

## **Good Preschools May Prevent Problem Behaviors Later**

### **Low-income tots who had high-quality child care were less aggressive at ages 7 to 11, study found**

WEDNESDAY, Sept. 15 (HealthDay News) -- American children from low-income families who are exposed to well-structured, attentive and stimulating preschool programs between the ages of 2 and 4 years are less likely to develop behavioral problems during their preteen years, new research says.

The finding, reported in the September/October issue of *Child Development*, appears to be particularly strong for boys and black children, the study authors found.

Led by Elizabeth Votruba-Drzal, an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, a team comprised of researchers from the University of Pittsburgh, Boston College, Universidad de Los Andes, Loyola University Chicago and Northwestern University gleaned its observations from an analysis involving about 350 children drawn from low-income families in Boston, Chicago and San Antonio.

"This study adds to a growing body of evidence suggesting the need for policy and programmatic efforts to increase low-income families' access to high-quality early care and education," Votruba-Drzal said in a news release from the Society for Research in Child Development.

The researchers noted that more than 12 million children under the age of 6 are enrolled in some form of child-care or preschool program in the United States.

All 350 children in the current analysis are part of a long-running study exploring the impact that the 1996 reform of the national welfare program has had on low-income families.

Votruba-Drzal and her colleagues explained that the low-income families involved in the study had typically relied upon the kind of child care -- such as "Head Start" and home-based programs -- that has commonly been available in their communities, rather than special intervention or model programs.

The children who attended responsive and engaging high-quality preschool programs were found to exhibit less aggression and rule-breaking behavior by the time they entered middle childhood (ages 7 to 11), according to the report.

Black children and boys in general appeared to derive a particularly noticeable benefit from exposure to a strongly structured child-care situation outside the confines of their home, the investigators found.

"Beyond a few model early intervention programs and a handful of short-term longitudinal studies, our knowledge is limited concerning the implications of child-care experiences for low-income children's later development," Votruba-Drzal said. "This study strengthens our understanding of how the varying quality of child-care experiences available to children in low-income families shapes children's development into middle childhood."

### **More information**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has more about childcare, at [ChildCare.gov](http://ChildCare.gov).

-- Alan Mozes

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