

Who We Are

The Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) is a diverse group of business, community, education, government, nonprofit, parent, and provider representatives that are appointed by Nevada's Governor. Founded in 2009 by an executive order, the Council was later established in statute by the 2013 Nevada Legislative Session and Governor Sandoval.

The Council works to strengthen state-level coordination and collaboration among the various sectors and settings of early childhood programs.

The Early Childhood System in Nevada is administered through four state level departments that administer services through approximately ten different state divisions or offices, in addition to numerous non-governmental entities who support the work. In addition, there are over 20 state-level coalitions, initiatives, and/or commissions that oversee, advise and/or support these entities and programs.

Over the past ten years, there have been over 25 local and state-level needs assessments conducted that address one or more factors related to the early childhood population in Nevada. All highlight the need for a comprehensive, coordinated statewide system to support cross-sector integration of resources and supports.

The Early Childhood Landscape

The Silver State is a land of rich diversity and stark contrasts, and those connected to the early childhood system are no different. Nevada's families and children come from a wide range of racial, cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and geographic backgrounds. This diversity continues to trend upward, as population growth throughout the State increases. From 1990 to 2017, Nevada had the largest child population growth in the country at 117% compared to the US average of just 15% (2019 KIDS COUNT Data Book). This growth, coupled with reliance on state funding streams that are susceptible to economic market fluctuations, has created strains in our infrastructure and social support systems, resulting in poor outcomes for children and families.

For decades experts have called for a comprehensive system that links young children and families to needed health, education, and social services at the community, state, and federal level. These services are only effective if families know about them, which is why a coordinated system is so important. Without it, service providers can't reliably know what supports exist in their communities and as a result, cannot easily connect families with the resources they urgently need.

The coronavirus pandemic has revealed that the need for a coordinated, comprehensive system is more urgent than ever. Because of COVID-19, key services have been interrupted or drastically altered and vulnerable populations have disproportionately suffered. Inequities in access to care

have made it harder for people of color, families with lower income, and children with special needs.¹

But even as these challenges have been amplified during this tumultuous time, Nevada’s early childhood network has responded with unfaltering commitment and a nimble mindset to ensure children and families get the supports they need. Fortunately, Nevada will soon benefit from an unprecedented investment of federal stimulus funding. Nevada is primed to receive \$2.9 billion through the American Rescue Plan, much of which will be directed to the early childhood landscape. In addition, the Nevada ECAC and its partners have secured significant new grant funding to expand and strengthen services. With renewed hope and fervor, the Council is using this unparalleled opportunity to reimagine its future, structuring a plan that builds a sustainable system that will support children from birth to 8 and their families now and in years to come.

Years of science on early childhood development confirms that providing quality early care and education from birth through age 8 is essential for the healthy development of our children and families as well as the economic vitality of our communities, our state, and our nation. However, in communities across Nevada, many families lack awareness of and access to quality early childhood services that will support their varied needs.

Investing in Young Children = A Lifelong Return

The science is clear. Children’s brains develop at their fastest pace during the early years when synapses form at a rate of 1 million new neural connections per second. This intense period of learning and development means that the youngest brains are highly flexible and responsive to the environment as their fundamental architecture is established. Ongoing advances in neuroscientific research reinforces what we now know—the early years are the most effective time to influence brain development and put children on a path to healthy development and life-long well-being and achievement. This, in turn, contributes to the economic vitality of our communities, our state, and our nation.

A Dynamic Plan by and for Nevadans

As Nevadans, we seek to close the gap between what we know is good for our children, families, and communities and what we currently provide. We set forth to do this through our 2022-2024 Nevada Early Childhood Strategic Plan with a focus on developing a strong system of support that works across the fields of health, early learning and development, and family support. This coordinated and aligned network will result in positive outcomes for young children and families so that everyone—regardless of race, socioeconomic background, geography, and ability- can reach their full potential. The very system we are looking to develop will impact Nevada children, birth through age 8, and their families now and in years to come.

The Nevada ECAC Strategic Plan framework focuses on alignment and strategic coordination of agencies, offices, commissions, councils and initiatives at the systems level that support a unified

¹ National Institute for Children’s Health Quality

and coordinated infrastructure to achieve positive outcomes for children and families. It is aligned with:

- NV Maternal and Child Health Needs Assessment (2020)
- NV Department of Education PDG B-5 Needs Assessment (2019)
- Nevada Early Childhood Care and Education Fiscal Feasibility Study (2020)
- Pritzker Prenatal to Three Implementation Plan (2020)
- NV HRSA Early Childhood Comprehensive System Health Integration Project (2021)

In carrying out this plan, the Nevada ECAC is committed to laying a solid foundation for systems work that will build upon existing strengths while also innovating and transforming those areas that are not performing optimally. Our work will be grounded in equity, authentic partnerships, and responsive, two-way communication that will lead our path forward.

