

Draft Minutes: Nebraska Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC)

November 17, 2023

Meeting was held at the Nebraska Innovation Center, 2120 Transformation Drive, Lincoln, NE

Council members present: Anthony, Bunnell, Carmoney, Hobson, Jara, Knust, Marinovich, Nunemaker, Ottoson, Robinson, Wilson, Vint

Council members excused: Freeny

Also in attendance: Council Facilitator, Phillips; Council Secretary, Hoffman; Technical Assistants Braddock, Cimino, Clark, Johnson, Renn, Rhodd, and Shockley; guest presenter: Deb Reiman with Nebraska Children and Families Foundation.

This quarterly meeting of the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC) commenced at 9:10 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 online and onsite in the meeting room. Presentation materials may be found in this [Google Docs](#) folder.

Council Meeting Convenes

ECICC Facilitator, Mary Phillips, convened the meeting, a quorum was confirmed. Council Chair, Amber Jara, led introductions. The agenda was adjusted to add a vote during the Part C Update. The Public Meetings Act was available in the room.

***Approval of minutes – August 18, 2023**

Motion made and seconded by Marinovich and Vint to approve the minutes from the August 18, 2023, meeting; roll-call vote was taken, and the motion passed.

Roll call vote: 10-yes, 2-abstain

Yes: Anthony, Bunnell, Carmoney, Hobson, Jara, Marinovich, Nunemaker, Ottoson, Robinson, Vint

Abstain: Knust, Wilson

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

Public comments or any announcements were requested for the good of the group. None were shared.

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Update

Nicole Vint, CCDF Administrator with Children & Family Services at DHHS, and ECICC TA, Carla Rhodd, shared a “CCDF 101” powerpoint. A hierarchy and organizational structure were shared, as were details about what child care looks like in Nebraska. Child Care Eligibility and Subsidy Policies, and Licensing Data were all shared. Details were given about CCDF Pandemic Funds and some of the programs that have been created. It was especially noted that some Child Care “deserts” in Nebraska were identified during this process and positively affected because of these efforts.

Nicole Vint can be reached at nicole.vint@nebraska.gov, and Carla Rhodd at caral.rhodd@nebraska.gov.

Early Childhood Update

Melody Hobson, Administrator for the NDE Early Childhood Office, shared some background about the Office of Early Childhood and updates about Programs and Partnerships, Rule 11 Waiver, and the Nebraska Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Prek-3 Leadership Academy. The Early Childhood Training Center (ECTC) is housed at Educational Service Unit (ESU) 3 in La Vista and oversees various trainings as the hub for the Early Childhood Professional Development Systems. Melody noted the effects of the pandemic and how Early Learning Center Coordinators have stepped up to address many challenges. Early Childhood professional development was also discussed. Melody concluded by noting some program changes are coming next year regarding tax credits for providers.

Melody Hobson can be reached at melody.hobson@nebraska.gov.

Head Start (HS) Update (find her email)

Steph Knust, Head Start State Collaboration Office Director, shared a PowerPoint containing Head Start information and recent program updates. Steph called attention to the federal Office of Head Start Program Priorities and the current Head Start income eligibility criteria, and provided updates about funded and actual enrollment information for Nebraska Head Start programs as of October 31, 2023, and recent federal policy updates from the Administration of Children and Families, including links to new materials that help connect Head Start families with more resources available to them. Current federal funding information was detailed for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024 as it relates to Head Start. Information was shared regarding the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) published in the Federal Register on November 20, 2023, titled "Supporting the Head Start Workforce and Consistent Quality Programming." The Office of Head Start is inviting public comments until January 19, 2024, that would make changes to the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) in the areas of workforce supports, mental health services, other quality improvements. More information can be found at: [New Rule Proposed to Improve Head Start Program Quality and Support the Workforce | ECLKC \(hhs.gov\)](https://www.eclkc.gov/news/2023/11/20/new-rule-proposed-to-improve-head-start-program-quality-and-support-the-workforce). Steph concluded by sharing updated resource links to the Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center (ECLKC). Steph Knust can be reached at steph.knust@nebraska.gov.

Part C Update

NDE Early Childhood Special Education Supervisor and Early Development Network Part C Co-lead, Amy Bunnell, reminded the group about recent EDN logo and resource updates. Some new parent resources that detail rights under IDEA regarding dispute resolutions have been developed, as well as an online learning module created with help from a technical assistance partner. Amy also mentioned the upcoming Nebraska Young Child Institute, occurring in Kearney on June 25 & 26, 2024.

Some Family Outcomes data from the 2023 Part C Family Survey was shared. The evidence-based survey, which included demographic representation this year, yielded an 84% response rate. Cole Johnson, Part C Data Manager and ECICC Technical Assistant, talked about outcomes that were revealed in the survey, and feedback that was given at the October annual Results Drive Accountability (RDA) Stakeholder's meeting. The required Federal Report is due in February and will detail how Nebraska is implementing its Early Intervention Programs at state and local levels. Amy explained each indicator and the corresponding target and performance goals. Each year the Council reviews this information and is asked to give approval for the ECICC Chair to sign off on the Report. A motion was made by Hobson and seconded by Robinson to allow Council Chair, Amber Jara, to sign the report stating that the ECICC has reviewed the data being submitted to the Federal Office. A roll-call vote was taken, and the motion passed.

