



Head Start, Early Head Start, and Community Childcare 2025-2026 Annual Report



Program Overview- Enrollment

Community Action Partnership Belknap-Merrimack Counties, Inc. provides center-based Head Start services for 130 children, ages 3 and 4, and their families. Head Start services are provided at five sites, located in Concord, Laconia, Franklin, and Pittsfield. In our Early Head Start program, our full enrollment is 128 and we provide services for pregnant mothers and children up to 3 years and their families.

The program continues to offer a variety of different program options in order to meet the different needs of families living in our communities.

- Center-based Early Head Start options are provided in our Concord and Laconia sites. The program also offers wrap-around childcare for Early Head Start and Head Start families.
- The home-based Early Head Start option provides services to pregnant women and families with children up to age 3 across Belknap and Merrimack counties.
- The Head Start program provides 1020 annual hours of planned classroom operation for 45% of the children enrolled in the Community Action Program Belknap-Merrimack Counties Head Start program by maintaining year-round early education services in 4 out of its 9 Head Start classrooms.

Due to continuous shortage of early childhood educators, the program was forced to keep several classrooms closed. The program was able to keep 3 of the 6 Early Head Start classrooms this year. The program was able to open 8 of the 9 Head Start classrooms. The program's home-based services maintained approximately 94% of its enrollment. Our combined enrollment for the 2025-2026 year was 250. Our program is prioritizing hiring qualified staff and enrolling children in order to meet full enrollment.

Budget Breakdown

Our agency 2026 audited revenues and expenditures for HS/EHS program year were as follows:

Revenues		Expenditures	
US Department of Health & Human Services	\$ 4,909,175	Personnel	\$2,709,976
Non-Federal Share	1,305,324	Fringe	832,604
	<u>\$ 6,214,499</u>	Other	1,317,840
		Travel	48,755
		Non-Federal Share	1,305,324
			<u>\$6,214,499</u>

Proposed Budget for 2027

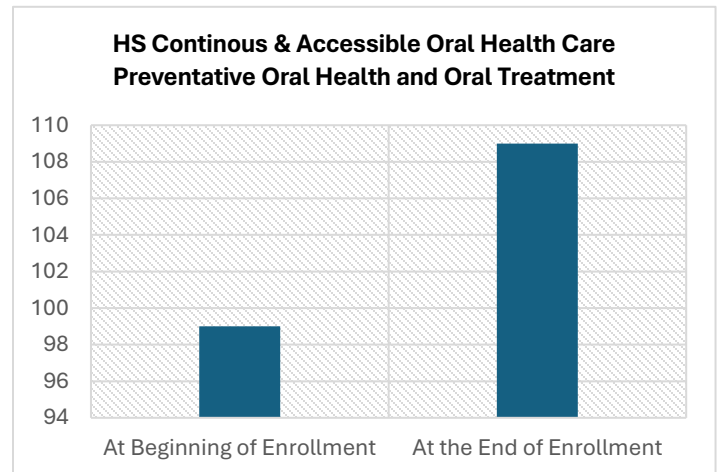
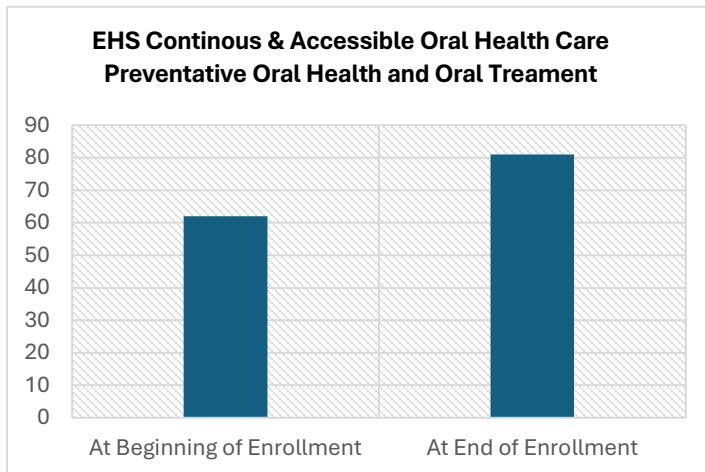
Personnel	\$3,000,000
Fringe	900,000
Travel	65,000
Other	1,138,154
Training and Tech. Assistance	70,601
Non-Federal Share	<u>\$1,275,789</u>
	<u>\$6,378,943</u>



