

ILLINOIS YOUTH



READY, WILLING AND
UNABLE TO SERVE



MISSION: READINESS
MILITARY LEADERS FOR KIDS

WHO WE ARE

MISSION: READINESS is the nonprofit, nonpartisan national security organization of more than 500 retired generals, admirals and other senior retired military leaders who work to ensure continued American security and prosperity into the 21st century by calling for smart investments in the upcoming generation of American children. It operates under the umbrella of the nonprofit Council for a Strong America.

For a full listing of our membership, please see our website at www.missionreadiness.org

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Illinois Youth:

READY, WILLING AND UNABLE TO SERVE

SUMMARY:

Illinois must address the education, crime and weight problems that leave 71 percent of young Illinoisans unable to serve in our military.

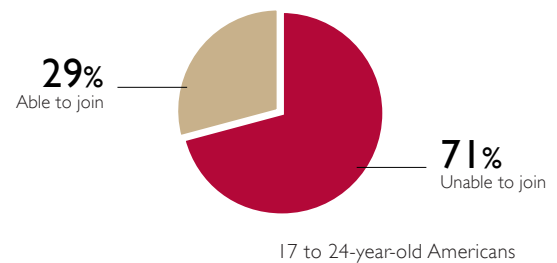
Our current military involves complex technology and highly integrated defense systems unimaginable in past generations. It demands the very best of its service members and increasingly our military finds it has to compete with the private sector for the more highly skilled individuals it needs.

Yet an alarming **71 percent of all young Americans are now unable to join the military** primarily because they are too poorly educated, have a serious criminal record, or are too overweight.¹ In Illinois, 71 percent of young people are ineligible for military service.² Fourteen percent of Illinois students do not graduate on time from high school and, of those who do, nearly a quarter cannot do well enough on the military's entrance exam to join.³ Others have serious criminal records, are overweight or obese, or have other medical reasons why they cannot join. A limited recruitment pool jeopardizes our military readiness and threatens future national security.

High-quality early childhood education is the foundation for effective public education – it can help prepare children to succeed in school, stay on the right side of the law, and even reduce their risks of becoming obese.

In Illinois, 54 percent of at-risk children are not being served in either state preschool or Head Start.⁴ Illinois policymakers must expand the reach and quality of early education programs to ensure that more of our youth are prepared in mind, body and character to succeed.

71% of Young Illinoisans Cannot Join the Military



“During my career as a senior military leader, I trained thousands of soldiers. I am deeply concerned that the Department of Defense says that 71% of young adults from Illinois are not qualified to join the military.”



Randall L. Rigby
Lieutenant General, US Army (Retired)

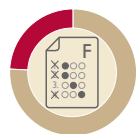
Unable to Serve

The latest available data show that most young adults in Illinois lack the basic skills and qualifications to serve in today's military:



14%

14 percent of young people in Illinois **do not graduate high school on time**⁵ (compared, for example, to 23 percent in Michigan and 13 percent in Missouri);



24%

24 percent of Illinoisans who do graduate and try to join the Army **do not do well enough on the military entrance exam** to be able to serve;⁶



31%

31 percent of young adults nationwide are **too overweight to qualify** for military service. 28 percent of adults in Illinois are obese, up from 20 percent in 2000;⁷



10%

A **criminal record** would prevent **one in 10 young Americans** from joining the military. In June 2013, there were nearly 49,000 Illinois citizens in state or federal prisons and an additional 28,000 on parole.⁸

When you add up all young adults who have not received an adequate education, have too much involvement in crime, are too overweight or have other reasons – or multiple reasons – why they cannot serve, 71 percent of young Americans cannot join the military.⁹ The figure for Illinois is also 71 percent.

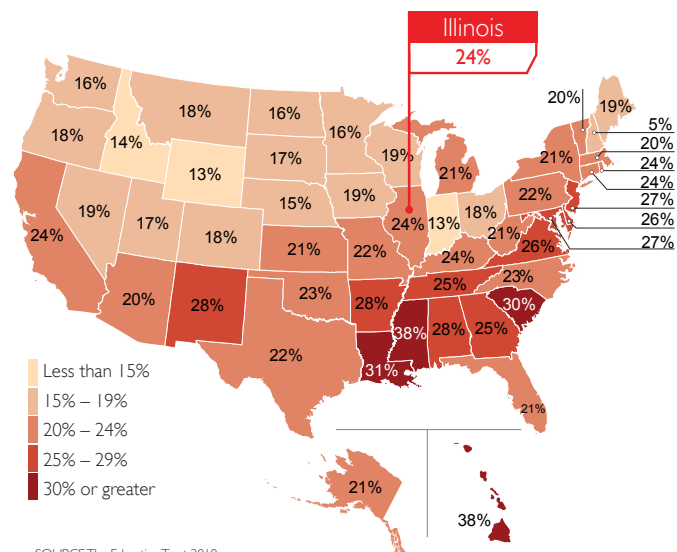
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR REFORM

Whether it is improving young people's education, keeping them on the right side of the law, or keeping them physically fit, early education has shown it can provide the foundation on which to build real success.

