



Office of the Legislative Auditor

State of Minnesota

Early Childhood Programs

February 7, 2019



Key Findings

- Programs are complex, fragmented
- Not currently possible to determine extent of potential duplication
- Statewide data on program effectiveness are inadequate
- Legal requirements limit sharing data across programs
- Extent of early childhood screening is unknown

Programs Offering Direct Services

- Early Childhood Family Education
- Early Childhood Health and Development Screening
- Family Home Visiting
- Head Start and Early Head Start
- School Readiness Program
- Voluntary Prekindergarten

Programs that Provide Funding Rather than Services

- Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)
- Early Learning Scholarships
 - Pathway I, awarded to individual children
 - Pathway II, awarded to certain early learning programs or child care programs

Quality Rating System

Parent Aware Quality Rating and Improvement System

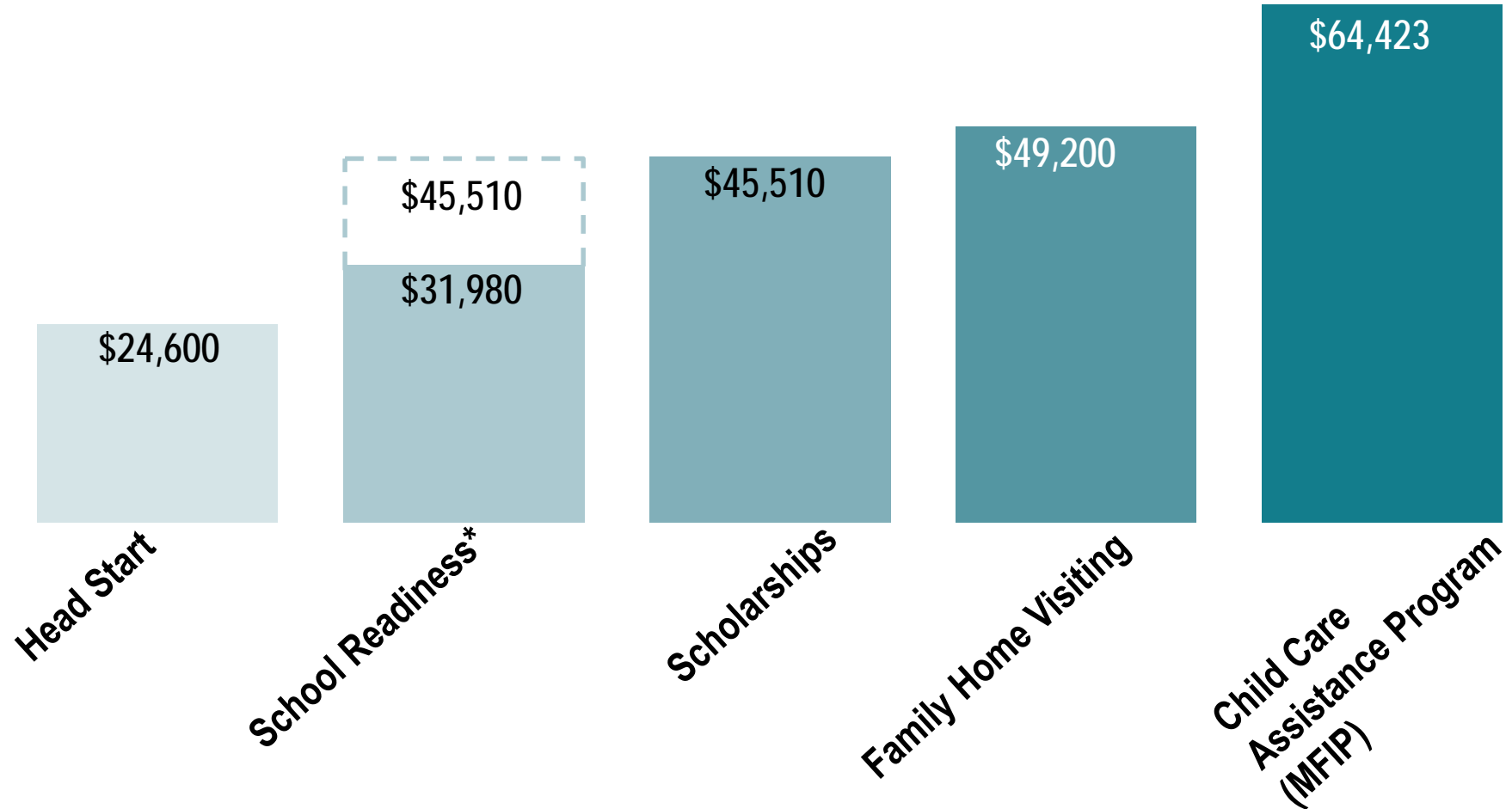
- Qualifies programs to accept scholarships and higher reimbursements for child care assistance

