



MSU EXTENSION HEAD START PROGRAM

Challenges

- Head Start was created in 1965 as a preschool program for disadvantaged children to counter deficiencies associated with poverty that contribute to school failure.
- The program strives to improve these children's futures; research has shown that significant long-term effects of program participation include increased high school graduation rates, increased college participation, reduced teenage pregnancy, and reduced criminality.

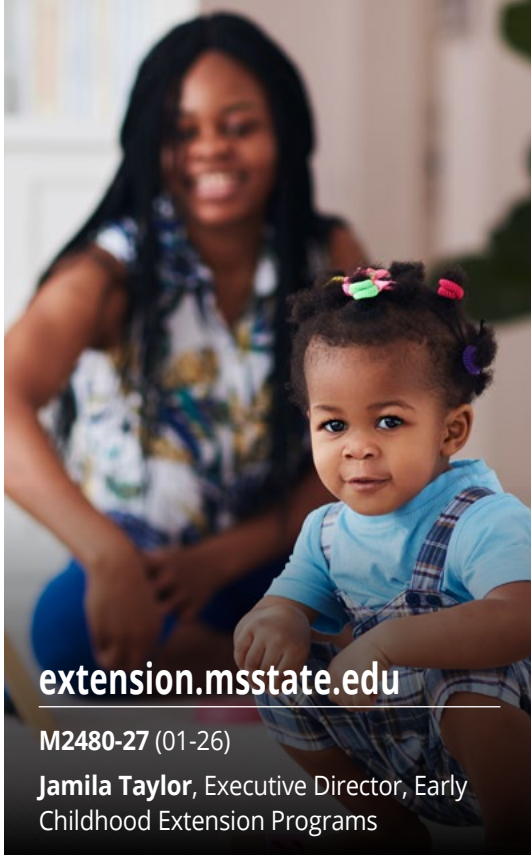
EXTENSION RESPONSE

MSU Extension began a Head Start program in 2019 to serve children and families in Harrison County. Significant proportions of enrolled children live at or below the federal poverty level.

- From the 2021–22 school year to the 2023–24 school year, the MSU Extension Head Start program served an average of 245 children in four directly operated Head Start centers (Biloxi, D'Iberville, and Gulfport). The program also operated five pre-K classrooms in the Gulfport School District.
- Head Start serves families from marginalized backgrounds who face socioeconomic challenges and/or have children with disabilities.
- Wellness services are a large component of the program; dental services are provided and disability/health conditions, such as weight disorders, speech/language issues, and developmental delays, are addressed.
- Each child is assessed across developmentally appropriate domains such as social/emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, and mathematics, so that instruction and support can be tailored to the individual child.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Research indicates that participation in the program could increase lifetime earnings by 5.2%, or **\$115,897** per participant. In 2024, 220 children participated in the program. Accounting for historical earnings increases, total earnings could increase by an estimated **\$25.5 million** for these children.
- This lifetime earnings increase could result in an estimated additional **113 jobs** in the six-county Mississippi Gulf Coast economy, earning **\$4.6 million**.
- This increase in earnings could also increase value-added in the state by **\$10.6 million** and total output by **\$17.8 million**.



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TAKING CARE OF WHAT MATTERS