

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

February 9, 2024

The meeting was held virtually via Zoom, with an in-person location at NDE, 500 S. 84th Street, Lincoln.

Council members present: Anthony, Borcher, Bunnell, Carmoney, Easter, Hobson, Jara, Knust, Marinovich, Robinson, Wilson, Vint

Council members excused: Freeny, Nunemaker

Also in attendance: Council Facilitator, Phillips; Council Secretary, Hoffman; Technical Assistants Braddock, Cimino, Clark, Johnson, Renn, Rhodd, and Shockley; guest presenters Alex Daro and Melissa Boyer.

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 Act was available online and onsite in the meeting room. Presentation materials may be found in this [Google Docs](#) folder.

Council Meeting Convenes

ECICC Chairperson, Amber Jara, convened the meeting stating that quorum was confirmed. Introductions were shared and the agenda adjusted to move the CCDF update back to accommodate DHHS staff members attending a DHHS meeting. The Public Meetings Act was noted as being available in the meeting room at NDE.

***Approval of minutes – November 17, 2023**

Motion made and seconded by Bunnell and Hobson to approve the minutes from the November 17th, 2023, meeting; roll-call vote was taken, the motion passed.

Roll call vote: 10-yes, 2-abstain

Yes: Borcher, Bunnell, Hobson, Jara, Knust, Marinovich, Robinson

Abstain: Anthony, Easter

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

Public comments or announcements were requested. Nora Robinson shared about the upcoming Excellence in Early Childhood Conference at the Chadron State College Student Center, February 16-17th featuring professional development on Friday and speaker, Cari Elbert, on Saturday.

Early Childhood (EC) Update

Melody Hobson, Administrator for the NDE Early Childhood Office, shared an update about the Early Childhood Grant Program with applications for new and expansion projects now being reviewed, and next steps occurring once state aid funding is finalized. She also shared about the recent release of the Early Childhood Program report that includes status of EC programs in Educational Service Units (ESUs) and schools districts for the last school year. A link to it is found here: https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/ECE-Long-Report_23.pdf. Next, Lauri Cimino, State Director with Step Up to Quality (SUTQ), shared information that included the current number of rated programs, and an update about the Quality Foundations pilot, noting that trainings are now being offered in Spanish. Melody Hobson can be reached at melody.hobson@nebraska.gov; Lauri Cimino can be reached at lauri.cimino@nebraska.gov.

Head Start (HS) Update

Head Start information and recent program updates from Steph Knust, Head Start State Collaboration Office Director, can be found in the powerpoint on the GoogleDoc. It includes federal funding and funded enrollment information for Nebraska Head Start and early Head Start. Recent 2024 federal budget and federal policy updates from the Administration of Children and Families include revised federal monitoring protocols for FY 2024, links to comments submitted regarding the recent Head Start Workforce and Consistent Quality Programming NPRM, and a link to an

updated joint policy statement on inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood programs. A slide shows upcoming events and developments affecting programs, and links for trainings, webinars, and communications from the Office of Head Start. Finally, updated resource links are provided 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, noted updates will be included in a powerpoint that will be sent out to the Council. Updates included the on-time submission of the Annual Federal Report to the U.S. Department of Education on February 1st. This data was reviewed at the November Council meeting and Chairperson, Amber Jara, was approved to sign off on it. The upcoming IDEA Part C Application for annual funding, which has yet to be released, will be completed so funds can be received July 1, 2024. Once completed, there will be required 30-day public comment and 60-day review periods. Amy noted that the Annual Application will include assurances that Federal Requirements are followed. Both documents will eventually be provided to the Council. Amy Bunnell can be reached at amy.bunnell@nebraska.gov.

Market Rate Survey Update

Alex Daro, Research Scientist with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, which is contracted to conduct the Market Rate Survey (MRS), shared a powerpoint that included brief background information about the survey's history, goals, and purpose. Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) dollars are used to help offset the cost of childcare for qualifying families who are eligible for subsidy. The 2023 MRS findings were shared and noted to reflect a rate structure change. Updated details and results from the 2025 MRS were also shared and included the current response rates. Alex noted that the most recent survey and supporting materials have been translated into Spanish, and that they will continue this practice with some targeted outreach across the state. Also present from the Buffett Institute were Melissa Boyer, Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Project Manager, and Greg Welch Ph.D., Associate Director of Research and Evaluation.

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Update

Nicole Vint, CCDF Administrator with Children & Family Services at DHHS, shared about two grants with applications and review processes that are occurring. Nicole also shared that this is a State Plan year for CCDF, and a plan is due July 1st. A public hearing will occur as will sharing with the Governor's office for approval. A draft will be shared at the May ECICC meeting. A recent change was noted within DHHS involving the Office of Economic Assistance now being separated from a previous office structure and given a Director, Shannon Grotian. It is thought this will better support these assistance programs. Next, ECICC Technical Assistant, Carla Rhodd, shared a project update about the Business and Childcare Partnership Grants, which assisted childcares with both licensing and the creation of additional childcare slots. Efforts have also helped close two childcare deserts in Boyd and Loup Counties, and assisting two childcare programs supporting 12 slots each. Nicole Vint can be reached at nicole.vint@nebraska.gov, and Carla Rhodd at caral.rhodd@nebraska.gov.

First Five Nebraska (FFN) Update

Mitch Clark, First Five Nebraska (FFN) Policy Advisor and ECICC Technical Assistant, shared an update about several child and childcare-related bills, as the Nebraska Legislature is currently in a 60-day session. Bills can be found on the FFN Policy Priorities page at: <https://www.firstfivenebraska.org/early-childhood-policy-priorities/>. Mitch detailed each of the bills and where they are in the process, noting that a more complete list of bills FFN is working with can be found on the Legislature Tracker page found here: <https://www.firstfivenebraska.org/track-legislation/>. It is expected there will likely, once again, be packages containing a number of combined bills. Mitch Clark will keep the Council informed, and can be reached at mclark@firstfivenebraska.org.

Governor's Biennial Report Update

ECICC Facilitator, Mary Phillips shared a powerpoint that reviewed the schedule for the Report, and the goals for completion and sharing it with the Governor's office. This Report will be titled "Common Ground – More Now Than Ever – 2022-2023." Mary thanked those who had gone into the GoogleDoc to make their respective updates. A quick

run-through of the Report revealed which areas still need some attention, and confirmation was given about the layout process that will eventually be happening.

May 5th, 2024, meeting format and elements

The next meeting will be held at the SCC Jack Huck Continuing Education Center. The Council was encouraged to email Karen agenda suggestions for the Steering Committee to consider. A formal call for agenda items will go out in late March.

Other/Adjourn

The meeting concluded with an approved motion to adjourn at 11:07a.m.