Health and Nutrition



Experienced health and family services staff work to ensure that the children enrolled in Belknap- Merrimack Head Start and Early Head Start have both a medical and dental home within their community. By the end of the 2025-2026 program year, nearly 100% of all Head Start children identified having a medical home and 100% identified as having a dental home, with preventative services provided by a dentist. For Early Head Start, 100% of all children, center-based and home-based, identified having a medical home, and for those children aged 1 year and older, 100% had received professional dental care provided by a dentist, within a dental home. We can also report that nearly 100% of our Head Start and Early Head Start children were insured with either NH Medical or private insurance. Continuous and accessible oral care provided by oral health care providers which includes preventative oral health and oral treatment is an area in which the Program strives to connect families with annually. During the 2025-2026, the Program was successful with increasing the number of families in both Early Head Start and Head Start to continuous oral health care for its enrolled participants. In Spring 2026, the program worked with the NH Dental Health Liaison to host dental clinics for those children who do not have dental homes as well as provide fluoride varnish to children and parents who provide permission at each of our sites. 78 children and families were seen during the scheduled dental clinics!



Education is provided to families regarding the benefits of oral health care, nutritious meals and snacks, and a variety of other health topics and concerns. Families are encouraged to establish a dental home by one year of age and to continue with routine exams every 6 months. All children receive an annual nutrition assessment and concerns are discussed with the WIC Registered Dietician. All pregnant mothers also receive a nutrition assessment and are provided individualized recommendations from the WIC Registered Dietician.

Two Health Services Coordinators provide health education and information to families, and help ensure a safe classroom for all children, including those with special health care needs. Vision and hearing screenings are provided by our health team and are updated annually. Our Health/Nutrition Specialist is a nutritionist who oversees the requirements of the Health and Nutrition programs.

The program participates in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program. All meals are served in a family-style environment, encouraging children's independence in serving themselves and participating in conversations around the meal table. Monthly meal calendars are planned with the emphasis on healthy food options. The program served nearly 57,480 total meals during the 2025-2026 school year (September-June) to children enrolled in our center-based Head Start and Early Head Start programs.





The program plans nutrition activities throughout the year where children and their families can participate in the preparation and exploration of different foods. With the help of the UNH Cooperative Extension, the Concord and Laconia sites each have raised garden beds where children are able to learn how to plant and tend to a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Mental Health

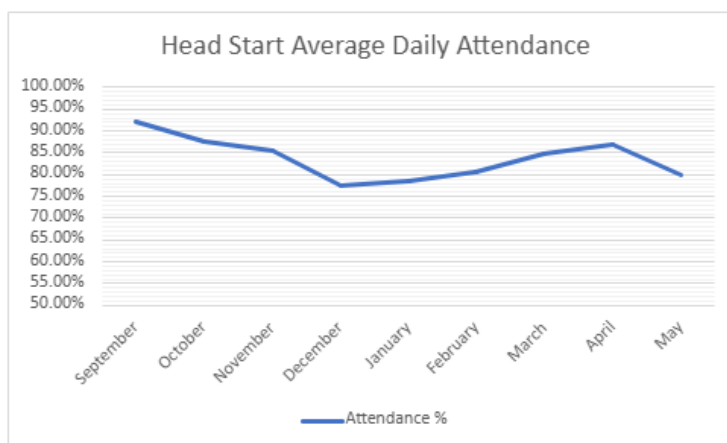
The program contracts with a licensed MSW/LICSW to provide almost 100 hours per month of assistance and support to families and staff. Duties include home visiting, observations, facilitating parent groups, professional development activities and providing staff with support. We also implement a comprehensive social emotional program comprised of both Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports and The Pyramid Model. Direct social emotional instruction occurs daily in all of our classrooms and is facilitated weekly at home visits.

Family Engagement

The mission of Belknap-Merrimack Early Childhood programs is to partner with families to prepare children for success in school and life. Starting at enrollment staff encourage family participation in all aspects of the program. There are a variety of family engagement opportunities:

- Classroom Volunteer
- Great Guy Events
- Health/Mental Health Services Advisory Committee
- Home and Center Visits
- Parent Committee Meetings
- Policy Council
- Parent Trainings
- Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Book Club
- School to Home Connections
- Socialization (home-based)
- State Parents Association
- Wonderful Woman Events
- Father/Male Engagement Activities

Good attendance is important for school success as it impacts the sense of community in the classroom, accessibility of needed resources, and access to quality early childhood experiences. Program staff support families with establishing strong attendance habits prioritizing their child's attendance. As a result, the program has maintained 84% Average Daily Attendance (ADA) for the 2025-2026 School Year. Classrooms who achieve 85% ADA receive a special visit from the program attendance mascot, Punctual Pete for that month.



