

**EARLY EDUCATION & CARE  
EARLY HEAD START/HEAD START  
2025 Annual Report**





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## OUR MISSION

**Mission:** The YMCA of Metro Chicago is committed to strengthening community by connecting all people to their purpose, potential, and each other.

**Vision:** To be at the forefront of advancing society by serving as a trusted convener, connector, and catalyst for all communities.

Our mission reflects the far-reaching impact our programs and services hope to achieve through building stronger and healthier communities. We envision more vibrant and compassionate neighborhoods where the Y is seen as an essential leader in making our city a world-class place to live and raise a family.

YMCA Early Head Start/Head Start programs clearly align with the YMCA mission anchors and provide comprehensive services to children and families in 6 Chicago communities.

Your partnership makes all this and so much more possible. We hope you enjoy reading about the difference your support is making in the lives of the children, individuals and families we serve.



## EARLY EDUCATION & CARE

Our Early Learning Programs includes both center- based and home-base settings. The programs provide comprehensive educational services to children ages 6 weeks to 5 years to enhance their social, emotional, mental, physical and cognitive development in preparation for school readiness.

Our programs use The Creative Curriculum® System for Infants, Toddlers, Two's and Preschoolers and the Teaching Strategies GOLD® Assessment as a guide for planning educational activities and experiences for children.

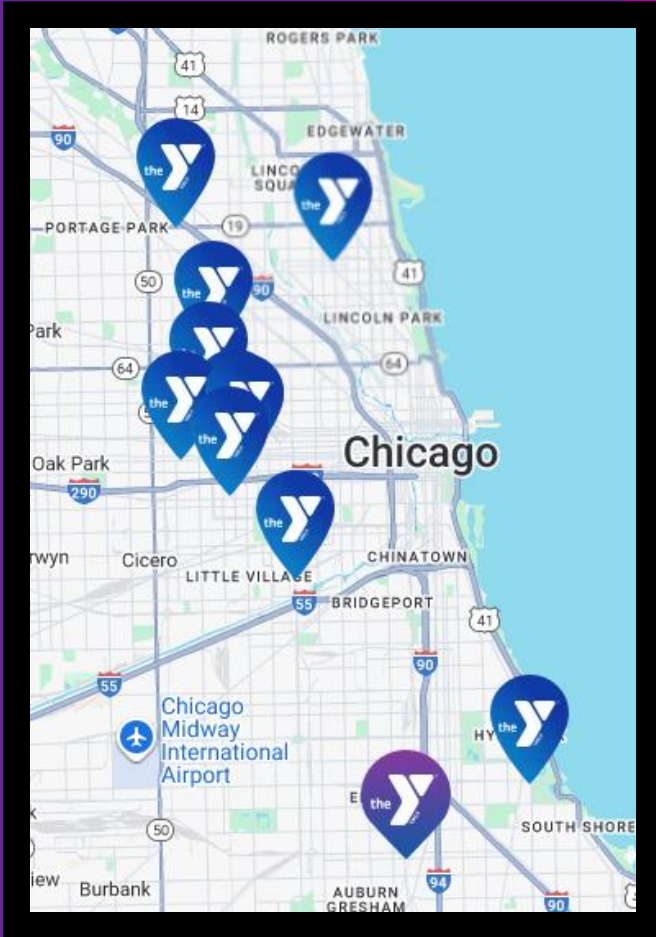
## QUALITY MATTERS

In 2024-2025, the YMCA of Metro Chicago operated seven Early Head Start/Prevention Initiative programs, four Head Start/Preschool For all Programs, and three Preschool for All programs across eight locations. We provided services to 360 children 6 weeks to 5 years old.

The Y consistently engages in an ongoing strategic process of continuous improvement and growth. This includes the recruitment and hiring of quality early learning staff, ongoing professional development for all personnel, participating in ongoing annual self-assessment, data assessment and analysis to guide planning and continued accreditation and affiliation with the National Association for the Accreditation of Young Children (NAEYC) and Excel Rate Illinois. In 2024-2025, 7 of our eight locations maintained NAEYC and a Gold Circle of Quality Rating.



# OUR COMMUNITIES



## Greater Grand Crossing

### JEANNE KENNEY YMCA

7600 S. Parnell Ave.

Chicago, IL 60620

Early Head Start/Head Start

Ages 0-5 years

## East Garfield Park

### DR. EFFIE O. ELLIS YMCA

10 S. Kedzie Ave.

Chicago, IL 60612

Head Start

Ages 3-5 years

## GARFIELD YMCA

7 N. Homan Ave.

Chicago, IL 60624

Early Head Start/Head Start

Ages 0-5 years

## YMCA MARSHALL FAMILY DEVELOPMENT CENTER

3250 W. Adams Street

Chicago, IL 60624

Early Head Start

Ages 0-3 years

## North Lawndale

### NORTH LAWDALE YMCA

3449 W. Arthington Street

Chicago, IL 60624

Early Head Start/Head Start

Ages 0-12 years

## Woodlawn

### SOUTH SIDE YMCA

6330 S. Stony Island Ave.

Chicago, IL 60637

Early Head Start/Head Start

Ages 2-12 years

## Logan Square

### McCORMICK TRIBUNE YMCA

1834 N. Lawndale Ave.

Chicago, IL 60647

Early Head Start/Head Start

Ages 2-12 years

## Pilsen/Lower West Side

### RAUNER FAMILY YMCA

2700 S. Western Ave.

Chicago, IL 60608

Early Head Start/Head Start

Ages 2-12 years

Early Education & Care program services are offered through collaborative partnerships and program models, including Early Head Start/Chicago Public Schools Prevention Initiative, Head Start/Chicago Public Schools Preschool for All, and school-age programming. Our Early Head Start and Head Start programs provide services to low-income children and families residing in several of Chicago's at-risk community areas, including East Garfield Park, Greater Grand Crossing, Logan Square, North Lawndale, Pilsen/Lower West

Side, and Woodlawn.

