

Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office Special Report

Special Report: Estimated Impacts of Actual and Projected Sequestration Cuts on Head Start and Early Head Start Programs in Vermont

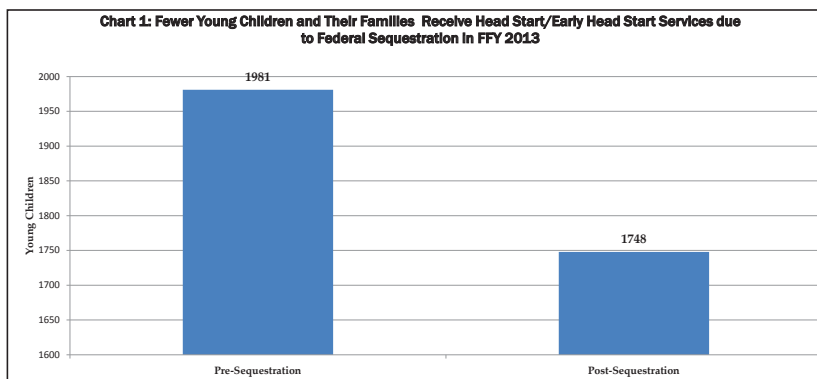
January 2014

On April 26, 2013, the federal Office of Head Start announced that all Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) programs nationally would receive a 5.27% cut on their Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2013 grants to operate their programs.¹ This cut reduced the base grant amounts of Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Vermont by \$800,000 from \$15.1 million to \$14.3 million during FFY2013.² Head Start and Early Head Start programs are currently operating under a Continuing Resolution at the FFY2013 funding level until federal lawmakers approve FFY2014 appropriations legislation containing the Head Start line item. Funding for the current FFY is still unconfirmed.

Head Start and Early Head Start Services to Children and Their Families:

The federal Office of Head Start reported in August 2013 that an estimated 233 young children and their families in Vermont would no longer receive Head Start and Early Head Start services because of the 5.27% cut.³ Using this official estimate, the number of young children and their families serving Head

Start and Early Head Start services dropped by 12% from 1,981 pre-sequestration to 1,748 post-sequestration (see Chart 1).



Surveys

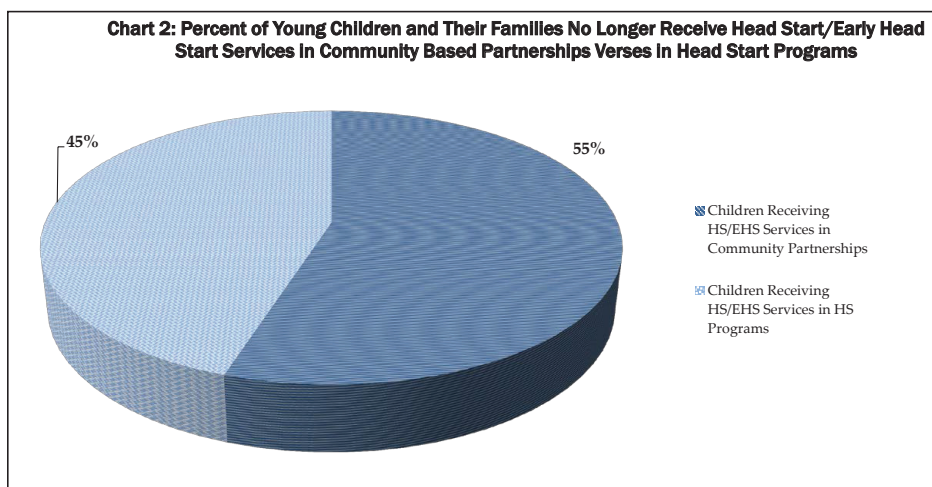
On May 20-23 and July 12-29, 2013, the Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office surveyed all Head Start and Early Head Start program directors in Vermont to understand how Head Start and Early Head Start programs in our state managed the impacts of the 5.27% funding cut for FFY2013. One hundred percent of programs responded to the surveys. The survey included questions about the extent to which cuts impacted Head Start and Early Head Start enrollment, staffing, services, programming, and partnerships with community early care and education programs.

Survey Findings

Head Start/Early Head Start programs are community-based organizations who directly receive federal grants. Each community-based organization is responsible for specific area in Vermont. The local programs have varying needs, resources, and partnerships in the communities they serve, and operate independent of one another. The programs sought to minimize the negative impacts of sequestration on their programs and on young children and families. Each program managed the cuts differently.

Partnerships:

Head Start and Early Head Start programs partner with community early care and education programs to provide additional care for Head Start and Early Head Start eligible children. Community early care and education partners access a high level of quality assurance through the federal Head Start regulations and monitoring system, which is lost when a partnership is not



sustained. Head Start/Early Head Start bring to these community based programs comprehensive services and financial investments that significantly improve services for the most vulnerable children and families. Comprehensive services provided by Head Start/Early Head Start programs include health, nutrition, mental health, and family support services that are not readily available to families outside of partnerships.

Sequestration has affected the consistency and commitment necessary for long-term, quality partnerships between Head Start/Early Head Start providers and community early care and education providers. For instance, Bennington County Head Start ended a 12-year partnership with a community early care and education partner.

The cuts affected partnerships between Head Start /Early Head Start programs and community early care and education programs because Head Start/Early Head Start programs had less federal dollars to contribute to these partnerships. It is estimated that 55 percent of the children who lost access to Head Start/Early Head Start services were in community early care and education programs and 45 percent were in programs operated by Head Start/Early Head Start grantees (see Chart 2).

Employment/Staffing:

Due to the funding cuts, Head Start and Early Head Start programs eliminated 32.5 positions - including 15 teacher and 7 home visiting positions and reduced 3.5 positions. In several programs, teachers and senior and junior staff were furloughed and/or required to take vacations.

Head Start and Early Head Start directors indicated in their survey responses that sequestration has

had negative impacts on teacher and staff morale, retention, and recruitment. This creates a stress that can impact the quality and consistency of services delivered to children and families.

Additional Impacts:

Some Head Start and Early Head Start programs closed their programs early and/or eliminated services during this past summer. For example, Central Vermont Community Action Council ended its Early Head Start home visiting program services to 115 infants, toddlers, and their families nine weeks early. One Head Start program reported cutting a mental health services contract and summer tooth tutor services.

Summary

Sequestration caused local Head Start and Early Head Start organizations to make cuts in a variety of ways. An estimated 233 young children and their families in Vermont no longer receive Head Start and Early Head Start services. The enrollment and staffing cuts and furloughs impact the quality and consistency of services delivered to children and families in Vermont. In addition, sequestration affected teacher and staff morale in the programs and resources available for partnerships.

For more information, please contact:

Ben Allen, Ph.D.
Vermont Head Start Collaboration Director
Vermont Agency of Human Services
Department for Children & Families, Child Development Division
103 South Main Street, Building 2 North
Waterbury, Vermont 05671-2901
Phone: 1-800-649-2642
Email: ben.allen@state.vt.us

¹ Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2013, April 26). Program Instruction: Final FY 2013 Funding Level, ACF-PI-HS-13-03. Visit: http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/PIs/2013/resour_pri_003_042613.html. The FFY begins on October 1st of each year and ends on September 30th of the subsequent year. For example, FFY 2014 is from October 1, 2013-September 30, 2014.

² The federal Office of Head Start Region I Office supplied the VHSSCO with the \$15,084,203 and \$14,289,266 figures on May 3, 2013.

³ Source: Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. August 19, 2013.

