



Raising the Next Nebraskans



2016 Report to the Governor



Nebraska Early Childhood
Interagency Coordinating Council

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About the Nebraska Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC)

The strength and prosperity of any community, state or nation is founded upon the well-being of its citizens—starting with the youngest. Nebraska has long recognized that ensuring the healthy development of young children isn't simply a shared, moral responsibility, it is a pragmatic necessity for the social and economic growth of our state.

For this reason, Nebraska's public officials rely on the knowledge and insight of parents, experienced professionals and state agencies to inform policies that affect the health, well-being and early development of our state's youngest children. Since 2000, the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC) (Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-3401 to 43-3403) has fulfilled this role in accordance with the (1) Early Intervention Act (Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-2501 to 43-2516), (2) Quality Child Care Act (Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-2601 to 43-2625), and (3) Early Childhood Education Act (Neb. Rev. Stat. 79-1101 to 79-1104). The ECICC is also designated as the State Advisory Council, as required by the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act, and serves as the State Advisory Council for Nebraska's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Program.

The ECICC submits a biennial Report to the Governor on the Status of Early Childhood in compliance with the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council Act. The ECICC is to advise and assist the collaborating agencies in carrying out the provisions of: the Early Intervention Act, Quality Child Care Act and other early childhood care and education initiatives under state supervision. Members are appointed by the Governor and membership representation requirements and council advisory duties are described.

A collaborative effort to advise state government on the improvement of services affecting young children and their families.

Raising the Next Nebraskans

Supporting parents in the work of raising healthy, capable citizens

The social and economic viability of any state or community depends on the well-being, civic involvement and productivity of its people.

The continued growth and quality of life in Nebraska's communities is the direct product of the skills and competencies of those who reside in them. Healthy, nurturing families, safe neighborhoods and steadily increasing opportunities for employment and economic growth are all factors in what makes Nebraska's economy so stable.

As state leaders, you are charged with keeping our economy steady while seeking opportunities for growth and innovation. As you seek to make positive impacts for Nebraska, we ask you to keep in your vision that children and families are at the core of any great state.

With an eye toward the future and raising the next generation of Nebraskans, we know that children's best opportunities to thrive in school, adopt positive behaviors and eventually mature into productive, contributing citizens are directly related to the nurturing, supportive adults in their lives. Stable, engaging relationships with



Stable, engaging relationships with adults are crucial to the healthy early development of our children, and have lasting effects throughout their lives. No other relationship a child experiences in the earliest years has as profound an effect as the bond shared with responsive, supportive parents.

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It is parents' responsibility to provide the kinds of early experiences that promote children's lifelong physical and mental health, socially positive behaviors and capacity to learn and achieve. However, an increasing number of families face circumstances or risk factors that undermine their ability to provide stable environments and stimulating experiences for their children. Very often these parents are subject to the pressures of multiple jobs and do not have extended family or social support. They may lack a strong working knowledge

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of their children’s earliest developmental needs or how to meet them. It is important that *all* families, but particularly those who face multiple risk factors, have supports and resources to help guide them in raising strong, capable adults.

Many people play a role in helping parents raise our state’s next generation—medical professionals, education leaders, child care providers, public agencies, legislators, local communities and the private sector.

Informed Parents and Families

Parenting is one of the most rewarding yet demanding jobs anyone will ever encounter. We all have a stake ensuring that parents—but especially those facing multiple risk factors—have available information and resources that help them in their enormous responsibility of raising the next Nebraskans.

What do families need to know when a child is born? What happens if a child has a special need or is not meeting developmental milestones? What do parents do, where do they go, or whom do they ask? Many people play a role in helping parents raise our state’s next generation—medical professionals, education leaders, child care providers, public agencies, legislators, local communities and the private sector.

In today’s world of technological advances, a scarcity of information isn’t the issue. The question is *where* do parents find reliable information and *how* do they make sense of it once they have it?

A growing number of Nebraska parents face the task of guiding their children’s physical, cognitive and character growth without family or social support or the information and resources necessary to effectively meet their children’s developmental needs.

By their very nature, government programs are developed in isolation of one another. Each program has its own funding source, eligibility criteria and guidance. Over time, a complex maze of programmatic features develops, sometimes conflicting and creating barriers against the very outcomes desired. It is critical to implement strategies to reach parents and communities with information that improves their awareness and builds their knowledge base to make informed decisions.

The role of the ECICC is to recommend advancement of work that supports coordination of quality, comprehensive systems of early care and education at the state level and reduces fragmentation.

To help in this collaboration, 29 **Early Childhood Planning Region Teams** across the state act as local interagency coordinating councils

made up of local schools, health and human service agencies, resource and referral agencies [see 43-3401(2)], Head Start, families, and other stakeholders. The ECICC, as the Governor's statewide council, is the liaison between the local networks and the state. Using information gained from the regional teams about local needs and disconnects, the ECICC works with the state to recommend a more integrated, efficient early childhood system that yields the best outcomes for our children.

Infants and Toddlers: The key ingredient is 'early'

The first three years of life is a time of incredible growth when all major domains of development are taking shape. Fine and gross motor skills develop so a child can learn to throw a ball or splash in a puddle of water. Speech and language skills form as simple sounds become words and, eventually, complex sentences. Social-emotional skills emerge so strong attachments are formed and children learn to exercise self-control when interacting with others. And finally, cognitive skills form when children learn to analyze and solve problems.