# Strategic Initiatives



## Capacity

Programs meet max capacity in enrollment and registration with managed waitlist.



## Partnerships

Increased Strategic partnerships that create value for YMCA learning programs by offering information, services and other resources.



## Revenue

Program revenue increases 25% annually while meeting or exceeding agency goal margins



## Belonging

Team Members report an increased sense of belonging.



# 2025 Financial Statement

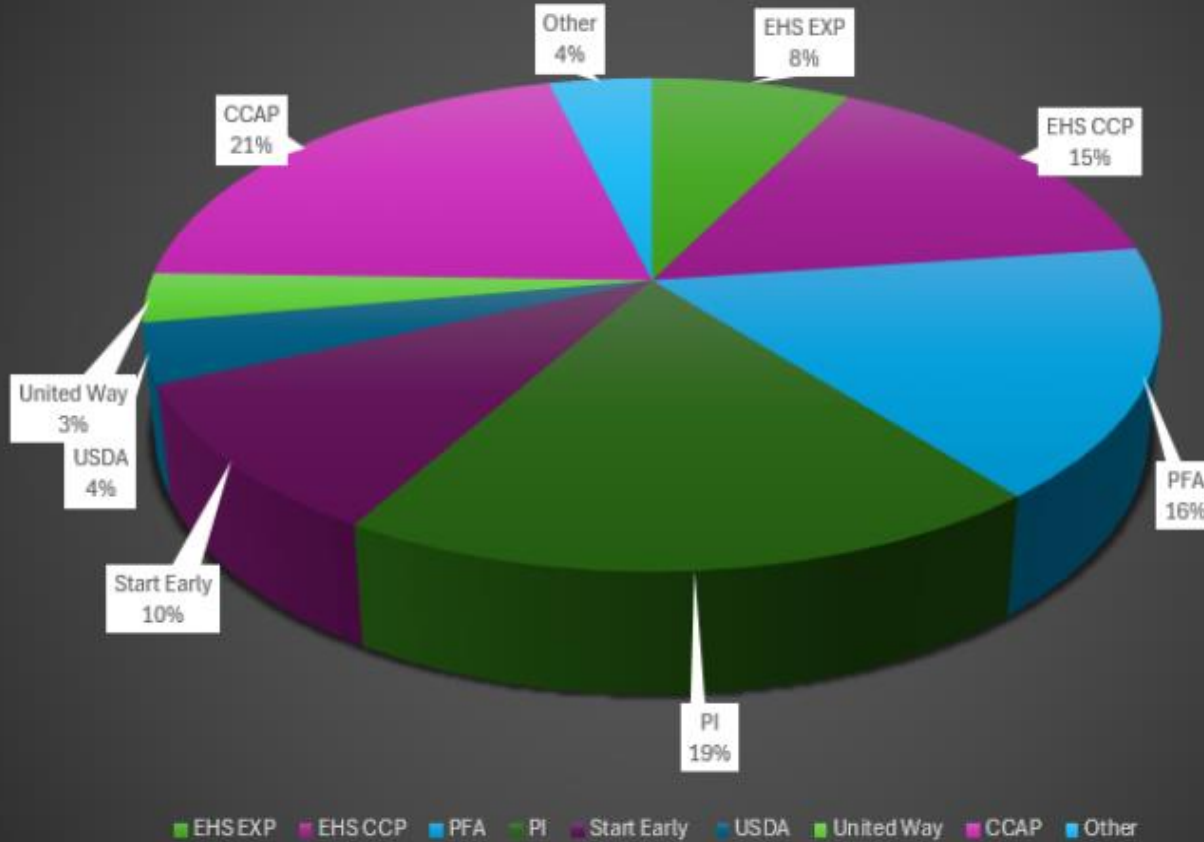


The YMCA of Metro Chicago (Young Men's Christian Association of Chicago) had an audit of its 2016 financial statements, which was performed by independent outside auditors. The audit was conducted in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in the Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

The auditor's opinion is as follows:

We have audited the financial statements of the Association as of and for the year ended December 31, 2024, and have issued our report thereon dated September 30, 2025, which contained an unmodified opinion on those financial statements. Our audit was performed for the purposes of forming an opinion on the financial statements as a whole. The accompanying schedule of expenditures of federal awards presented for purposes of additional analysis as required by the Uniform Guidance and is not a required part of the financial statements. Such information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the financial statements. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the financial statements or to the financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. In our opinion, the schedule of expenditures of federal awards is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the financial statements as a whole.

### FY2025 Projected Revenue Sources



### FY 2025 Projected Expenses

Personnel Costs	(\$7,114,788)
Fees & Contract Services	(\$1,876,245)
Occupancy	(\$236,275)
Supplies & Equipment	(\$688,796)
Repairs & Maintenance	(\$82,174)
Insurance & Taxes	(\$971,537)
Promotions & Advertising	(\$1,035)
Meeting/Travel/Training	(\$3,823)
Support & Assistance	(\$8,655)
Other Misc. Expenses	(\$10,694)
Management and Administration	(\$2,501,872)
Total Operating Expense	(\$13,495,894)

2024-25 EHSN IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS TOTALED

**\$861,885**

## ENROLLMENT

### Cumulative Enrollment

Early Head Start- Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP)	125
Early Head Start Expansion (EHS-EXP)	40
Prevention Initiative (PI)	167
Head Start (HS)	82
Preschool For All (PFA)	183

