

Archived Information

EVEN START FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM

Goal: To help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities of the Nation's low-income families, through a unified family literacy program that integrates early childhood education, adult literacy or adult basic education, and parenting education.

Relationship of Program to Volume 1, Department-wide Objectives: Even Start's activities support Objectives 2.1 (children enter school ready to learn), 2.2 (reading) and 3.4 (adult literacy) by providing model programs and supporting state and local implementation of the models. Because Even Start is focused on families most in need, it supports Objective 2.4 (special populations). A central feature of Even Start is its involvement of families and its coordination of community services to provide services to its families, supporting Objective 1.5 (families and communities).

FY 2000—\$150,000,000

FY 2001—\$150,000,000 (Requested budget)

OBJECTIVE 1: THE LITERACY OF PARTICIPATING FAMILIES WILL IMPROVE.

Indicator 1.1 Adult literacy achievement: Increasing percentages of Even Start adults will achieve significant learning gains on measures of math and reading.						
Targets and Performance Data					Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
<i>Percentage of adults showing moderate to large gains on Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE)</i>					<p>Status: Math gains—no 1999 data are available, but significant progress toward target is unlikely. Reading gains—no 1999 data are available, but significant progress toward target is unlikely.</p> <p>Explanation: The percentage of adults who showed significant gains in 1995-96 (the last year for which data are available) did not change in math and declined in reading. Progress toward the 1999 target was judged unlikely because of the trends in the Second National Evaluation and the challenges associated with long-term participation.</p> <p>An improved but different assessment instrument will be used in the next measure of performance toward this target in 1999-00.</p>	<p>Source: Second National Even Start Evaluation: sample study. <i>Frequency:</i> Occasionally. <i>Next Update:</i> Third National Even Start Evaluation: Experimental Design Study 1999-2000.</p> <p>Validation Procedure: Data collection before ED Standards for Evaluating Program Performance Data were developed. Other sources and experience corroborate these findings.</p> <p>Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements: <i>Limitations:</i> Study was designed to look at new participants' gains each year, thus the populations being compared in 1994-95 and 1995-96 were different. The sample study also had a small sample size, as well as grantee-collected data. <i>Planned Improvement:</i> The Third National Evaluation will use an experimental design, which is the strongest design for measuring program impact.</p>
Math		Reading				
Year	Actual	Target	Actual	Target		
1994-95:	26%		31%			
1995-96:	24%		20%			
1998-99:	No data available	Continuing increase	No data available	Continuing increase		
2000-01:		40%		30%		

Indicator 1.2 Adult educational attainment: Increasing percentages of adult secondary education (ASE) Even Start participants will earn their high school diploma or equivalent.

Targets and Performance Data			Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
Year	Actual Performance	Performance Targets	<p>Status: No significant progress toward target.</p> <p>Explanation: There has been no significant change in the percentage of ASE participants earning a Graduate Equivalency Diploma, and the challenges associated with long-term participation make significant progress unlikely. The 1998-99 figure was derived from only those participants with pre and post information, approximately one-fifth of all Even Start adults. The Revised Third National Evaluation instrument for 1999-00 will avoid this problem by asking all adult participants whether or not they obtained their Graduate Equivalency Diploma during the year.</p>	<p>Source: Second National Even Start Evaluation: Universe Study. <i>Frequency:</i> Annually. <i>Next Update:</i> Third National Evaluation: Universe Study, 1999-00.</p> <p>Validation Procedure: Data Collection before <u>ED Standards for Evaluating Program Performance Data</u> were developed. Other sources and experience corroborate these findings.</p> <p>Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements: Definitions of participation in ASE and Graduate Equivalency Diploma may vary across programs, and these data are obtained through grantee self-report. Sample sizes and composition have varied but will be realigned in the 1999-2000 collection.</p>
1995-96:	18%*			
1996-97:	19%*			
1998-99:	18.4%**	Continuing increase		
1999-00:		Continuing increase		
2000-01:		25%		
<p><i>*Indicates the percentage of all adult secondary education Even Start participants who earned their high school diploma or Graduate Equivalency Diploma.</i></p> <p><i>**Of the new enrollees who were working toward a high school diploma or Graduate Equivalency Diploma, the percentage who obtained a diploma or Graduate Equivalency Diploma by the end of the program year.</i></p>				

Indicator 1.3 Children’s language development and reading readiness: Increasing percentages of Even Start children will achieve significant gains on measures of language development and reading readiness.