To ensure infants are on a pathway to lifelong health, Nebraska requires all babies to receive **newborn screening** to detect early disorders that may affect future brain and organ development, hearing loss and heart problems. Every state has an early intervention program to help families and their child(ren) who have been identified with special needs. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) coordinate to administer a continuum of services for infants and toddlers with special needs and help transition these children and families to early childhood programs and relevant special education services as the children grow. [See Appendix, p. 23, Early Development Network]

The infant and toddler years cannot be overlooked—critical foundations for health, and skills for success in school and productivity in the workplace develop in the earliest years of life.

DHHS provides **voluntary, evidence-based home visiting** to pregnant or parenting families of children age 5 and under who may face significant life stressors such as poverty, exposure to violence or substance abuse, teen parenting, or military families with one or both

parents in the service. Individualized support is offered from highly skilled home visitors to help build family resiliency in the face of unmitigated life stressors. [See Appendix, p. 22, Nebraska-Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting]



To support young children's learning environments and social-emotional development, Nebraska has three **Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships (EHS-CCP)** that offer high-quality, comprehensive services for low-income infants, toddlers and their families: Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, Blue Valley Community Action Partnership in Crete and Fairbury and the Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative in Omaha. This comprehensive approach was built with existing funding to maximize resources and support better outcomes for families in their role of raising the next Nebraskans.

The **Sixpence Early Learning Fund** is an innovative collaboration between our state's public and private sectors. Sixpence provides financial resources and professional guidance to 34 school districts and partners to meet the needs of 988 infants and toddlers who might otherwise have difficulty in school. Sixpence helps parents grow in their roles as educators and caregivers by employing highly skilled, experienced early childhood professionals with a solid understanding of the unique developmental needs of infants and toddlers. [See Appendix, p. 25, Sixpence Early Learning Fund]



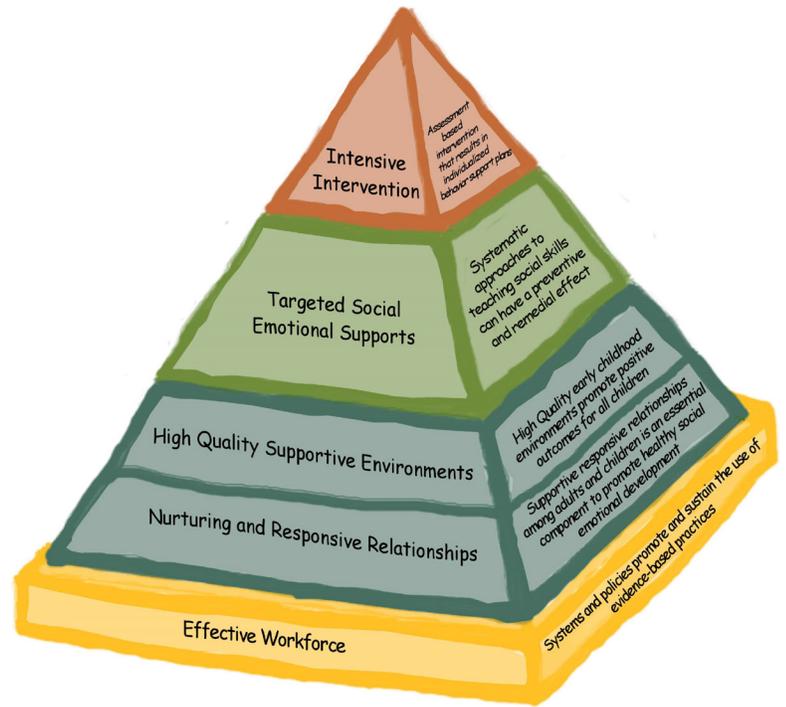
The social-emotional development that takes place during children's early years is strongly influenced by the quality of the relationships between young children and their primary caregivers. Improving children's environments, relationships and experiences early in life can mitigate many costly societal problems, including incarceration, homelessness and failure to complete high school. **Rooted in Relationships** is a public-private initiative that partners with child care homes and centers in communities to implement evidence-based practices that enhance children's social-emotional development. In 2015-16, Rooted in Relationships granted funds to six communities in Dakota, Dawson, Dodge, Hall, Lancaster and Saline counties. In

The most effective policies to help raise the next Nebraskans are those that empower parents to better guide the healthy early development of their young children.

year one, 20 coaches supported 82 center- and home-based child care providers in 39 programs impacting more than 850 children. Additionally, these communities have developed long-range plans to support social-emotional development through screening and referral, providing Circle of Security Parenting classes and creating community-wide awareness about early childhood mental health.

Another strength in Nebraska that focuses on children’s social-emotional development is the **Nebraska Department of Education Pyramid Model Project (NDE-PMP)** in school district-operated preschools across the state. Since fall 2013, the NDE-PMP has utilized over a dozen coaches to support 110 classrooms in 20 different districts, affecting more than 2,375 preschoolers. Each participating program spends three years implementing a sustainable Pyramid Model program through the development of leadership teams, ongoing training, intensive coaching and the establishment of their own internal infrastructure and support systems.

The overarching goal of the Pyramid Model is to create positive environments and relationships for each child through evidence-based practices. These practices promote child engagement and learning while focusing on teaching children the appropriate social skills they’ll use to develop friendships and regulate their emotions. The Pyramid Model focuses on home- and center-based programs, in both child care and preschool, to promote healthy social-emotional development for *all* children.



Many programs utilize the pyramid model to support young children’s healthy social-emotional and cognitive development as the basis for school readiness.

Growing Nebraska’s professional early childhood workforce

One of the most important issues facing early childhood today is how to best create a diverse workforce of high-quality early childhood educators to nurture and guide our next generation of Nebraskans in their early developmental years. Like many other states, Nebraska has seen the need for high-quality early childhood developmental opportunities grow faster than the availability of professionals to deliver them.

