



# Region XI American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start: A Portrait of Children and Families



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Meryl Yoches Barofsky, Laura Hoard, and  
the AI/AN FACES 2015 Workgroup\*

## Introduction

The American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (AI/AN FACES 2015) is the first national study of Region XI American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Head Start children, families, and programs. Region XI Head Start programs serve children and families in programs operated by federally recognized AI/AN tribes (see Box 1 for more information). Since 1997, the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) has been a regular source of nationally representative data on Head Start programs, centers, classrooms, children, and families. Until the 2015–2016 program year, however, FACES had not been conducted in Region XI AI/AN Head Start programs. This was due in part to the time and resources required to engage in the intensive community-based planning and implementation process needed to successfully carry out the study in partnership with Region XI Head Start programs and communities. Head Start programs, researchers, and federal staff all identified the lack of data on Region XI Head Start children and their programs as a critical information gap.

Nearly two years of extensive planning preceded AI/AN FACES 2015. Planning was informed by principles of participatory research with AI/AN communities (see Fisher and Ball, 2003, for example) and with advice from members of a workgroup composed of Region XI Head

Start directors, researchers, and federal government officials. Members of the AI/AN FACES 2015 Workgroup discussed and provided input on the AI/AN FACES 2015 design, implementation, and dissemination of findings, and worked to ensure that native voices were at the forefront.<sup>1</sup>

## Research Questions (RQ)

This research brief provides a national portrait of the characteristics, development, and well-being of children and families in Region XI Head Start at the beginning of the program year, using data from AI/AN FACES 2015<sup>2</sup> (Bernstein et al., 2018). The following research questions are addressed:

- Who is Region XI Head Start Serving?
  - » We explore the characteristics of children and families participating in Region XI Head Start, such as the age of the children, children's racial/ethnic background, and who the children live with.
- What are Region XI Head Start Families' Resources and Needs?
  - » We examine indicators of family well-being, specifically parent education and employment, and family psychological well-being.

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## Box 1. What is Region XI Head Start?

There are 12 regions for federal management of Head Start, 10 of which are geographically based. The other two are defined by the populations served: Region XI serves children and families in programs operated by federally recognized AI/AN tribes and Region XII serves migrant and seasonal workers and their families. AI/AN FACES 2015 is a descriptive study of the children, families, and programs in Region XI.

In 2015, Region XI comprised 146 Head Start programs across the United States. These programs served approximately 20,000 children, the majority of whom were AI/AN. It is important to note, however, that not all children served in Region XI are AI/AN.

Region XI Head Start programs may enroll families that have incomes above the poverty line if (1) all eligible children in the service area who wish to be enrolled are served by Head Start, (2) the tribe has resources in its grant to enroll children whose family incomes exceed the low-income guidelines set forth by the Head Start Program Performance Standards, and (3) at least 51 percent of the program's participants meet the eligibility set forth by the Head Start Program Performance Standards (45 CFR Chapter XIII, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/hspss-final.pdf>).



- How are Region XI Children Doing at the Beginning of the Program Year?
  - » We describe children's language, literacy, and early math skills, physical development and health, social skills, problem behaviors, and executive functioning at the beginning of the program year.
- What are AI/AN Region XI Head Start Children's Home and Community Experiences?
  - » We examine the cultural and community experiences of AI/AN children and families in Region XI Head Start, including native language use in the home, importance of native language, and participation in community cultural activities. These findings pertain only to AI/AN children; all of the other findings in the brief pertain to all children served in Region XI Head Start, which includes non-AI/AN children and families.

## RQ 1: Who is Region XI Head Start Serving?

AI/AN FACES 2015 collects information on child and family characteristics, including prior exposure to Head Start, child age, race/ethnicity, and home language, which can help the Office of Head Start (OHS) better tailor services to the needs of the Region XI children and their families. In addition, information about whether children live with both of their biological or adoptive parents provides some indication of family needs and strengths in providing resources and caregiving. This information may also help OHS work collaboratively with programs around continuous program improvement.

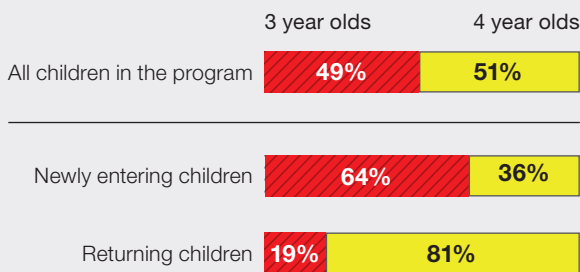
### The Children in Region XI Head Start

Seventy-four<sup>3</sup> percent of children in Region XI Head Start are attending Head Start for the first time. Twenty-six percent are returning for a second year. Fifty-one percent of Region XI Head Start children are 4 years old and the rest are 3 years old at the start of the program year. Of

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children attending for the first time, 64 percent of children are 3 years old and the rest are 4 years old (see Figure 1; Malone et al., 2016). Over half of Region XI Head Start children participated in Early Head Start (56 percent). Almost equal numbers of children in Region XI Head Start were female (47 percent) and male (53 percent).

**Figure 1.** Slightly more than one-half of all the children in Region XI Head Start are 4 years old. Over half of the children entering Head Start for the first time are 3 years old, and the majority of returning children are 4 years old.