### Average Monthly Enrollment

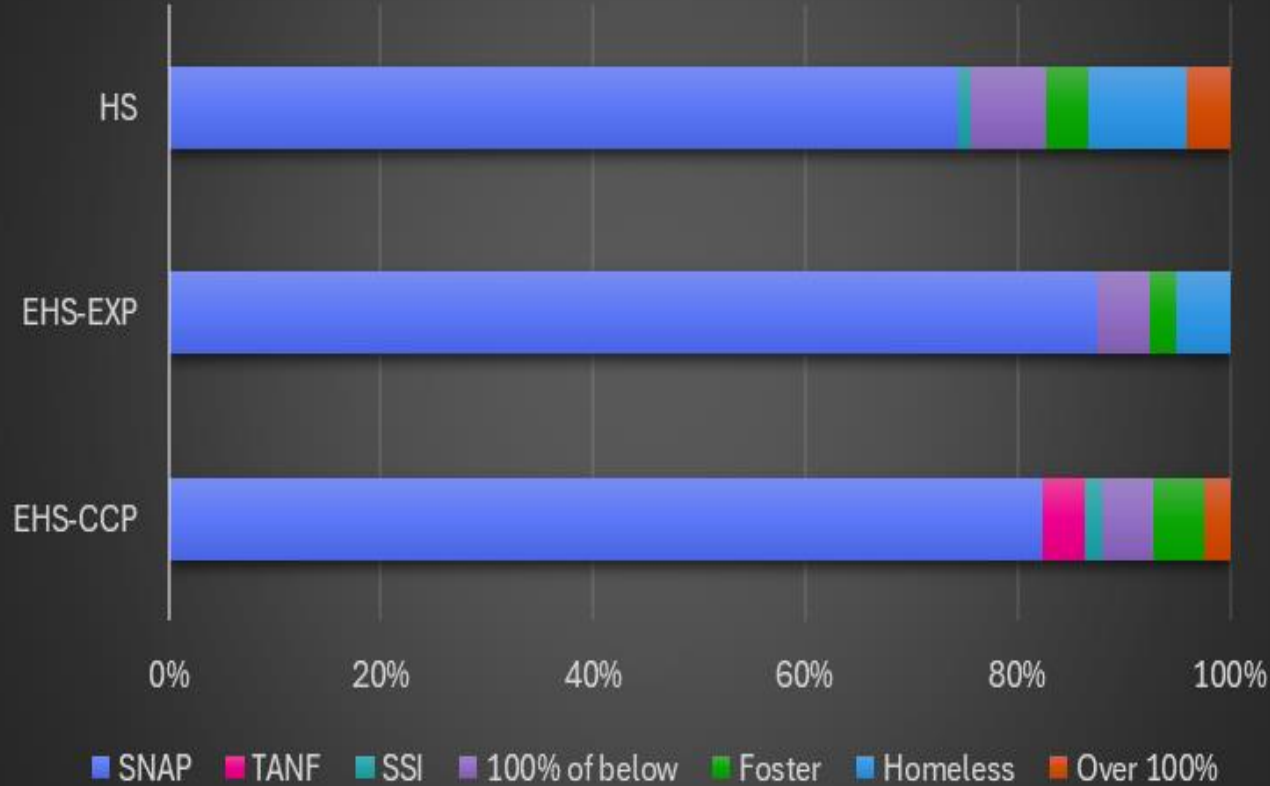
Early Head Start- Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP)	86% (99 of 115 slots awarded)
Early Head Start Expansion (EHS-EXP)	89% (32 of 40 slots awarded)
Prevention Initiative (PI)	85% (139 of 160 slots awarded)
Head Start (HS)	95% (78 of 82 slots awarded)
Preschool For All (PFA)	50% (145 of 289 slots awarded)



# Eligibility & Demographics



## Eligibility Category



**87%** of the families served were single parent households

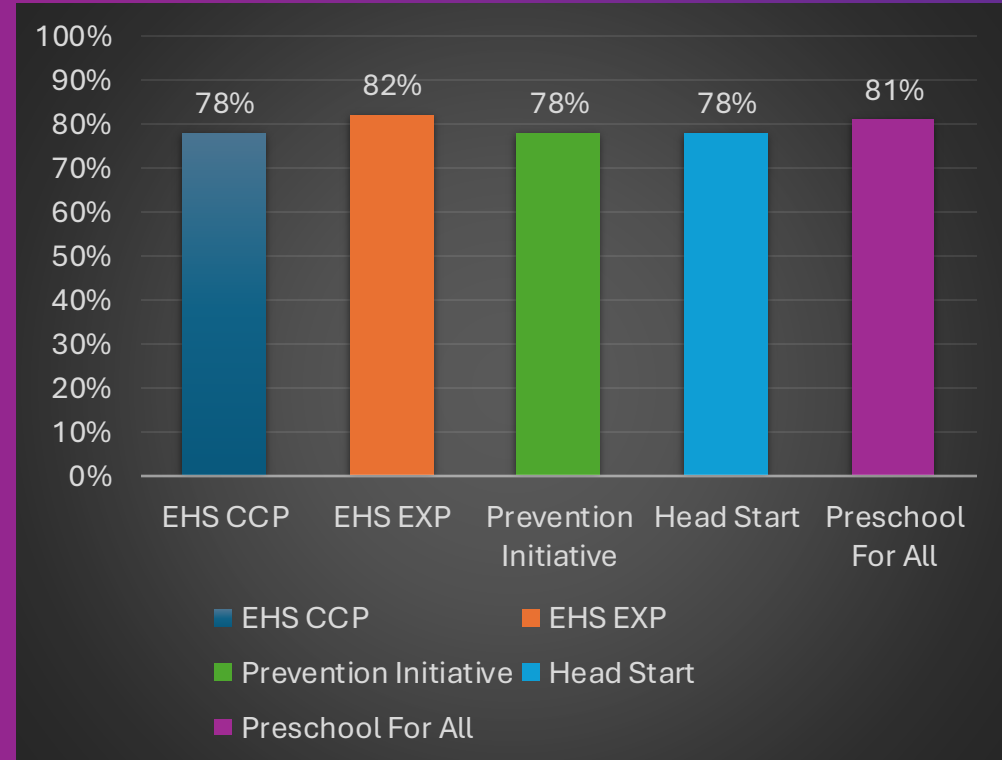
**2%** of Early Head Start/ Head Start children served were experiencing homelessness

Due to the strict Early/Head Start eligibility requirements, almost all children that qualify for Early Head Start and Head start services qualify for PI and PFA. Eligibility captured above reflects the more stringent guidelines.