To offset the magnitude of this challenge, Nebraska must strategically cultivate our state’s talent pool to support parents as educators and deliver the caliber of early developmental supports that will prepare young Nebraskans to thrive in tomorrow’s marketplace. A sizeable and highly skilled cadre of early childhood educators and professionals is essential to the long-term viability of our state. According to recent calculations, Nebraska needs an estimated 8,000 skilled professionals who possess the specialized knowledge to work in settings where there are young children, and to help parents deliver high-quality experiences and environments to Nebraska’s most vulnerable children under age 5.

This deficit in the early childhood workforce represents more than a challenge to Nebraska—it is an increasingly serious threat to

While an advanced degree is not required for every job, a set of core competencies should be required for anyone working with young children, especially in the infant and toddler years.

the overall caliber and productivity of our state's next generation of innovators and leaders. Given the persistent concerns of Nebraska employers about the scarcity of adequately skilled workers, we cannot afford to sacrifice even a fraction of that future potential by not generating a sufficient number of qualified professionals to assist in raising the next Nebraskans.

As members of the ECICC, we see two parallel pathways that need to occur simultaneously to achieve the number of professionals needed in Nebraska's early childhood workforce.

Elevate the child care profession

While the gulf between need and available talent is alarming, it is important to recognize this shortfall does not necessarily mean that additional early childhood workers must pass through our state's higher education system or be recruited from elsewhere. Nebraska already has a number of individuals who possess valuable experience in caring for children, but may simply need better opportunities to develop necessary skills required in high-quality early learning programs.

Because child care is where the majority of our youngest children spend their days while their parents work, it is critical these settings have trained providers with specialized knowledge and core competencies to guide young developing minds in their care. Nebraska has 3,084 child care providers in homes and centers across the state who are licensed to care for more than 87,000 children under age 5. So, how do we build on the current talent pool in the short-term to help meet the needs of our youngest children and their families?

Early Childhood Professional Development

To help build these core competencies, Nebraska has a statewide system of career and in-service professional development for early childhood care and education providers, regardless of whether they work for a school district, private child care business, Head Start or a community-based entity. The statewide **Early Learning Connection (ELC)** coordinators, under NDE, work with a cadre of professional trainers and coaches to ensure Nebraska maintains a well-qualified and skilled workforce for those working with our youngest children. The ELC collaborates with an array of professional and career development entities that have education and learning missions: University of Nebraska Extension, Head Start training and technical assistance staff, the Child and Adult Care Food Program and the statewide Community Learning Centers Network.



Raising Quality in a 5-Step System

Step Up to Quality, the state's quality rating and improvement system, provides a pathway for early childhood programs to increase their level of quality. Step Up to Quality is a mechanism to enhance the quality in child care settings and improve providers' skills by offering supports and incentives such as additional training and coaching. It is also meant as a resource to help parents recognize elements of quality settings.



Higher Education—A Pathway for Preparation

For those choosing a career in early childhood, there are multiple opportunities in Nebraska's higher education institutions to obtain an associate, bachelors, masters or doctoral degree in early childhood. One of the greatest indicators of a high-quality early childhood program is qualified staff who are knowledgeable and have expertise in child development. The higher education route is a longer-term solution to Nebraska's early childhood workforce shortage, but one that is necessary to ensure we have enough skilled professionals to meet the increasing requirements of certification and endorsement.

Regardless of the pathway chosen, it is critical that a set of core competencies, at the very least, be required for anyone working with young children, especially those who care for infants and toddlers. The first three years of life are a time of incredible growth—a time that calls for professionals who have specialized knowledge in the area of child development. Children's early relationships and interactions with adults literally shape who they become—how well their social and emotional skills develop, as well as their ability to master language and literacy—all vital for a successful school experience and promising adulthood.

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood NEBRASKA

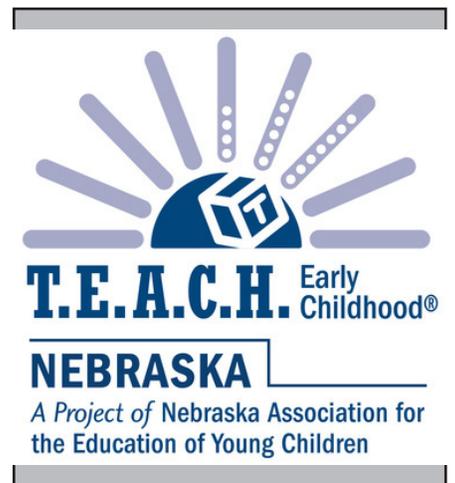
Providers who are enrolled in Step Up to Quality or on their own can apply for a scholarship through T.E.A.C.H. as a pathway to obtain a higher education degree in the field of early childhood. Public and private dollars fund these scholarships that are administered by the Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children. Scholarships help early care and education professionals complete coursework at a local community college, they then may choose to work toward a four-year degree and endorsement in Early Childhood Education.

