



# National Coalition For Literacy

## **Even Start Family Literacy Program Appropriations**

### ***What is Even Start?***

The Even Start program provides education and related services jointly to disadvantaged parents and their young children. The purpose of the program is to integrate early childhood education, adult basic education, and language and literacy focused parent education into a unified family literacy program. Even Start services must include adult literacy instruction, early childhood education, instruction that helps parents support their children's education, participant recruitment, screening of parents, staff training, and program evaluation leading to program improvement. Even Start serves an extremely disadvantaged population. In 2006-2007, 90% of Even Start parents did not have a high school diploma or GED and 91% of Even Start families lived at or below the federal poverty line. It is also important to note that 53% of the parents served in Even Start programs are English language learners.

### ***What is the Need for Even Start?***

Families living in poverty experience many challenges. Parents cannot find sustainable employment, and have difficulties fulfilling their and their children's basic needs for housing, food, and clothing. Their children are less likely to enter school ready to learn, having fewer language and literacy rich experiences. Research has documented the relationship between poverty and limited education. Over half of the adults in Even Start programs have not gone beyond the ninth grade in school and 90% do not have a high school credential. In addition, research has shown that parents with limited education want their children to succeed in school but have few concrete ideas on how they can help their children develop academic skills at home. ***The U.S. Department of Education states that no other federal education program serves a comparable population.***

### ***What is the Impact?***

Even Start has helped parents develop basic skills they need to enter employment or training and to help their children enter school ready to learn. Participating children have made significant learning gains as well, preparing them for success in school.

- Participating families consistently make gains each year on literacy measures.
- Although they come from more disadvantaged families and score substantially lower at entry to the program, Even Start children made gains on a measure of receptive vocabulary that were comparable to Head Start children.

### ***What is the Current Budget Situation?***

The current federal appropriation is \$66.45 million. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the Even Start Family Literacy Program served 23,763 families, including 58,844 individuals (24,711 adults and 34,133 children) in 2006-2007. These numbers are greatly reduced due to significant cuts to the Even Start budget over the past eight years. Specifically, funding has decreased by 60%, decreasing the number of participating parents and children by 48%. This leaves a significant number of our country's most vulnerable families without educational services that focus on and support family learning.

### ***What should Congress do?***

Increase Even Start appropriation to \$150 million in FY 2010.