



South Dakota Head Start Association

Volume 8, Number 3, June 2014

South Dakota Head Start & Early Head Start Nutrition & Mental Health

Nutrition

Head Start's child nutrition services assists families in meeting each child's nutrition needs. The services also include establishing good eating habits that nurture healthy development and promote life-long well-being. Nutritious lunches and snacks are served family style to children attending a Head Start classroom¹.

In addition, many Head Start programs use the *I am Moving, I am Learning (IMIL)* curriculum, which is a proactive approach for addressing childhood obesity. The *IMIL* seeks to increase daily moderate to vigorous physical activity, improve the quality of movement activities intentionally planned and facilitated by adults, and promote healthy food choices². Head Start offers an environment and experiences that contribute to children's physical fitness. In addition, staff encourage healthy eating, exercising, and movement habits that support lifelong fitness. Head Start follow a daily schedule that allows children to spend ample time each day in structured and unstructured physical activity.

Providing nutritious meals to children is a fundamental Head Start service. Programs work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) program to ensure all center-based children receive one half to two-thirds of their daily nutritional needs, depending on the length of the program day³. Head Start Children often participate in other community based nutrition programs such as the Feeding South Dakota national Backpack Program, which provides at-risk children with nutritious, easy-to-prepare foods during weekends and holidays when school is not in session.

Body Mass Index

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a number calculated from a child's weight and height. BMI is a reliable indicator of body fatness for most children and teens, but does not measure body fat directly. Additionally, BMI is an inexpensive and easy-to-perform method of screening for weight categories that may lead to health problems. For children and teens, BMI is age- and sex-specific. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend the use of BMI to screen for overweight and obesity in children beginning at 2 years old⁴.

However, BMI is not a diagnostic tool. To determine if excess fat is a problem, a health care provider would need to perform further assessments. These assessments might include skinfold thickness measurements, evaluations of diet, physical activity, family history, and other appropriate health screenings⁴.

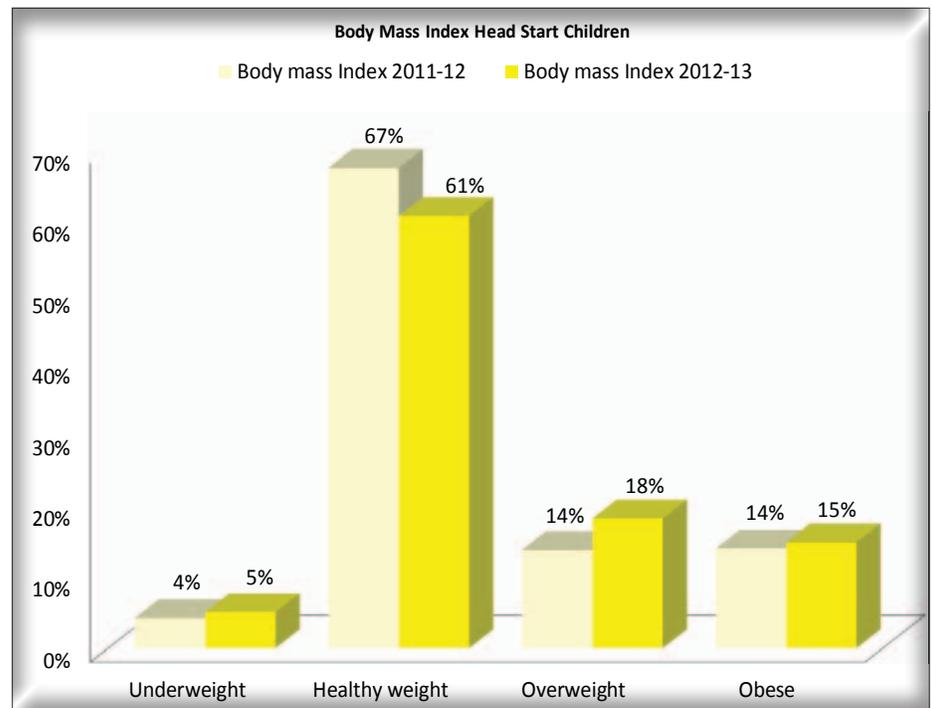
The body mass index (BMI) of Head Start children shows an increase from the previous year for the underweight, overweight and obese BMI.

¹ South Dakota Department of Education, Head Start Collaboration Office. Retrieved May 2, 2014: <http://doe.sd.gov/oess/headstart.aspx>

² U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Head Start. Retrieved May 2, 2014: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center/healthy-active-living/imil>

³ Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center/nutrition>

⁴ Center for Disease Control. Retrieved May 2, 2014, from Center for Disease Control: http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/childrens_bmi/about_childrens_bmi.html#What%20is%20BMI



The Head Start / State Collaboration Office (<http://doe.sd.gov/oess/headstart.aspx>)

The Head Start / State Collaboration Office, at the Department of Education was established in 1990, is the state's central point of contact between South Dakota Head Start programs and State agencies. Its purpose is to disseminate information about Head Start, assist in development of multi-agency and public/private partnerships between Head Start and the State, assist with interagency agreements for services and transitions from early childhood into the public schools, collaborate with other agency initiatives, and help build early childhood systems and access to comprehensive services for all low-income children.