Complex, Fragmented Programs

- Eligibility requirements differed
 - Income is *not* an eligibility requirement for:
 - Early Childhood Family Education
 - Health and Development Screening
 - Voluntary Prekindergarten
 - Among other programs, income limits differ by program

Income Eligibility

2017 Income Limit for Family of Four



Staffing Requirements Differ

	Early Childhood Family Education	School Readiness	School Readiness Plus	Voluntary Prekindergarten
Maximum Class Size		√	√	√
Staff-Child Ratio		√	√	√
Salary Requirement				√
Teacher Licensure	√		√	
Program Supervisor Licensure	√	√		

Funding and Program Differences

	Early Childhood Family Education	Early Learning Scholarships-Pathway II	School Readiness Program	Voluntary Prekindergarten
Compete for Funding		√		√
User Fees Allowed	√		√	In limited circumstances
Transporting Preschool Children				√

Recommendation

- The Legislature should consider aligning eligibility and funding requirements for certain programs
 - Could lead to a single application form for certain programs
 - Could allow providers more efficiency
- The Legislature could convene a working group as a first step

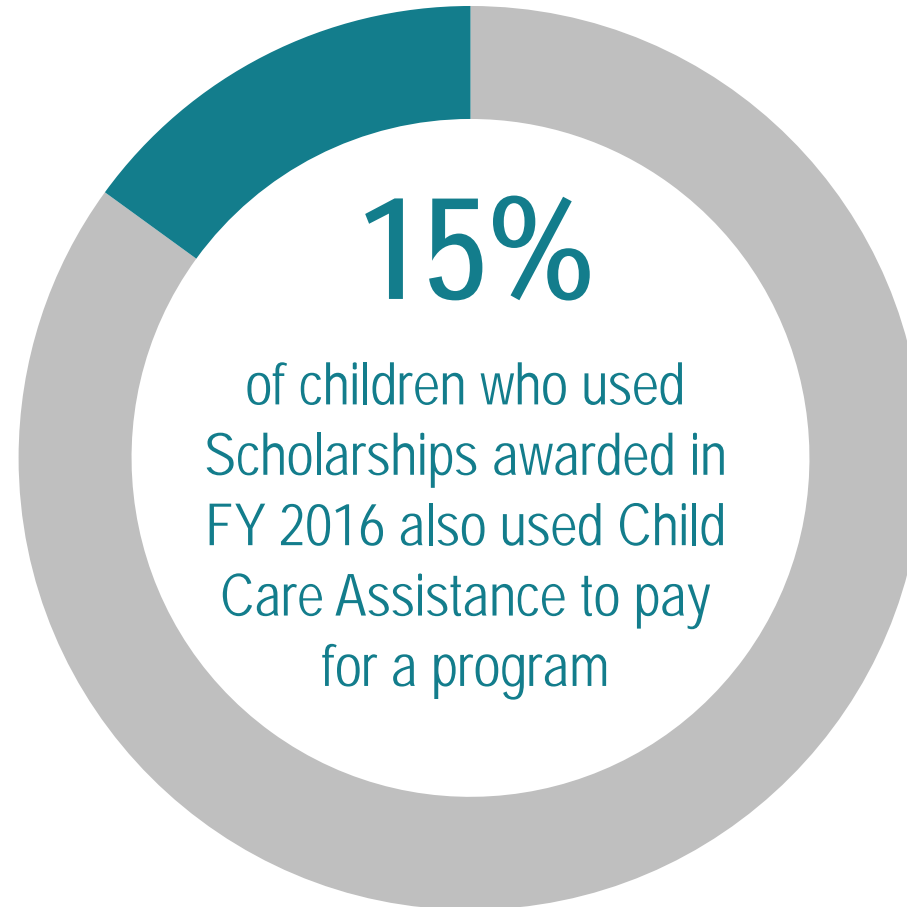
Potential Duplication

- Not possible to determine extent of potential duplication
- Agencies use different methods to identify children

Potential Duplication (cont.)