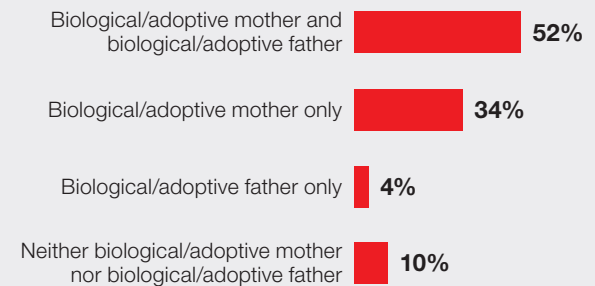
**Source:** AI/AN FACES Fall 2015 Parent Survey and Survey Management System

**Note:** Statistics are weighted to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs in fall 2015. Age as of September 1, 2015.

## The Families in Region XI Head Start

The majority of Region XI Head Start children (90 percent) live with at least one biological/adoptive parent. Slightly more than half (52 percent) live with both their biological/adoptive parents (see Figure 2). Some children's households are also intergenerational, with almost one-quarter (23 percent) of children living with a grandparent or great-grandparent.

**Figure 2.** Almost all Region XI Head Start children live with at least one biological/adoptive parent.



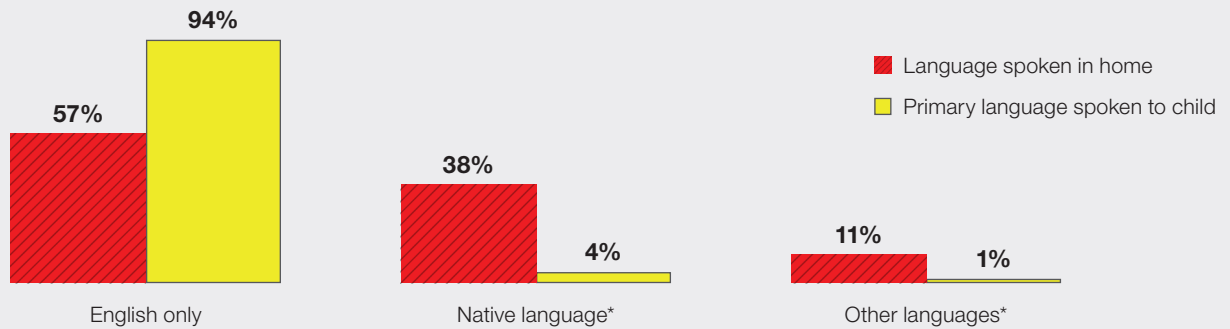
**Source:** Fall 2015 AI/AN FACES Parent Survey

**Note:** Statistics are weighted to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs in fall 2015. This figure focuses on biological/adoptive parents and does not include other adults, such as parents' romantic partners, step-parents, foster parents, or grandparents.

The majority of children in Region XI Head Start are AI/AN (81 percent). The 81 percent of children who are AI/AN includes those children whose parents reported a single race (AI/AN) and those whose parents reported more than one race.

Forty-three percent of Region XI Head Start children live in households where a language other than English is spoken in the home. A native language is the most prevalent non-English language, spoken in 38 percent of homes. Only 6 percent of children live in households where a language other than English is primarily spoken to them<sup>4</sup> (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** A native language is spoken in one-third of homes, but most children's primary language is English.



**Source:** Fall 2015 AI/AN FACES Parent Survey

**Note:** Statistics are weighted to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs in fall 2015.

Households that do not include a biological/adoptive mother and/or biological/adoptive father are not included in the relevant percentage calculations for native language use.

\*Native language and other languages can overlap. For example, a household in which a native language and Spanish are spoken would be represented in both categories.

## RQ 2: What are Region XI Head Start Families' Resources and Needs?

Family characteristics provide important information about children's developmental contexts. These contexts are important for Head Start programs to consider as they identify the best ways to serve children and families' needs.

### Parent Education and Employment

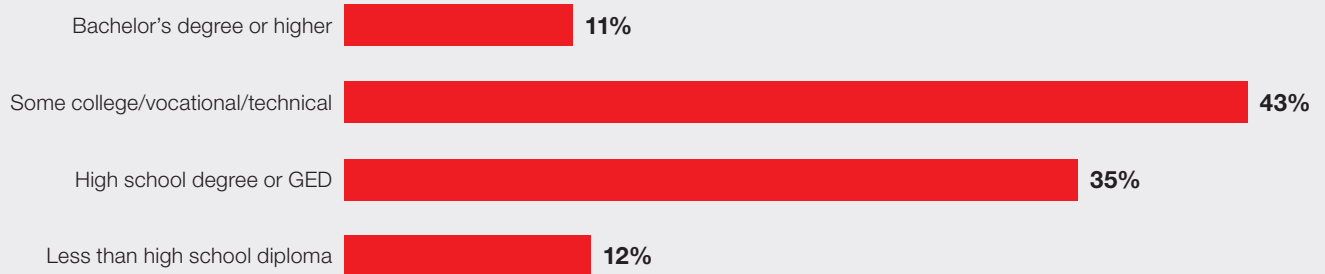
Almost all Region XI Head Start children (88 percent) live with one or more biological/adoptive parents who have a high school education or higher (based on the parent with the highest education in the household). This includes one-third (35 percent) of children who live with at least one parent who has earned a high school diploma or GED; 43 percent who live with at least one parent who has some college, vocational, or technical training; and 11 percent who live with at least one parent who has a bachelor's degree or higher (see Figure 4).

Sixty-four percent of children have at least one biological/adoptive parent who is working full time, and 15 percent have at least one parent who is working part time (based on the most employed parent in the household). Twelve percent of children have at least one parent who is looking for work, and 10 percent have at least one parent who is not in the labor force (see Figure 5).