School Readiness and Child Outcomes

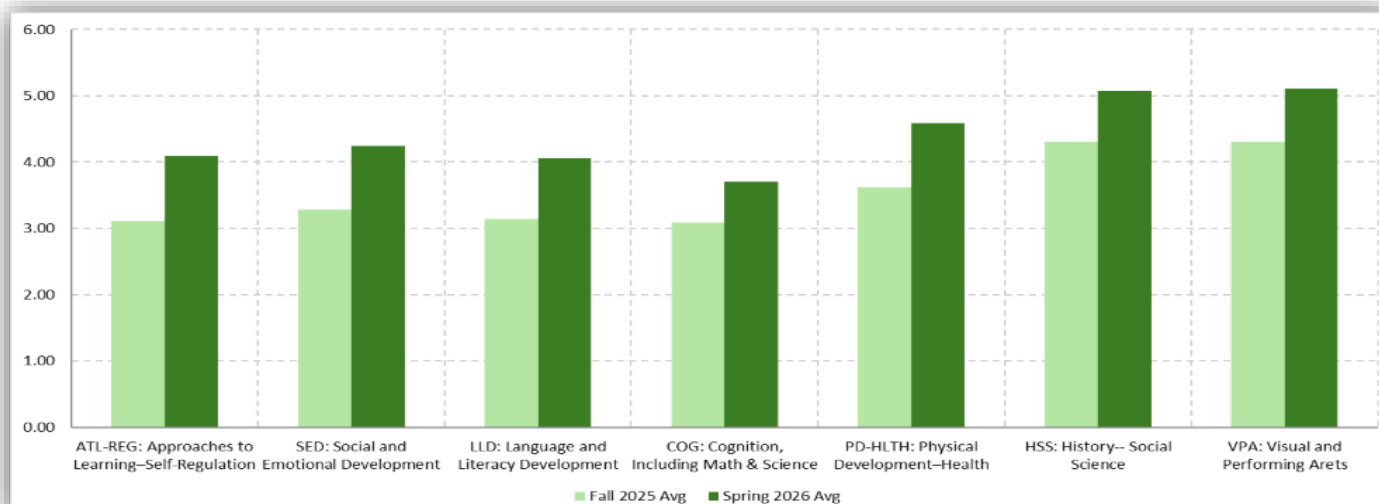


Our Head Start classrooms serve 130 three and four-year old children in multi-aged group settings. Children have the opportunity to attend our program for one or two years prior to entering kindergarten. Our staff provide children with experiences to support their success in achieving school readiness. Our program has created School Readiness Goals for children and families that align with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework. The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework describes the skills, behaviors, and knowledge that programs must foster in all children and is grounded in a comprehensive body of research about what young children should know and be able to do to succeed in school. It is comprised of 5 domains: Approaches to Learning, Social Emotional Development, Language and Literacy, Cognition and Perceptual, Motor and Physical Development, and can be achieved through implantation of our curriculum.

Each of our Head Start programs uses the Creative Curriculum, developed by Teaching Strategies, in conjunction with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework. We also draw from other programs such as The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, I Am Moving I Am Learning, Personal Safety, and Picturing America.

Three times per year, data is collected using our assessment tool Desired Results For Children and Families (DRDP). Fall, winter, and spring outcome data collected is used to drive instruction both individually and program wide. The data collected on each child allows the teachers to individualize their instruction and learning experiences for that child and measure growth. Programmatically the data is used to inform staff training needs and program strengths as well as for ongoing assessment of systems and continuous improvement.

Head Start DRDP Overview Averages from Fall to Spring



The Spring 2026 DRDP data tells a positive story of growth. Children moved steadily from Exploring developmental levels into Building and Integrating levels across all domains, demonstrating progress toward school readiness goals. The results reflect the impact of intentional teaching practices, strong family partnerships, and a commitment to continuous improvement. As children prepare for kindergarten, they are demonstrating increased independence, stronger social-emotional skills, enhanced language and literacy abilities, growing cognitive competencies, and improved physical development- providing a strong foundation for future success.