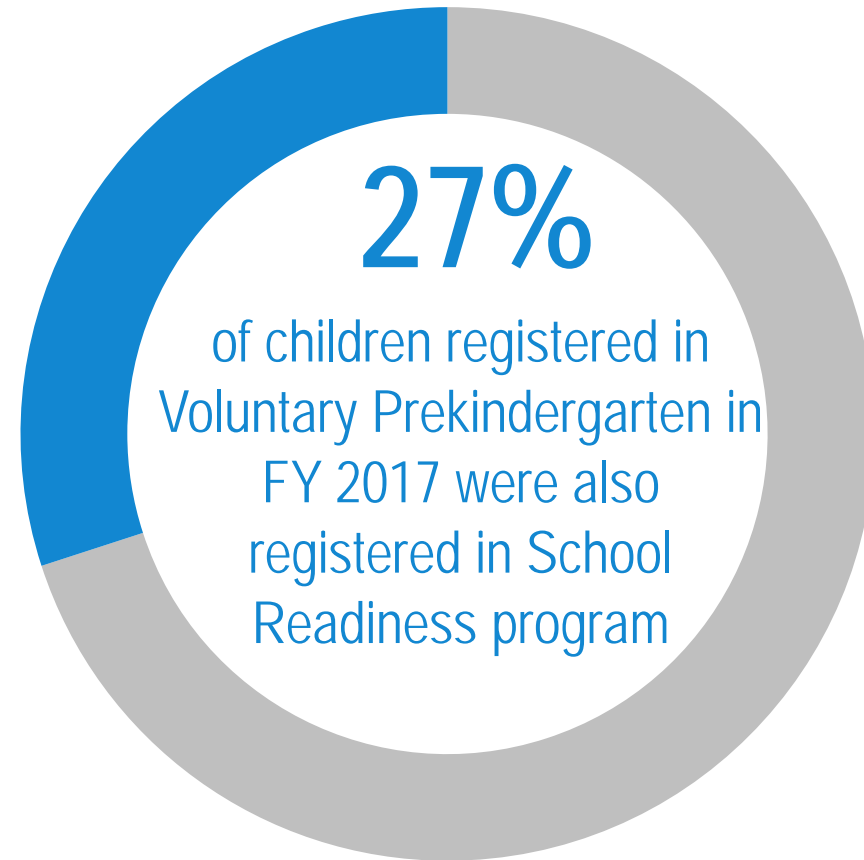
- Longitudinal data system
 - Not designed to identify duplication
 - Missing and incomplete data
- Department lacks participation data
- Lack of information on local program delivery

Children Using Multiple Funding Streams



- Does not indicate duplicative funding

Children in Multiple Programs



- Could not determine extent of potential overlap

Recommendation

- Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), and Department of Human Services (DHS) should jointly identify what is needed to use a universal identification number
- MDE should consistently collect participation data