Source: National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning

**Figure 4.** Almost all children in Region XI Head Start live with one or more parents with at least a high school degree or higher.

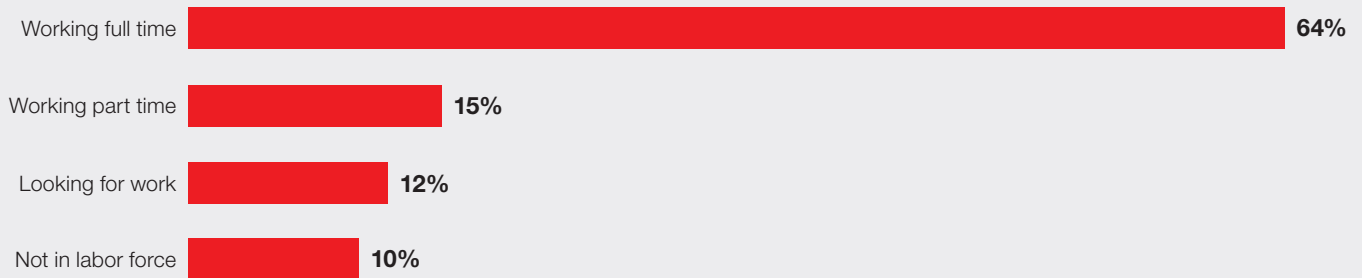


**Source:** Fall 2015 AI/AN FACES Parent Survey

**Note:** Statistics are weighted to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs in fall 2015.

Parents include both biological and adoptive parents. Households that include neither a mother nor a father are not included in this figure.

**Figure 5.** The majority of children in Region XI Head Start have at least one parent working either full or part time.



**Source:** Fall 2015 AI/AN FACES Parent Survey

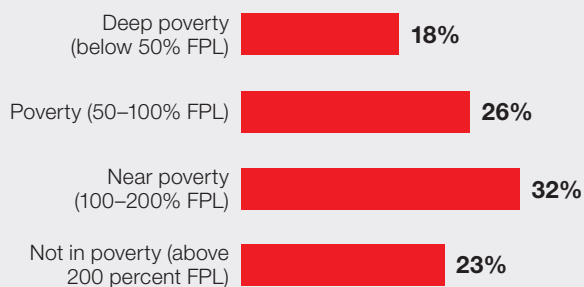
**Note:** Statistics are weighted to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs in fall 2015.

Parents include both biological and adoptive parents. Households that include neither a mother nor a father are not included in this figure.

## Family Economic Hardship<sup>5</sup>

Twenty-three percent of Region XI Head Start children do not live in poverty. However, nearly half (44 percent) of Region XI Head Start children live at or below the federal poverty line (FPL), including 18 percent who live in deep poverty<sup>6</sup> and 26 percent who live in poverty.<sup>7</sup> An additional 32 percent of Region XI children live near poverty<sup>8</sup> (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6.** Almost one-half of Region XI Head Start children live in poverty.



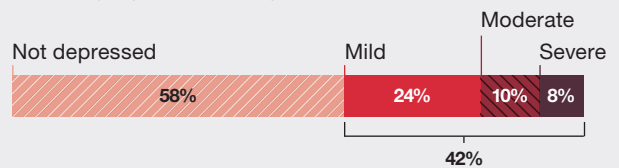
**Source:** Fall 2015 AI/AN FACES Parent Survey

**Note:** Statistics are weighted to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs in fall 2015. The federal poverty line is based on 2015 thresholds set by the United States Census Bureau. For example, the federal poverty threshold for a family of four in 2015 was \$24,529.

## Parent Depressive Symptoms

Fifty-eight percent of Region XI Head Start children live with a responding parent who does not report any symptoms of depression. Slightly more than 40 percent have a parent who reports some symptoms of depression. Parents (predominantly mothers) of 8 percent of Head Start children report symptoms of severe depression, another 10 percent report symptoms of moderate depression, and 24 percent report symptoms of mild depression<sup>9</sup> (see Figure 8).

**Figure 7.** More than 4 out of 10 children in AI/AN Head Start were living with a parent who reports some symptoms of depression.



**Source:** Fall 2015 AI/AN FACES Parent Survey

**Note:** Statistics are weighted to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs in fall 2015. The Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) short form is used for screening symptoms related to depression, a self-report measure of how often one has felt or experienced certain situations in the past week. Higher scores indicate greater symptoms with possible depressive symptom categories presented here.

## Home Learning and Literacy Activities

Almost all (99 percent) Region XI Head Start children have family members who engaged with them in home learning activities in the past week. For example, family members (1) told them a story; (2) taught them letters, words, or numbers; (3) played with toys or games indoors; (4) took them along on errands; (5) involved them in household chores; (6) talked about what happened in Head Start; or (7) counted different things with them. Children participated in an average of about 12 activities in the past week.<sup>10</sup>

The vast majority of children (98 percent) in Region XI were read to at least once within the last week. More than three-quarters (79 percent) were read to at least three times in the past week. Forty-three percent were read to three or more times, but not daily, and 36 percent were read to daily. About 19 percent of children were read to once or twice a week, and only about 2 percent were not read to at all.



A large majority of Region XI children (90 percent) were told a story at least once within the last week. About 63 percent were told stories at least three times in the past week. Forty-one percent were told stories three or more times, but not daily, and 21 percent were told stories daily. About 27 percent of children were told stories once or twice a week, and about 10 percent were not told stories at all (see Figure 8).

