

Head Start and mothers' work: Free child care or something more? ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

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Excerpted from abstract

Head Start is the largest public pre-school program in the US, but it provides many additional services to families. This paper uses a discontinuity in grant writing assistance from the founding of the Head Start program in 1965, to identify impacts on the work and welfare usage of mothers in the short and long-run. Using restricted Decennial Census and administrative AFDC data I find that Head Start increased employment for non-white mothers, while decreasing employment for single mothers. This is accompanied by a suggestive increase in welfare receipt for single mothers which is confirmed by an increase in the share of administrative welfare case-files that are single mother households. When estimating the first long run impacts on mothers, 10 years after a woman's child was eligible for Head Start, I find large and persistent declines in work for both non-white mothers and single mothers. This is accompanied by an increase in public assistance income and return to school. I argue that this is consistent with the 1960's era Head Start program's focus on encouraging quality parenting, parent participation and helping families access all benefits for which they were eligible.

Region: United States ^[4]

Tags: poverty ^[5]

equity ^[6]

mothers ^[7]

female labour force participation ^[8]

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