Using data to its best advantage

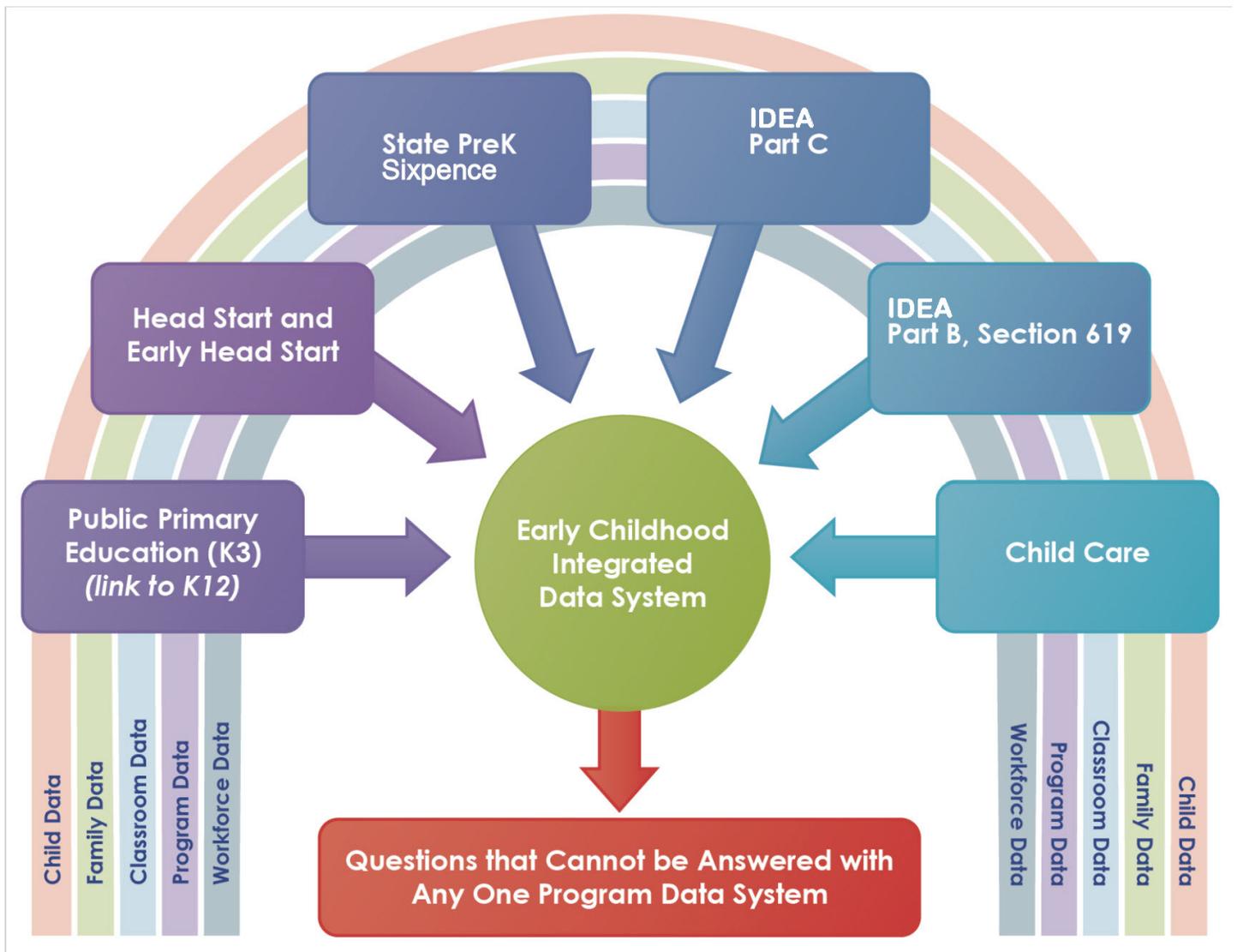
Because the interest level in early childhood has grown, states are becoming increasingly aware of the need to connect early learning data to K-12 data and beyond. It is important to identify whether young children are on a positive trajectory to enter school—have they had access to high-quality early care and education and is the early childhood workforce appropriately trained to meet the needs of the young children in Nebraska.

A current initiative under NDE is the **Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS)** which is focused on the collection and integration of Nebraska data in the early childhood years.

The past several years have seen a tremendous surge of support for early childhood programs, which has created an increased need for available data. Since 2009, Nebraska public and private entities have collaborated on coordination of early childhood data. Emerging from this



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collaboration is the ECIDS workgroup comprised of program administrators, teachers, service providers and private interests. ECIDS' purpose is to provide integrated, cross-program data that informs decisions about early childhood policy, services and education, and answer questions that cannot be answered by any one data system. By the end of 2020, we recommend connection of the integrated early childhood data system with the state's more comprehensive longitudinal data system for a more complete picture of the educational continuum.

It's important to remember why we use data. Not only does data confirm what is working or not working, it helps us identify gaps and trends, and informs the way resources are delivered for ultimate efficiency. A longitudinal data system that includes reliable information from the ECIDS will provide a more coherent picture of the state of education in Nebraska. This will reduce redundancy by allowing Nebraska to collaborate between disparate systems and track children's performance more effectively as they approach their K-12 journey and their eventual career path.

