

# Giving High Risk Children and Their Families a *Head Start*

Rebecca Krieger, Naomi Malam, John Sooy, Katherine Tang, Michaela Tracy, Leanne Winchester



Population Health Clerkship  
University of Massachusetts Medical School



## Head Start

- A federally funded program administered by the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for families under the national poverty line, disabled children, children in foster care, and families receiving public assistance
- Provides early childhood education for preschool aged children and health education for their families
- Domains of learning: Approaches to learning, physical education and health development, literacy, social and emotional development, language development, mathematics, creative arts, and science

## Objectives

- To provide early detection health screenings
- To observe inter-professional roles of Head Start
- To assess the social determinants of health in Head Start families

## Population

- Families qualify for Head Start if their income is below the requirement determined by the Office of Management and Budget (congruent with the Federal poverty line), receive public assistance, the child has a documented disability, or if the child is in foster care
- 29% families do not primarily speak English
- High Risks: Lead toxicity, nutritional deficiency, stunted cognitive growth, and delayed physical development

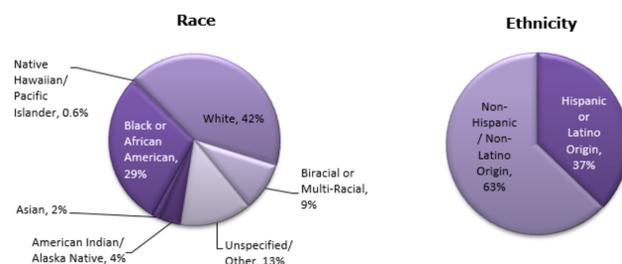


Figure 1. Racial and ethnic distributions of Head Start families nationwide<sup>1</sup>

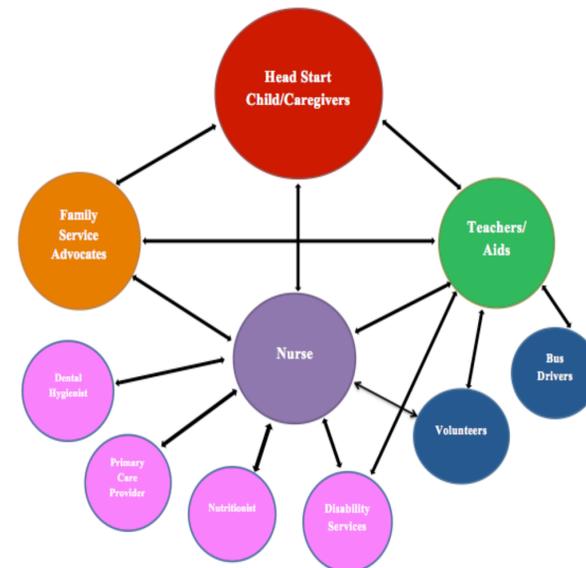


Figure 2. Schematic of the inter-professional team at Head Start. There are many shared responsibilities between different roles, but all team members are ultimately focused on the child/family.

## Advocacy

- Significant high-risk, vulnerable, un-served populations still exist due to restricted budgets and resources
- Major organizations
  - National, state, and local Head Start Associations
  - National Association for the Education of Young Children
- Departments of Labor, Health, and Human Services and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2015
  - A proposed bill to return to the pre-sequestration budget for Head Start and many other public services
  - The sequestration cut 60,000 spots nationally and thousands of staff members.
  - The 2015 version has cut out controversial funding issues to increase the likelihood of passing

## Acknowledgments

A very special thank you to Leanne Winchester, Annie Foley, Brenda Pike, Migdalia Garcia, Lisa Klatt, Mary Ann Rollings, and Worcester Head Start.

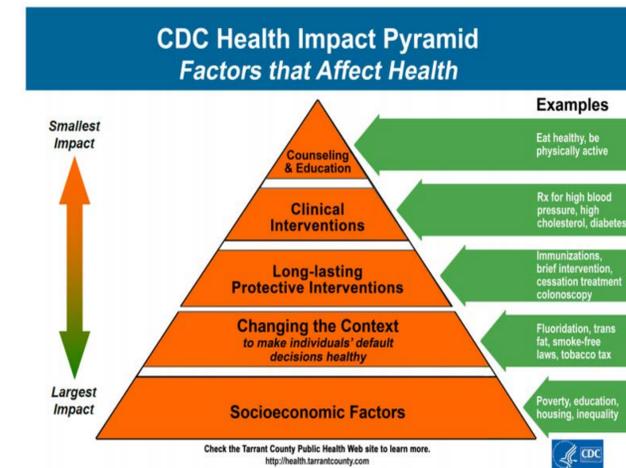


Figure 3. The Health Impact Pyramid developed by the CDC<sup>2</sup>

## Service Project

- Health is mainly affected by socioeconomic factors such as income and level of education (Figure 3)
- Most current day health interventions are aimed at improved patient education and counseling, which affect the very top of the Health Impact Pyramid, meaning they have only a small capacity for affecting change
- Large, long lasting improvement on health must address socioeconomic factors
- Head Start is an excellent example of a service aimed at fixing health from the base of the pyramid
  - Providing a pre-school education for low-income families helps to address the educational inequality that exists based on income.
  - Head Start children are thus provided the chance to improve their socioeconomic status, which will improve their health

## Conclusions

- Screened all the children in Mill Swan B and Millbury
- Head Start provides a wealth of services to support the children and their families to promote health and education
- Socioeconomic status of Head Start families lead to health disparities

## References

- <sup>1</sup>Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (2013). Head Start Program Facts Fiscal Year 2013. Retrieved October 31, 2013, from <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/data/factsheets/2013-hs-program-factsheet.html>.
- <sup>2</sup>Frieden TR. A framework for public health action: the health impact pyramid. *Am J Public Health* 2010;100(4):590-5 10.2105/AJPH.2009.185652.
- <sup>3</sup>National Head Start Association. (n.d.). Retrieved October 31, 2014, from <http://www.nhsa.org/>.
- <sup>4</sup>Sue, D.W., Capodilupo, C., Torino, G, Bucceri, J., Holder, A., Nadal, K., & Eskin, M. (2007). Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice. *The American Psychologist*, 62 (4) 271-286.



Figure 4. Racial Microaggressions: "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color".<sup>4</sup> Those who inflict microaggressions are usually unaware of the harm they have caused to another.