Targets and Performance Data			Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
<i>Percentage of children achieving moderate to large gains on a measure of language development</i>			<p>Status: Target met.</p> <p>Explanation: There has been a continuing increase in the percentage of children achieving gains on a measure of language development, an increase we can expect to continue.</p> <p>An improved but different assessment instrument will be used in the next measure of performance toward this target in 1999-2000.</p>	<p>Source: Second National Even Start Evaluation: sample study. <i>Frequency:</i> Occasionally. <i>Next Update:</i> Third National Even Start Evaluation: Experimental Design Study 1999-2000.</p> <p>Validation Procedure: Data Collection before <u>ED Standards for Evaluating Program Performance Data</u> were developed. Other sources and experience corroborate these findings.</p> <p>Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements: <i>Limitations:</i> Study was designed to look at new participants' gains each year; thus, the populations being compared in 1994-95 and 1995-96 were different. The sample study also had a small sample size, as well as grantee-collected data.</p>
Year	Actual Performance	Performance Targets		
1995-96:	45%			
1996-97:	64%			
1998-99:	No data available	Continuing increase		
1999-00:		Continuing increase		
2000-01:		60%		

Targets and Performance Data	Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
		<i>Planned Improvement:</i> The Third National Evaluation will use an experimental design, which is the strongest design for measuring program impact. The new study will use measures that align for the most part with Head Start's national FACES study.

Indicator 1.4 Parenting skills: Increasing percentages of parents will show significant improvement on measures of parenting skills, home environment, and expectations for their children.

Targets and Performance Data			Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
<i>Percentage of parents of 3-to-6-year-old children making medium-to-large gains on the Home Screening Questionnaire</i>			<p>Status: No 1999 data, but progress toward target is likely.</p> <p>Explanation: The percentage of parents showing significant improvement on measures of parenting skills has continued to improve. ED has also placed a strong emphasis on improving the literacy focus of parenting education in the last year.</p> <p>The third national evaluation will use a different assessment instrument in the next measure of performance toward this target in 1999-00.</p>	<p>Source: Second National Even Start Evaluation: Universe Study. <i>Frequency:</i> Annually. <i>Next Update:</i> Third National Evaluation: Universe Study and Experimental Design Study 1999-2000.</p> <p>Validation Procedure: Data Collection before ED <u>Standards for Evaluating Program Performance Data</u> were developed. Other sources and experience corroborate these findings.</p> <p>Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements: Instruments used to measure parenting outcomes often have accuracy problems; parents often respond with the answer that is socially acceptable, even if not accurate.</p>
Year	Actual Performance	Performance Targets		
1994-95:	41%			
1995-96:	50%			
1998-99:	No data available	Continuing increase		
1999-00:		Continuing increase		
2000-01:		Continuing increase		

OBJECTIVE 2: EVEN START PROJECTS WILL REACH THEIR TARGET POPULATION OF FAMILIES WHO ARE MOST IN NEED OF SERVICES.

Indicator 2.1 Recruitment of most in need: The projects will continue to recruit low-income, disadvantaged families with low literacy levels.

