



Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council

Definition of “Vulnerable or Underserved Children”

The Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council (Nevada ECAC) strives to ensure that ALL children ages 0 to 8, and their families, have equitable access to high quality programs and services that meet their needs to fulfill our vision that:

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.

While we strive for universal access, we recognize that the need for and potential impact of high quality programs are greater for some than others in our State. In an effort to prioritize service delivery for children and families with the greatest need, we have developed the following definition to serve as guiding principles for identifying those populations and communities where our efforts should be focused.

To the extent possible, the factors included in the definition are characteristics that are clear and measurable, enabling the Nevada ECAC and our partners to identify these populations and the communities where they live.

The definition will be utilized to:

- Support the early childhood system in development and implementation of communication and outreach efforts to identify where and to whom to conduct outreach, as well as effective methods for two-way communications
- Support data and evaluation efforts aimed at ensuring equitable access and impact of early childhood programs and services
- Support policy and finance decisions to ensure appropriate resources are directed to the appropriate populations and communities, as well as to address policy barriers impacting equitable access to early childhood programs and services
- Support systems alignment efforts to identify trusted community partners and entities, as well as to enhance coordination and alignment across early childhood system sectors serving these populations and communities
- Ensure that populations and communities with the greatest needs are integrated into key leadership and decision-making roles in the early childhood system

Vulnerable or Underserved Children

The following indicators were established to identify populations of children who are considered “vulnerable or underserved” and thus have the greatest need for early childhood services and supports.

Vulnerable or Underserved Children includes all families with children who:

- Are at or under 200% of the Federal Poverty Level¹
 - *This includes children who may be lacking basic needs, experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity²*
- Have experienced verbal, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect
 - *This includes children who are actively engaged in the child welfare system or have a parent receiving domestic violence services*
- Have a disability (physical or mental), developmental delay or special health care needs
 - *This includes any children with a documented disability or developmental delay, as well as children who have been screened with a disability or developmental delay*
- Are multilingual learners
 - *This includes children who are (or whose families are) immigrants or refugees*
- Live in a Vulnerable or Underserved Community, defined as:
 - Have a rating of **Low or Very Low** on the Child Opportunity Index³ (by census tract or zip code) as determined by 29 indicators in three primary domains:
 - Education
 - Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, Secondary & Postsecondary Education, and Educational & Social Resources
 - Health & Environment
 - Healthy Environments, Toxic Exposures, and Health Resources
 - Social & Economic
 - Economic Opportunities and Economic & Social Resources
 - Prioritization among these geographic areas will be given to communities that have a high percentage of racial/ethnic minorities (particularly Black, Hispanic and Native American populations that are disproportionately impacted by structural, institutional and systemic racism) as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.⁴

¹Federal Poverty Level is determined annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. Federal Poverty Level guidelines are posted online at: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/>

²“Housing Instability” here is defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [Housing Instability - Healthy People 2030 | health.gov](https://www.hhs.gov/healthypeople/2030/health/gov)

³<https://www.diversitydatakids.org/>

⁴<https://nmhec.org/nvec/>

Utilization of “Vulnerable or Underserved Children” Definition by Nevada ECAC Subcommittees

Community Engagement and Outreach

- Who/where do we need to target outreach efforts?
- What organizations are working in these communities/with these populations that we can learn from and partner with?
- How do we need to align/adjust messaging, materials and strategies to best reach these populations to connect to services and identify service/access barriers?

Data and Evaluation

- Are we equitably serving the populations most in need of services and supports (priority populations – who are they and how do we define)?
- Do we have access to the data we need to identify these populations in terms of geography (where are they located to target service delivery/outreach) and to track service utilization (are they receiving and/or participating in EC programs/services)?
- Are our efforts impacting the populations who have the highest need for services and supports?
- Are there gaps in serving the priority populations? Where are the largest gaps – check regularly to identify changes.
- Are we meaningfully including community voices when working with data (quantitative and qualitative)?

Policy & Finance

- When new funding/resources are available to expand access to EC services and supports, where and/or to whom should receive priority in regard to location/populations served?
- Are additional resources needed to serve these populations?
- Are there policy barriers that limit equitable access to programs and services for these populations?

Systems Alignment

- Are state agencies/programs prioritizing these populations?
- Do cross-sector partnerships exist within these communities to support equitable access to programs and services?
- Are there structural/regulatory barriers that limit equitable access to programs and services for these populations?
- How can we align/coordinate efforts across early childhood sectors to meet the needs of these populations? What sectors/entities are currently working with these populations that we can coordinate with?

Leadership

- Are these populations and/or the organizations that work directly with these populations represented in leadership and decision-making roles in the early childhood system?