## RQ 3: How are Region XI Children Doing at the Beginning of the Program Year?

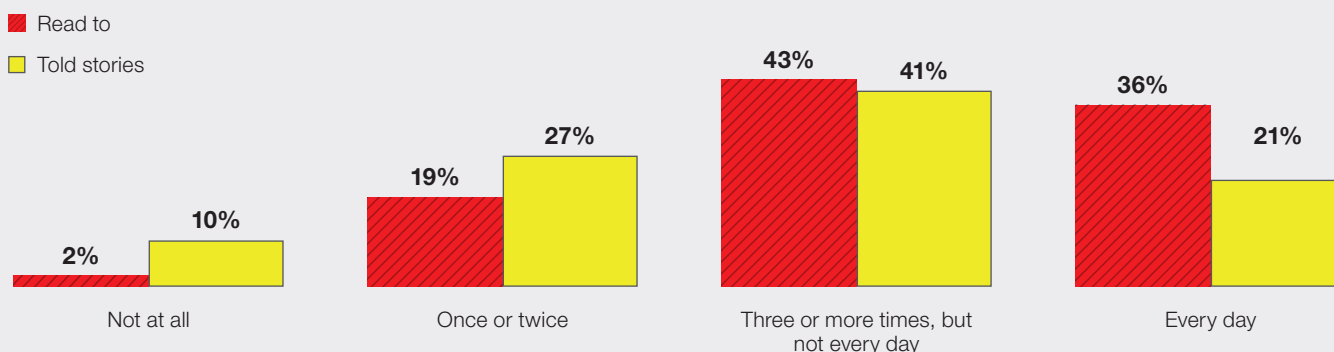
Next, we examine children’s school readiness skills at the beginning of the Head Start year. In the fall of 2015, AI/AN FACES 2015 assessed children’s language, literacy, and early math skills; social-emotional skills; executive functioning; physical development (height and weight); and health. Information about the measures that were used to assess children’s development is included at the end of this brief in the box describing the AI/AN

FACES 2015 study. For some skills, we are able to draw comparisons between Region XI Head Start children and others of the same age in the general population using standard scores. Fall child assessments also provide a starting place from which to measure children’s progress during the Head Start year and to identify areas of growth that can be addressed by Head Start. We examine fall-to-spring changes in children’s skills in the “A Year in Region XI Head Start: Children’s Growth and Opportunities to Foster It from AI/AN FACES 2015” (Bernstein et al., 2018).

### *What are Standard Scores?*

*Standard scores allow us to examine how Region XI Head Start children are doing compared to children of the same age nationally. The average score for same-aged children in the general population is 100. Scores above or below 100 mean that compared to children of the same age nationally, the child’s skills are more or less advanced.*

**Figure 8.** Most children were read to or told a story at least three times a week in the past week.



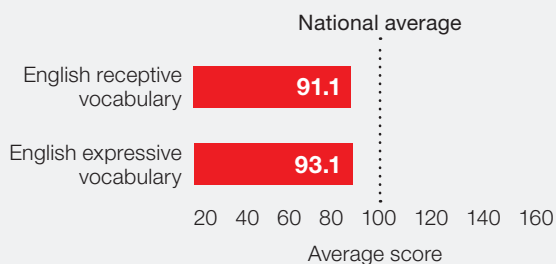
**Source:** Fall 2015 AI/AN FACES Parent Survey

**Note:** Statistics are weighted to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs in fall 2015.

## Children’s Language, Literacy, and Math Skills

On average, using standard scores, Region XI Head Start children score below other children of the same age in language skills at the beginning of the program year. Specifically, Region XI Head Start children score below same-age peers nationally in English receptive vocabulary (91.1, range 44–131) and in English expressive vocabulary (93.1, range 45–145; see Figure 9). As context, in a national sample of Head Start children in Regions I–X, scores are similar (Aikens et al., 2017).

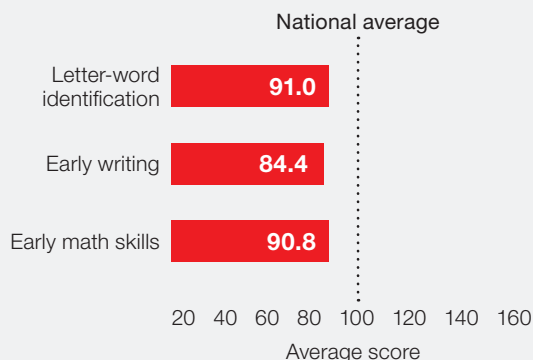
**Figure 9.** At the beginning of the program year, Region XI Head Start children’s receptive and expressive English scores were, on average, lower than other children’s the same age nationally.



**Source:** AI/AN FACES Fall 2015 Direct Child Assessments  
**Note:** Statistics are weighted to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs in fall 2015. Receptive vocabulary was assessed using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Fourth Edition (PPVT-4) and expressive vocabulary was assessed using the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test-4 (EOWPVT-4).

Region XI Head Start children’s literacy and math skills also lag behind other children of the same age. Region XI Head Start children score below national averages on letter-word identification (90, range 60–147), early writing (84.4, range 36–121), and early math (90.8, range 51–127; see Figure 10). As context, in a national sample of Head Start children in Regions I–X, scores are similar in letter-word identification and early math skills (Aikens et al., 2017).

**Figure 10.** At the beginning of the program year, children’s letter-word knowledge and math scores were, on average, lower than other children of the same age.