INADEQUATE EDUCATION PREVENTS YOUNG AMERICANS FROM SERVING

Proportion Who Score Too Low

Out of those who do graduate and try to join the Army, **over one in five** cannot join because they score too low on Armed Forces Qualification Test.



SOURCE: The Education Trust, 2010.

I. Improving Education

Long-term studies of model early education programs show impressive education outcomes:

- The participants in the **Chicago Child-Parent Centers** were **29 percent more likely to have graduated from high school**.¹⁰
- The children who participated in the **Perry Preschool** project were **44 percent more likely to graduate from high school**.¹¹
- Children not served by the **Abecedarian** project were **75 percent more likely to be held back in school**.¹²
- By age 30, **Abecedarian** project participants were **four times more likely to have earned a 4-year college degree** than those not in the program.¹³

While most high-quality state pre-kindergarten programs have not been around long enough to follow the children served into adulthood, the programs that have invested in high quality can already demonstrate strong results. For example:



Children who participated in the Chicago Child-Parent Centers were 29% more likely to graduate from high school, while those left out were 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime.

- **Michigan's Great Start Readiness** state preschool program reported a *35 percent increase in high school graduation rates*.¹⁴
- **New Jersey's preschool program** reported that children in the program were *three-fourths of a year ahead in math and two-thirds of a year ahead in literacy* in 4th and 5th grades.¹⁵
- Children in **Tennessee's preschool program** were *half as likely to be held back in kindergarten*.¹⁶

2. Reducing Crime

Two long-term studies on early education have strong results on preventing crime:

- By age 18, *children left out of the Chicago Child-Parent Centers* program were *70 percent more likely* than participants to *have been arrested for a violent crime*.¹⁷
- By age 27, *those who did not attend the Perry Preschool* were *five times more likely to have been chronic offenders* than the children who participated.¹⁸

3. Reducing Obesity

There is even new evidence showing how early learning programs can help reduce America's rising rates of childhood obesity:

- Children who entered **Head Start** as obese had a greater decline in their body mass index (BMI) than children who did not attend Head Start. Similar results were found for children who entered Head Start overweight. Head Start students were *less obese, less overweight*, and less underweight at the end of the program than children in the comparison groups.¹⁹
- A randomized control study in **Chicago** demonstrated

that working with preschool-aged children and their parents can reduce weight gain: *children not in the program gained 16 percent more weight* over the next two years than those receiving the program.²⁰

- In **New York City, Philadelphia and Mississippi**, schools improved the nutritional quality of the food served to children, increased their physical activity, and coached their parents on children's healthy nutrition and physical activity needs. As a result of these efforts, along with other broader reforms, *rates of childhood obesity dropped by 5 to 24 percent*.²¹

These results indicate that, if the lessons from these programs can be adapted successfully for centers elsewhere, early education can help children establish healthy eating and exercising habits to last a lifetime.

EARLY EDUCATION PAYS FOR ITSELF AND MORE

The cost of failure is staggering. On average, a child who drops out of school, uses drugs and becomes a career criminal costs society \$2.5 million.²² That goes a long way in explaining why early education can produce such outstanding savings. A well-respected, independent cost-benefit analysis of more than 20 different studies of state and local pre-kindergarten programs showed that pre-k can return, on average, a "profit" (economic benefits minus costs) to society of over \$26,000 for every child served.²³



New evidence shows that early learning programs can help reduce rising childhood obesity rates.

NO EXCUSES

Results from New Jersey, Michigan and other states should effectively end the debate on whether high-quality early education can be brought to scale and deliver strong and lasting results. If programs are not delivering the strong results we know are possible, policymakers and administrators need to find out what successful programs are doing differently and make changes.

ILLINOIS PUBLIC EARLY EDUCATION

Since the early 1980s, both Democratic and Republican leaders in Illinois have prioritized the expansion and improvement of early childhood education. Its current funding stream, the Early Childhood Block Grant in the Illinois State Board of Education budget, was established in 1998. Later, the Illinois General Assembly enacted Preschool for All, which set high quality standards and goals to provide publicly-funded preschool to all families who want it, with services going to at-risk children first. However, due to repeated funding cuts, in 2013, the program served just 18 percent of three-year-olds and 27 percent of four-year-olds.²⁴ With regard to unmet need among at-risk children, statewide, there are nearly 244,000 at-risk three- and four-year-olds. Of these children, approximately 111,000 are receiving early childhood education through either the state preschool program or Head Start. This leaves approximately 132,500 at-risk three- and four-year-olds (54 percent) who are not enrolled in either of these programs.²⁵ Even if Illinois serves just one-third of its at-risk 3- and 4-year-old children not enrolled, the \$26,000 lifetime net savings to society comes out to over \$1 billion saved. That is a solid investment in our state's future.

