

## Early Childhood Programs

### Review 1

Anderson, L. M., Shinn, C., Fullilove, M. T., Scrinshaw, S. C., Fielding, J. E., Normand, J., . . . Task Force on Community Preventive Services. (2003). The effectiveness of early childhood development programs: A systematic review. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 24, 32–45. PubMed abstract available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12668197>.

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| <b>Objectives</b>                  | Assess the effectiveness of early childhood development programs on cognitive, social, health, and family outcomes for low-income children aged 3–5.  |
| <b>Studies Included</b>            | Sixteen U.S. studies from 1966 to 1998  |
| <b>Participants in the Studies</b> | Children aged 3–5 from low-income families who are in early childhood development programs; target populations include African American, Latino, Asian, Native American, and children of other races.   |
| <b>Settings</b>                    | Some of the reported settings were center-based programs (in a public school or child development center) and home visits in urban, rural, and suburban settings.   |
| <b>Outcomes</b>                    | <p><b>Cognitive:</b> academic achievement test scores, school readiness, intelligence quotient (IQ), grade retention, placement in special education</p> <p><b>Social:</b> social competence, social risk factors, use of social services, delinquency, arrests, incarceration</p> <p><b>Child health screening:</b> health-screening tests, dental exam within the last year</p> <p><b>Family outcomes:</b> parental high school graduation rate, family income above poverty level, parental employment, public assistance, health screening for siblings of participants</p> |
| <b>Limitations of the Studies</b>  | Relatively few studies assess program impact on health, well-being, and social success; there is lack of evidence about social outcomes, child health screening outcomes, and family outcomes; there is also a lack of standardized measures and longitudinal follow-up.  |

### Results

This systematic review examined the effects of early childhood programs (e.g., Perry Preschool Program, Head Start) on low-income preschoolers’ cognitive, social, behavioral, and health outcomes within 1 year of the intervention up to 20 years postintervention. Overall, early childhood development programs had a positive effect on preventing delay of cognitive development and increasing readiness to learn, as assessed by reductions in grade retention and placement in special education classes, as well as improvements on standardized measures of academic achievement and school readiness. However, there was insufficient

evidence to determine effectiveness in areas of children's behavioral and social outcomes, children's health screening outcomes, or family outcomes. In sum, there were positive effects of early childhood programs on young children's cognitive development that are likely to generalize to similar populations of disadvantaged preschool children in the United States.