**Source:** AI/AN FACES Fall 2015 Direct Child Assessments  
**Note:** Statistics are weighted to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs in fall 2015. Letter-word identification was assessed using the Woodcock-Johnson III Letter Word Identification subtest, early writing was assessed using the Woodcock-Johnson III Spelling subtest, and early math was assessed using the Woodcock-Johnson III Applied Problems subtest.

## Children’s Social and Emotional Development

Children’s social and emotional development was assessed by Head Start teachers’ report of their social skills, behavior problems, and positive approaches to learning using raw scores. Executive functioning, which broadly includes children’s skills in self-regulation, working memory, and attention, was measured by the Pencil Tapping task,<sup>11</sup> which requires the child to do the opposite of what the assessor does (tap one time when the assessor taps two times; tap two times when the assessor taps one time).



### What are Raw Scores?

*Raw scores are counts or an average count a child received on an assessment. Raw scores are not compared to other children of the same age nationally or converted to a standard scale. The range for each scale represents the highest and lowest possible score a child could receive.*

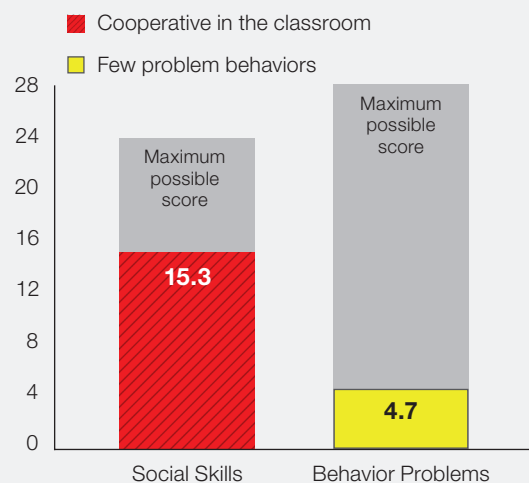
On average, Region XI Head Start children were rated 15.3 on a measure of social skills, with a range of possible scores from 0 to 24, with higher scores meaning higher teacher-reported social skills. Children were rated 4.7 on a measure of behavior problems, with a range of possible scores from 0 to 28, with higher scores meaning more behavior problems (see Figure 11). Children were rated 1.7 on a measure of positive approaches to learning with a range of possible scores from 0 to 3, with higher scores meaning more positive approaches to learning.<sup>12</sup> Children respond correctly on an executive functioning task 40.4 percent of the time, on average. Scores can range from 0 to 100, with higher scores meaning better skills on the task. The task is only administered to children age 4 and older at the time of the direct assessment. As context, in a national sample of Head Start, children in Regions I–X score similarly (Aikens et al., 2017).

### Children’s Health

Almost all Region XI Head Start children (99 percent) have a regular health care provider, with half using the Indian Health Service for routine health care. Less than one-third of children go to a private doctor, private clinic, or HMO for routine health care. Over 80 percent of Region XI Head Start children have a regular place for dental care.

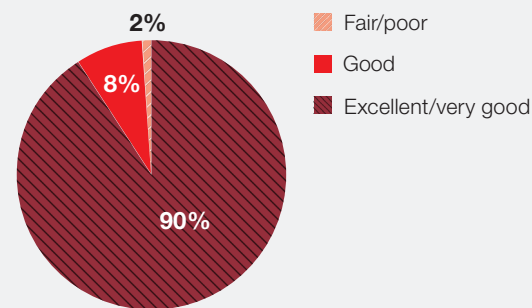
Parents were asked to report on their child’s general health status. Almost all children (90 percent) were reported to have excellent or very good health. Eight percent were reported to have good health, and 2 percent were reported to have fair or poor health (see Figure 12).

**Figure 11.** Teachers report that, on average, the children in Region XI Head Start are cooperative in the classroom and exhibit few problem behaviors.



**Source:** AI/AN FACES Fall 2015 Teacher Child Report  
**Note:** Statistics are weighted to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs in fall 2015.

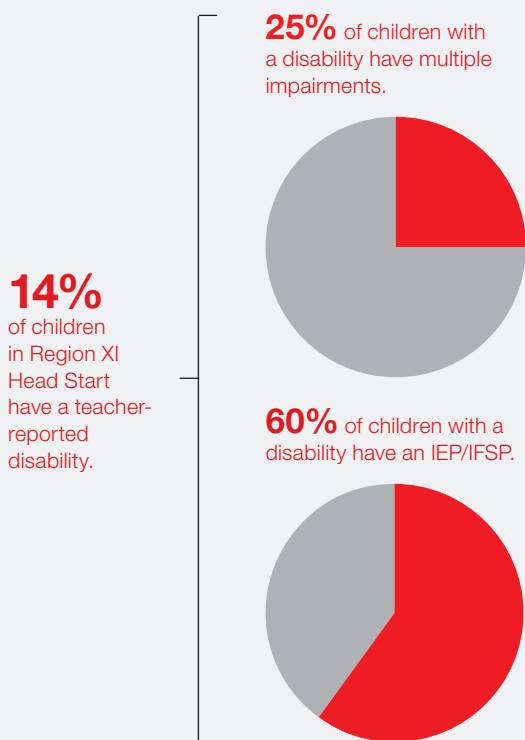
**Figure 12.** Parents report that the vast majority of children in Head Start have excellent or very good health.



**Source:** Fall 2015 AI/AN FACES Parent Survey  
**Note:** Statistics are weighted to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs in fall 2015.