Recommendation #2:
Strengthen Step Up to Quality to incentivize improvement in Nebraska’s child care programs

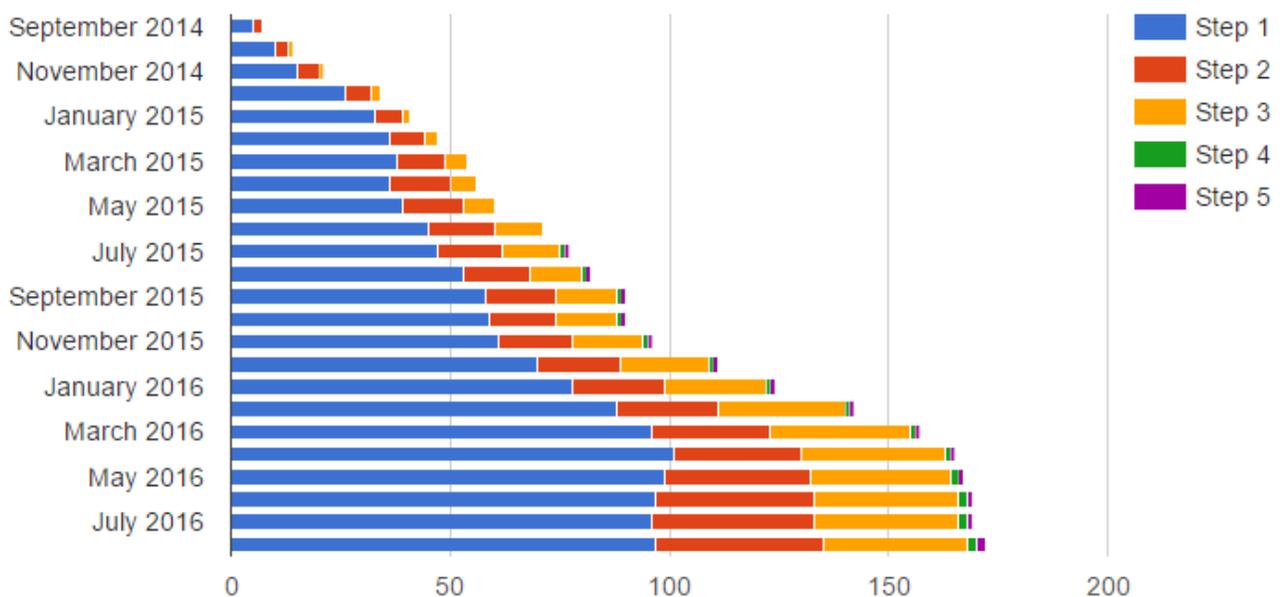
Step Up to Quality, Nebraska’s quality rating and improvement system for child care providers, was designed to:

- Increase fiscal accountability for Nebraska’s public investment in early care and education
- Provide parents with information to recognize quality settings and make informed choices about child care options in their communities
- Provide quality improvement supports for child care providers to better meet the developmental needs of young children and to increase children's readiness for kindergarten

Recent Accomplishments:

- A cross-agency steering committee meets monthly to make key decisions for implementation
- Nearly 3,000 users are entered into the Professional Record System, highlighting professional experience
- A cadre of reliable observers collect baseline data for official ratings
- Orientations continue statewide
- Coaching is being accessed by programs
- Child care ratings will go public in July 2017. A campaign will kick off soon to raise awareness of Step Up to Quality for the general public, early childhood educators and parents about quality environments, recruit licensed child care providers and other early childhood education and care programs into Step Up to Quality, and educate parents about how to use the ratings to choose quality child care settings.
- All 38 child care programs *required* to participate in Step Up to Quality are participating (providers receiving more than \$250,000 per year in child care subsidies).
- The private sector has funded two years of program evaluation

Step Up to Quality Ratings-The First 2 Years



Total number of programs participating in Nebraska Step Up to Quality at each step rating.

Recommendation #3:

Examine more closely the work being done by Nebraska’s P-16 initiative and expand its scope to include the early childhood years in its collection and analysis of longitudinal data

While this recommendation was framed around the P-16 initiative, its intent is to focus any effort on education reform or workforce preparedness to consider creation of a longitudinal data system for education in Nebraska and to include data in the early childhood years starting at birth rather than at preschool age (4-year-olds).

An Education to Workforce Roundtable whose purpose is to study education issues—including early childhood, K-12 and postsecondary education—and workforce development has been created by our current governor.

In addition, a state support team is working on building an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (see page 12) that collects, integrates, maintains, stores and reports information obtained from multiple agencies that serve children and families from birth to age 8.

Recommendation #4:

Provide improved information for parents and families of young children

The need continues for families to be able to access information regarding various public resources in a simple, understandable manner. A single website for families was created under the existing Answers4Families website, but it has not met expectations from users as a simple navigational tool.

While not a comprehensive look at all public resources, a public information campaign will kick off in 2016 as part of Step Up to Quality to educate various audiences, including child care providers, parents, and the general public to better understand what high-quality early childhood programs look like and where they are located.

Recommendation #5:

Focus on infants and toddlers at risk

Because the infant and toddler years are so crucial in a child’s development, it is likely that a focus on infants and toddlers will be a longstanding recommendation of the ECICC. Whether it is a child’s physical or mental health, early care and education or special needs, the desired outcome will always be more effective if the investment is made early. Research indicates that the quality of developmental experiences in the first three years informs children’s core neural architecture and physiology in ways that affect their chances for success as students, workers and citizens. The quality of our earliest experiences have implications for the most urgent issues facing our state today. This is why a clear understanding of neural development in the infant and toddler years is key to an informed, strategic approach to shaping public policy.

Moving Forward: 2016 Recommendations of the ECICC

Moving forward, the ECICC's 2016 recommendations to our state's officials mirror our 2014 recommendations. We consider the following four recommendations to be fundamental challenges that require a long-term approach, and we have suggested specific strategies for accomplishing our recommendations.

