

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

New Analysis Demonstrates the Positive Impact of Head Start in California – But the Program Still Faces Severe Budget Cuts

Sacramento, CA (2/16/11) – Children who participate in Head Start programs are significantly better prepared to start school, according to a new study conducted by Child Care Results, a firm specializing in child development data analysis. The finding was released on the heels of a proposed federal budget that would cut these benefits to over 200,000 children nationally – approximately 27,000 children in California.

Head Start is the federally funded preschool program for young children and their parents whose income is at or below the poverty level.

The analysis compared preschool children entering their second year of Head Start with children entering their first year of Head Start, while controlling for age. It found that after one year of Head Start, children had a four to eight month developmental advantage due to participation in Head Start. These developmental advances were seen in a range of areas including language & literacy, pre-math skills, self regulation and other domains, leaving children better prepared for school when they enter Kindergarten.

Child assessment data have been collected for years by individual Head Start programs using a tool developed by the California Department of Education. For the second time ever, many California Head Start programs shared their information to allow for the broad analysis of program effect.

The analysis is noteworthy in part because of the large sample size of 10,200 children from 42 separate programs across California. It is the first time that such data has been analyzed using Regression Discontinuity. Child Care Results is a California-based firm specializing in data analysis for early childhood development programs. “While academic studies predict these sorts of outcomes for quality child development programs,” said Peter Huffaker, a lead researcher on the project, “it is significant to have operational data confirm the impact of Head Start programs locally.”

The new research is consistent with other studies which have found that Head Start helps to better prepare children to start school. Long term studies have found that Head Start can return up to \$9 in benefits for every \$1 invested. Institutions as diverse as the RAND Corporation and the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis have concluded that investing in early childhood education is one of smartest investments government can make.

“It is ironic that the U.S. House of Representatives is targeting Head Start for such significant cuts, even while we are demonstrating such positive outcomes,” Stated Rick Mockler, Executive Director of the California Head Start Association. “It would be a tragedy if 27,000 California children were denied the opportunity to be better prepared for Kindergarten.”

The Outcome Bulletin summary is available at www.caheadstart.org/ChildOutcomes2010 and the study’s methodology at www.childcareresults.com/ChildOutcomes2010.

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