Targets and Performance Data			Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
<i>Percentage of families having incomes at or substantially below the Federal poverty level at intake</i>			<p>Status: Target met.</p> <p>Explanation: Projects are already successfully targeting service to the neediest of families. No declines expected.</p>	<p>Source: Second and Third National Even Start Evaluations: Universe Study. <i>Frequency:</i> Annually. <i>Next Update:</i> Third National Evaluation: universe study 1999-2000.</p> <p>Validation Procedure: Data Collection before ED <u>Standards for Evaluating Program Performance Data</u> were developed. Other sources and experience corroborate these findings.</p>
Year	Actual Performance	Performance Targets		
1996-97:	90%			
1998-99:	85%	No decrease		
1999-00:		No decrease		
2000-01:		No decrease		

Targets and Performance Data			Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality	
<i>Percentage of parents having no high school diploma or Graduate Equivalency Diploma or a ninth-grade education or less at intake</i>				Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements: Second national evaluation in 1996-97 had some accuracy problems with income survey questions. Third national evaluation currently under way benefits from improvements to the survey to increase the accuracy of income information.	
Year	Actual Performance				Performance Targets
	No Diploma or GED	Ninth Grade or Less			
1995-96:	87%	44%			
1996-97:	87%	45%			
1997-98:	85%	44%			
1998-99:	84%	45%			No decrease
1999-00:					No decrease
2000-01:			No decrease		

OBJECTIVE 3: LOCAL EVEN START PROJECTS WILL PROVIDE HIGH-QUALITY, COMPREHENSIVE INSTRUCTIONAL AND SUPPORT SERVICES TO ALL FAMILIES IN A COST-EFFECTIVE MANNER.

Indicator 3.1 Service hours: Increasing percentages of projects will offer at least 60 hours of adult education (AE) per month, 20 hours of parenting education (PE) per month, and 65 hours of early childhood education (ECE) per month.

Targets and Performance Data							Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
<i>Half of projects offered at least the following numbers of hours per month of the three core components:</i>							Status: Positive movement toward target. Explanation: On average, projects have increased the number of service hours that they offer to participants. Although these data show positive movement toward the target, service intensity is not at the target level for the majority of projects.	Source: Second and Third National Even Start Evaluations: Universe Study. <i>Frequency:</i> Annually. <i>Next Update:</i> Third National Evaluation: Universe Study 1999-2000. Validation Procedure: Data Collection before ED <u>Standards for Evaluating Program Performance Data</u> were developed. Other sources and experience corroborate these findings. Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements: Data collections undertaken in 1995-98 required providers to report service hours in a way that was difficult for them to reliably calculate. The calculation method has been improved for the 1999-00 collection.
Year	AE		PE		ECE			
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target		
1995-96:	32		13		34			
1996-97:	36		14		36			
1997-98:	40		16		48			
1998-99:	40	Continuing increase	16	Continuing increase	50	Continuing increase		
1999-00:		Continuing increase		Continuing increase		Continuing increase		
2000-01:		60		20		65		

Indicator 3.2 Participation, retention, and continuity: Projects will increasingly improve retention and continuity of services.

Targets and Performance Data			Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
<i>Percentage of participating families who stayed in the program for more than 1 program year</i>			Status: No significant progress toward target. Explanation: ED has observed a small but insignificant movement toward target. Projects are faced with new challenges related to the pressures associated with the competing demands of welfare reform.	Source: Third National Even Start Evaluation: Universe Study. <i>Frequency:</i> Annually <i>Next Update:</i> Third National Evaluation: Universe Study 1999-2000 Validation Procedure: Data Collection before ED <u>Standards for Evaluating Program Performance Data</u> were developed. Other
Year	Actual Performance	Performance Targets		
1997-98:	38%			
1998-99:	40%	Continuing increase		
1999-00:		Continuing increase		
2000-01:		60%		

Targets and Performance Data	Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
		<p>sources and experience corroborate these findings.</p> <p>Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements: Data are grantee-collected and require accurate record-keeping. The calculation method has been improved for the 1999-00 collection.</p>

KEY STRATEGIES

Strategies Continued from 1999

- ❖ Improve Even Start programs by identifying model projects and promising practices through the Staff Mentoring Sites project and high-quality evaluations; by disseminating these practices through an Internet listserv, newsletters, and regional meetings; and by conducting an analysis and evaluation of costs associated with Even Start.
- ❖ Work with states to encourage targeting and serving families most in need of services by
 - disseminating models and discussing targeting issues at state coordinators' meetings, with a particular focus on increasing the intensity and continuity of service for highly mobile families and families in rural areas, such as through distance learning, and
 - reviewing local applications during integrated reviews for statements on serving families most in need.