Children’s teachers reported that about 14 percent of children were living with a disability, but of those, only about 60 percent had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) (see Figure 13). Of the 14 percent of children living with a disability, three-fourths had speech or language impairments, about a third had cognitive impairments, and a quarter had multiple impairments. Other reported disabilities included sensory impairment (6 percent of children), physical impairments (7 percent of children), and behavioral impairments (8 percent of children).

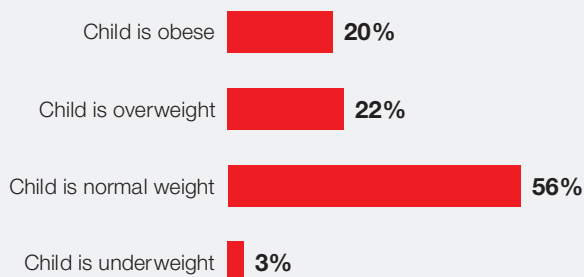
**Figure 13.** Three-fifths of children with a teacher-reported disability have an IEP/IFSP.



**Source:** AI/AN FACES Fall 2015 Teacher Child Report  
**Note:** Statistics are weighted to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs in fall 2015.

Finally, AI/AN FACES 2015 measured children’s height and weight. At the beginning of the Head Start year, over half of Region XI Head Start children (56 percent) were normal weight, but over 40 percent of Region XI Head Start children were overweight or obese. The remaining 3 percent were underweight<sup>13</sup> (see Figure 14).

**Figure 14.** Over one-half of children are normal weight, but many children are overweight or obese.



**Source:** Fall 2015 AI/AN FACES Direct Assessment  
**Note:** Statistics are weighted to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs in fall 2015.

## RQ 4: What are AI/AN Region XI Head Start Children’s Home and Community Experiences?

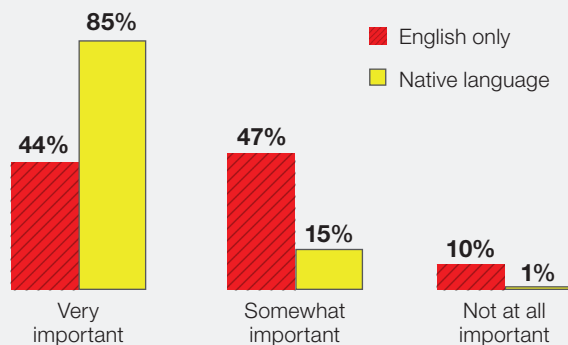
Cultural identity can foster protective attributes such as promoting health, resilience, and well-being (Fleming and Ledogar, 2008; Pu et al., 2013; Wexler, 2014). In AI/AN FACES 2015, parents answered questions about their sense of native or cultural group pride and belonging; their use of native language, song, and dance; and participation in cultural events. The findings in this section use data only on AI/AN children. While some

data regarding children’s native language and culture experiences at home and their community are presented in this current report, the data on native language and culture experiences are the sole focus of two briefs (Barnes-Najor et al., 2018, and Sarche et al., 2019) on AI/AN children’s native language and culture experiences at home and in the community. Furthermore, the data in the Barnes-Najor et al. report are presented in the broader context of native language and culture revitalization.

### Native Language Exposure

Although 95 percent of AI/AN children live in households where the primary language spoken is English, about half live in a household in which only English is spoken and 46 percent live in a household where a native language is spoken. No matter what language was spoken at home, almost all parents of Region XI AI/AN children (91 percent of children who are spoken to in English only at home and 99 percent of children who are spoken to in a native language at home) believe that it is very or somewhat important for their child to learn the native language (see Figure 15).

**Figure 15.** Parents believe that it is important that their child learn the native language.



**Source:** Fall 2015 AI/AN FACES Parent Survey  
**Note:** Estimates include only children who are AI/AN alone or in combination with another race or ethnicity. Statistics are weighted to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs in fall 2015.

Parents also reported on how often they engaged in various activities to support native language in the past month, such as speaking with their child in a native language, making sure their child hears a native language, encouraging the child to learn the native language, and using the native language in prayers or songs. When asked about native language use in the past month, 28 percent of parents of Region XI AI/AN children reported they spoke to their children in a native language often or very often, 45 percent made sure their children heard a native language often or very often, and over half (56 percent) encouraged their children to learn the native language often or very often.

### Community and Cultural Activities

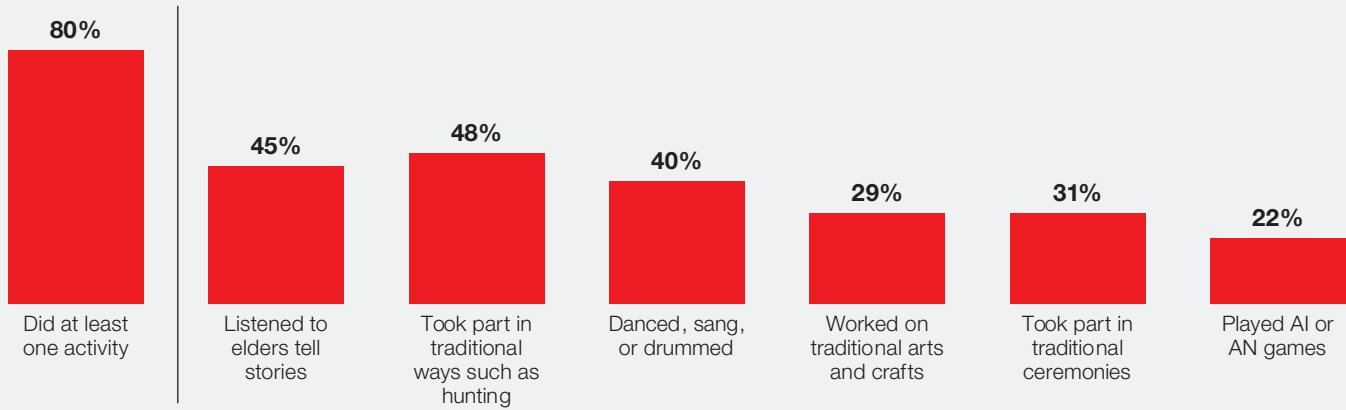
Parents were asked if their children had participated in various activities with community members in the past month. These activities included listening to elders tell stories; participating in traditional ways, such as carving, harvesting, collecting, hunting, and fishing; dancing, singing, or drumming; working on traditional arts and crafts; participating in traditional ceremonies; and playing



