

What is an Early Childhood System?

An “early childhood system” is comprised of all of the programs, services and supports that young children and their families need to enhance optimal health and development. The system includes both direct services, as well as governance and support structures that enable programs and services to be delivered effectively.

A “comprehensive early childhood system” is a well-organized network of programs, services, and resources designed to support children prenatally through their early years. This system is designed to provide a holistic approach to child development and early education, addressing the various needs and stages of a child's growth. It includes the following program elements, which are often referred to as “early childhood sectors”:

1. **Early Education and Care:** Quality preschools, child care, and early education programs to support cognitive and social development. This includes programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start, Child Care Subsidy, and Nevada Ready! PreK, among others.
2. **Health, Mental Health and Nutrition Services:** Access to health and mental health screenings, regular medical check-ups, early intervention services, immunizations, and related health services to ensure both pregnant persons and children are healthy and growing well. This also includes programs to ensure pregnant persons and young children have access to proper nutrition. This includes program such as Medicaid and Nevada Check Up, WIC, NV Immunization Program, Nevada Early Intervention Services and more.
3. **Family Supports:** Programs to assist parents and caregivers in providing a nurturing and supportive environment for their children. This includes parenting education programs, home-visiting programs, family resource centers, child abuse prevention programs and others.
4. **Economic Well-Being:** Programs to provide financial support to families, as well as programs that focus on long-term economic stability. This includes programs such as credit counseling, job placement and training services, SNAP, TANF, and housing and utility assistance, among other programs.

In addition to the program elements, a comprehensive early childhood system also includes governance and support elements:

1. **Leadership and Governance:** This includes key decision-making for programs and services, as well as how the agencies which run the programs and services work together to create equitable access that meets the needs of children & families. This also includes how government entities include parents and families in decision-making.
2. **Partner Engagement:** This focuses on communication and engagement of all key partners including government agency staff, service providers from across all programs and services, parents and families, academic experts, and other community leaders. This element addresses how these partners work together and communicate to align programs and services that meet the needs of children and families.

3. **Financing and Budgets:** This component addresses how programs and services are funded and how those funding decisions are made. Funding plays a critical role in how these programs and services are delivered and to whom and where.
4. **Laws, Policies and Standards:** This element includes all of the laws, regulations, policies and standards that are enacted by elected officials and/or developed by agency or programs at the federal, state and local levels. Policies and standards often control which publicly funded programs are developed, how they are funded and where they can operate, in addition to who is eligible. At the program level, policies can include hiring and training of staff, hours of operation, and other details of how a program is run on a day-to-day basis.
5. **Technology and Networks:** This includes how information is collected, shared and used to support programs and services, including the ability to determine which programs are working well, and which are not. At the program level, technology is needed to communicate with clients, support case management and report activities to funders. At the system level, technology is used to make key funding and policy decisions. Effective and aligned technology and support structures (how different technology programs connect and/or ‘talk to each other’) are setup to support a seamless flow of information across programs and agencies, and also reduce administrative burdens for providers and families (for example, having common or universal applications so families do not need to complete separate applications for every program/service they need).
6. **Workforce:** This component addresses how the early childhood workforce is developed and supported to meet the needs of programs and services in the early childhood system.

A comprehensive early childhood system aims to provide a seamless, unified, and coordinated approach to early childhood development, recognizing how various factors (health, safety, learning, etc.) that influence a child's well-being and potential must work together. This approach is crucial in setting the stage for a child's future success by addressing their physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development during these formative years.

Nevada's Early Childhood System

Program Elements Within Early Childhood Sectors			
Early Care & Education	Health, Mental Health & Nutrition Services	Family Supports	Economic Well-Being
Child Care & Development Program (child care subsidy)	Medicaid & Nevada Check Up	NV Home Visiting Programs	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
Head Start & Early Head Start	NV Immunization Program	Family Resource Centers	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
Nevada Ready! PreK	Women Infants & Children Program (WIC)	Parent Education Programs	Section 8 & Other Housing Assistance Programs
Vroom!	Nevada Early Intervention Services (NEIS)	Comprehensive Screening & Connection Programs*	Utility Assistance Programs
Child Care Resource & Referral Program	Prenatal Care – Group, OBGYN, midwives, doulas	Early Childhood Community Health Worker Program	Credit Counseling Programs
	Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)		
	Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Program		
	Autism Treatment Assistance Program (ATAP)		
Governance & Support Elements			
Leadership & Governance	<p>State Legislature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committees: Health & Human Services; Education; Governance <p>Governor's Office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation (GOWINN) • Governor's Office of Early Childhood Systems* <p>State Agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Health & Human Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Division of Public & Behavioral Health ○ Division of Welfare & Supportive Services ○ Division of Child & Family Services ○ Aging & Disability Services Division • Department of Education • Department of Agriculture • NV System of Higher Education <p>Advisory Bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council • Maternal & Child Health Advisory Board <p>Early Childhood Leadership Academy*</p>		

Partner Engagement	<p>Communication: Early Childhood Marketing & Outreach Campaign</p> <p>Family Engagement/Support: Parent Engagement & Education Programs; NV Early Childhood Leadership Council (NECFCLC)</p> <p>Other: Employer Child Care Development Program; Child Care Provider Action Committee (CCPAC)</p>
Financing & Budgets	<p>Federal: Congressional Budget Allocations; Federal Agencies</p> <p>State: Governor's Executive Budget; NV Legislature Finance/Ways & Means</p> <p>Local: Counties, Cities & Towns Budgets</p>
Laws, Policies & Standards	<p>Federal: Agency regulations/policies for program funding</p> <p>State: NV Revised Statutes; NV Administrative Code; Agency Policies; Standards</p> <p>Local: Zoning; Business licensing; Health Departments</p> <p>Program: Policies, procedures</p>
Technology & Networks	<p>Early Childhood Eligibility Portal; Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS)*; Coordinated Intake & Referral Systems*; Online Universal Application System*</p>
Workforce	<p>NV System of Higher Education</p> <p>NV TEACH Program; Nevada Registry; Child Care Excellence Academy/Spiral Up Program</p> <p>Certification programs</p> <p>Professional Associations</p>