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ABSTRACT

This GAO fact sheet provides information on public and private organizations that operate local Head Start programs and the kinds of facilities used for Head Start programs. Particular emphasis is placed on the number of Head Start programs that are operated by or use the facilities of churches, synagogues, or other religious organizations. Data were collected by means of a questionnaire sent to the 1,835 grantees and delegate agencies that operated centers in the school year 1987-88. A total of 94 percent of those in a random sample of 750 responded. Data indicated that 454 of 10,842 centers were operated by religious organizations. Of the 454, a total of 187 used facilities in churches, synagogues, or other religious organizations. The other centers operated by religious organizations primarily used government agency space, private space, public schools, and other facilities, such as community centers. While more Head Start centers used public schools or public school space than other kinds of facilities, significant numbers of centers used government agency, religious organization, or privately owned space. Of centers using facilities in religious organizations, most were sponsored by community action agencies and private, nonprofit organizations. The GAO questionnaire and related statistical information are provided in appendices. (RH)

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Human Resources Division

B-235917

July 12, 1989

**The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman, Committee on Labor
and Human Resources
United States Senate**

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This fact sheet responds to your request that we develop and provide information on the public and private organizations that operate local Head Start programs and the kinds of facilities these programs use. Your office was particularly interested in the number of Head Start programs that are operated by or use facilities in churches, synagogues, or other religious organizations.¹ This information should be useful during ongoing congressional deliberations over pending preschool legislation and during Head Start reauthorization hearings in 1990.

Background

As you know, the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Head Start program annually provides more than \$1.2 billion in child development services to about 450,000 children, aged 3 to 5 years. Local Head Start programs serve primarily low-income children in both urban and rural areas in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Trust Territories. The Head Start program is administered by HHS's Administration for Children, Youth, and Families within the Office of Human Development Services.

Participating children attend Head Start centers in their communities, where they receive nutrition, medical, social, mental health, and educational services. Most programs operate half-day classes during the school year.

Head Start centers are operated by grantees or—in cases where the grantee has elected to subcontract with a separate organization—by delegate agencies. In school year 1987-88, there were 1,835 grantees² and delegate agencies that operated local programs. Each program may serve children in one or more centers.

¹For data collection purposes, we defined religious organizations as churches, synagogues, YMCAs, YWCAs, and other religiously affiliated organizations, such as parochial schools and ecumenical groups.

²Excludes 47 grantees that subcontract all program operations to delegate agencies.

Scope and Methodology

In discussions with your office, we agreed to determine

- what kinds of organizations operate Head Start centers,
- what kinds of facilities Head Start centers use,
- which organizations operate centers located in religious facilities, and
- which facilities are used by those Head Start centers operated by religious organizations.

To collect the needed information, we obtained from the national Head Start office a list of the 1,835 grantees and delegate agencies operating centers in school year 1987-88³—the most recent year for which data were available—and sent questionnaires to a random sample of 750 of these entities.⁴ (See app. I for a copy of our questionnaire.) Ninety-four percent of those in our sample responded to our questionnaire. (See apps. II and III for detailed information on our estimates and confidence intervals for selected questionnaire results.)

