

Early Learning Pathways of Early Intervention Service Participants in Washington State



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ABOUT THE ERDC

The research presented here uses data from the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC), located in the Washington Office of Financial Management. ERDC works with partner agencies to conduct powerful analyses of learning that can help inform the decision-making of Washington legislators, parents, and education providers. ERDC's data system is a statewide longitudinal data system that includes de-identified data about people's preschool, educational and workforce experiences.

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Abstract

The Washington Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) program provides early intervention services to children from birth to age three who have disabilities or developmental delays in physical, cognitive, social emotional, communication, and adaptive areas. Using the Education Research and Data Center's (ERDC) linked early learning data across programs, this brief report investigates the pathways of ESIT participants after they receive services and transition out of the program. Results show that a vast majority of ESIT participants receive public school-based special education services after they exit ESIT, while a smaller proportion of children participate in ECEAP after transitioning from the ESIT program.

Introduction

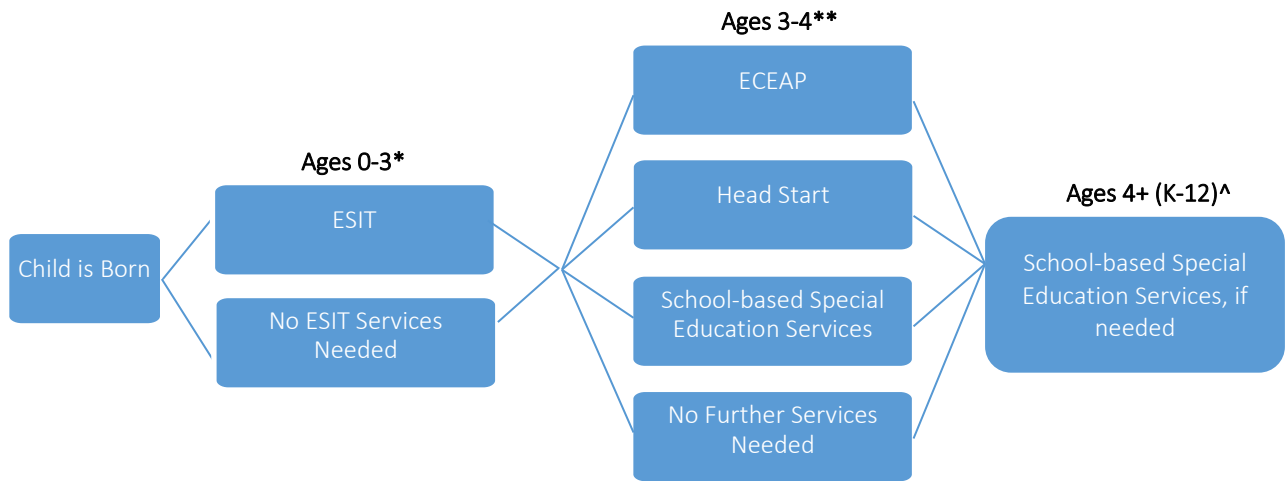
Washington's [Early Support for Infants and Toddlers \(ESIT\) program](#) delivers early intervention services to children from birth to age three who have disabilities or developmental delays in physical, cognitive, social-emotional, communication, and adaptive areas. These services are provided according to Part C of the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ([IDEA](#)). Each ESIT program participant has an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) developed for him or her to access intervention services and resources specified in the plan. Early intervention services may include, but are not limited to, specialized instruction, speech therapy, occupational therapy or physical therapy. The ESIT team also uses the Child Outcomes Summary Form (COSF) to record and evaluate three key outcomes at program entry and exit: Positive social-emotional skills; Acquiring and Using Knowledge and Skills; and Use of Appropriate Behaviors. Results from the COSF indicate if the participant has Age-Expected Skills, Decreasing Degree of Age-Expected Skills, or No Age-Expected Skills, as well as Decreasing Degree of Immediate Foundational Skills.