Recommendation #1: Recruit, Train and Retain Enough Highly Skilled Early Childhood Professionals to Meet Statewide Needs

Strategies to expand the availability of high-quality early learning experiences for children by growing the pool of skilled early childhood professionals statewide

- Strengthen Nebraska's early childhood professional development infrastructure to deliver necessary training and coaching to Nebraska's early childhood workforce
- Strengthen Nebraska's child care workforce to provide more high-quality early childhood settings in both rural and urban communities
- Support higher education in their goal of aligning A.A., B.A. and M.A. Early Childhood preparation programs to ensure multiple career pathways for early childhood educators
- Support professionalization efforts of the early childhood workforce so all are considered skilled professionals

Recommendation #2: Focus on Infants & Toddlers and Their Families

Strategies to address the early development needs of Nebraska's youngest, most vulnerable children

- Support programs and initiatives that provide evidence-based, high-quality early childhood environments
- Support professional development that builds the unique skill set and knowledge base necessary to work with infants and toddlers

Recommendation #3: Inform, Engage and Collaborate with Nebraska's Families, Public and Private Stakeholders

Strategies to reach parents and communities with information to improve awareness and build and strengthen their knowledge base

- Support a central website that is easy to navigate and includes information for families regarding multiple public resources
- Support awareness efforts to educate parents and the public on the importance of children's school readiness, increased parent engagement and how to recognize quality early childhood environments

Recommendation #4: Support continued development of Nebraska's Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS)

Strategies to support a sustainable infrastructure for early childhood data and connect it to the broader Nebraska Longitudinal Data System

- Support a comprehensive data system by encouraging collaboration across multiple agencies and systems for a more coherent picture of the state of education in Nebraska

Appendix

Head Start and Early Head Start in Nebraska

Promoting school readiness in children from birth to age 5 from low-income families

Pregnant women or children whose family income is equal to or below the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG) are eligible for Head Start. The FPG is \$24,250 gross income for a family of four. In 2014-15 there were 24,734 children in poverty under age 5.¹ Of those, only 43% of the 3- and 4-year-olds living in poverty had access to Head Start and only 8% of children under age 3 had access to Early Head Start.

Total Funded Enrollment: 5,861

Total Head Start Grantees	Early Head Start Programs	Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships	Migrant/Seasonal Head Start Birth to Age 5 Programs	Tribal Head Start Partnerships
16	11	3	1	3

Total of All Children Served Birth to Age 5	Total Infants and Toddlers Served Birth to Age 3	Total Children Served Age 3 to 5	Migrant/Seasonal Head Start Children Served Birth to Age 5	Tribal Head Start Children Served Age 3 to 5
5,289	1,208	4,081	54	226

Children with a disability	Children were dual-language learners	Children were homeless	Children were in foster care
957	26.8%	403	696

Head Start takes a comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of the whole child and family. The two-generation approach supports the stability and long-term success for families who are most at risk. Depending on each family's needs, they receive a wide range of individualized services.

In 2015, families participated in:

- Adult education: 661
- Support for homeless families: 439
- Dual language classes: 502
- Parenting classes: 3,822
- Workforce training: 208
- Emergency crisis intervention: 1,494

Federal Funding to Programs in Nebraska

- \$43,263,303 estimated Head Start and Early Head Start funding
- \$4,700,000 FY2015 Early Head Start – estimated Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships funding

Comprehensive services to all children:

- Dental screening and examination
- Vision and hearing screening
- Lead and anemia screening
- Medical/physical examination
- Nutrition and growth assessment
- Developmental screening
- Speech and language screening

Head Start Workforce	Early Head Start Workforce
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average salary for teacher with a BA: \$31,242 • Teacher turnover: 7,238 • Reason: 33.2% claim salary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average salary for teacher with a CDA: \$23,268 • Teacher turnover: 2,314 • Reason: 25.2% claim salary

¹Kids Count Data Book. (2015) Children in poverty by age group. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved from <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data>

Child Care Licensing

Child Care Licensing in Nebraska

The Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council Act requires a report on child care licensing be included in this biennial report. The information required includes:

- a) number of license applications received under the Quality Child Care Act and the Child Care Licensing Act
- b) number of licenses issued
- c) number of license applications denied
- d) number of complaints investigated regarding such licenses
- e) number of such licenses revoked
- f) number and dollar amount of civil penalties levied pursuant to section 71-1920
- g) any information which may assist the Legislature to determine the extent of cooperation provided to DHHS by other state and local agencies pursuant to section 71-1914.

Nebraska requires any individual or agency providing child care to four or more children at the same time from different families for compensation to be licensed. Licensing regulations focus on minimum standards of health and safety. Fire safety inspections are conducted on all licensed programs. Sanitation inspections are conducted on child care centers.

Number and Capacity of Licensed Child Care/Preschool Programs

License Type	Number of Programs		License Capacity	
	June 2015	June 2016	June 2015	June 2016
Family Child Care Home I (licensed for 4-10 children)	1,675	1,568	16,404	15,431
Family Child Care Home II (licensed for 11-12 children)	624	639	7,312	7,495
Child Care Center*	705	707	58,524	59,984
School-Age-Only Center*	241	243	26,968	27,628
Preschool*	181	170	4,774	4,360
TOTAL	3,426	3,327	113,982	114,898

*License capacity based on facility size and staff

Inspections Completed by Child Care Licensing Staff

Routine Inspections

All licensed programs receive a minimum of one unannounced inspection each year, and programs licensed for 30 or more children receive two unannounced inspections. Routine inspections include: 60-day inspections to Family Child Care Home I programs carried out within 60 days of the issuance of a provisional or operating license; annual and semi-annual inspections; follow-up inspections to determine compliance after violations have been observed; and, monitoring inspections to determine compliance while programs are on corrective action status or some level of discipline.