We invite all Nevadans to learn more and become involved in this growing effort to support young children and families. Learn more at <http://nvecac.com/>.

Side Bar

This plan was informed by:

- A document review of the prior strategic plan, the most recent asset maps, funding map, needs assessments, a fiscal feasibility study, Nevada ECAC Bylaws and minutes, and Nevada ECAC Subcommittee minutes
- Tools developed by the Early Childhood Systems Working Group
- Survey respondents representing geographic regions throughout the state; respondents included childcare facility staff, parents, educators, and individuals with multiple roles in the early childhood system
- Survey results that captured perceptions of progress made since the last strategic plan along with perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the early childhood system
- Focus groups with Nevada ECAC subcommittees
- Individual interviews
- Meetings of the Nevada ECAC and the Nevada ECAC Strategic Planning Subcommittee

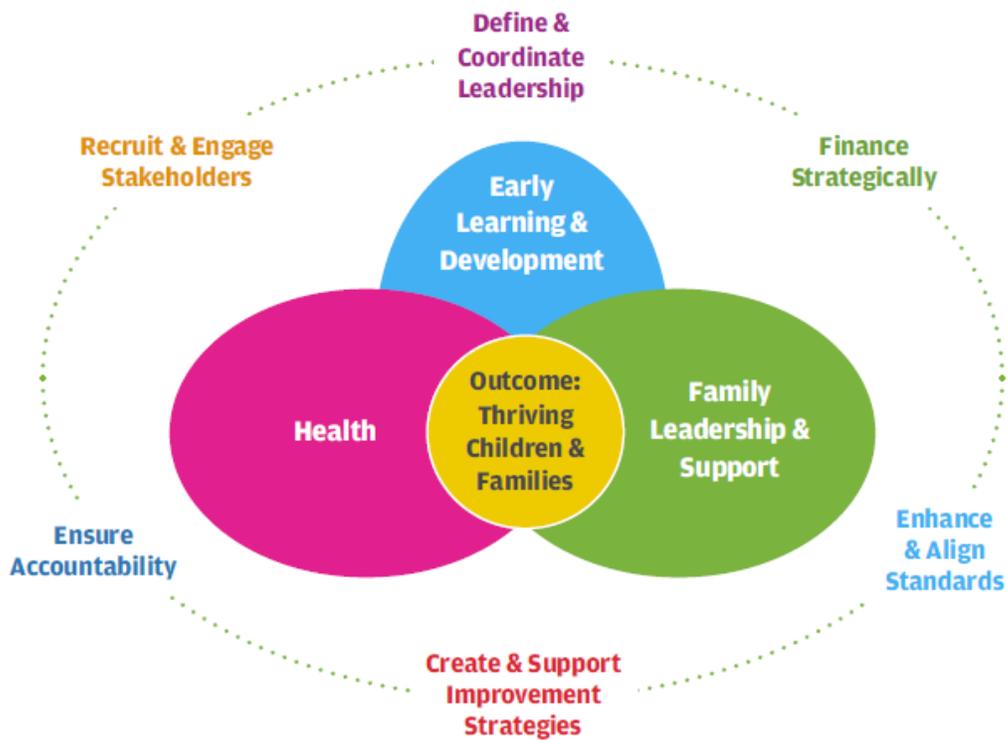
Strategic Framework

Vision

Nevada’s children will be safe, healthy, and thriving during the first eight years of life, and the system will support children and families in achieving their full potential.

Purpose

The Council shall work to strengthen state-level coordination and collaboration among the various sectors and settings of early childhood education programs in Nevada.



Values and Principles

Optimally, a comprehensive early childhood system will:

- Reach all children and families, and as early as possible, with needed services and supports
- Genuinely include and effectively accommodate children with special needs
- Reflect and respect the strengths, needs, values, languages, cultures and communities of children and families
- Ensure stability and continuity of services along a continuum from prenatal into school entry and beyond
- Ease access for families and transitions for children
- Value parents as decision makers and leaders
- Catalyze and maximize investment and foster innovation

Goal 1: Create a Coordinated Early Childhood Leadership Infrastructure

Define, Develop, and Coordinate Leadership

- Establish Governor's Office for Early Childhood to align policy and fiscal decision-making for the early childhood system across relevant agencies.
- Restructure the NECAC to establish program and community level advisory support to Governor's Office.
- Establish supports and resources to ensure equitable engagement of parents/families in leadership and decision-making at state and local levels.

Goal 2: Increase Coordination and Alignment Between Systems of Care for Young Children and Families

Enhance and Align Standards

Create and Support Improvement Strategies

- Conduct assessment of the strengths, disparities, inequities, strategic priorities and goals among programs and agencies within the early childhood system.
- Produce and disseminate an early childhood system assets and gaps analysis.
- Develop comprehensive, unified strategic plan to better coordinate and align services and improve access and outcomes.
- Establish workplan to update and align early childhood system standards, administrative rules and program practices.

