



# DESCRIPTION OF EVEN START

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**E**VEN START is a family literacy program based on the premise that since literacy is a family legacy, illiteracy may be passed on from one generation to the next. The purpose of **EVEN START** is to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy. This goal is accomplished by improving the educational opportunities of low-income families through integrating early childhood education, adult literacy or adult basic education, and parenting education and support into a unified family literacy program (Public Law 103-382, Part B, Section 1201). The program is funded through the U.S. Department of Education.

Each **EVEN START** program is uniquely based within its local community. Programs are cooperative projects that build on existing community resources to create a new range of services. Within this uniqueness, every program provides core services. Each of these services is equally important, and all are needed for maximum effectiveness.

- **Adult Basic Education** for building literacy and employment skills, learning English, preparing for a GED, and/or earning a high school diploma
- **Early Childhood Education** for promoting children's development and preparing them to enter and attend school ready to learn

- **Parent Education** for support and training
- **Parent and Child Time Together** for providing opportunities for adults and children to interactively practice newly learned literacy skills

Those eligible to participate in **EVEN START** are:

- families with a child or children ages birth to seven; and,
- families with a parent or parents who are eligible to participate in an adult literacy or adult basic education, or English language proficiency program; or,
- parents who are within the State's compulsory school attendance age range, so long as the school district provides the basic education component.

**EVEN START** is often confused with another federal program, Head Start. The primary focus of Head Start is to serve children, with parent involvement and literacy as integral aspects of the program. In contrast, **EVEN START** exclusively serves families. A child alone or an adult alone cannot participate in **EVEN START**.



## RESEARCH

The National Center for Family Literacy recently studied 30 high quality **EVEN START** programs which were fully implemented according to **EVEN START** design\*. Researchers found that adults in these programs worked on their education and made positive changes in their lives.

- 54% seeking educational credentials received the GED or its equivalent.
- 45% of those on public assistance reduced the amount they received, or completely stopped receiving aid.
- 40% were enrolled in a higher education or training program.
- 50% of those not in an education or training program were employed.

The study compared **EVEN START** children to a randomly selected sample of children and found:

- **EVEN START** kindergartners and third graders were rated higher by their teachers, as compared to the sample children, on academic performance, motivation to learn, self-concept, and probable success in school.
- 90% of **EVEN START** children showed satisfactory grades in reading, language, and math (a higher percentage than the sample children demonstrated).
- Having parental support in school was rated as a strength by teachers for more than two-thirds of the **EVEN START** children.

\* **EVEN START**: An effective literacy program helps families grow toward independence, 1997.



## **EVEN START IN COLORADO**

**T**here are currently eight **EVEN START** programs in Colorado. These programs serve the following communities and in some cases surrounding areas: Colorado Springs, Commerce City, Denver (serving the homeless population), Durango, Glenwood Springs, San Luis Valley, Trinidad and Windsor.

In addition, there are seven sites in Colorado which have been awarded grants for planning **EVEN START** programs. These communities are: Brush, Cortez, Craig, Custer County, Denver (Focus Points Family Resource Center and Southwest Family Center), and Fort Collins.

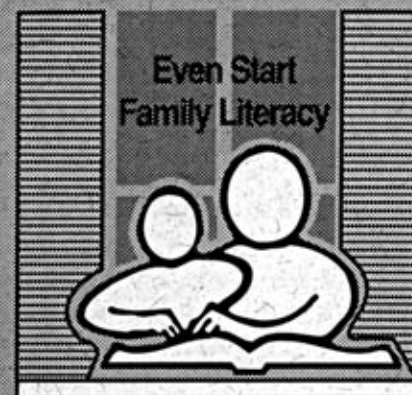
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**Update**

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