

**Draft Minutes: Nebraska Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC)
August 19, 2022 - 9:00a.m.
SCC Jack Huck Continuing Education Center, 301 So. 68th St. Pl., Lincoln, Nebraska**

Council members present: Anthony, Borchert, Bunnell, Easter, Freeny, Hobson, Howard, Jara, Knust, Lester, Marinovich, Ottoson, Robinson, Thompson, Wilson

Council members excused: Bowen, Larsen, Nunemaker, Vint

Also in attendance: Council Facilitators, Eleanor Shirley and Mary Phillips; Council Secretary, Karen Hoffman; Technical Assistants Brehm, Cimino, Cromer, Feser, Greedy, Johnson, Shockley and Texel; guest presenters: Kristen Cunningham, Alex Daro, Jessica Johnson, Kerry Miller, Shannon Mitchell-Boekstal, Noelle Wegner.

This quarterly meeting of the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC) commenced at 9:02 a.m. Public notification of the meeting was on the Nebraska Department of Education website and in the Omaha World Herald. The Public Meetings Notice was available in hard copy form. Presentation materials may be found in this GoogleDocs folder. ([link found here](#))

Council Meeting Convenes

Mary convened the meeting, introduced herself, and made a couple house-keeping announcements. She announced that the Public Meetings Act was posted in the back of the room.

ECICC Chair, Dr. Karla Lester, introduced herself, and had members share their name and a favorite summer food they have enjoyed.

***Approval of minutes – May 5, 2022**

Motion made by Marinovich and seconded by Knust to approve the minutes from the May 5, 2022, meeting; roll-call vote was taken, the motion passed.

Roll call vote: 9-yes, 6-abstain, 0-no

Yes: Anthony, Borchert, Easter, Howard, Jara, Knust, Lester, Marinovich, Robinson

Abstain: Bunnell, Freeny, Hobson, Ottoson, Thompson, Wilson

**** Public Comment, Announcements, Upcoming Events**

Karla announced that Beckie Cromer would present the CCDF update and asked if there were any announcements. Paula shared that the University of Nebraska-Kearney's Annual Early Childhood Conference will be held October 21/22 at the UNK Student Union. She invited the Council to attend and share about it. Information can be found at [this link](#).

Testing for Lead in Nebraska Schools and Daycares

Jessica Johnson is an Environmental Specialist with the Monitoring and Compliance-Drinking Water Division at the Nebraska Department of Environment & Energy (NDEE). She shared a ppt about testing for lead in schools and daycares. Nebraska schools and licensed childcare facilities can test for lead in their drinking water through an expanded effort from the NDEE with funding coming from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act grants. Children ages six and younger are the most vulnerable to the effects of lead exposure, which may be associated with hearing and speech impairments, learning disabilities, behavioral disorders, slowed growth and development, and adverse impacts to the developing nervous system. The DHHS Lead Home page lists lead testing results that are updated monthly: <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Lead-Data.aspx>. Discussion was had about the importance of lead testing, the challenges that can occur when high lead levels are found, and the perceptions around testing itself. A possible AdHoc committee was mentioned, and Jessica encouraged the group to talk to local daycares about lead testing, as well as offered to return and present updates at future meetings. Jessica Johnson can be reached at Jessica.l.johnson@nebraska.gov, or 402-471-1009.

As a follow-up, Dr. Karla Lester, current chair of the ECICC, shared a helpful link to the American Academy of Pediatrics website regarding Lead Exposure: <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/lead-exposure/>.

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Update

Beckie Cromer, CCDF Grant Coordinator and ECICC Technical Assistant, shared an update in Nicole Vint's place. Her team works with grants, sub-awards, and contracts, and additional CRRSAA (Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act) and ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding increased their usual \$10 million budget to over \$300 million, with no additional staffing. Work has focused on delivering programming and relief funds to providers as quickly as possible. Nebraska Stabilization grant rounds, which are available to licensed providers, are still active, with two rounds having yielded roughly 2300 childcare providers receiving \$105 million dollars to help stabilize businesses after a loss of income and additional regulations due to the Pandemic. A survey will go out to providers later in September regarding a possible supplemental payment and will include a requirement that providers register with the Child Care Resource Network to better utilize some of the tools that have been created to better connect families with services and childcare choices across the state.

Beckie said that efforts to listen to providers' needs have successfully resulted in some new programs being created. A Child Care Advisory Committee now meets monthly to address issues and concerns that are brought to it. While future sustainability of these programs is a known need, Beckie shared that efforts and funding are going to more immediate concerns. Beckie can be reached at Beckie.cromer@nebraska.gov.

