%	5%	4%	*
Head Start	54%	38%	36%	*
CCDBG	21%	8%	11%	6%

*Not included due to low numbers of AIAN children in most states and complexity of eligibility requirements.



There are dramatic disparities in how Head Start and CCDBG are serving children of different races and ethnicities. Overall, Black children are more likely to be served by Head Start, yet there are significant differences within and between states. Because of the small number of eligible Asian and American Indian/Alaskan Native children in many states, and because of separate programs targeting AIAN children and families, the comparisons offered below are primarily between Black and Hispanic/Latino groupings.

CLASP reported that while Mississippi served every Black child eligible for Head Start, only 59% of eligible Hispanic/Latino children were served. Wisconsin's numbers look quite different. While serving a smaller overall percentage of Head Start eligible children (52%), there is not a disparity between groups of color. Wisconsin served 59% of eligible Black children and 60% of eligible Hispanic/Latino children. Georgia offered a different scenario, where 43% of eligible Black preschoolers and only 15% of Hispanic/Latino children are served.

Further exploring how well parents' needs are served by these programs will likely shed light on why disparities do and don't exist across racial and ethnic groups, and within and across states. Disparities might be associated with a number of factors, including: the locations of centers in relation to where low-income families live and parents work; families' child care preferences; language issues; and/or the ways the programs are publicized.

A closer look at CCDBG numbers reinforces the disparities, but also illuminates the dismal rates at which this program serves children of color. Nationwide, only 13% of eligible children of color are served. In the states whose numbers warrant consideration of both Black and Hispanic/Latino categories, CCDBG always serves Black children in greater percentages (with one exception, Rhode Island). In Louisiana and Wisconsin, Black children are three times more likely to be served by CCDBG than Hispanic/Latino children. Georgia is more extreme with 18% of eligible Black children and 2% of eligible Hispanic/Latino children participating. Similarly, Mississippi's CCDBG only serves 16% of eligible Black children and 1% of eligible Hispanic/Latino children. Interestingly, nationwide, 11% of Asian children are served through CCDBG, and New York is the only state serving a majority of any group of color, with 73% of New York's eligible Asian children participating.

The percentages of children of color served by Early Head Start are even more dismal. In Louisiana, 6% of eligible Black children are served through Early Head Start and in Georgia the portion is 5%. Yet within those two states, only 1% of eligible Hispanic/Latino infants and toddlers are served. It is also true in Early Head Start that Black children are more likely to be served, yet the larger issue seems to be the dismal participation rates across all groups of color. Given the very low participation rates of eligible children of color, it is particularly important to understand families' experiences and decision-making processes in meeting their child care needs. In addition to issues already mentioned, the type and quality of care available, the hours of the programs, waitlists, transportation and accessibility for all parents—both mothers and fathers—may also play roles in participation.

While participation rates of children of color is clearly an important layer to consider, it is also useful to consider the ways in which policies and practices accommodate varied formal and informal custody and parenting time arrangements and therefore impact rates of participation. For example, children who are eligible for these programs often have two parents that do not live in the same household and all parents



and guardians that are helping to establish a safe and thriving environment for their children, should be reflected in CCDBG, Head Start and Early Head Start policies. Like all adults raising children, parents that do not live in the same household have expectations of one another around financial support, physical presence in the child's life, and additional roles that parents play. When there are two parents active in a child's life, in what ways do these programs support the development of the child, as well as each parent, and therefore the family unit? Does each parent have access to the programs' resources? Is access linked to the formal or informal custody or parenting time arrangements? Children benefit most when systems are in place that support the development of the child and the family as a whole which includes each parent. Understanding the programs in relation to parent access and usage, and related policies and practices, will afford additional insights into how to most effectively support children, their parents, and therefore, the whole family.

Head Start, Early Head Start, and CCDBG are programs intended to support the growth and development of children and families. Understanding the currently disparate and dismal participation rates among children of color necessitates analyses of policies and practices in the context of the children and families whom these programs are intended to serve. Head Start was created to provide high-quality early childhood education and comprehensive family support services to children experiencing poverty and their families. Participation of children reflects one very important aspect of participation, but only one. [Head Start regulations sometimes talk about “pregnant woman” and sometimes “family,”](#) suggesting that there is one parent eligible to access services and sometimes suggesting more. In what ways does Head Start encourage/support access to resources and learning for multiple parents when they do not live in the same household? Similarly, do noncustodial parents who provide care for their children and work or attend school have access to CCDBG funding? The disparate and dismal rates by which Head Start, Early Head Start and CCDBG programs serve eligible children and families of color highlight the need to develop and assess programs in the context of today's families which often include two parents who do not live in the same household.

Mission Statement: The mission of the **CENTER FOR FAMILY POLICY AND PRACTICE (CFFPP)** is to strengthen society through the expansion of opportunities for low-income parents – mothers and fathers – to protect and support their children. CFFPP operates as a policy think tank to remove the unique barriers and negative public perceptions that affect low-income men of color. Through technical assistance, policy research and analysis, and public education and outreach, CFFPP works to support low-income families and develop public awareness of their needs.

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