Our program plans for a variety of transition activities to help children and families move from Head Start to kindergarten. These activities include:

- Visits to the public school by individual Head Start centers
- Visits from the kindergarten teachers to our centers
- Spring Parent Information Night for Head Start parents
- Kindergarten screening and enrollment information given to families
- Transition information packets from Head Start given to each exiting family

The CAPBM Head Start program served on the team that developed and proposed school readiness definitions and indicators for adoption by the State of NH Department of Education and the Early Childhood Community.

Early Head Start

The Early Head Start (EHS) program provides services for 128 prenatal women, infants and toddlers across the Belknap and Merrimack Counties through either a center-based or home-based program option, which is individualized based on family need. The program's EHS center-based childcare sites in Laconia and Concord are NAEYC accredited. The ongoing staffing shortage continues to impact families enrolling in our program and being able to maintain teaching staff for our classrooms.

The early child development and education approach for the center-based EHS program is based on the Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos, and aligns with the Head Start & Early Learning Outcomes Framework. The Creative Curriculum is used as a framework to provide a curriculum for children that focuses on the development of secure relationships; an understanding of the child's family and culture; the development of trust and security; the opportunity to explore a variety of sensory, motor and literacy experiences with support from EHS staff and family members.



The home-based EHS curriculum is based on the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. The PAT program is designed for home visiting programs serving families with children birth to three. The PAT curriculum emphasizes parents as the principal architects of their child's development. Children and their families participate in weekly 90-minute home visits year-round. During the year families are offered opportunities to participate in group experiences called socialization. Socializations provide children with an array of experiences that promote development in a group setting. The prenatal curriculum is based on the Partners for a Healthy Baby program. EHS provides comprehensive, high-quality home visitation services that support and strengthen the relationship between infants, toddlers, and their parents. This relationship provides the foundation from which young children develop the social competence necessary for success later in school and life.

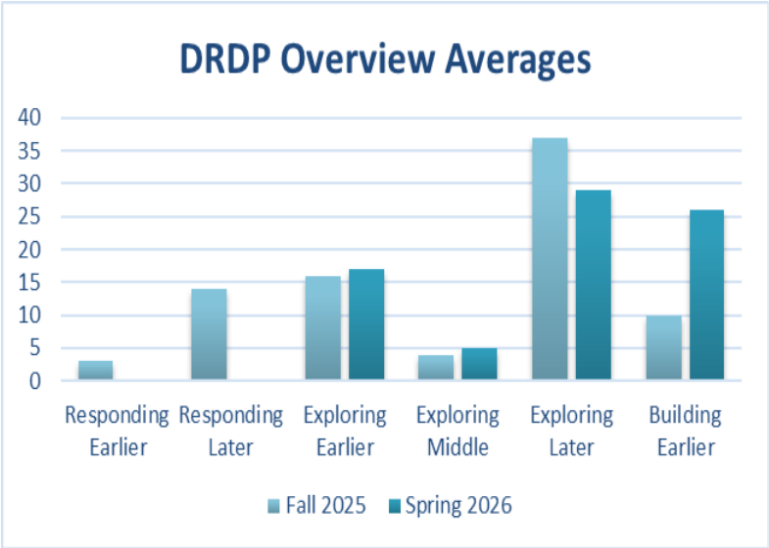


Belknap-Merrimack County Head Start and Early Head Start Program has three Certified Lactation Counselors on staff to help support families in their breastfeeding journey! Our counselors hold a professional certification in lactation counseling who have demonstrated the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to provide clinical breastfeeding counseling and management support to families who are thinking about breastfeeding or who have questions or problems during the course of breastfeeding/lactation.



Our EHS programs use the DRDP child assessment system in tandem with the 5 essential domains of school readiness: Approaches to Learning, Social Emotional Development, Language and Literacy, Cognition and Perceptual, Motor and Physical. The DRDP system helps teachers and home visitors observe and document children's development and learning over time and supports, guides and informs planning and instruction. It provides child outcomes information on both an individual and large group basis. Outcomes data is collected and analyzed 3 times a year, Fall, Winter and Spring.