ESIT-provided early intervention services end on the child's third birthday, or the point when the child achieves satisfactory results before age three. Children can also transition out of the ESIT program voluntarily, based on the family's decision or a change in the child's status due to moving out-of-state or a lack of proximity to current service providers. In these situations, ESIT staff develop a transition plan that outlines other programs or services that the child may be eligible for after they exit ESIT. Some children are eligible for early childhood special education services provided by the local public school district¹, while some children qualify for other programs like Head Start or the Early Childhood Educational Assistance Program (ECEAP)². Figure 1 illustrates the possible services that ESIT participants may qualify for after they exit the ESIT program.

¹ Local school district special education services are provided through the Part B of the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

² [ECEAP](#) is Washington's preschool program serving children ages 3 or 4 from low-income families to prepare them for school success. ECEAP also allocates up to ten percent of their program slots to children exceeding minimum program criteria, but with special risk factors. Please see [WAC Chapter 110-425](#) for additional details on ECEAP's eligibility criteria. [Head Start](#) is a national program serving a similar population to ECEAP's, but with slightly different [eligibility](#) criteria.

Figure 1. Possible Service Pathways for ESIT Participants in Washington State by Age Range



*ESIT participants can exit the program reaching three years old or earlier. Eligibility for additional services is determined when a child exits from ESIT.
 **Any child may apply for these services, even if they did not participate in ESIT. School-based Special Education Services here refers to special education services at Pre-K level.
 ^Students are eligible for school-based special education services at any point in their K-12 tenure.

ERDC links data across ESIT, ECEAP and K-12 (Comprehensive Education Data and Research System, or CEDARS) data systems and provides the platform to track the pathways in Figure 1, except for Head Start. As such, results from this analysis expand our knowledge about the typical transitions of ESIT participants to other programs like ECEAP and school-based services. This report explores the most common reasons for exiting the ESIT program, the demographics of transitioning ESIT participants, and enrollment in other programs post-ESIT.

Results

Reaching the cut off age of three is the main reason that ESIT participants transition out of the program.

ESIT participants exit the program for different reasons, as outlined in Table 1 below. Between 2011 and 2019, on average, more ESIT participants transitioned at the cutoff age of three (59%) than those who exit before their third birthday (41%). Next steps following transition at age three are of particular interest. Here, we only count ESIT participants who transitioned out with a clear reason and age status recorded in the ESIT administrative database. From 2011 to 2019, on average, 41% of all transitioned children who exited ESIT at age of three qualify for further special education services. Between six and nine percent (6 to 9%) of all participants who exit ESIT at age three during this timeframe do not qualify for Part B Special Education services but receive referrals for other services. An additional four to seven percent (4% to 7%) of ESIT participants left the program at age three but did not receive further referral.

On the other hand, the primary reason that participants transition out of ESIT before age three during this timeframe is unsuccessful contact with the parent or parents’ decision to remove the child from the program.

The other common reasons for children to leave ESIT before age three are no longer being eligible and moving out of Washington State. From 2011 to 2019, the ESIT program also sees an increasing trend in the number of participants who transition each year, which is associated with an average enrollment increase of 15% per year.

Table 1. Count and percent of children in ESIT administrative data by reasons for transition, 2011 to 2019*