# PROGRAM OPERATIONS: ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is encouraged to ensure children receive the maximum benefit of their educational experience.



## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

At the Y, we are committed to establishing strong supportive relationships with our families. Family engagement and collaborative staff parent relationships are major cornerstones of our program design and our approach to creating a positive learning environment. Program services emphasize the unique and important role of our families and engaging families in their child's educational journey. Families' engagement activities include; established and functional center committee and policy committee, and parent participation and active engagement in policy council meetings with our grantees, Department of Family and Support Services, (DFSS) and Start Early Head Start Network (EHSN). Family involvement in the annual Self-Assessment and bi-annual parent surveys. Other avenues of engaging families include home visits and parent teacher conferences, weekly home parent activities, center sponsored and YMCA events, and parent workshops and training based on family assessments and expressed interest. Our activities are designed to support the following key areas;

- Family well-being and positive parent child relationships
- Parent engagement in the education of their children, including child transitions into the program and to kindergarten.
- Family as lifelong learners
- Family connection to peers in the community
- Family as advocates and leaders
- Family assessment and goal planning
- Implementation of the Parents as Teacher curriculum

## FAMILIES SERVED

- 325 families served across the eight sites during the 24-25 program year
- 94% of families received at least one additional service beyond childcare
- 5 families obtained employment or enrolled in school after enrolling their child in a YMCA Early Learning Program



# Spring Family Survey Results

## Confidence in Program Safety

- 100% of families that completed the Spring Family Survey reported that they are confident that their children are safe while in the program

## Learning and Development

- 84% of families that completed the Spring Family Survey reported that the teachers working with their children promote learning and growth

## Recommending to Others

- 72% of families would recommend the YMCA Early Learning programs to others and 23% responded neutrally

# FAMILY SUCCESS STORIES



In search of a better life, Y. A., a pregnant single mother, traveled from Venezuela to the U.S. The A. family joined our early education and care program in April 2024, having been referred to by the refugee (shelter) facility where they were residing. Ms. A. enrolled her then four-year-old daughter, A. A., in our DR. Effie O. Ellis YMCA program, yet over the course of the program year, the A. family encountered numerous challenges.

Y. A. faced numerous challenges upon arriving in the U.S from a foreign country, particularly due to her unfamiliarity with the culture and language. The family needed to adapt swiftly to the new environment(s) and to the refugee facility's living conditions. Ms. A. started to fear for her and her children's safety; aware that to improve her circumstances, she needed to be employed, yet her work permit had not yet arrived. Therefore, to save money, she started selling food in the streets of Chicago; after a few months, the family was able to move out of the shelter and go live with a friend.

Y. A. shared her excitement with YMCA staff when she reached out for assistance with items to furnish her home. As a program, we banded together and gave the A. family gently used goods; to include, pots, pans, silverware, bathroom equipment, and gently worn blankets. Additionally, with the YMCA's partnership with Cradles to Crayons, we were also able to get baby items and clothes for her children. The A. family continues to persevere despite numerous hardships they have encountered. Y. A. has expressed her gratitude to our program/services and has stated that without the YMCA's assistance, her family would not have been able to get through.

When L.K began attending early education care at North Lawndale YMCA, his emotional responses to the unfamiliar environment were notably distressing. Upon separation from his parents, he exhibited frequent and intense crying, often accompanied by self-soothing behaviors such as rocking and repetitive hand movements. These reactions suggested that L.K may have been responding to internal sensory stimuli, struggling to self-regulate in a setting that was highly stimulating and unfamiliar to him. His early days in early education care were marked by difficulty in adapting to the structure and routine of the classroom, and his interactions with peers were limited, as he seemed to withdraw into his own coping mechanisms. L.K's challenges were not simply a reaction to being away from his parents, but rather an indication of difficulties in emotional regulation and sensory processing. This presented a unique challenge for his teachers, who were tasked with not only helping him manage his distress but also fostering a sense of security and trust in the early education care environment.

L. K's educators responded by implementing a variety of strategies aimed at providing consistent support while gradually introducing structure and routine into L. K's daily schedule. Predictability was key in this process. Educators also ensured that each part of L. K's schedule—from morning arrival to snack time, play, and nap—was structured in a way that would reduce uncertainty and allow him to anticipate transitions. L. K's educators also created opportunities for L.K to engage in sensory-based activities that would help him self-soothe in less overwhelming ways. These activities include tactile play with soft toys and listening to calming music, providing him with the necessary tools to manage his internal sensory needs.

Over time, these approaches began to yield positive results as L. K's distress significantly decreased as he grew more familiar with the routines and expectations of early education and care environment. His crying episodes became less frequent, and he began to show more interest in participating in group activities. While still sensitive to overstimulation, he exhibited increased self-regulation and was able to respond to the structured environment with less apprehension. The key developments in L. K's progress was his ability to comply with simple requests from his educators. Initially, L. K had difficulty following directions, often disengaging, or resisting tasks. However, with consistent support and reinforcement, he began to follow instructions such as putting away toys and transitioning from one activity to the next. This shift was not only a sign of behavioral improvement but also reflected his growing sense of security and confidence in the classroom environment.

By the end of quarter one (December 2024), L.K had made considerable progress. While he still experienced moments of overstimulation and occasionally needed time to self-soothe, he was far less fretful and demonstrated greater compliance with classroom routines. He engaged in peer interactions and showed more interest in social play. This transformation in L, K's emotional and behavioral responses are the result of the structured, supportive environment provided by his teachers, who employed a combination of predictability, sensory support, and gradual adaptation to ensure his success. L. K's experience highlights the critical role that early childhood educators play in supporting the emotional and developmental needs of young children. Through consistent and individualized strategies that consider a child's unique sensory and emotional needs, educators can help children like Lucious build the skills necessary to navigate and thrive in structured environments.

## COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES

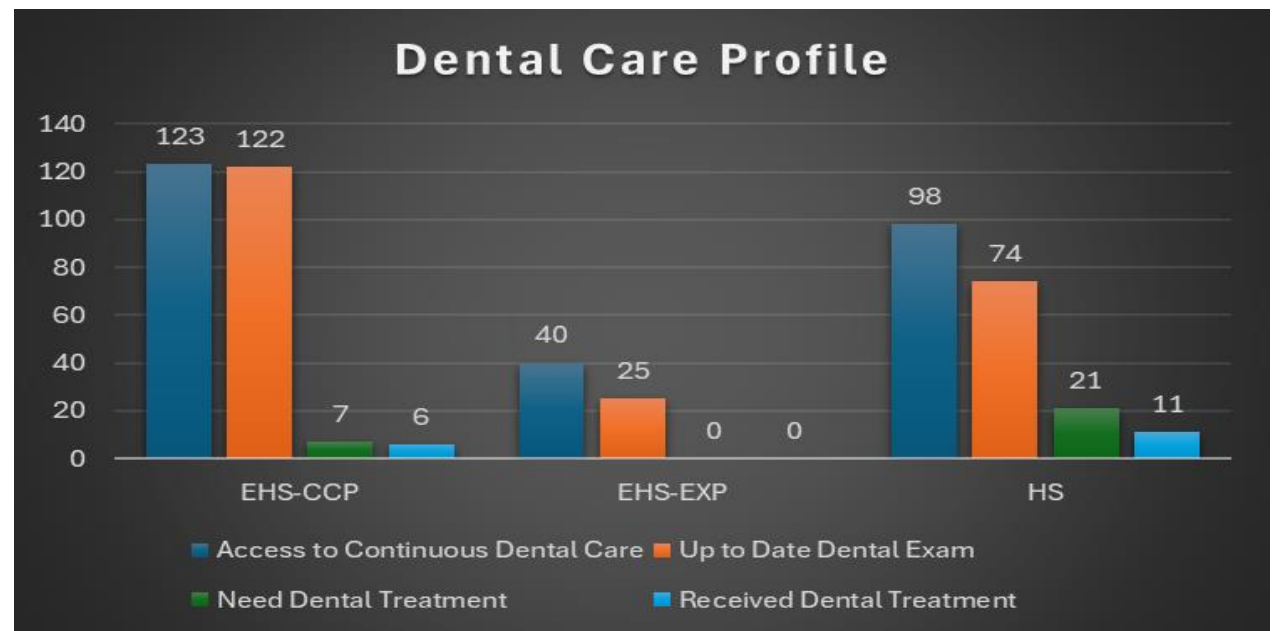
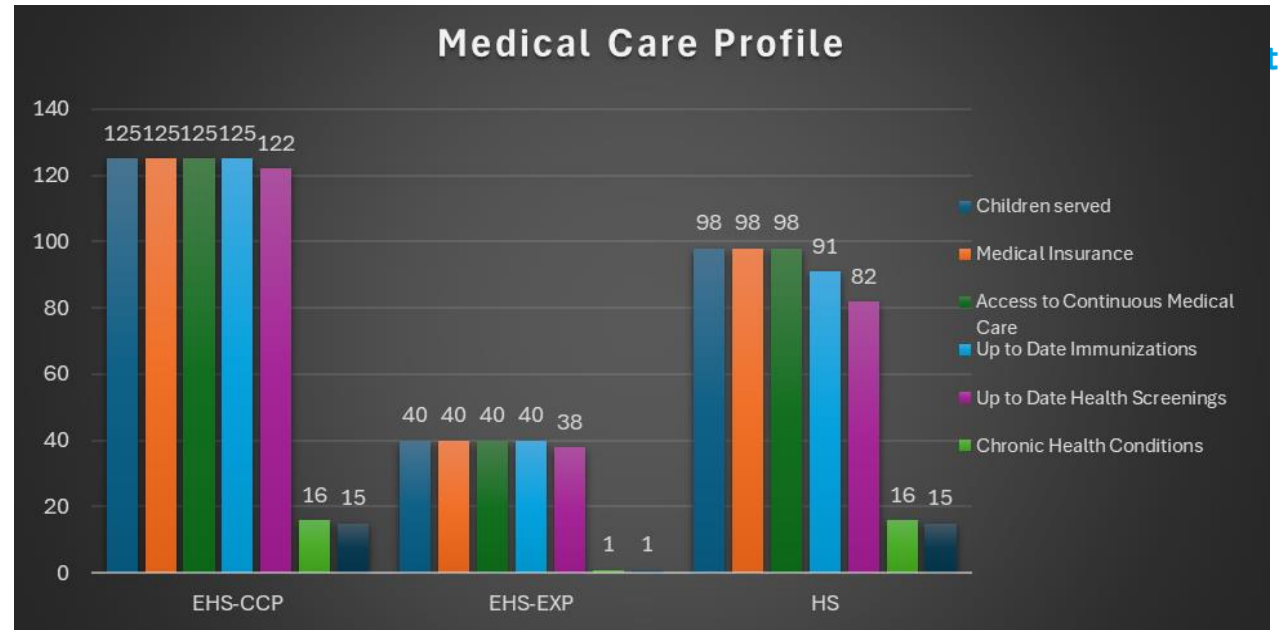
Comprehensive support services are offered to children and families in the following areas:

- Physical Health and Nutrition
- Disabilities
- Mental Health
- Child development and educational services
- Other supportive services specific to the needs of the family

## HEALTH

The YMCA offers comprehensive health supportive services to help ensure each child receives annual medical and dental screenings and assessments.

Additionally, for those children identified as needing treatment, staff provides assistance through case management and referrals to ensure children obtain needed treatment and resources.