Routine Inspections	Number of Inspections
	(1/1/15–12/31/15)
Family Child Care Home I	3,259
Family Child Care Home II	641
Child Care Center	1,841
School-Age Only Center	550
Preschool	189
TOTAL	6,480

Complaint Inspections	Number of Complaints
	(1/1/15–12/31/15)
Family Child Care Home I	156
Family Child Care Home II	37
Child Care Center	359
School-Age Only Center	3
Preschool	4
Unlicensed Care Complaints	101
TOTAL	660

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Required Data	(1/1/15–12/31/15)
Number of Applications Received	DNA
Number of Licenses Issued	405
Number of License Applications Denied	8
Number of Complaints Investigated	660
Number of Licenses Revoked	27
Number of Civil Penalties Levied	95
Dollar Amount of Civil Penalties Levied	\$66,116

Together for Kids and Families

Building safe, supportive communities where all children and families are a top priority

Together for Kids and Families (TFKF) is an initiative of DHHS with the goal of improving child outcomes through a comprehensive and integrated system of services. The Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council serves as the advisory board.

Since 2003, TFKF has engaged stakeholders, partners, providers and families in pursuit of this goal and has continuously been supported by the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) federal grant. This federal funding for ECCS as we have known it has phased out, and the Maternal Child Health Block Grant (Title V) is continuing the valuable work of TFKF through a transition period of refocusing workgroups and introducing opportunities for innovation in response to policy and environmental changes.

Key Priorities & Activities

- Create a shared vision for two-generation approaches
- Introduce two-generation approaches in Medicaid
- Reduce infant abuse and neglect
- Promote access to preventive and early intervention mental health services
- Increase maternal depression screening during pediatric visits
- Increase social and emotional screening of young children in pediatric medical homes
- Assess current state of Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment screening in Medicaid
- Medical home for Children with Special Health Care Needs (CY-SCHN), and empowerment of family involved in decision making.

What are Two-Generation Approaches?

Two-generation approaches address parents and young children at the same time. Research has documented the impact of a parent's education, economic stability and overall health on a child's trajectory. Similarly, children's education and healthy development are powerful catalysts for parents. Two-generation approaches provide opportunities and meet the needs of low-income children and their parents simultaneously, helping the two generations make progress together.



Two-generation approaches address parents and young children at the same time. Research has documented the impact of a parent's education, economic stability and overall health on a child's trajectory.

Nebraska-Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (N-MIECHV) Program

Home Visiting means family support, right when it's needed the most



N-MIECHV helps identify the unique needs of families and find the most appropriate resources available through validated screening tools for mental, physical and social/emotional development, maternal depression, substance abuse and interpersonal violence.

The N-MIECHV program supports eligible pregnant women and families and overburdened parents of children from birth to kindergarten entry to tap into the resources and home skills they need to raise their children into productive adults.

- N-MIECHV programs help identify the unique needs of families and find the most appropriate resources available through validated screening tools for mental, physical and social/emotional development, maternal depression, substance abuse and interpersonal violence
- Education and support takes place in prenatal and postpartum care, successful breastfeeding, well-child visits and immunization schedules, early language and literacy, behavioral concerns, safe sleep environments, safety and nutrition
- Family self-sufficiency is assessed, strengthened and nurtured in relationships and support from the home visitors
- Seven Nebraska program sites are implementing evidence-based home visiting, serving more than 400 families with a combination of state and federal funds
- All seven sites are held to the highest accountability and best practice standards. Data collected and analyzed in the past three years indicate positive improvement in all six of the MIECHV benchmark areas:
 - o Maternal and Newborn Health
 - o Maltreatment, Injury and Emergency Room visits
 - o School Readiness and Achievement
 - o Domestic Violence
 - o Family Economic Self-sufficiency
 - o Coordination of referrals and resources
- A coordinated pilot and screening process has been developed in Douglas County, including 11 partners that are both federal and state-funded N-MIECHV participant programs. The screening assesses the needs of families placed at risk in the heavily populated county. Referrals come to a single phone number and/or website maintained by the Douglas County Health Department, and families are screened and referred to the agency that can best meet individual needs. There is no waiting list and families have been connected with resources within days, not weeks or months, of first contact.

Early Development Network

Individuals with Disabilities Act – Part C for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families

The Nebraska Early Development Network (EDN) is a statewide system of coordinated services designed to address the specific developmental needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. The EDN is co-administered by NDE, Office of Special Education and DHHS's Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care.

Nebraska's Results-Driven Accountability (RDA) plan focuses on the implementation of Routines-Based Early Intervention, which documents scientific evidence about how young children learn. "Natural learning opportunities include those practices that support parents of children with disabilities to understand the critical role of everyday activities and child interests as the foundation for children's learning... the child will be motivated to pay attention longer, resulting in positive benefits related to child learning...given the opportunity to learn and practice new skills multiple times." (Dunst et al., 2000; Raab, 2005).

Meaningful learning opportunities for young children are based on daily routines; "children learn through repeated interactions with the environment distributed across time, better than they do in massed trials" (McWilliam, 2010). Inherent to quality early intervention home visits is coaching to build the family's capacity to support their child's learning; "parents are the major influence on their children's development even when their children participate in early intervention; and effectiveness of intervention is highly associated with parents becoming more responsive with their children...." (Mahoney, 2009).

Nebraska is in the process of statewide training and scaling-up of the implementation of Routines-Based Early Intervention which will lead to improved child and family outcomes by 2020 as measured by Results Matter (see page 24) and the Early Development Network Family Survey.