CONCLUSION: PRESERVE AND EXPAND EARLY EDUCATION, FOCUS ON IMPROVING QUALITY

High-quality early education builds a solid foundation and helps more young people develop in mind, body, and character so they can succeed at whatever career path they choose, including military service. In short, it is an investment in America's future economic prosperity and national security.

Illinois local, state and national policymakers need to act boldly and decisively now to protect, expand and continually improve early education.

If Illinois serves just one-third of its at-risk 3- and 4-year-old children not enrolled in pre-k, the \$26,000 lifetime net savings per child comes out to over \$1 billion in savings to society.



Endnotes

- 1 According to the 2013 Qualified Military Available (QMA), based on personal communication with the Accession Policy and Joint Advertising, Market Research and Studies teams at the Department of Defense in July 2014.
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State and County Data: Obesity, Crime, High School Graduation and Preschool Unmet Need

	Adult Obesity ₁	Violent Crime Rate ₂	Graduation ₃	Preschool ₄		Adult Obesity ₁	Violent Crime Rate ₂	Graduation ₃	Preschool ₄		Adult Obesity ₁	Violent Crime Rate ₂	Graduation ₃	Preschool ₄
Statewide	29%	457	14%	54%	Hamilton	29%	54	14%	34%	Montgomery	25%	512	14%	6%
Adams	30	355	10	42	Hancock	28	91	14	19	Morgan	30	261	17	28
Alexander	33	1351	10	0	Hardin	31	278	17	50	Moultrie	30	110	9	58
Bond	29	41	13	30	Henderson	31	305	18	34	Ogle	28	66	8	66
Boone	31	147	19	90	Henry	29	165	11	37	Peoria	27	624	22	47
Brown	30	209	13	0	Iroquois	32	67	17	59	Perry	28	126	14	44
Bureau	31	93	14	34	Jackson	28	550	14	6	Platt	30	219	6	70
Calhoun	30	358	18	74	Jasper	30	232	6	32	Pike	29	41	21	16
Carroll	31	67	14	37	Jefferson	33	557	11	15	Pope	31	291	23	6
Cass	30	66	15	5	Jersey	28	313	8	44	Pulaski	33	1124	22	16
Champaign	27	616	11	57	Jo Daviess	27	176	9	0	Putnam	29	75	15	12
Christian	32		13	37	Johnson	29	295	4	0	Randolph	31	169	15	33
Clark	31	310	17	46	Kane	27	215	14	73	Richland	30	193	10	22
Clay	30	65	11	24	Kankakee	33	400	17	50	Rock Island	27	500	12	40
Clinton	28	153	9	62	Kendall	28	138	6	75	St. Clair	30	945	17	49
Coles	29	272	11	64	Knox	32	367	13	36	Saline	30	338	15	16
Cook	26	697	16	52	Lake	25	143	11	71	Sangamon	31	943	19	45
Crawford	33	222	12	16	LaSalle	29	120	16	58	Schuyler	29	99	16	0
Cumberland	29	121	4	53	Lawrence	31	186	27	25	Scott	29	80	11	23
DeKalb	30	231	12	81	Lee	27	202	18	76	Shelby	30	119	11	63
De Witt	30		17	33	Livingston	31	210	17	30	Stark	32	132	10	47
Douglas	30	148	6	57	Logan	33	347	20	65	Stephenson	28	143	16	49
DuPage	25	100	7	81	McDonough	29	162	13	18	Tazewell	27	258	14	69
Edgar	33	344	14	39	McHenry	27	119	8	77	Union	31	101	23	7
Edwards	27	137	18	50	McLean	32	343	15	54	Vermilion	30	568	22	47
Effingham	27	134	8	79	Macon	32	537	21	49	Wabash	30	166	19	52
Fayette	32	156	20	50	Macoupin	30	162	14	18	Warren	30	345	12	21
Ford	31	385	17	56	Madison	32	246	15	51	Washington	32	300	7	48
Franklin	30	333	20	20	Marion	33	293	19	25	Wayne	29	243	20	29
Ford	33	168	11	40	Marshall	30	125	22	41	White	31	258	13	27
Franklin	33	107	18	24	Mason	32	480	16	38	Whiteside	28	172	17	33
Fulton	30	205	15	30	Massac	34	343	12	42	Will	33	169	12	79
Gallatin	30	103	11	65	Menard	29	185	11	39	Williamson	30	580	18	34
Greene	30	205	15	30	Mercer	32	226	11	39	Winnebago	29	892	25	54
Grundy	34	103	11	65	Monroe	29	53	9	75	Woodford	30	44	7	71

1. This is a way of comparing obesity rates in IL across counties but is not a figure for how many young adults cannot join the military. County obesity data from 2010; statewide rate from 2013.

2. Violent Crime Rate per 100,000 (2011)

3. Percent not graduating in 4 years (2010-11)

4. Percent unserved in early childhood education (2014)

Sources: High school graduation: Social Impact Research Center; Children unserved: Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map; Obesity and Crime: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



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