Source: National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning

American Indian or Alaska Native games. Eighty-one percent of AI/AN children in Region XI Head Start participated in at least one such activity in the past month outside of Head Start, with an average of two community activities per month. The most common activities were participating in traditional ways such as hunting; listening to elders tell stories; and dancing, singing, or drumming, being done by 44 to 49 percent of children (see Figure 16).

**Figure 16.** Most children have engaged in at least one community cultural activity in the past month.



**Source:** Fall 2015 AI/AN FACES Parent Survey

**Note:** Parents were asked to report on activities in the past month. Statistics are weighted to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs in fall 2015 and include children who are new to the program and those who are returning for a second year.

## Summary and Implications

The purpose of this brief is to provide a portrait of the characteristics and well-being of children and families in Region XI Head Start, as well as children's school readiness skills at the beginning of the Head Start program year.

In fall 2015, a majority of the children served by Region XI Head Start were AI/AN, but the program also served children of other races. Additionally, more than 40 percent of children live in households where a language other than English is spoken, the most common being a native language. The majority of children lived with at least one biological/adoptive parent.

There was variation in the educational and economic resources and needs of Region XI Head Start families. Almost all children live with one or more parents with at least a high school education, and almost three-quarters live with at least one parent who is working full time. However, almost half of the children live at or below the poverty line, with more than 25 percent living in deep poverty.

We found that many Region XI Head Start children's responding parents face additional challenges, with more than 40 percent reporting some level of depressive symptoms, which may in turn adversely affect parents' interactions with their children. Nevertheless, the majority of parents report engaging in a variety of home learning activities at the start of the program year. More than three-quarters report reading to their Head Start child at least three times in the past week, and almost all told their children a story at least once in the past week.

Children begin the Head Start program year with a range of prior experiences, skills, and needs. Examining children's skills in the fall provides a starting place from which to measure children's progress during the year. As measured through direct assessments at the beginning of the program year, we see that the average language, literacy, and early math skills of Region XI Head Start children lag behind others of the same age in the general population, on average. While these findings are similar to children in Regions I–X Head Start, these findings suggest aspects of development that can be nurtured. Although the children are coming in with lower scores

than same-aged children nationally, this is an opportunity for focused attention, provision of teaching services, and individualized instruction.

Finally, AI/AN children in Region XI Head Start have many cultural and community experiences. Almost half live in a household where a native language is spoken, and almost all parents of AI/AN children report that it is important for their child to learn a native language. AI/AN children also participated in a variety of cultural activities in their community, including listening to elders tell stories; participating in traditional ways; and dancing, singing, or drumming.

Overall, this portrait of children and families served by Region XI Head Start at the beginning of the 2015–2016 program year underscores that the program is serving a diverse population of families and children with a range of resources and needs to which Region XI Head Start can tailor services. This national picture of Region XI provides information that Head Start considers when setting goals for the program and provides a starting place and opportunity for tracking children's progress relative to national norms.



Source: National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning

## Sources

<sup>1</sup> In this document, we use the terms American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN), and Native to refer inclusively to the broad and diverse groups of American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, villages, communities, corporations, and populations in the United States, acknowledging that each tribe, village, community, corporation, and population is unique from others with respect to language, culture, history, geography, political and/or legal structure or status, and contemporary context.

<sup>2</sup> This brief highlights information from the AI/AN FACES Fall 2015–Spring 2016 Data Tables and Study Design report.

<sup>3</sup> All reported percentages and means are rounded to the nearest whole number.

<sup>4</sup> This characteristic is based on the parent's report of whether a language other than English is spoken in the child's home and whether the child's parent/guardian primarily uses this language when speaking with the child. Other FACES reports refer to children with a primary home language other than English as dual language learners, or DLLs.

<sup>5</sup> This section summarizes household income and, therefore, should not be used to estimate eligibility for Head Start. Head Start qualifying criteria are based on family (not household) income, and there are other (non-income) ways to qualify for the program. Region XI programs may enroll participants who do not meet the low-income criteria, as long as these participants comprise no more than 49 percent of total enrollment.

<sup>6</sup> Deep poverty is defined as a household income adjusted for family size less than 50 percent of the federal poverty line.

<sup>7</sup> Poverty is defined as a household income adjusted for family size between 50 and 100 percent of the federal poverty line.

<sup>8</sup> Near poverty is defined as a household income adjusted for family size between 100 and 200 percent of the federal poverty line.