Family Outcomes

On October 1, 2014, the EDN served 1,492 infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. Based on the 2014 Family Outcome survey results, families reported that EDN services enabled them to:

- Better understand their children's rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (86%)
- Effectively communicate their children's needs (84%)
- Improve their ability to help their children develop and learn (93%)



Results-Driven Accountability (RDA): the U.S. Department of Education's revised accountability system requires states to develop and implement a five-year Systemic Improvement Plan to ensure improved results for infants and toddlers with disabilities receiving early intervention services.



School districts and Educational Service Units are expected to serve children within inclusive classrooms that represent a full range of abilities and disabilities as well as respect the social, linguistic and economic diversity of families.

Results Matter in Nebraska

Measuring program performance to achieve better results for young children and their families

Results Matter in Nebraska is a child, program and family outcomes measurement system designed and implemented to improve supports for all young children birth to kindergarten entry who are served by school districts and community partners. School districts and Educational Service Units are expected to serve children within inclusive classrooms that represent a full range of abilities and disabilities as well as respect the social, linguistic and economic diversity of families.

Results Matter measures child progress and program quality to accomplish these purposes:

- Improve the learning and development of young children prior to kindergarten
- Improve the experiences and interactions between young children and their families
- Inform program practices and demonstrate program effectiveness
- Guide the development of local and state policies and procedures
- Provide data to demonstrate results

Results Matter documents results of programs administered by NDE:

- o Rule 11 regulations for the Approval of Prekindergarten Programs Established by School Boards or Educational Service Units and for the Issuance of Early Childhood Education Grants
- o Rule 51 regulations and standards for Special Education Programs
- o The federal mandate of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C (ages 0-3) and Part B-619 (ages 3-5)

Children served

In 2014, 15,253 children from birth to kindergarten entrance age were served by school districts. This included 7,042 children birth to age 5 with disabilities:

- 5,465 were preschoolers (ages 3-5) with Individual Education Plans
- 1,577 were infants and toddlers (ages 0-3) with Individualized Family Service Plans

Sixpence Early Learning Fund

Serving infants and toddlers at risk of failure in school

For nearly 10 years, the Sixpence Early Learning Fund has shifted the odds of lifelong success in favor of a growing number of Nebraska's infants and toddlers at risk of failing in school. A Nebraska-based, innovative collaboration between our state's public and private sectors, Sixpence provides funding to school districts in partnership with community providers—enhancing the quality and efficiency of early learning and development services offered in communities throughout Nebraska. Sixpence demonstrates how targeted investments in the school readiness of our youngest, most vulnerable children are also investments that strengthen our families, communities and state.

Sixpence helps build stronger families—Parents play the most important role in the care and education of young children. Sixpence-funded programs work directly with parents to help them better understand and address their children's earliest developmental needs.



Sixpence is a Nebraska-based, innovative collaboration between our state's public and private sectors.



GRANTEES TYPE

Home-based	Combination Home-/Center-based
Center-based	Child Care Partnership

9/20/2016

Each Sixpence-funded program represents a community partnership between local school districts, service providers and other area agencies and stakeholders.

Sixpence is about meeting local needs—Each Sixpence-funded program represents a community partnership between local school districts, service providers and other area agencies and stakeholders.

This community-oriented focus enables each Sixpence program to be highly responsive to the unique needs of the children and families it serves and to leverage local resources more efficiently.

Sixpence promotes quality and accountability—Sixpence invests in proven practices that support the development of character and cognition in young children and are staffed by knowledgeable, highly skilled educators. Regular assessments enable Sixpence staff to deliver specialized assistance to help programs grow in quality and ensure better outcomes for the children they serve.

In 2015-16, Sixpence served 1,107 children from 961 families across 31 school districts. Sixty-one percent of these families experience three or more risk factors, compounding the challenges they face as parents of our most vulnerable children. The most common risk factors are:

- 95% low-income households
- 51% single parent
- 41% no high school diploma
- 30% teen parent

Child outcomes

During Sixpence's 2015-16 program year, the evaluation team measured children's outcomes across multiple developmental domains. These included children's emerging ability to demonstrate social-emotional competencies as well as language comprehension and production, literacy, basic mathematics and other foundational skills. All play a critical role in children's preparedness to succeed in the classroom and mature as productive, contributing citizens.

Social-emotional outcomes

Social-emotional skills are a widely recognized predictor of school success. They reflect children's ability to show initiative and persistence in addressing tasks, exercise control over their impulses, work cooperatively and form healthy connections with peers and adults.

- 76% of children served by Sixpence-funded programs met the target benchmarks for social-emotional development by end of the evaluation year. For each subscale, the children showed statistically significant competency gains over the evaluation year.
- Sixpence children's average scores on social-emotional measurement scales were as much as 9 points above national averages. [*Instrument: Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA)*]

Children’s language development

A child’s ability to assimilate new words, understand and exercise basic communications skills are key elements in the emerging mastery of language—another major predictor of school preparedness.

- Language Production: 30% met or exceeded program goal
 - Vocabulary: 35% met or exceeded program goal
 - Language Comprehension: 46% met or exceeded program goal
- [Instruments: McArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories (CDI), Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test–IV (PPVT-IV)]*

In 2016, five school districts in partnership with their local community child care providers will begin serving infants and toddlers through Sixpence. It is projected that more than 500 infants and toddlers will be positively impacted by their provider’s commitment to achieve a Step 3 in Step Up to Quality (see page 14) by the end of the three-year grant term.

Sixpence invests in proven practices that support the development of character and cognition in young children and are staffed by knowledgeable, highly skilled professionals.

Nebraska Early Childhood
Interagency Coordinating Council
2016