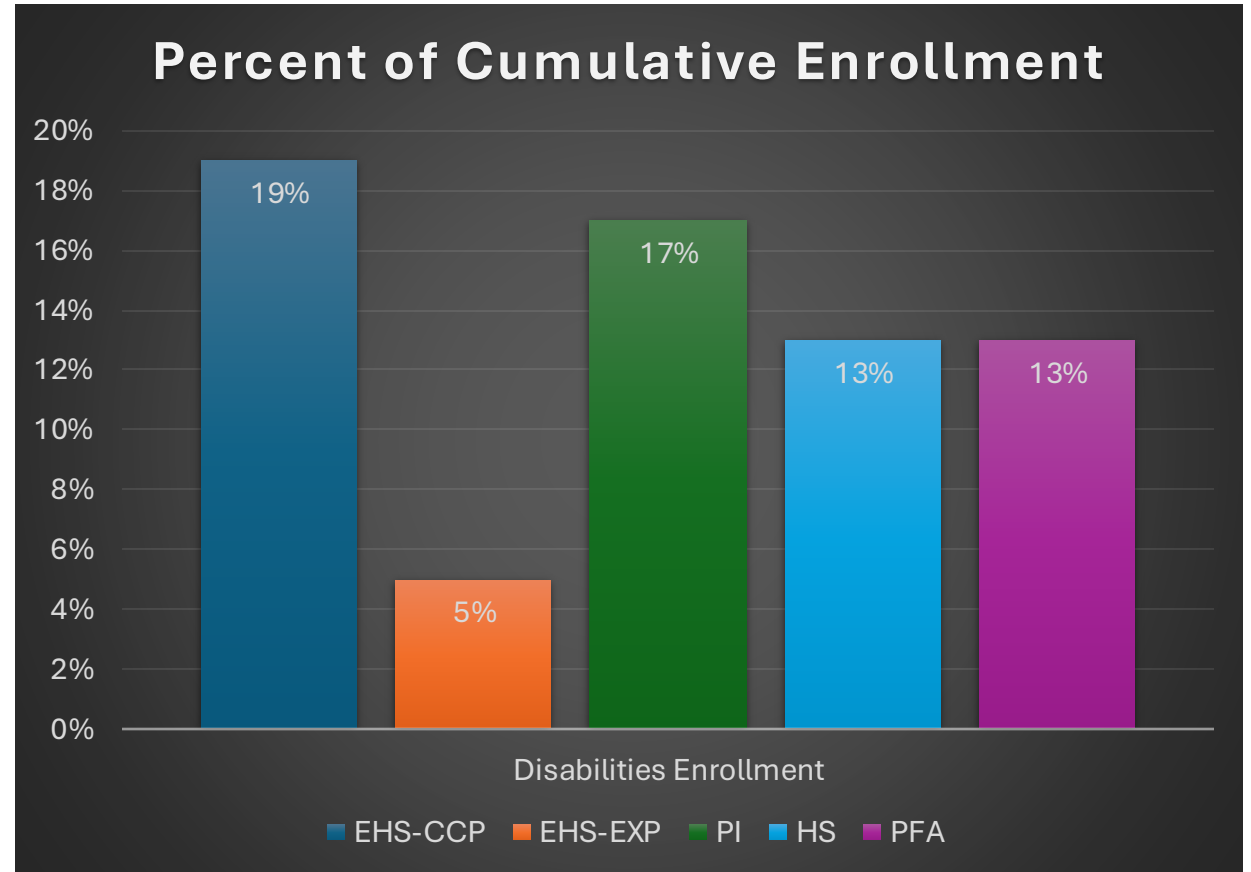


## Enrollment of Children with Disabilities

Cumulative IFSP 28

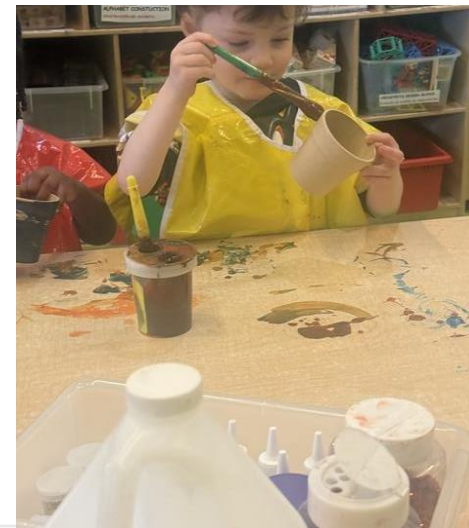
Cumulative IEP 24

Over the past 15 years, Y has met/ exceeded the Head Start requirement required enrollment of 10% children with disabilities within our birth to five programs. The Y provides annual Developmental and Social Emotional screenings with first 45 days of each child enrollment, to support early identification of children suspected of a disability. Community Linkage Agreements with Child and Family Connection # 8, 9, 10 and 11 and a Memorandum of Agreement with our Local Education Agencies, supports the Y to ensure timely evaluations, service delivery and transportation to children who qualify for an Individualize Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individualize Education Plan (IEP). In addition, staff receive training on accommodation, adaptation and modification, and individualizations to support inclusion of children with disabilities in all activities within the Y programs as well as supporting families in understanding their AED rights and becoming a strong advocate for their children with a disability.



- The Mental Health Coordinator was hired in January 2025 to ensure Head Start programs implement and adhere to Head Start Performance Standards, state, and local requirements for Mental Health Services. The focus of the mental health coordinator is to coordinate with the mental health consultant(s) to ensure that mental health services are being provided such as staff trainings, parent trainings, and following the mental health referral flowchart. The mental health coordinator has worked with EHSN funded sites to ensure that children marked with social emotional concerns are receiving timely and adequate mental health services by following formulating either a Positive Behavior Support Plan or Interim Plan. The Mental Health Coordinator has also been tasked with coordinating, training, tracking, and monitoring the implementation of the Conscious Discipline social emotional curriculum in all classrooms.
- The Mental Health Coordinator is responsible for working with the Conscious Discipline Action Team that consists of the Site Directors, FSS, and Staff Content managers to ensure that the training and implementation of the Conscious Discipline curriculum is implemented in all classrooms. The EHSN sites including Site Directors, FSS, and Teaching Staff all received the Conscious Discipline training curriculum called Adult First Mindset virtually from February 2025- July 2025 , all surveys (pre and post surveys), training schedules, and input were documented using the Implementation Tracker provided by Start Early and documented accordingly. The purpose of the curriculum is to provide social emotional tools and strategies for staff to implement in the classroom with the focus of self-regulation and self-care skills. The social emotional curriculum is an adult first focused mindset teaching the staff to self-regulate in order to model the children how to self-regulate.