Goal 3: Increase Capacity to Equitably Connect Families with the Early Childhood System Continuum of Care and Community at Large

Recruit and Engage Stakeholders

- Implement a strategic two-way communications plan to engage and connect providers, families, and stakeholders.
- Expand engagement, training, and leadership opportunities for underrepresented and underserved populations
- Expand engagement, alignment, and coordination of services among all early childhood system providers
- Select and implement a centralized intake and referral system to streamline access and utilization of services

Goal 4: Identify Budget and Finance Strategies to Drive Policy Goals and Objectives

Finance Strategically

- Perform fiscal analysis of early childhood funding streams and program development needs
- Identify funding pathways and policy changes needed to meet program and system goals

Goal 5: Execute data collection and integrated systems to increase equity and accountability

Ensure Accountability

- Improve data collection by fostering understanding and collaboration with providers, families, policy makers, and other stakeholders.
- Increase availability of, access to, and use of data that can be disaggregated to drive informed decision making.
- Implement Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) to improve service delivery.

The Charge Ahead

The Nevada Early Childhood Strategic Plan is designed to create a more integrated system of early childhood services and to ensure that, no matter where a family lives or what challenges they face, each child in Nevada has access to quality early childhood services. The goals and objectives build on a strong foundation of existing and expanding collaborative relationships and ongoing initiatives across the state, providing a clear framework and targets for the shared work ahead. At the same time, the goals and objectives are broad enough to allow stakeholders across Nevada to define, implement, and refine strategies and action plans that respond to the strengths and needs of specific communities and populations.

The Nevada Early Childhood Strategic Plan is a dynamic plan by and for Nevadans. As we develop detailed implementation strategies, we need the continued input and participation of people from across the state who share our commitment to providing equitable access to quality early childhood services that support children's healthy development from birth through age 8. Learn more about how you can get involved at <http://nvecac.com/>.

APPENDIX A: Data Report

Insert Data Report – Lisa Segler & Team

APPENDIX B: Statewide Outreach & Engagement

To further the goals and objectives set forth in this plan, the Nevada ECAC plans to invite and engage a variety of individuals, sectors, and entities to join in the important work surrounding early childhood. We recognize that without deeper involvement from a diverse pool of stakeholders, this plan will be challenged to succeed.

Below is a partial listing of some of the groups the Nevada ECAC brainstormed as part of its outreach efforts. The Council recognizes this list is not comprehensive and will continue to develop this further. We also invite your suggestions and interest in joining with us to imagine and build a system that will support children and families in reaching their full potential.

Italics below indicate ideas that came up multiple times by multiple groups:

- Parents/Caregivers
 - *Young Children (0-8)*
 - *Disabilities*
 - *Special HC needs*
 - Homelessness
 - *Rural/Urban*
 - *PTA/Parent Group (local and national PTA)*
 - SES
 - *Race/Ethnicity*
 - *Language*
 - *Families beyond the nuclear families (kith and kin, foster care)*
- State Agency Leadership
 - DWSS/CCDP
 - NDE/OELD and UMORE
 - CDFS/ECMHS
 - DPBH (MCH/Licensing/A???) – Rural Children’s M/H
 - DAG – DACFP
 - ADSD
 - *Tribes (ITCN, etc)*
 - *Economic Development/Workforce Development*
 - DCFS/CW
- National stakeholders - technical assistance through Division for Early Childhood, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Zero to Three
- Early Childhood Personnel Center
- Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children
- School Districts
 - NV Association of Superintendents

- School Admin Group (State)
- School Counselors
- *Teachers*
- *Principals*
- More K-3 representation: Kindergarten teachers, principals, P-3 cohort leadership member, Education Council, members of kindergarten transition team, local education agencies
- *Local Government*
 - City Manager's Office
 - Mayor Roundtable Group
 - Child Welfare
 - County GNA
 - Local education agencies
 - Local Department Fiscal Analysts
 - Law Enforcement
 - Sheriff's & Chief's Association
- *Service Providers (NGOs)*
 - Child Care Providers (all types)
 - *Healthcare Providers*
 - *Mental Health Providers*
 - Early Intervention
 - *Social Service Providers (i.e., Nevada PEP)*
 - Head Starts (ENS)(HSA)
 - Libraries
- *Community Gathering Spaces*
 - Community centers
 - Neighborhood Associations
 - *African American men – barbers (2)*
 - *Faith Communities*
 - Stylists
 - Gyms
- *Governor's Office*
- *Legislative Leadership/Champions/Policy Makers – City, Local, State, Federal*
- *People who have trust from the communities in which they reside*
- *Business Sector*
 - *Chambers of Commerce*
 - *Large companies/gaming entities (release time for parents to participate in family engagement and leadership opportunities)*
 - Employers, bosses, managers, decision makers
- *Indigenous populations and tribal programs, tribal leaders, sovereign nations*
- Local ECACs

APPENDIX C: Glossary

APPENDIX D: Individuals and Groups Consulted