Early Childhood Update

Melody Hobson, Administrator at the NDE Office of Early Childhood, shared about Pandemic funds going to school districts and that mental health has been a priority. She also mentioned that funds were approved at that the August Nebraska State Board of Education for some Educational Service Unit (ESU) grants to support Early Childhood programming and staffing for School Districts with Preschool to grade two needs. Five areas the grants can cover are appropriate practices, curriculum support, formative and observational assessment, pyramid model, and preschool-to-kindergarten transition. Finally, the office of Early Childhood has had some staffing changes, and there is excitement regarding some new people joining this team. Melody can be reached at melody.hobson@nebraska.gov.

Head Start Update

Head Start State Collaboration Office Director, Steph Knust, shared a powerpoint and reminded the group about the National Head Start priorities and Eligibility Criteria. Policy updates and expectations for the 2022-23 Program Year were also included. Some programs and flexibilities that had been in place around enrollment and federal monitoring are beginning to return to pre-Covid practices. However, there will be some revised procedures for monitoring, conducting reviews, and scoring, as well as for improvement plans for Head Start classrooms. Another change has been that additional funding has been made able to be used not only for services, as in the past, but also for the work force.

Steph shared there is currently no new information from the federal Office of Head Start (OHS) regarding masking or vaccine mandates. Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2023 dollars may include modest increases for cost of living, quality improvement, and minimal expansion of Early Head Start childcare partnerships. An update was given about what percentage of Covid-19 Relief Appropriations has spent, and a final slide shared several resources of which Steph noted a link to Head Start Collaboration Office Briefs, that will education about the work Head Start Collaboration offices do across the nation. Steph can be reached at steph.knust@nebraska.gov.

Part C Update

Amy Bunnell, NDE Early Childhood Special Education Supervisor and Early Development Network (EDN) Program Coordinator, introduced Dr. Kerry Miller via zoom. Dr. Miller, from the UNMC Munroe Meyer Institute, is the Nebraska Ambassador to the Center for Disease Control's program, "Learn the Signs. Act

Early.” The mission of this national effort is improving early identification of developmental delays and disabilities by facilitating family-engaged developmental monitoring and promoting developmental screening. With the EDN as a partner and using some of its American Rescue Plan (APR) funding, a multimedia Child Find Campaign is underway with resources available in several languages.

Kerry also mentioned an effort in which materials are being sent to local libraries, Head Start locations, Sixpence programs, medical facilities, etc. She would welcome other ideas of where to send materials, and anyone who would like information or resources is welcome to give Karen their contact information. Kerry can be reached at: kerry.miller@unmc.edu.

Amy and Jessica Anthony, DHHS Medicaid and Long-Term Care, EDN Program Co-Coordinator, continued Part C updates by sharing that the Annual Performance Report was submitted on February 1st. Nebraska received a grade of “Meets Requirements” from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), and the report is available at <http://edn.nde.gov/cms/annual-performance-reports-apr>. The IDEA Part C Application that was also due May 1st was reviewed and approved for funding for the 2023 grant year of July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023.

Jessica shared about several efforts that are utilizing additional American Rescue Plan (APR) funding, including Child Find outreach efforts and increasing family engagement, social-emotional support for infants and toddlers, technological supports for EDN providers, and professional learning opportunities that include a Leadership Academy for EDN Supervisors and Administrators.

Discussion was had about referrals during the pandemic and what some of the concerns have been. These included loss of social interactions from fewer outings, and additional fears of bringing illnesses home to medically fragile children. There may be some impacts seen in child outcome data due to this, and the Council will hear more at the November meeting. Amy and Jessica can be reached at the following: amy.bunnell@nebraska.gov and Jessica.anthony@nebraska.gov

Children with Special Needs Workgroup

ECICC Technical Assistant and FirstFive Nebraska Policy Advisor, Adam Feser, shared about a group that has begun meeting to address the unique childcare needs and challenges regarding children with disabilities. Director of the Autism Family Network, Cathy Martinez, is adding guidance to this effort and two meetings have occurred to begin exploring what the challenges are and how to meet them. Solutions include the passing of the Family Support Act passed by the Nebraska Legislature last Spring supporting special services, “Special Cares” training through NDE, and Awareness Training for EC Coaches. Providers who work with children with disabilities need help and guidance, so parents, professionals, and providers are all invited to the table. Adam shared that a Brief may be developed once there is a firmer grasp on what the work and hopeful outcomes of this group may be.

Working Lunch – AdHoc Membership/Recruitment Committee Update

To address the ongoing challenge of replacing outgoing Council members, the AdHoc Membership and Recruitment Committee has been meeting. AdHoc Committee Chairperson, Karla Lester, and Committee member and ECICC Technical Assistant, Connie Shockley, shared a powerpoint that included the group’s scope, a work plan, and objectives to fill Council vacancies, and a proposed recruitment process. Once presented and approved by the Steering Committee, some marketing materials will be developed and placed on the ECICC website and produced for distribution. A listing of current vacancies was read, which includes 12 of 31 total Council members. In closing, Karla encouraged members whose terms are ending to work ahead to replace themselves.