Early Head Start Center-Based DRDP Overview Fall-Spring

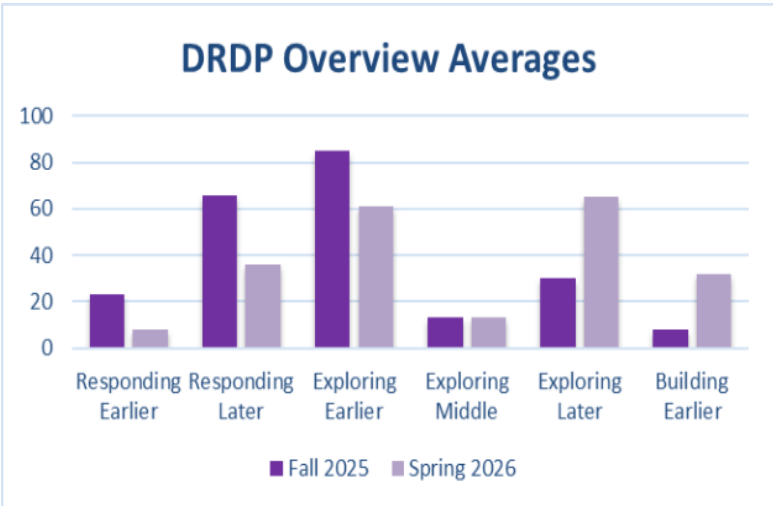


At the beginning of the year, a noticeable portion of children were performing at the Responding levels, particularly Responding Later (14%) and Responding Earlier (3%). By Spring 2026, the percentage of children in these categories dropped substantially, with Responding Earlier nearly disappearing and Responding Later no longer represented. The data suggests that most children successfully moved beyond the earliest developmental stages.

Over the course of the year, children moved steadily along the developmental continuum, with the most notable achievement being the substantial increase in Building Earlier performance. This pattern suggests that intentional teaching practices and learning experiences effectively supported children's growth, enabling many to transition from emerging skills toward more advanced developmental competencies by Spring 2026.

Early Head Start Home-Based DRDP Overview Fall-Spring

A review of Fall 2025 and Spring 2026 DRDP results show growth across all domains. Children moved from Responding levels into Exploring and Building levels; this demonstrates increased skills, confidence, and engagement over time. The progressions of children's skills show they are developing more complex, consistent abilities for school readiness. These patterns are developmentally appropriate for infant and toddler development and suggest responsive caregiving, individualized support by home visitors, and the creation of intentional learning experiences that effectively support a child's growth and learning.



Among all domains, Physical Development demonstrated the greatest overall growth from Fall to Spring. The data show a substantial increase in children reaching Building Earlier levels by Spring 2026, alongside decreases in Responding and Exploring levels. This reflects expected and meaningful developmental progress in motor skills, coordination, and physical confidence during infancy and toddlerhood. Significant gains were also observed in Social and Emotional Development and Language and Literacy Development. This shows growth in emotional regulation, relationships, communication, and language use. Together, these outcomes indicate that the program is effectively fostering development across all domains, with a particularly strong impact in supporting children's physical growth and readiness for increasingly complex learning experiences.

Additional Information

- Our Head Start/Early Head Start program currently employs 75 individuals, 11 of whom are currently or were previously enrolled in our program. 3 staff attended our program as children.
- All of our classrooms at our Concord and Laconia sites are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).
- 60% of our teachers in HS have a Bachelor's degree or higher in ECE.
- 40% of our teachers in HS have an Associate's degree in ECE.
- 33% of EHS Teachers have an Associate's degree, Bachelor's Degree, or advanced degree.
- 53% of EHS Teachers have a CDA (Child Development Accreditation, equivalent course work, or are enrolled in a credentialing program).
- 53% of our HS Assistant Teachers have a CDA or higher.
- 16% of HS Teachers assistants are working on completing their CDA or are enrolled in a degree and completing college level courses.
- 100% of our Family Service Workers have Bachelor's degrees; 75% have a Family Service Worker Credential.
- 100% of our Early Head Start home visitors have a CDA credential, or equivalent course work as part of an Associates, Bachelor's, or advanced degree.
- 17 children with IEPs and 23 children with IFSPs were enrolled in Head Start/Early Head Start in 2025-2026.
- The program served 40 dual language learners in Head Start and 40 dual language learners in Early Head Start during the 2025-2026 program year.
- Over 317 individuals volunteered time to our program, 211 of whom are current or former parents of our Head Start/Early Head Start program.
- The program has a full-time Practice-Based Coach and a full-time Social-Emotional and Behavior Support Coordinator on staff.
- The program has (6) certified car seat technicians and partners with local fire departments to serve as car seat installation sites throughout Belknap and Merrimack counties.



Community Action Partnership Belknap-Merrimack Counties, Inc.

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