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TENNESSEE

FACTSHEET

Early Learning: A National Security Imperative

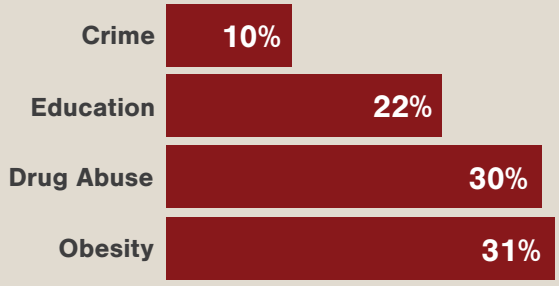
How high-quality pre-K can help more young adults qualify for military service

73 percent of today's young adults in Tennessee cannot join the military. As military leaders look ahead to the coming years, they are increasingly concerned that there are not enough qualified candidates to defend our nation. This concern stems from problems including education, obesity, crime and drug abuse that render many young adults ineligible for military service.[1]

If we do not address such problems early on in children's lives, the nation risks a shortage of qualified recruits—one that will leave the country vulnerable for years to come and threaten the strength of the future military.

Common Barriers to Military Service

US Population of Young Adults Ages 17-24



Note: Young Adults can be counted in more than one category.

High-quality pre-K can help children succeed

Mounting research shows that the early years of life are incredibly important for later learning, behaviors and health.[2] Studies show that high-quality pre-K helps children:

Be better prepared for school: Participants in the Tennessee Voluntary Pre-K Program had higher school readiness outcomes at the end of their pre-K year, and were half as likely to be held back in kindergarten, compared to children who didn't participate. However, these academic benefits were not sustained in a smaller subgroup assessed in first, second and third grades. Efforts are underway to improve the quality of the program, which has been inconsistent.[3]

Achieve a healthy weight: Pre-K programs that emphasize healthy eating, physical activity and parent engagement can help lower child obesity rates by five to 24 percent.[4]

Stay on the right side of the law: Studies of two high-quality pre-K programs found that participating children were less likely to have criminal records as adults.[5]

These benefits play into one another. For example, better education can help improve health and vice versa. As such, high-quality

pre-K is an important step toward establishing a culture of health across America.

Policymakers should continue the movement toward high-quality pre-K

Over the past few years, high-quality pre-K has gained traction across the U.S. In the 2015-16 state budget year, 32 states—22 with Republican governors and 10 with Democratic governors—increased funding for pre-K.[6]

However, 54 percent of the nation's three- and four-year-olds still do not attend pre-K, let alone a high-quality program.[7] In Tennessee, the situation is worse, with 61 percent of young children not enrolled in pre-K.[8] Policymakers at the state and national levels should continue to expand high-quality early education to ensure that all children are prepared in mind, body and character to succeed at whatever career they choose, including military service.

61%

of three- and four-year-olds in Tennessee do not attend high-quality pre-K.

1 Department of Defense. (2017) Qualified Military Available (QMA). Acquired through personal communication with Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness in November 2017. Also see Jordan, M. (2014, June).Recruits' ineligibility tests the military. Wall Street Journal. https://www.wsj.com/articles/recruits-ineligibility-tests-the-military-1403909945

2 Harvard University Center on the Developing Child (n.d.) "Key Concepts: Brain Architecture." http://developingchild.harvard.edu/key_concepts/brain_architecture/

3 Lipsey, M. W., Hofer, K. G., Dong, N., Farran, D. C. & Bilbrey, C. (2013, August). Evaluation of the Tennessee Voluntary Prekindergarten Program: Kindergarten and first grade follow-up results from the randomized control design. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt Peabody College; Pre-K in TN: How can we sustain the gains? http://news.vanderbilt.edu/2015/09/pre-k-in-tn-how-can-we-sustain-the-gains/

4 Fitzgibbon, M. L., Stolley, M. R., Schiffer, L., Van Horn, L., Kaufer Christoffel, K., & Dyer, A. (2005). Two-year follow-up results for Hip-Hop to Health Jr.: A randomized controlled trial for overweight prevention in preschool minority children. Journal of Pediatrics, 146 (5), 618-625.

5 Reynolds, A. J., et al. (2001). Long-term effects of an early childhood intervention on educational achievement and juvenile arrest. JAMA, 285, 2339-2380; Schweinhart, L. J., Barnes, H. V., & Weikart, D. P. (1993). Significant benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 27. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

6 Education Commission of the States (2016). http://www.ecs.org/ec-content/uploads/01252016_Prek-K_Funding_report-4.pdf

7 KIDS COUNT Data Center http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/9010-young-children-not-in-school?loc=1&loct=2#detailed/1/any/false/1491,1443,1218,1049,995/any/17975,17976

8 KIDS COUNT Data Center (2018). Tennessee young children not in school. http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/9010-young-children-not-in-school?loc=44&loct=2#detailed/2/any/false/1491,1443,1218,1049,995/any/17975,17976

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