New or Strengthened Strategies

- ❖ Work with HHS to coordinate performance indicators and measures by conducting an assessment of the scope, quality, and frequency of measurement of the current set of ED and HHS program performance indicators for its early childhood programs. Included in this analysis will be a comparison of both the GPRA indicators for the programs as well as the studies, reporting systems and evaluations, and measures used to report on the indicators and evaluate the programs. This analysis will help to inform a more coordinated effort and can guide ED in developing indicators and measures for Title I preschool and an ongoing future reporting system for Even Start outcomes (post Experimental Design Study).
- ❖ Work with HHS to better coordinate early childhood services in both agencies, through joint technical assistance and joint meetings of Head Start State Collaboration grantees and Even Start State Family Literacy Initiative grantees.
- ❖ Promote literacy in early childhood programs by producing a guide on best practices in early reading as well as assessing Even Start programs that provide high-quality, research-based early-literacy components using rigorous measures.

HOW THIS PROGRAM COORDINATES WITH OTHER FEDERAL ACTIVITIES

- ❖ Work with Head Start program in the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Vocational and Adult Education to compare and coordinate performance indicator and standards requirements at various levels for use in helping states develop their required indicators of quality for Even Start.
- ❖ Participate on the Education/Health and Human Services Coordinating Committee for early childhood and on the research/performance measures subgroup of that committee to plan coordination of measures.
- ❖ Work with Head Start and the Child Care Bureau to coordinate efforts of the Head Start State Collaboration grants and the Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative grants. Meeting planned for summer 2000.
- ❖ Work with the Office of Vocational and Adult Education to develop distance learning materials to help improve service intensity.

CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING PROGRAM GOAL

- ❖ Planning and Evaluation Service-sponsored national evaluations have shown that even though the number of service hours projects offer has increased on average, the service intensity of many projects could still be improved.
- ❖ Planning and Evaluation Service-sponsored national evaluations have shown that retaining program participants is a challenge, especially with welfare reform requirements.
- ❖ Evaluations continue to report that families served by Even Start have multiple high-need factors associated with low-income and under-education.

INDICATOR CHANGES

From FY 1999 Annual Plan (two years old)

Adjusted

- ❖ Indicator 1.1 used the term “literacy measures;” the current Indicator 1.1 uses “measures of math and reading skills.”
- ❖ Indicator 1.2 based percentage on all Even Start adults; the current Indicator 1.2 bases the percentage only on Even Start adults participating in ASE or Graduate Equivalency Diploma preparation.
- ❖ Indicator 1.3 used the term “school readiness and success;” the current Indicator 1.3 uses “language development and reading readiness.”
- ❖ Indicator 3.1 is now Indicator 2.1.
- ❖ Indicator 4.1 is now Indicator 3.1, with some wording changes.
- ❖ Indicator 4.2 is now Indicator 3.2.

Dropped

- ❖ Indicator 2.1 (adult employment) was dropped.
- ❖ Indicator 2.2 (continuing adult education) was dropped.
- ❖ Indicator 4.3 (local collaborations) was dropped.
- ❖ Indicator 5.1 (Federal technical assistance) was dropped.

From FY 2000 Annual Plan (last year’s)

Adjusted

- ❖ Indicators 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 3.1, and 3.2’s specific 2001 targets were removed from the indicator wording.
- ❖ Indicators 1.1 and 1.3’s 2001 targets were set for these indicators based on data from different assessments than will be used in the third national evaluation. Thus targets will need to be revisited when data on the new assessments become available.

Dropped

- ❖ FY 2000 Plan 4.1 (Federal technical assistance—an increasing percentage of local project directors will be satisfied with technical assistance and guidance) was dropped.

New—None.