- The Y has a Mental Health Cooperative Agreement with a licensed Mental Health Provider, to provide training and support for both parents and staff in developing positive attitudes toward Mental Health services for children birth to five. The mental health consultants function as a member of the team and collaborate closely with staff and parents to develop secure, trusting relationships. Both parents and teachers participate in completing a Social Emotional Questionnaire within the first 45 days of enrollment into the program to identify if there are concerns that may impede the overall all cognitive, and social growth and development of children. If the screening identifies a concern, the consultant collaborates with the parent and teaching team complete and individual observation and if required develop a Positive Behavior Support Plan with strategies to support the child. If additional support required, with consent, referrals to Child and Family Connections, Chicago Public School, or to a community area Mental Health agency for additional support to connect children to ongoing services.



# EDUCATION/SCHOOL READINESS

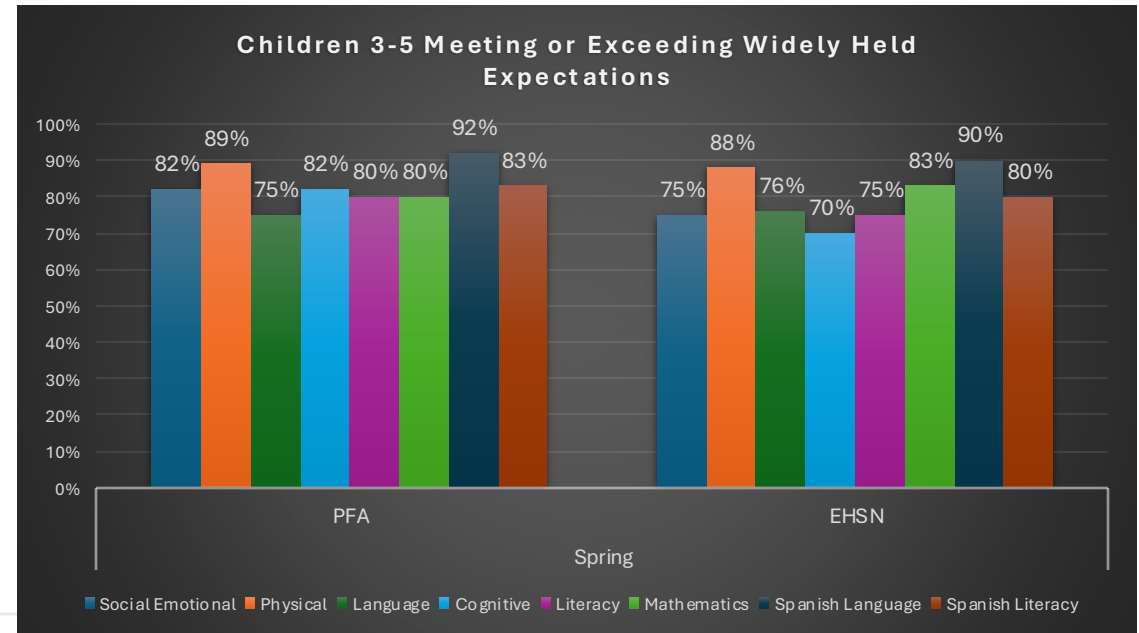
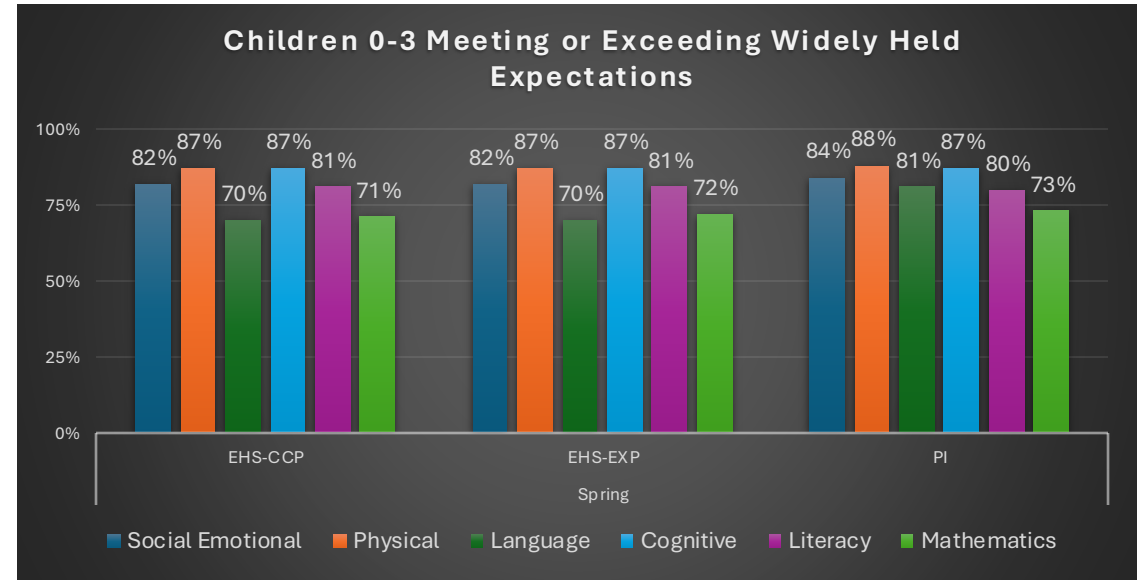
YMCA Early Education & Care believes that when supported by a high-quality early childhood program and access to comprehensive services, every parent has the potential to raise successful, happy and healthy children. We believe that an environment that values and respects each family’s culture and strengths, and that supports and empowers families in areas of need, will produce children and families that are resilient, self-sufficient and successful. We believe that our role is to provide a safe, healthy, nurturing environment in which each child can develop at his or her own rate, supported by developmentally appropriate materials and activities, and to provide support and empowerment to parents in their position as their children’s first and most important teachers.