Mental Health Services

Children’s mental health affects their capacity to explore their environment and learn. It is critical to school readiness. The Head Start Act of 2007 defines the purpose of Head Start “to promote the school readiness of low-income children by enhancing their cognitive, social and emotional development”. The South Dakota Early Learning Guidelines also describe positive outcomes in its section on Social/Emotional Development and Approaches to Learning. The South Dakota Early Learning Guidelines for Social/Emotional Development Include:

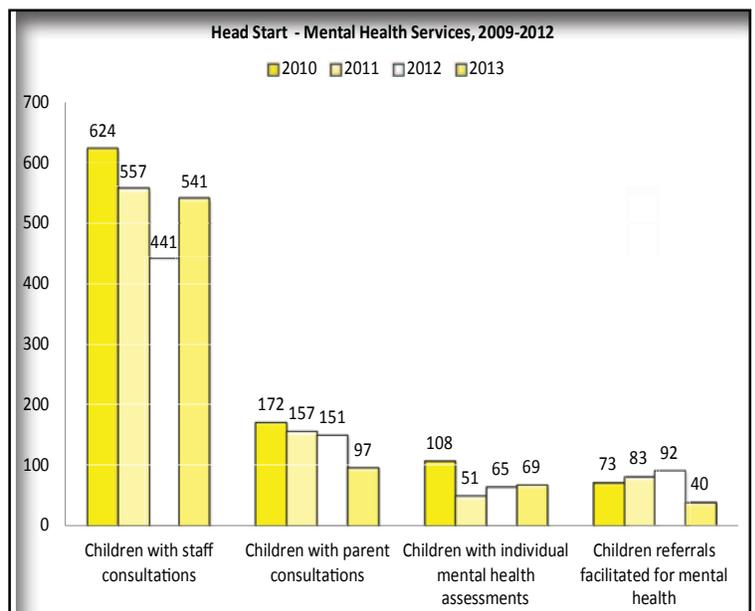
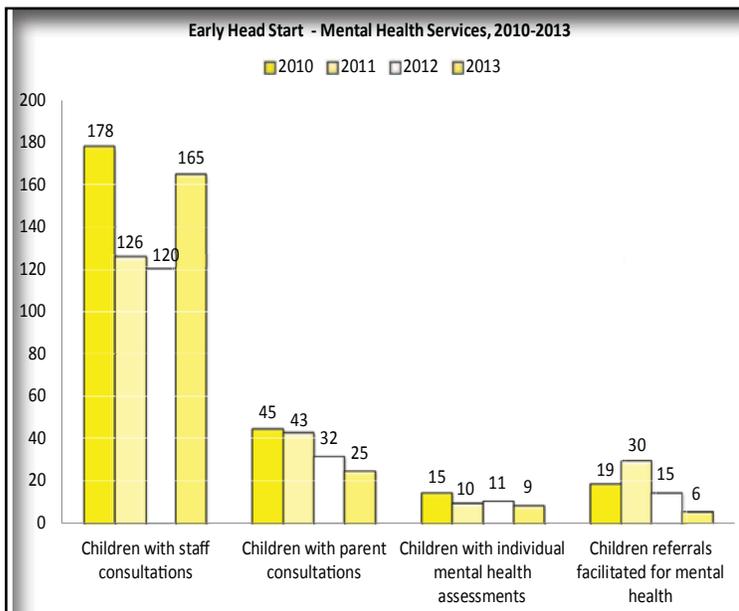
- Standard 1 — Self-concept and Self-Confidence
- Standard 2 — Regulating Emotions
- Standard 3 — Respect and Appreciation of Similarities and Differences
- Standard 4 — Speaking/Communicating and Oral Language Development

Educational and developmental research, including brain research, has shown that the early years in children’s lives are critical to their social/emotional development. These early years form the foundation that will be the basis of all future growth. Early relationships are key to children’s later social and emotional competence; forming secure attachments to caregivers is critical⁵.

Early Head Start and Head Start programs provide mental health services and refer to mental health providers based on the needs of the child and family.

Collaboration with local mental health providers is essential for effective services for both children and their parents. Many grantees collaborate with the South Dakota Community Mental Health Centers across the state. Head Start Mental Health Services for families supports them to strengthen nurturing supportive relationships and use positive techniques of guidance. The University of South Dakota is also developing an Infant/Toddler Mental Health Certificate to help improve the quality of mental health services available to families with young children.

"To summarize, then, because someone(s) within Head Start gave "\$50 bucks and a Damn", one more family can leave poverty behind, a grandmother achieved a life-long goal, and a little girl is a successful student and budding dancer in spite of having multiple challenges. It is my hope that I will be able to give forward what was given to me". -Parent comment



⁵ South Dakota Early Learning Guidelines for Social/Emotional Development and Approaches to Learning Retrieved May 2, 2014, from SD Department of Education: <http://www.doe.sd.gov/contentstandards/documents/EarlyLearningGuidelinesBook.pdf>

Data Sources: Data are from the Head Start Program Information Reports 2009/10 - 2012/13. The figures are all Head Start and Early Head Start programs in South Dakota, including Tribal programs. There are 23 reporting sites.

South Dakota Head Start Association (<http://sdheadstart.org>)



The South Dakota Head Start Association, established in 1989, is to coordinate and conduct activities designed to enhance awareness of Head Start in South Dakota, to be a support link between local, regional and National Head Start programs, to develop joint policy positions and statements which reflect a consensus of the opinions of Head Start Parents, Staff, Directors, and Friends, to establish communication, cooperation and an action network between head Start Directors, Staff, Parents, and Friends within the State of South Dakota, to conduct training on a statewide basis for Head Start parents, Staff, Directors, and Friends and to coordinate efforts with other interested groups.

Our Mission: The South Dakota Head Start Association is a leading voice supporting the work of Head Start programs and their partners through education, advocacy, training and networking for quality early childhood education and services to families. **Our Vision:** To be a positive voice, a powerful advocate and promoter of quality programs for children, families, and communities in South Dakota.

