

KENTUCKY EDGUIDES | CORE PROGRAMS 2.1

Early Childhood and Preschool

All children begin life as learners, and their early abilities grow best with strong support from well-prepared parents and caregivers. Here's how Kentucky supports that growth.

HOW CAN NEW PARENTS LEARN ABOUT SUPPORTING THEIR CHILDREN'S GROWTH?

For new and expectant parents, the **HANDS program** provides voluntary home visits to support parents' efforts to help their children grow and learn. All first-time parents are eligible for a first meeting to discuss questions and share resources. Parents who are facing multiple challenges can receive regular home visits that share information, link families to health and other services, and build on the strengths of each family. HANDS is short for Health Access Nurturing Development Services. Contact your local health department to learn more or participate.

For low-income families, **Early Head Start** serves pregnant women, infants, and toddlers up to age 3, providing support for healthy births, child development, and family functioning. Early Head Start is offered by a variety of providers, with some offering support in families' homes, others working in centers, and some using combined approaches.

WHAT HELP IS AVAILABLE IF A CHILD HAS A POSSIBLE DISABILITY OR DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY?

From birth through age three, children with developmental delays are eligible for **First Steps**, a statewide early intervention system that serves those children and their families. First Steps support is also available for children with conditions that may cause delays (for example, Downs Syndrome). Depending on the child's needs, services may include varied therapies, parent training, counseling, medical assistance, and other kinds of support. Anyone can refer a child for First Steps services by sending an e-mail to chfs.firststeps@ky.gov.

Starting at age three, children with developmental delays and disabilities are eligible for free, **state-funded preschool programs** in their local school districts. Check with your local schools for information on how to enroll children in your local program.

HOW CAN CHILD CARE CONTRIBUTE TO CHILDREN'S GROWTH?

Children benefit deeply from high quality childcare, developing greater thinking skills and attention, better relationships with parents and peers, and enhanced academic performance.

The Kentucky **STARS for KIDS NOW** program rates childcare programs based on features shown to contribute to children's

KENTUCKY EARLY CHILDHOOD STANDARDS

Our standards for Kentucky's youngest learners are "designed as a framework to assist parents, early care, intervention, and education professionals, administrators, and others in understanding what children are able to know and do from birth through four years of age." Aligned with the Kentucky Academic standards, they address the Key areas shown below.

BIRTH TO THREE YEARS OF AGE

- Cognitive
- Communication
- Creative Expression
- Motor
- Social Emotional

THREE AND FOUR YEARS OF AGE

- Arts and Humanities
- English/Language Arts (Early Literacy)
- Health Education (Health/Mental Wellness)
- Mathematics
- Physical Education (Gross and Fine Motor Skills)
- Science
- Social Studies

At education.ky.gov, you can find the full Standards by searching for "early childhood."

LEARNING MORE

The Child Care Council of Kentucky shares information on child care, STARS ratings and other supports at childcarecouncilofky.com

Early Childhood Profiles for each county offer data on childcare quality, kindergarten screening results, and participation in publicly funded preschool, Head Start and childcare. Find them at Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce website (kcews.ky.gov) by searching for "childhood profile."

To connect with your local Community Early Childhood Council, visit kidsnow.ky.gov and search for "CECC."

development, like program curriculum, child care staff training, opportunities for family involvement, and other features. Participation in a childcare rating system gives parents clear, quick information about the quality of education and support their children will receive. Learn more by talking to local childcare providers or visiting chfs.ky.gov/dCBS/dcc/stars.

An enhanced rating system, known as Kentucky All STARS, will begin in 2016 and provide ratings for preschool, Head Start and childcare.

The Child Care Assistance Program helps low-income working families afford quality childcare for their children. For more information, visit childcarecouncilofky.com.

WHAT LEARNING PROGRAMS CAN HELP YOUNG CHILDREN BE READY FOR SCHOOL?

Before they start kindergarten, many children benefit from a year or more of preschool, learning to socialize with other children, participate in planned activities, and begin learning about letters, numbers, and other lasting skills.

For low-income children who turn four by August 1, Kentucky school districts provide free **state-funded preschool** programs. Starting in 2015-16, students are eligible for state preschool if their family incomes are 160% of poverty: that is a change from the past 150% cut off and has the potential to allow another 5,000 children to benefit each year. In some districts, state-funded preschool programs also have openings for children who are not from low-income homes. Check with your local schools for information on available options.

Children from low-income families can also benefit from **Head Start**, a federally funded program that promotes school readiness by enhancing their cognitive, social and emotional development.

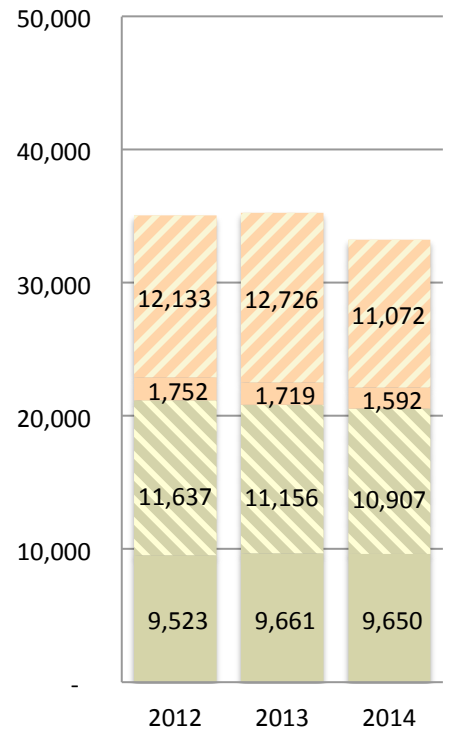
Many Kentucky children also participate in **private preschools**, offered by many different organizations within their communities, usually charging fees and sometimes also offering scholarships or fee reductions to children who would otherwise not be able to attend.

Kentucky's **public libraries** also promote school readiness with resources, activities and early childhood programming, and the Kentucky Governor's Office of Early Childhood offers **Parent Guides** and **Monthly Messages** with insights into how to support young children at www.kidsnowky.gov.

HOW DOES KENTUCKY FUND ITS STATEWIDE EARLY CHILDHOOD SUPPORTS?

As noted above, state tax dollars support preschool and federal dollars support Head Start. Kentucky also funds some important early childhood investments using dollars from the master tobacco settlement fund, including the HANDS program, childcare quality efforts, and childcare scholarships for early care and education personnel, along with other investments in children's health.

SEEING RESULTS



- Head Start Low Income Enrollment
- Head Start Disability Enrollment
- Preschool Low Income Enrollment
- Preschool Disability Enrollment

Source: Early Childhood Profile reports www.kcews.ky.gov