



Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council

Executive Leadership Strategic Planning Retreat

Public Meeting

WEDNESDAY, October 29, 2025

10:00 am-5:00 pm

Location:

Sunrise Children's Foundation
2795 Desert Inn Road, Las Vegas, NV 89121

“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.”

MINUTES

1. Welcome, Call to Order, Attendance via Introductions 20 min.

Tiffany Alston, Nevada ECAC Chair, and Patrice Gardner, Nevada ECAC Vice Chair

- Tiffany Alston started meeting at 10:17 am
- Brandi Hearst conducted Roll Call

Members' Present

1. Tiffany Alston, ECAC Chair
2. Brianna Cambra, Communication and Engagement Co-Chair
3. Marty Elquist, Data and Evaluation Co-Chair
4. Patrice Gardner, ECAC Vice Chair
5. Amanda Haboush Deloye, Data and Evaluation Co-Chair
6. Jerek Hough, District Manager, Source Academy
7. Dr. Jamelle Nance, Communication and Engagement Co- Chair
8. Tiffany Olivas, Systems Alignment Co-Chair
9. Denise Tanata, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Advisor, The Children's Cabinet

Members' Absent

1. Elysa Arroyo, Policy and Finance Co-Chair
2. Abbey Bernhardt, Systems Alignment Co-Chair
3. Cherry Clark, Nevada Early Intervention Services
4. Ashley Dines, Parent Representative
5. Dr. Elizabeth Glover, CEO of Echoes of Excellence
6. Darby Porter, Nevada Library System
7. Kathy Yoder-Bass, Provider Representative

Public in Attendance

1. Jess Angel, Parent/Family Leader
2. Nayesdi Badillo, Family Engagement Specialist, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education, Subcommittee Member
3. Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Community Member
4. Anna Binder, Parent, Subcommittee Member
5. Jennese Black, Education Programs Professional, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education, ECAC Member
6. Laura Brown, Head Start Representative, ECAC Member
7. Tami Conn, Deputy Bureau Chief, Department of Human Services, State of Nevada, ECAC Member
8. Lindsey Dorneman, University of Nevada, Reno
9. Nicole Flangas- Community Member
10. Brandi Hearst, ECAC Administrative Coordinator, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education
11. Matthew Hoffman, Education Programs Professional, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education,





Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council

Subcommittee Member

12. Danielle Holmes, Director, The Children's Cabinet
13. Julie Houchins, United Way of Southern Nevada
14. Sabrina Jones, ECAC System Specialist, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education
15. Sampada Karandikar, University of Nevada, Reno
16. Kathy Knickelbein, Head Start Representative
17. Marisa Lacroix, Education Programs Supervisor, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education
18. Adriana Lemus, Parent, Family Leader, Subcommittee Member
19. Dazzrael Lyke, Developmental Specialist 4, Early Intervention Services, Aging and Disability Services Division, State Of Nevada, ECAC Member
20. Kristen McNeill, Public Works Team
21. Jamie Mendez, Early Childhood Workforce Specialist, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education, Subcommittee Member
22. Smriti Neupane, S. Nevada ECAC Member
23. Steven Romero, Education Programs Professional, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education
24. Tina Springmeyer, Director, Department of Child Family Services, ECAC Member
25. Rachel Stepina, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education, Subcommittee Member
26. Deetra Stewart, Home Care Provider, ECAC Member
27. Gabriella Velasco, Parent/Family Leader
28. Kate Verville, Public Works Team
29. Anna Villatoro, Family Engagement Specialist, The Children's Cabinet, Subcommittee Member
30. Lakesha Washington, The Children's Cabinet, Subcommittee Member
31. Dr. Jenna Weglarz-Ward, Associate Professor, UNLV, ECAC Member
32. Linda Young, Owner of It Takes a Village, ECAC Member

2. Public Comment #1 5 min.

No Public Comment made.

- No Comment

3. Strategic Planning Discussions, Reviews, and Idea Shares (Informational, Discussion) 360 min

The Subcommittee worked on the next strategic plan, holding an open discussion that was inclusive of all topics within the Early Childhood System of Nevada.

Tiffany Alston, Nevada ECAC Chair, and Patrice Gardner, Nevada ECAC Vice Chair

With Kristen McNeil, Kate Verville of Public Works

- Tiffany Alston gave an overview of the building and joined Patrice Gardner in an introduction activity
 - Kristen McNeil introduced herself and started the meeting by reviewing the agenda
 - Reviewed ECAC vision, mission, commitments, and goals
 - Reviewed responsibilities and NRS scope
 - Discussed what ECAC is not
-
- Denise Tanata presented a slideshow reviewing the Policy Priorities and Survey results from the past few months of work within the Policy and Finance Subcommittee, showing members the priorities submitted, and the 6 core issue areas.
 - Dr. Jamelle Nance presented what the Children's Advocacy Alliance does and discussed various legislative areas that were in the last session, as well as what we could look into for the next session
 - Tiffany Olivas presented projects that the Systems Alignment Subcommittee had worked on for the year, discussing the System Asset and Gap Analysis (SAGA), Advancing a Common Vision, definition of a comprehensive early childhood system, and early





Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council

childhood sectors, moving into the Early Childhood System infographic the Subcommittee recreated, as well as showing the gaps in diversity among our own members.