Governor’s Biennial Report Update

Copies of the 2018-2021 Governor’s Report and Summary were shared with meeting attendees. ECICC Facilitators, Mary Phillips and Eleanor Shirley, also shared a draft dissemination plan with the Council that has

a number of activities that members can engage in to spread information about the work of Early Childhood efforts in Nebraska. Table talk about the plan was had and in November the group will be asked to report back about where they were able to share the Report, and any other information gained. Each person in the room is qualified to share the Governor's Report and Summary to anyone with a connection to Early Childcare services.

Moving on to another handout entitled "Looking Forward," individuals were asked to share about their comfort level sharing the Report and relevant information. Discussion included how acronyms could always be explained, as well as the value of an "information loop/progress update" time at each Council meeting for members to share recent experiences and accomplishments. A great deal of information is shared in the way of updates at each meeting, and comments were shared that having more actionable, purposeful objectives could be a goal for the group. The fact that there are currently several missing parent members and voices on the Council was also shared, along with the need for some brainstorming and creative solutions to address this need.

In closing, Mary encouraged members to share the Report at any appropriate times that present themselves and increase outreach from 2018. Members will be asked to share numbers at both the November and February meetings. Efforts will also be made to put it into the Governor's hands as well as Legislative Chairs'. A word of thanks was given to Sarah Corey at Nebraska Children and Families for formatting the Report, as well as to the entire group for its collective input and work in updating the previous report. Eleanor was also recognized and thanked for her work in writing the last two Reports and shepherding the update of this most recent.

Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Update

Shannon Mitchell-Boekstal, Assistant Vice President at Nebraska Children & Families Foundation, and Early Childhood/PDG Program Manager, shared information about an effort to compile a list of funding streams and programs being supported. When the document is farther along Shannon would appreciate having the Council review it and provide feedback. She also shared some brochures about a virtual conference being held October 22nd for families and parents of young children. The event is dedicated to collaboration, learning, support, and leadership, and attendance is free. The first 500 families who register will be eligible to receive a \$30 stipend for participating. The event is being co-facilitated by professionals and parents. Shannon also brought some brochures for the Nebraska Infant Mental Health Program, and the Nebraska Childcare Referral Network. Shannon encouraged anyone with questions to reach out to her at: sboekstal@nebraskachildren.org.

Next, Shannon introduced Noelle Wegner, with the PDG, who shared an update about the Communities for Kids Preschool Development Grant project as their year two evaluation report is complete. Community spending is geared toward increasing capacity and enhancing quality of childcare in a variety of ways. Communities have made remarkable progress and have been innovative in their quests to change their early childhood landscapes. Efforts are being made across the board to sustain the projects, but it is important to note that the prevailing issue for childcare capacity appears to be low wages and therefore, ongoing staffing crises, which the Preschool Development Grant was not designed to fix—the more attention this issue gets moving forward, the better. Noelle can be reached at: nwegner@nebraskachildren.org.

PDG Needs Assessment Social Networking Analysis

Kristen Cunningham and Alex Daro, Research Specialists with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, shared via zoom. They are in the reporting back phase of year two of the PDG project and have been talking about collaboration across a mixed delivery system. Kristen shared a ppt and findings from their Social Network findings. The purpose of the project drove the questions they were asking, and a slide showed several programs and services that work together to provide care and education for children. Another slide demonstrated a "web" of programs and services and how highly interconnected they can be. Discussion was had about what was helpful and what was a surprise about this information. Comments were shared that affirmed the web visual as being accurate and showing the interconnectedness and how much collaboration does happen.

A concluding takeaway was that, while it is very overwhelming to see all the connections, the mixed delivery system is very interconnecting, and the funding streams play a big role in who collaborates with who. Future research will look at expanding the network and what it means to collaborate. The group was encouraged to reach out with any additional thoughts or questions as this work will continue. Kristen and Alex can be reached at: kcunningham49@nebraska.edu and adaro@nebraska.edu respectively.

November Meeting Components for consideration by the Steering Committee

- Report back about Governor's report dissemination
- Because LB83 allows the Council to have 50% of meetings in person, the November meeting, which will be the first in the next ECICC year cycle, will be in person and February will likely be virtual
- Possibly set aside first 15 minutes of meeting for group follow-up and reporting out of various Early Childhood-related subjects.

Eleanor closed the meeting with some parting thoughts having been the ECICC Facilitator for six years. She shared gratitude for being of service and gave some observations from 1997 when the Council first began, as appointed by then Gov. Johanns. Eleanor also encouraged listening and remembering the five key points of quality, standards, collaboration & coordination, professional development, and data. Attendees showed their gratitude to Eleanor for her work and dedication to the Council and to Nebraska's children and families.

The meeting adjourned at 2:45pm.

Next Meeting: Friday, November 18th, 2022, at the Jack Huck Continuing Education Center at 9:00a.m.