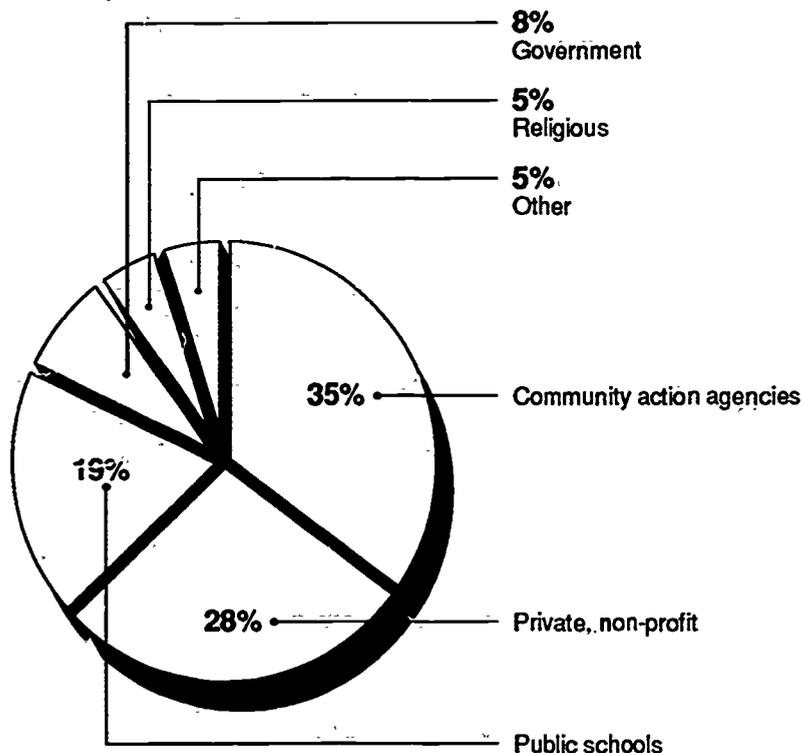
Questionnaire Results

As shown in figure 1, Head Start grantees and delegate agencies are primarily community action agencies; private, nonprofit organizations; or public schools. The other grantees and delegate agencies are state or local government agencies; religious organizations; and other organizations, particularly tribal organizations. These Head Start grantees and delegate agencies operate an estimated 10,842 centers.

³Includes 1,237 grantees and 598 delegate agencies. Further, we reduced the total number of grantees and delegate agencies that operate Head Start centers from 1,835 to 1,807 after identifying organizations that were closed or listed more than once.

⁴We subsequently identified organization closures and duplicate listings, which reduced our sample size to 742.

Figure 1: Organizations Operating Head Start Centers

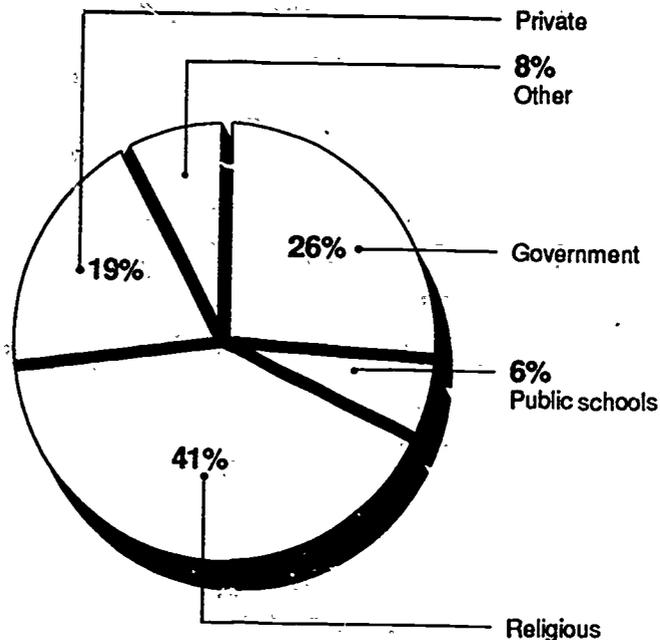


N=1807

Religious includes churches or synagogues (2.5%), other religiously affiliated organizations (2.4%), and YMCAs or YWCAs (.4%).

Approximately 454 of the 10,842 centers are operated by religious organizations. As shown in figure 2, of the 454 centers operated by religious organizations, 187—or 41 percent—use facilities in churches, synagogues, or other religious organizations. The other centers operated by religious organizations primarily use government agency space, private space, public schools, and other facilities, such as community centers. (See app. IV.)

