

NATIONAL AGFAMILIES HEAD START ASSOCIATION

**A NATIONAL PROFILE OF AGRICULTURE CHILDREN,
FAMILIES, PROGRAMS, AND COMMUNITIES IN AMERICA**



A proven school
readiness model
for children,
families, and
agricultural
communities.



MSHS PREPARES CHILDREN FOR FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

For more than 55 years, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) has demonstrated how high-quality early childhood education can be tailored to meet the unique needs of working families and rural communities. MSHS prepares children for success in school and life, as well as helps sustain the agricultural workforce that feeds America.



MODEL AT A GLANCE BY THE NUMBERS (2024-2025)

MSHS connects early learning, health services, family stability, and agricultural workforce participation in one place.

25 MSHS grantees	34 States served	340 MSHS centers	21,018 Children served	16,678 Farmworker families
8,867 Jobs supported	1,804 Classrooms	48% Children age two or younger	100% Centers full-day	100% Families employed in agriculture

WHAT MAKES MSHS UNIQUE

PARENT WORK REQUIREMENT Eligibility is tied to agricultural employment, ensuring services reach families whose work is directly connected to America's food system.	SERVING FROM BIRTH TO AGE FIVE MSHS was the first Head Start model to serve infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in a single program setting. This early start supports language, social-emotional development, and kindergarten readiness.
BUILT AROUND THE NEEDS OF WORKING FAMILIES MSHS provides full-day services, seasonal flexibility, transportation, and extended hours when resources allow, helping parents work while children learn in safe, developmentally appropriate settings.	RESPONSIVE TO AGRICULTURE Center locations, months of operation, and classroom capacity are determined by farmworker families and rural agricultural communities.



MSHS PROVIDES

- Full-day and seasonally flexible services
- Transportation and rural access support
- Health, dental, vision, developmental, and nutrition services
- Family engagement, parent leadership, and bilingual learning opportunities

SUPPORTING RURAL COMMUNITIES & LOCAL ECONOMIES

MSHS is grounded in early childhood education, but its impact reaches beyond the classroom and serves as a critical partner within agricultural communities.

- **For children:** high-quality early learning, school readiness, screenings, nutritious meals, and safe environments that support social, cognitive, language, and physical development.
- **For families:** reliable childcare, transportation, leadership opportunities, bilingual support, and resource connections that can be difficult to navigate while moving for seasonal work.
- **For agricultural employers and communities:** stronger workforce participation, reduced disruption during harvest seasons, and contribution to rural economic stability.

TESTIMONIES FROM THE FIELD

Alumni

"Because of MSHS and its fundamental education as a kid, I have continued to learn. Now at an Cornell University, I can say I'm truly grateful for the program's resources and impact as a migrant farmworker."

Freddy
Bautista-Molina

Agriculture Employer

"...their passengers on board are headed for a safe, secure place to spend the day while their parents and older siblings are able to earn a living for the family. The Oregon Child Development Coalition, MSHS services that make this possible..."

Dan & Kay Ericksen,
owners of Knob Hill
Orchards in Oregon

Parent

"Head Start became our village. It gave us the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with other parents, teachers, and staff who genuinely cared about our family's success. ... Having access to reliable, high-quality childcare gave me the stability to pursue my education, and I recently completed my bachelor's degree."

Tanisha, OCDC Parent

INVESTING IN A PROVEN MODEL: ESSENTIAL TO AMERICA'S FOOD SYSTEM

In 2020, agricultural workers were recognized as essential workers because American families depend on them to ensure access to fresh, affordable, and safe food. Today, that reality remains unchanged. Farmworkers continue to support the production, harvest, processing, and distribution of the food that reaches tables across the country. MSHS helps make that work possible by ensuring children have access to safe, high-quality early childhood education while parents contribute to the agricultural economy.

MEETING GROWING DEMAND

MSHS programs continue to experience demand from eligible families, particularly for infant and toddler enrollment and in communities where transportation, staffing, and operating costs affect service capacity. Current National AgFamilies Head Start Association (NAFHSA) data shows:

- MSHS served 21,018 children and 16,678 farmworker families in 2024–2025, reflecting sustained demand among eligible working families.[FBM1]
- Nearly half of the enrolled children were age 2 or younger, underscoring the need for early school-readiness supports.
- MSHS operated through 340 centers and 1,804 classrooms to reach families during agricultural seasons.
- 2,314 children used the Family Childcare Option, while 52% of programs received Early Head Start grant funds

WHY CONTINUED INVESTMENT MATTERS

CHILDREN Preparing the next generation for success.	FAMILIES Supporting working parents & family stability.
RURAL COMMUNITIES Strengthening local economies and community well-being.	AGRICULTURE Supporting the workforce that helps feed America.

LOOKING AHEAD

For more than five decades, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start has demonstrated the power of a responsive, community-driven approach to early childhood education. MSHS remains one of the strongest examples of how targeted investments in school readiness can generate lasting impact for children, families, rural communities, and the agricultural workforce.