		All Children Ever Served by ESIT Program									
		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Average
Transitioned at age 3		3,721 (66%)	3,736 (65%)	3,769 (60%)	3,956 (61%)	4,227 (59%)	4,589 (58%)	4,925 (58%)	5,292 (57%)	5,867 (57%)	4,453 (59%)
Eligible for Part B/ Special Education		2,548 (46%)	2,575 (45%)	2,629 (42%)	2,806 (43%)	2,923 (41%)	3,142 (39%)	3,328 (39%)	3,592 (38%)	3,942 (38%)	3,054 (41%)
Not eligible for Part B, but other program		467 (8%)	399 (7%)	416 (7%)	464 (7%)	622 (9%)	661 (8%)	595 (7%)	591 (6%)	691 (7%)	545 (7%)
No further referral		382 (7%)	334 (6%)	386 (6%)	394 (6%)	343 (5%)	315 (4%)	390 (5%)	456 (5%)	435 (4%)	382 (5%)
Part B eligibility not determined		324 (6%)	428 (8%)	338 (5%)	292 (5%)	339 (5%)	471 (6%)	612 (7%)	653 (7%)	799 (8%)	473 (6%)
Transitioned before age 3		1,885 (34%)	1,988 (35%)	2,468 (40%)	2,558 (39%)	2,962 (41%)	3,390 (43%)	3,618 (42%)	4,062 (43%)	4,476 (43%)	3,045 (41%)
Deceased		12 (0.2%)	22 (0.4%)	17 (0.3%)	16 (0.2%)	13 (0.2%)	22 (0.3%)	27 (0.3%)	22 (0.2%)	23 (0.2%)	19 (0.3%)
Moved out of state		329 (6%)	356 (6%)	385 (6%)	377 (6%)	444 (6%)	493 (6%)	478 (6%)	608 (7%)	540 (5%)	446 (6%)
No longer eligible for Part C		493 (9%)	320 (6%)	417 (7%)	447 (7%)	493 (7%)	571 (7%)	574 (7%)	645 (7%)	664 (6%)	514 (7%)
Unsuccessful contact or parent choice		1,051 (19%)	1,290 (23%)	1,649 (26%)	1,718 (26%)	2,012 (28%)	2,304 (29%)	2,539 (30%)	2,787 (30%)	3,249 (31%)	2,067 (28%)
Total		5,606	5,724	6,237	6,514	7,189	7,979	8,543	9,354	10,343	7,499

*Some transition cases recorded in ESIT database do not have a reason for exit or transition status specified. These cases are not reported in this table. Please see Table 4 for counts for all cases.

Most former ESIT participants enter the public school system during their Pre-K year to receive school-based services.

Table 2 illustrates the count of previous ESIT participants entering public school each year from 2011 to 2018. Here we used linked data connecting ESIT administrative data and K-12 data from the Washington Office of Superintendent and Public Instruction’s (OSPI) CEDARS system. Because the specific time between ending ESIT

services (for example, at third birthday) and school-based services cannot be computed for each child, their initial enrollment in the public school system were captured in this data. If they ever enroll in school-based services, former ESIT participants mainly start at the Pre-K level that the number of children receiving school-based services at Pre-K level do not align precisely with the number reported in Table 1 statistics, which came from ESIT administrative data recording transition recommendations. Actual placement for former ESIT participants are different based on actual public schools’ enrollment. One possible reason for this discrepancy is that school districts take different approaches to determining eligibility for services based on their interpretation, capacity, and individual needs of each child.

Table 2. Number of previous ESIT participants by initial enrollment in public schools’ grade level, 2011 to 2018

Year	Pre-K	K1 [^]	K2 [^]	1st Grade	2nd Grade
2011	4,708	*	*	*	*
2012	5,107	*	*	*	*
2013	5,835	*	*	*	*
2014	6,051	269	153	*	*
2015	7,133	375	144	25	*
2016	7,726	530	116	41	15
2017	8,430	901	49	44	18
2018	8,652	965	62	47	16

[^]K1 and K2 are different levels of kindergarten, where most K1 children are age four and K2 are age five.

*Small cell sizes are not reported.

Table 3 outlines the demographic characteristics of former ESIT participants at their initial public school enrollment. Between 2011 and 2018, over half of the ESIT participants who transition into the public school system are White. Another 20% to 25% of ESIT participants who transition to the public school system during this timeframe are Hispanic/Latino.

Table 3. Count and percent of ESIT participants’ initial enrollment in public schools by year and race/ethnicity

Year	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	African American	Hispanic/Latino	White	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Two or more races	Previous ESIT Participants Enroll in Public School
2011	83 (2%)	242 (5%)	181 (4%)	1,117 (24%)	2,796 (59%)	28 (1%)	256 (5%)	4,703
2012	88 (2%)	291 (6%)	222 (4%)	1,172 (23%)	2,940 (58%)	50 (1%)	346 (7%)	5,109
2013	95 (2%)	335 (6%)	245 (4%)	1,409 (24%)	3,287 (56%)	49 (1%)	416 (7%)	5,836
2014	101 (2%)	341 (5%)	264 (4%)	1,640 (25%)	3,595 (56%)	36 (1%)	497 (8%)	6,474