Figure 2: Facilities Used by Religiously Sponsored Head Start Centers



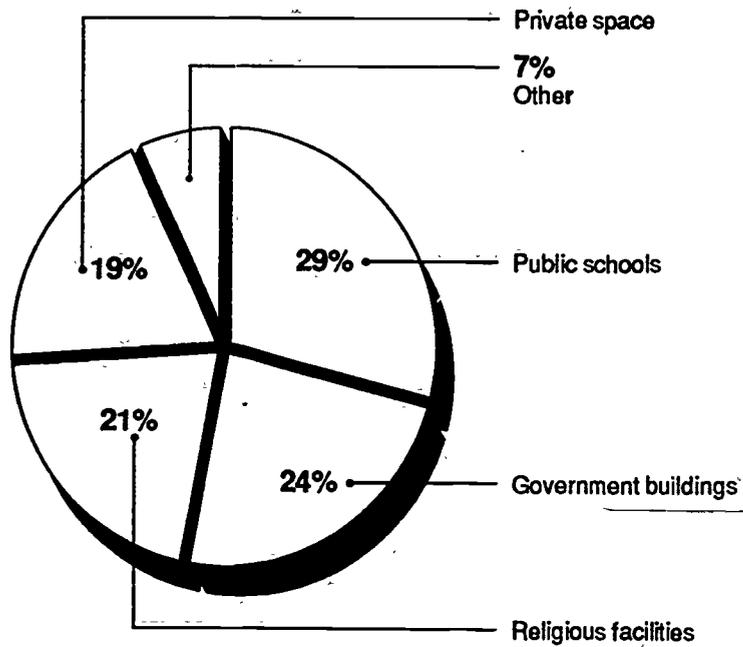
N=454

Religious includes churches or synagogues (23.5%), other religiously affiliated organizations (15.9%), and YMCAs or YWCAs (1.8%)

Regarding the kinds of facilities used by all Head Start centers, as shown in figure 3, more Head Start centers (29 percent) use public schools or public school space than other kinds of facilities. However, significant numbers of centers use government agency space; religious organization space; or privately owned space, including, for example, grange halls and Masonic lodges. A much smaller number of centers (7 percent) use other facilities, including portable classrooms, community centers, tribal buildings, and families' homes.⁵ (See app. IV.)

⁵In "home-based" programs, which are intended to help strengthen parents' involvement in their children's development, home visitors help parents provide their children with many of the same developmental activities and support services that the children would receive if they were attending a Head Start center.

Figure 3: Facilities Used by Head Start Centers

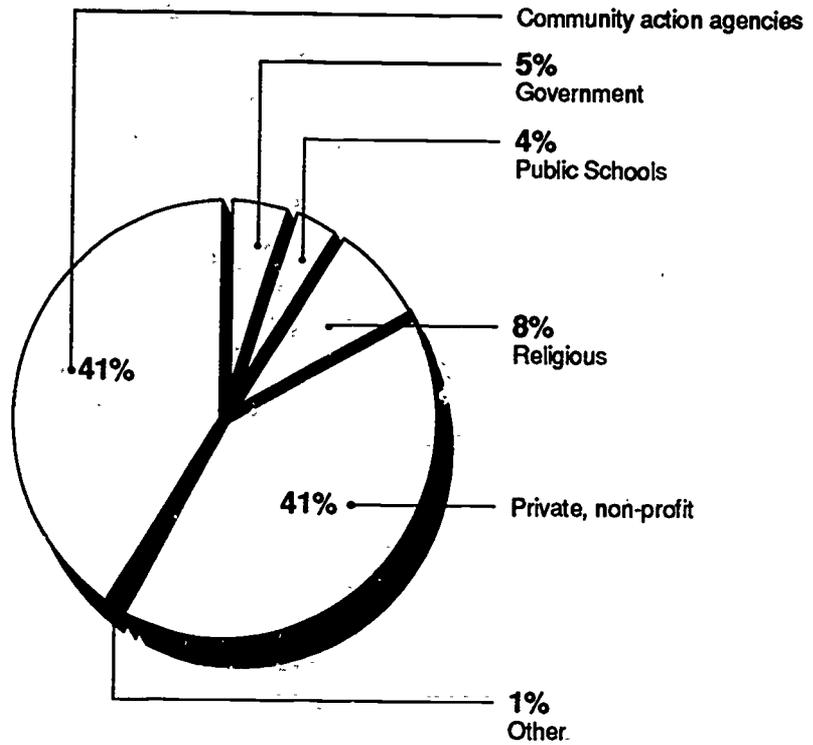


N=10,842

Religious includes churches or synagogues (17.3%), other religiously affiliated organizations (2.5%), and YMCAs or YWCAs (.3%)

Of those centers using facilities in churches, synagogues, YMCAs, YWCAs, or other religious organizations, most (82 percent) are sponsored by community action agencies and private, nonprofit organizations (see fig. 4). Only 8 percent of these centers are sponsored by religious or religiously affiliated organizations.

Figure 4: Sponsors of Head Start Centers in Religious Space



N=2295

Religious includes churches or synagogues (3.1%), other religiously affiliated organizations (4.4%), and YMCAs or YWCAs (.6%).