Staff, parents and the community work together using multiple sources of data, including child assessments, community assessments and self-assessments, to identify the most comprehensive alignment to school-readiness goals. Program goals developed are based on the categories of development identified in the national Office of Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework and align with the Teaching Strategies GOLD® indicators of progress, the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards and the expectations of kindergarten entry development checklists of the schools the children will be attending. School readiness goals address these five essential domains:

- **Social and Emotional Development:** Skills necessary to regulate one’s behavior and emotions, to develop a healthy concept of personal identity, and to foster secure attachment and maintain healthy relationships.
- **Cognition and General Knowledge:** Comprehension of information and concepts, including but not limited to mathematics, science and creative arts.
- **Physical Health and Well-Being:** Physical well-being, use of body, muscle control, and appropriate nutrition, exercise, hygiene and safety practices.
- **Approaches to Learning:** Persistence, attentiveness and other skills necessary for children’s engagement in social interactions and learning experiences.
- **Language and Literacy Development:** The emerging ability to understand and use language, as well as skills necessary to focus on early reading and writing.



## Children Meeting/Exceeding Widely Held Expectations



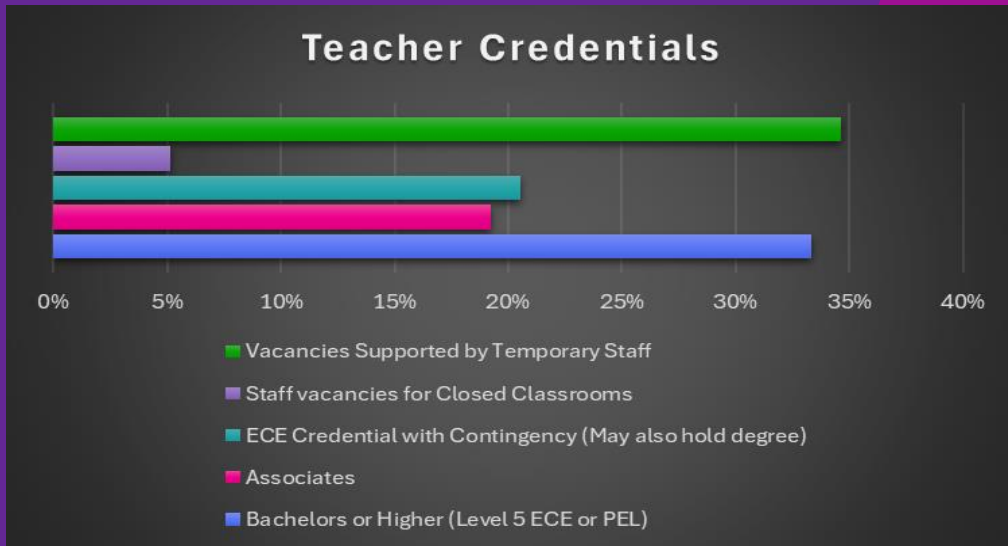
# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The YMCA realizes that every teacher enters the classroom with a unique background, a distinct set of teaching skills and various classroom strengths. Professional development is a teacher's continuous process of developing and refining skills and expanding academic knowledge and experiences to help children develop, grow and thrive. Multiple opportunities for continued professional development are provided through our grantee, Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services, as well as the Chicago Public Schools Community Partnership and internal support systems within the YMCA.

Early Head Start and Head Start staff have opportunities to continue their development through active involvement in YMCA professional learning communities, professional conferences, seminars, workshops, and webinars or online training.

## STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE 2024-2025 PROGRAM YEAR

1. Two Teachers received BS Degree in ECE
2. Two assistant teachers received AA Degrees in ECE





## LOOKING AHEAD

The YMCA of Metro Chicago's Early Education & Care team has some exciting program changes happening in the 25-26 program year:

### Increased EHSN Slots

The YMCA started their partnership with EHSN (Start Early) during the 2023-2024 program year with funding to support 64 Head Start slots across 4 sites. In January 2024, EHSN awarded 14 additional slots to the YMCA to bring the total number of Head Start slots to 82 across 4 sites and five classrooms. With the start of the 2025-2026 program year the YMCA was awarded 71 additional slots, bringing the Head Start slot total to 153 across five sites.

### Increased CCAP enrollment

During the 2024-2025 program year, the YMCA increased the number of children enrolled receiving CCAP subsidies. At the start of the program year there were 174 children enrolled receiving CCAP, and at the end of the program year there were 236 children enrolled receiving CCAP.

### EHS-EXP Homebased Award

The YMCA was awarded 12 homebased Early Head Start Expansion slots to support families in community areas surrounding the Rauner Family YMCA location. Neighborhoods to be supported by this grant include Lower West Side, Pilsen, and Little Village. The YMCA will have a home visitor that is responsible for supporting the families and providing Early Head Start services. The YMCA will be working to onboard this grant in the Fall and will begin programming in the Winter 2026.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Every year, the Y serves approximately 420 children ages 6 weeks to 5 years through our Early Head Start/Head Start programs. The vast majority of our children are from families living below the poverty line in high-need, under-resourced communities across Chicago.

Studies show that there is a drastic difference in learning development between children born into low-income versus high-income households, one that can be seen as early as 9 months of age.

We know from the research that quality early childhood education can prevent the low-income achievement gap from taking root. However, due to recent changes in the State of Illinois budget and stricter eligibility requirements for child care assistance, our families are in jeopardy of losing access to this pivotal programming.

We are counting on your support in order to close the achievement and skills gap for our highest-risk children in some of Chicago's most vulnerable communities. Please consider making a donation to our Early Education & Care programs so that all children, regardless of socioeconomic status, may benefit from a quality education that will put them on the path toward a positive future.

**[Make a contribution at ymcachicago.org/support-the-y/donate](https://ymcachicago.org/support-the-y/donate)**

**YMCA OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO**  
1030 W. VanBuren Street, Chicago, IL 60607  
312.932.1200  
Ymcachicago.org