<sup>9</sup> The AI/AN FACES 2015 parent survey included the short form of the Center for Epidemiologic Studies–Depression Scale (CES-D), a psychosocial measure. The short form includes 12 items on a 4-point scale for frequency in the past week. Total scores range from 0 to 36. Scores ranging from 0 to 4 are coded as no symptoms of depression, from 5 to 9 as symptoms of mild depression, from 10 to 14 as symptoms of moderate depression, and 15 and above as symptoms of severe depression. This was administered only to one parent respondent, most commonly the mother.

<sup>10</sup> Range of possible responses is 0–14.

<sup>11</sup> In fall 2015, there were 984 children who participated in the AI/AN FACES 2015 study. The sample in this research brief is smaller because it excludes children who did not have a completed child assessment or teacher child report in the fall and a completed parent survey in the fall or spring.

<sup>12</sup> This is an adaptation of a peg-tapping task (Blair 2002; Diamond and Taylor, 1996).



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<sup>13</sup> Teachers rated each child on a scale of 1 (“never”) to 4 (“very often”) on the six items that comprise the Approaches to Learning Scale from the ECLS-K (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). These scores were converted to a scale of 0 (“never”) to 3 (“very often”) for reporting. The items assess a child’s motivation, attention, organization, persistence, and independence in learning.

<sup>14</sup> Each child is weighed and their height measured using procedures from the ECLS. Body mass index (BMI) is calculated as the ratio of an individual’s weight to height (weight in kilograms divided by squared height in meters) and can be used as an indicator of overweight and obese status. BMI calculation is specific to gender and age. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a child is considered to be overweight when his/her BMI score is at or above the 85th percentile and below the 95th percentile for age and gender, and obese if his/her BMI is at or above the 95th percentile for age and gender. Children with a BMI score less than the 5th percentile for age and gender are considered underweight, and those between the 5th and 85th percentile are considered normal weight.

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## Head Start

Head Start is a national program designed to promote children’s school readiness by enhancing their social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development. The program provides educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services to enrolled children and their families. Head Start places special emphasis on helping preschoolers develop the reading, language, social-emotional, mathematics, and science skills they need to be successful in school. The program also seeks to engage parents in their children’s learning and to promote progress

toward the parents’ own educational, literacy, and employment goals (ACF website). Head Start aims to achieve these goals by providing comprehensive child development services to economically disadvantaged children and their families through grants to local public agencies and to private nonprofit and for-profit organizations.

## AI/AN FACES 2015

This research brief draws upon data from the American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (AI/AN FACES 2015). AI/AN FACES 2015 is the first national study of Region XI AI/AN Head Start children and their families, classrooms, and programs. Other AI/AN FACES 2015 products describe the study’s design and methodology and the characteristics of Region XI Head Start children in fall 2015 and spring 2016 (Bernstein et al. 2018), children’s progress over the program year (Malone et al., 2018), and children’s cultural and language experiences (Barnes-Najor et al., 2018; Sarche et al., 2019).

## Methods

For AI/AN FACES 2015, we selected a sample to represent all children enrolled in Region XI Head Start in fall 2015. We selected a nationally representative sample of Region XI Head Start programs from the 2012–2013 Head Start Program Information Report, with one to two centers per program and two to four classrooms per center. Within each classroom, we selected all children for the study. In total, 21 programs, 36 centers, 73 classrooms, and 1,049 children participated in the study. The sample used for this brief includes 882 children who were enrolled in Region XI Head Start in fall 2015.<sup>11</sup> All findings are weighted to represent this population.

## Measures of Children's Development

To assess children's cognitive skills, AI/AN FACES 2015 directly administers norm- and criterion-referenced measures of language, literacy, and mathematics to the children. The assessment battery measures English receptive and expressive vocabulary using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Fourth Edition (PPVT-4; Dunn and Dunn, 2006), and the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test–Fourth Edition (EOWPVT-4; Martin and Brownell, 2010). The assessment battery measures children's letter-word knowledge, early writing, and early math skills in English by using the Letter-Word Identification, Spelling, and Applied Problems subtests from the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement, Third Edition (WJ III; Woodcock et al., 2001). Standard scores have a mean of 100 and standard deviation of 15. Children's height and weight are also directly measured for computation of BMI.

Teachers report on children's cooperative classroom behavior or social skills and their problem behaviors in the classroom using items from the Behavior Problems Index (Peterson and Zill, 1986), the Personal Maturity Scale (Entwisle et al., 1997), and the Social Skills Rating Scale (Gresham and Elliott, 1990). Teachers also rate children's approaches to learning with the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study–Kindergarten Approaches to Learning Scale (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). A pencil tapping task (Blair, 2002; Diamond and Taylor, 1996; Smith-Donald et al., 2007) captures children's executive functioning in the direct child assessment. In the Pencil Tapping task, children are asked to do the opposite of what the assessor does. That is, if the assessor taps once, the child should tap twice, and vice versa. Reported scores reflect the percentage of times the child tapped correctly. They can take on any value from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating better skills on the task. The task is administered only to children age 4 and older at the time of the direct assessment.

To learn more about AI/AN FACES, visit the AI/AN FACES website at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/american-indian-and-alaska-native-head-start-family-and-child-experiences-survey-faces>.

A restricted-use data set is available for additional analyses by qualified researchers in order to further provide critically needed information about Region XI Head Start programs and the children and families they serve. Information about the data set and how to apply for access is available at <https://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/studies/36804>.

### **Mary Mueggenborg and Meryl Yoches Barofsky, Project Officers**

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### **Lizabeth Malone, Project Director**

Mathematica Policy Research  
1100 1st Street, NE, 12th Floor  
Washington, DC 20002-4221

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