Roll call vote: 11-yes, 0-no

Yes: Bunnell, Carmoney, Hobson, Jara, Knust, Marinovich, Nunemaker, Ottoson, Robinson, Vint, Wilson

Next, Heather Ottoson, Part B 619 Specialist and Preschool Special Education Specialist, shared information about the LEAD-K bill (LB 965) regarding language assessments for children who are deaf and hard of hearing. Heather noted that NDE has finished creating the required guidance materials and is making them available across the state. Three were shared and included a Guidance Document, a LEAD-K Parent Brochure, and a document entitled "Initial and Annual Language Assessment Program Implementation Guidance," a resource for Service Coordinators and other providers who serve a family and a child who is deaf or hard of hearing. Next steps were shared as was the website, www.education.ne.gov/sped/lead-k. Districts can contact Sara Peterson, State Coordinator for Programs for Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing for questions or more information. Amy Bunnell can be reached at amy.bunnell@nebraska.gov, Cole Johnson can be reached at cole.johnson@nebraska.gov, and Heather Ottoson can be reached at heather.ottoson@nebraska.gov.

Working Lunch Technical Assistant Presentations

Stephanni Renn, Sixpence Administrator and ECICC Technical Assistant, and Deb Reiman, AES-Sixpence, both with Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, shared a presentation about Sixpence Child Care Partnerships (CCP). The goal of CCP was shared and funding noted. Coaches and program coordinators are employed by school districts, ESUs or within Head Starts. Quality indicator information and program requirements were shared. Sixpence Risk Factors are used as a guide to assist in seeking out potential families to work with. Collaboration is emphasized to engage with Early Childhood Coach Consultants in their region. Information was also shared about the Nebraska Growing Readers program, which focuses on childcare providers being distributors of children's books. A goal is to reach 1,000 providers with 12,000 books, with content being Nebraska-specific for more relevance to families.

Next, Lindsay Braddock, Unit Administrator with DHHS office of Public Licensure and ECICC Technical Assistant, shared a powerpoint detailing a Professions and Occupations Licensure Unit overview. Lindsay shared about the functions of licensure and the goal of it be conducted in a safe and healthy manner. Credentialing occurs across a number of businesses and there are 26 professional boards in place that assist in writing regulations and helping determine when and if a license or credential can be reinstated. Nebraska's Uniform Credentialing Act was mentioned, as were the Professional Boards that focus on specific business categories. In closing, Lindsay shared a website and other resources to assist the public license lookups: <https://www.nebraska.gov/LISearch/search.cgi>. Lindsay Braddock can be reached at lindsay.braddock@nebraska.gov.

First Five Nebraska (FFN) Update

Mitch Clark, First Five Nebraska Policy Advisor and ECICC Technical Assistant, shared an update about some recent Capitol happenings. An interim study, LR 191, has been introduced by Sen. Ibach, to examine the process as a whole that includes both federal and state requirements for obtaining fingerprint background checks for childcare staff. The study will give providers a public voice for their experience with the process, and provide agencies with another avenue to share about process improvements with the public and providers. Resources, briefs, and blogs can be viewed at firstfivenebraska.org.

A second interim study Mitch shared about involves Sen. Dover and efforts to explore and build out the educational infrastructure for registered apprenticeship programs, a trend that is carrying over to the Early Childhood world. There are now 35 states with a statewide apprenticeship program for the EC profession, and seven in development, including Nebraska. The intent is to build on the momentum of developing apprenticeship programs and develop avenues of support in the future. A brief is currently under construction at FFN.

In closing, Mitch mentioned some efforts already underway that include the Respect Across Nebraska project, and a state contracted technical assistance project with Childcare Services Association to help implement the many elements of a statewide apprenticeship model, a process that will likely take a year to a year and a half. Mitch Clark can be reached at mclark@firstfivenebraska.org.

Nicole Vint stepped in to add some information regarding fingerprinting, sharing that the federal waiver that allowed childcare staff to work while their fingerprints were being processed, had not been renewed, despite some efforts by Nebraska to do so. Nicole echoed it is a very complex issue and that education is key. The department is working to create some resource materials. Some process improvements were shared, and Nicole noted that 15 mobile fingerprinting machines are being purchased and training given for their use across the state. Next, Lindsay Braddock shared information about the blanket authorization agreement for fingerprinting that was signed by DHHS and allows those doing fingerprints to immediately run a background check and provide enough information to contact the individual. An application must be completed for use in this developing, intuitive system that communicates when a fingerprint process has begun.

Governor's Biennial Report Work Groups

Council Facilitator, Mary Phillips, led the group through a powerpoint and exercise to discuss the five sections of the most recent Governor's Biennial Report, which covered three years and encompassed the period of the

pandemic.” To begin work on the next report, which will cover 2022-2023, each section was shown and discussed to identify who Mary will work with as updates are made and new content created. Ahead of the next ECICC meeting on February 9, Mary will reach out to those responsible for each section, with the goal of having content ready for the group to review before it goes to layout. Mention was made that appendices will need to be closely reviewed in relation to what is legislatively required to be in the report. The goal is for content will be finalized at the May meeting, and a draft format ready for review in August. Once approved by the Council, Mary will make arrangements to present it to the Governor.

Proposed meeting dates for 2025

The dates of February 14, May 2, August 15, and November 21 were discussed and initially approved.

February 9, 2024, meeting format and elements.

It was agreed upon that the next ECICC meeting would be held virtually. Length will be determined closer to the date, and a link will be sent out with a meeting invitation. Meeting elements will include work on the Governor’s Biennial Report, update information about the Market Rate Survey, and a discussion of any bills related to Early Childhood that will have been proposed into the Legislature.

Other/Adjourn

The meeting concluded with an approved motion to adjourn at 2:10p.m.