Year	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	African American	Hispanic/Latino	White	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Two or more races	Previous ESIT Participants Enroll in Public School
2015	122 (2%)	386 (5%)	341 (4%)	1,911 (25%)	4,283 (56%)	40 (1%)	594 (8%)	7,677
2016	142 (2%)	524 (6%)	359 (4%)	2,114 (25%)	4,568 (54%)	44 (1%)	660 (8%)	8,411
2017	127 (1%)	598 (6%)	435 (5%)	2,338 (25%)	5,115 (54%)	58 (1%)	757 (8%)	9,428
2018	73 (1%)	442 (7%)	263 (4%)	1,644 (25%)	3,488 (53%)	42 (1%)	584 (9%)	6,536

Some ESIT participants enter ECEAP as they transition out of ESIT.

Table 4 displays the count and percentages of former ESIT participants who transitioned from ESIT to Pre-K or ECEAP by year of first enrollment, even if their reason for transition and age status are unclear. Unlike in Table 1, all the transition cases in ESIT administrative data are incorporated into Table 4, including those without a completed IFSP or specific transition status. On average, 67% of all exiting ESIT participants received early learning intervention services through ECEAP or the public school system between 2013 and 2018. While it is more common for exiting ESIT participants to enroll in Pre-K public school services, their rate of ECEAP enrollment has increased annually over the last five years. The number of former ESIT participants who enroll in ECEAP steadily increases each year, from five percent (5%) in 2013 to eight percent (8%) in 2018.

Table 4. Count and percent of ESIT participants who transition to initial Pre-K enrollment and ECEAP* by year

Year	All Transitioned Out of ESIT^	Pre-K		ECEAP	
		Count	Percent of Transitioned Total	Count	Percent of Transitioned Total
2011	6,532	4,708	72%		
2012	7,354	5,107	69%		
2013	9,494	5,835	62%	446	5%
2014	10,764	6,051	56%	489	5%
2015	12,373	7,133	58%	853	7%
2016	13,917	7,726	56%	1,059	8%
2017	15,200	8,430	56%	1,148	8%
2018	16,648	8,652	51%	1,279	8%

*ECEAP data is not available prior to 2013.

^All transition cases reported in this table include ESIT participants summarized in Table 1 and participants without specified transition reason and status.

Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

In this report, ESIT data is linked with K-12 and ECEAP data to explore the rate of former ESIT participant enrollment in public school-based services and ECEAP. Subsequent placements after ESIT reveal that the actual enrollment outcomes vary considerably from the ESIT administrative data, which capture the program-recommended services for participants that are outlined in their transition plan. For example, enrollment in Pre-K is higher than recommended by ESIT transition plans, which could be due to differences in how school districts determine program eligibility compared to the ESIT transition plans. To be specific, from year 2011 to 2018, nearly three thousand exiting ESIT participants per year (2,943 children) are determined by ESIT staff to be eligible for school-based services. However, an average of 6,694 children actually start enrollment in Pre-K each year. Secondly, over time, the number of former ESIT participants who enroll in ECEAP has steadily increased each year. Altogether, ECEAP and school-based Pre-K services provide continued early learning intervention services to a large proportion of former ESIT participants. It is worth mentioning that public-school data include indicators of homelessness, foster care and immigration status. Although the number of cases were too small to report for this cohort, combining them with ESIT data could help us understand the education outcomes of these groups. Future studies could explore ESIT participants' pathways to the Head Start program. Investigating education outcomes of early learning participants using metrics such as kindergarten readiness, test results, and IEP participation, could also help to better understand the direct impacts of these programs on students. Additionally, it will be beneficial to investigate the effectiveness of early learning programs based on students' characteristics and their transitions to other services, utilizing ERDC's linked data across education programs. Incorporating the analysis of medical claims data could also help us understand the proportion of children in need who receive private early learning intervention services instead of those services from ESIT.