Statewide Data on Effectiveness are Inadequate

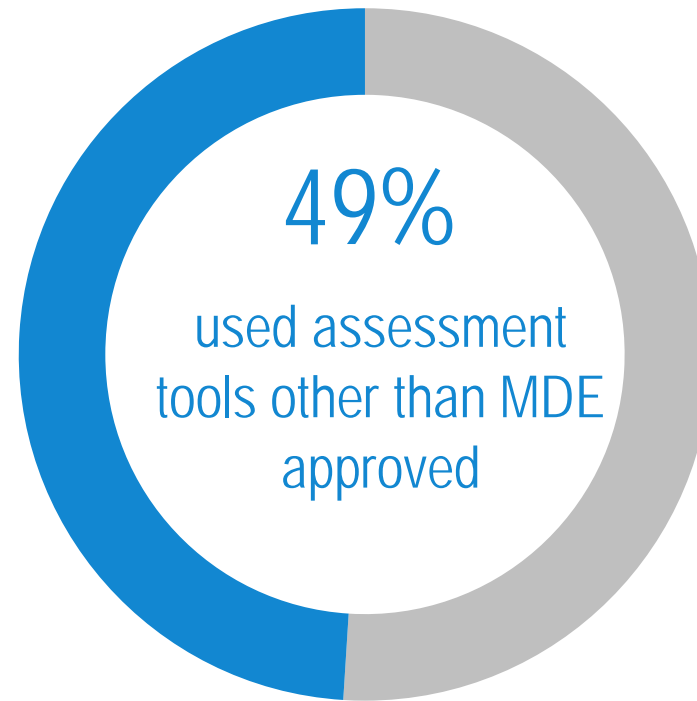
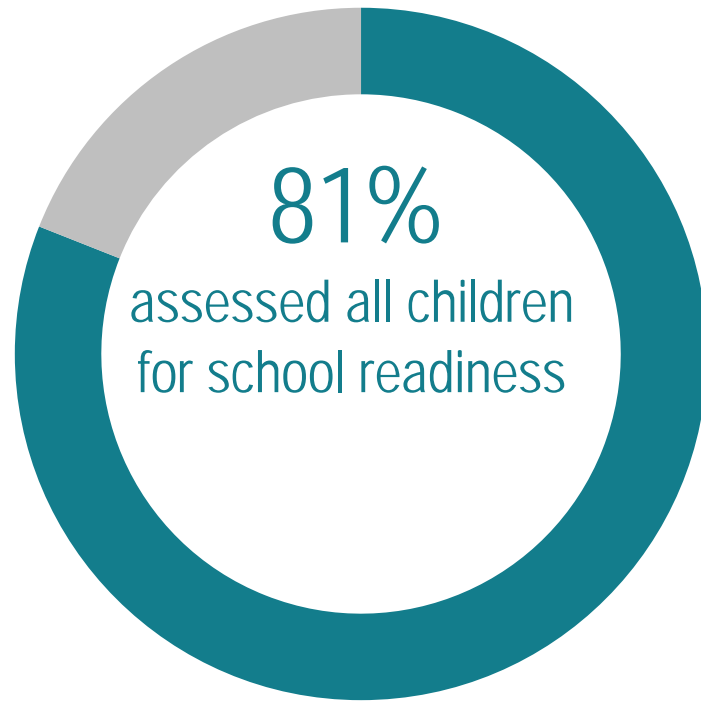
- Statutes do not require all programs to report on their effectiveness
- Statutes place priority on school readiness
- Data do not exist to measure whether children statewide are ready for school

Assessment Requirements Differ

	Head Start and Early Head Start	Voluntary Prekindergarten	School Readiness Program
Assessments Required	√	√	√
Must Align with Standards	√	√	
Tool Must be State Approved	Federal	√	
Skills Measured	Literacy, cognition, motor development, social and emotional development	Cognitive and language skills	Cognitive and language skills

Assessments at Kindergarten

- No state requirement to assess school readiness in kindergarten



Recommendation

- Legislature should consider requiring assessments of all children's school readiness as they complete certain early childhood programs
 - Eventually, all publicly funded, Parent Aware-rated programs
 - Use a state-approved assessment tool
 - Submit assessment results to the state
- Legislature should consider requiring assessments for children in kindergarten

Recommendation

- The Legislature should direct MDE, MDH, and DHS to plan a comprehensive approach to evaluating impacts
 - Legislature would specify general outcomes
 - Agencies would identify indicators of effectiveness
 - Legislature would decide whether to proceed

Legal Requirements Limit Data Sharing Across State Agencies

- Laws protect children's identity
- Laws prohibit sharing data unless the subject of the data gives informed consent
- Restrictions can interfere with program operations

Recommendation

- The Legislature should consider broadening authority for MDE, MDH, and DHS to share individual-level data from early childhood programs

Early Childhood Screening

- State law requires that all children undergo health and development screening, with exception for conscientious objections
- The number of children who are not screened is unknown

Recommendation

- Minnesota Department of Education should collect data on children who are not screened

Summary

Changes are needed to address:

- Program complexity and fragmentation
- Lack of data on whether young children statewide are prepared for school
- Need to measure program impacts
- Legal restrictions on data sharing
- Unknown number of children not screened

Early Childhood Programs

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