



Head Start & Early Head Start

Every child, regardless of circumstances at birth, has the ability to reach their full potential.

BACKGROUND

In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson launched the War on Poverty, recognizing education as the key to breaking the cycle of poverty. As a part of this effort, Project Head Start was established to provide early childhood education and family support. Early Head Start serves expectant families and infants through age three, and Head Start Preschool serves children ages three to five.

The YMCA of Metro Atlanta (the Y) has been a trusted Head Start provider since 1999, impacting over 3,000 children every day with the education, resources, and support needed for a strong start in life.

Our Head Start children engage in the Read Right from the Start program, focusing on language and literacy development through practice-based training for teachers. 90% of our Head Start children leave our YMCA Early Learning centers prepared for kindergarten in language and literacy, indicating they are on track for 3rd grade reading proficiency.



KEY PILLARS

Head Start programs take a comprehensive approach to supporting young children and their families through four key pillars.

ABC

Early
Learning



Health
Services



Family
Engagement



Wraparound
Services



YMCA OF METRO ATLANTA ENROLLMENT ELIGIBILITY

Head Start serves families with incomes below the U.S. Federal poverty guidelines, but eligibility also includes:

- Families receiving public assistance
- Children in foster care
- Up to 10% of slots for families with slightly higher incomes, only if spots are available

EXPANDING ACCESS TO EARLY EDUCATION: THE Y'S LEADERSHIP IN HEAD START

In 2024, the Office of Head Start awarded the YMCA of Metro Atlanta the Richmond County, Augusta, Georgia Head Start service area. Programs in this area faced potential closure, however the Y acted swiftly, leveraging its expertise to reopen Head Start programming.

The YMCA of Metro Atlanta's Head Start programs assures that parents have access to high-quality early childhood education and job opportunities while providing support and resources promoting their child's development at home.



379

Head Start
Centers in
Georgia

90%

of Head Start children
leave prepared for
kindergarten in
language and literacy

355

Head Start teachers
and staff employed
by the YMCA of
Metro Atlanta

78%

of Head Start
parents currently
employed in the
workforce

HEAD START CHILDREN ARE:

- ↑ More likely to complete high school
- ↑ More likely to enroll in and complete college
- ↑ More likely to avoid the criminal justice system
- ↓ Less likely to enter foster care
- ↓ Less Likely to experience poor health



ADVOCATE FOR HEAD START'S FUTURE



Head Start programs face an uncertain future. Proposals to dismantle this critical safety net would directly impact thousands of Georgia's families, reducing access to early education and essential services.

How You Can Take Action:

- Share the value of Head Start with your congressional leaders.
- Speak with policymakers about the importance of protecting early learning programs.
- Advocate for continued investment in Head Start to ensure every child has the opportunity to succeed.

Together, we can safeguard the future of Georgia's children.

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