As agreed with your office, we did not obtain written agency comments on a draft of this fact sheet. However, we discussed its contents with HHS officials and have incorporated their comments where appropriate. We are sending copies of this document to other congressional committees, the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, and

other interested parties. Major contributors to this fact sheet are listed in appendix V.

Sincerely yours,



William J. Gainer
Director of Education and
Employment Issues

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Abbreviations

HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

GAO Questionnaire

U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
SURVEY OF HEAD START PROGRAM DIRECTORS

1. Is your organization a Head Start grantee or delegate agency? (CHECK ONE.)
- 1. Grantee
 - 2. Delegate agency
 - 3. Both Grantee and Delegate agency

2. What type of organization are you? (CHECK ONE.)
- 1. Community Action Agency
 - 2. Government agency, other than Community Action Agency
 - 3. Public school system
 - 4. YMCA or YWCA (Young Men's/ Young Women's Christian Assoc.)
 - 5. YMHA or YWHA (Young Men's/ Young Women's Hebrew Assoc.)
 - 6. Church or synagogue
 - 7. Other religious or religiously affiliated organization (such as parochial school, ecumenical group, and others)
 - 8. Private-non-profit organization (not religiously affiliated or Community Action Agency)
 - 9. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY.)

3. Does your organization directly operate a Head Start center? (CHECK ONE.)

- 1. Yes (GO TO QUESTION 4)
- 2. No (STOP! PLEASE RETURN YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE. THE REMAINING QUESTION WILL BE ANSWERED BY YOUR DELEGATE AGENCIES WHO ARE ALSO RECEIVING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.)

4. For each of the following types of facilities, how many Head Start centers does your organization operate as a (1) grantee or (2) delegate agency? (ENTER NUMBER; IF NONE, ENTER '0'.)

TYPES OF FACILITIES	(ENTER NUMBER OF CENTERS)	
	DIRECTLY OPERATE AS GRANTEE	DIRECTLY OPERATE AS DELEGATE
1. Federal, state or local government space (not public school)		
2. Public school or public school space		
3. YMCA or YWCA		
4. YMHA or YWHA		
5. Church or synagogue space		
6. Religious or religiously-affiliated organization space (such as parochial school, ecumenical group space, and others)		
7. Family day care home		
8. Other privately-owned space		
9. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY.)		
TOTAL NUMBER OF CENTERS		

Estimates and Confidence Intervals for Selected GAO Questionnaire Results Obtained From Head Start Grantees and Delegate Agencies (Number)

Variable	Estimate	Estimate range ^a	
		Lower limit	Upper limit
Organizations operating centers N=1,807):			
Religious organizations	96	72	120
Government agencies	134	106	161
Public schools	347	305	389
Community action agencies	636	586	686
Private, nonprofit organizations	504	457	551
Centers:			
Total	10,842	10,033	11,651
In religious facilities	2,295	1,982	2,608
In public schools	3,117	2,692	3,542
In private space	2,345	1,978	2,712
In government buildings	2,580	2,241	2,919

^aThese estimates were calculated using a 95-percent confidence level.

Estimates and Confidence Intervals for Selected GAO Questionnaire Results Obtained From Head Start Grantees and Delegate Agencies (Percent)

Variable	Estimate	Estimate range ^a	
		Lower limit	Upper limit
Organizations operating centers (N=1,807):			
Religious organizations	5.3	4.0	6.6
Government agencies	7.4	5.9	8.9
Public schools	19.2	16.9	21.5
Community action agencies	35.2	32.4	38.0
Private, nonprofit organizations	27.9	25.3	30.5
Centers (N=10,842):			
In religious facilities	21.2	21.1	21.3
In public schools	28.8	28.7	28.9
In private space	21.6	21.5	21.7
In government buildings	23.8	23.7	23.9

^aThese estimates were calculated using a 95-percent confidence interval.

Estimates of Head Start Center Facilities Used by Sponsoring Organizations

Sponsoring organizations	Kinds of center facilities					Total
	Public school	Religious organization	Government building	Private space	Other	
Community action agencies	1,113	945	966	867	100	3,991
Private, nonprofit organizations	448	939	678	1,082	176	3,323
Public schools	1,341	93	109	83	3	1,629
Government agencies	171	115	658	206	3	1,153
Religious organizations	27	187	120	85	35	454
Other	19	16	51	24	182	292
Total	3,119	2,295	2,582	2,347	499	10,842

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