- Rachel Stepina presented on the Preschool Development Grant, Birth - 5, describing to the participants all of the work that goes on behind the scenes the progress being made by ECC by having the support in place so the subcommittees and council can focus on the work and activities moving forward, accomplishing goals building relationships and helping local community members access services and programs available to them.

- Rachel Stepina further mentioned not wanting to lose the progress and momentum ECAC has made and requested everyone think creatively as to how we can keep it going using different methods or finding new funding sources as it is a lot of work over the past couple of years that was supported by PDG B-5 Grant, but in terms of funding, it isn't a LOT of money to have these supports and creatively there has to be a way to sustain the funding.

- Kristen McNeil moved on to the next discussion: "What we heard you say?"

- Groups were created, and they had key takeaways from the discussion. Groups collaborated and then presented the following takeaways:

- Reaching out to agencies that aren't involved
- Identify allies and those in our corner
- Educate those not in our corner and show them why you advocate, and listen to why they share a different perspective
- Communication plans for different stakeholders
- Connect stakeholders in different spaces
- Workforce development
- Investing in the infrastructure of early childhood
- Availability/choices for care
- Imminent family leadership/centering family priorities
- Workforce development
- Explore the affordability cycle
- Increase pay/workforce supports
- Family education
- Representing diversity in our conversations, locations, people, and workforce
- Become the source 3 for early childhood, where people know and trust we are working on their behalf
- Brain psychology
- Getting educators/admin to understand early childhood, even when they work with older students.
- Identify the ece champions
- Working with legislators
- Use common language
- Educators can come off as intimidating, using jargon or acronyms, people don't understand, and they shy away

Community Survey Results

- Kristen McNeil shared the Community Survey results with the group, sharing challenges that were identified:

- Funding
- Workforce Collapse
- Staffing shortages
- Program closures
- Public recognition
- The early childhood sector is viewed as non-professional.
- Weakening advocacy power
- Workforce appeal





Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council

- Systemic fragmentation
 - Interagency competition
 - Lack of authority perpetuates silos.
 - Agencies debate over who's responsible for ECAC
 - Geographic barriers
 - Language Barriers
 - Rural area support
 - Fatigue and Burnout
 - Current compliance
 - Open-meeting law requirements are unsustainable under this volunteer model.
 - Data integrity
 - Conflicting population counts
 - Limited adoptions reduce the ability to measure true outcomes and progress.
- **SWOC Analysis: EXTERNAL FORCES:**
- **Federal funds & policy changes effects:**
 - Medicaid spending
 - Health care coverage
 - SNAP food benefits
 - Cuts to Head Start.
 - Nevada has one of the lowest rates of investment in ECE compared to other states
 - **Higher Cost of Care**
 - **Lack of Head Start funds**
 - More closures
 - Less accessible care
 - People go unemployed
 - **Workforce Shortage**
 - Nevada's wages are average
 - Tighter public dollars
 - **Mental & Physical Health Needs:**
 - Expect MCH health access in rural areas to be scarce
 - 42% of Nevada's young children live in households at 200% of the federal poverty level.
 - Reduced access to services
 - Greater exposure to mental and physical needs.
- **SWOC Analysis: ECACs Accomplished Goals from 2024-2025**
- **Examples:**
 - Spanish Translations
 - Communication campaign
 - Starting a new marketing campaign

SWOC Analysis:

- **Strengths:**
 - Strong commitment and expertise
 - Federal grant alignment and coordination





Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council

- Infrastructure achievements
- Improved cross-sector collaboration

● **Weaknesses:**

- Lack of sustainable funding
- Structural/governance fragmentation
- Limited visibility
- Workforce crisis/collapse
- Weak legislative relationships
- Public perception
- Professional recognition
- Language and geographic barriers
- Meeting fatigue/volunteer burnout
- Data integrity concerns
- System fragmentation

● **Opportunities:**

- Establish sustainable funding
- Legislative education and advocacy
- System integration
- Workforce innovation
- Marketing and visibility
- Data drives decisions
- Authentic family leadership
- Research ECACs in other states
 - How do they operate?
 - Who is on their council or board?
 - Where are they receiving funds from?
 - Looking at how we are appealing to other generations?

● **Challenges:**

- People still have the older social constructs
- Create a structure similar to those built for parents or health care providers
- Offer early childhood development courses to all system professionals and families
- Teach developmental science
- Understanding human capital
- Systematic shift in how we invest in our services.
- Create a clear understanding of the “why.”
- Reminding educators that they are brain architects

4. Public Comment #2

Public Comment was taken during this agenda item on any matter within the Subcommittee’s control or advisory power.

- Dr. Jenna Weglarz-Ward announced that her team has emailed out information; some ECAC members may have received the emails
- Amanda Haboush Deloye announced a food collection event happening on Saturday, 11.01.25





Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council

5. Adjournment

- Tiffany Alston adjourned the meeting at 3:30 pm

