

Nevada Early Childhood  
Advisory Council



# A Coordinated System to Support Nevada's Young Children and their Families



## 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 Nevada ECAC was later established in statute by the 2013 Nevada Legislative Session and Governor Sandoval.

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

**Early childhood is defined by the Nevada ECAC** as the period from birth to age eight, while also recognizing the importance of quality prenatal care in early childhood outcomes. Early childhood is a period of rapid and critical development which encompasses access to nutrition, health care, protection, play and early learning to stimulate children's physical, cognitive, linguistic and social-emotional development.



**The Early Childhood System in Nevada** is administered through four state level departments that administer services through approximately ten different state divisions or offices, with 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.

ALMOST  
HALF

# 49%

of Nevada's children  
under the age of six  
live in households with  
income less than

# 200%

of the federal poverty level (FPL).

NEVADA RANKS

# 50<sup>TH</sup>

for public health funding at \$50 per person  
compared to the national average of

# 91 DOLLARS

per person (America's Health Rankings)

NEVADA RANKS

# 42<sup>ND</sup>

in spending per capita for early education  
at \$103.05 per person compared to the  
national average of

# \$1,085

 per person

NEVADA RANKS

# 45<sup>TH</sup>

in the nation for percentage of  
children without health insurance at

# 8 PERCENT

about 58,000 children.

NEVADA'S OB/GYN (MDS AND DOS)  
WORKFORCE CURRENTLY RANKS

# 47<sup>TH</sup>

in the nation in terms of  
number of physicians.





## The Early Childhood Landscape (cont.)

**The data evidence** a need 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. At the same time, providers need to know what support exists in their communities in order to connect families with the resources they urgently need. **This is why a coordinated system is so vital.**

**The coronavirus pandemic** has further revealed the urgency for a coordinated, comprehensive system. 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.

**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 has benefited from an unprecedented investment of federal stimulus funding. It is estimated that Nevada will receive \$2.9 billion through the American Rescue Plan (ARP).



**Approximately \$365 million in ARP funds are being allocated to support child care in the Silver State.** In August 2021, the state legislative Interim Finance Committee approved spending for approximately \$222 million to support providers, families and system improvements. The majority of funds will be given as stipends for operating costs to help child care providers stay in business and help existing and newly-recruited child care centers achieve sustainable revenue. The funds are expected to save Nevada families more than \$50 million in child care costs, support more than 750 small businesses, and provide more than \$50 million in direct financial support to child care workers, according to the Governor's Office.





**“This investment** will help stabilize and grow our child care sector by **supporting providers and families**, as well as ensuring state-level infrastructure is in place to meet continuing needs of parents and employers while giving **our children opportunities** to learn, grow and succeed.”

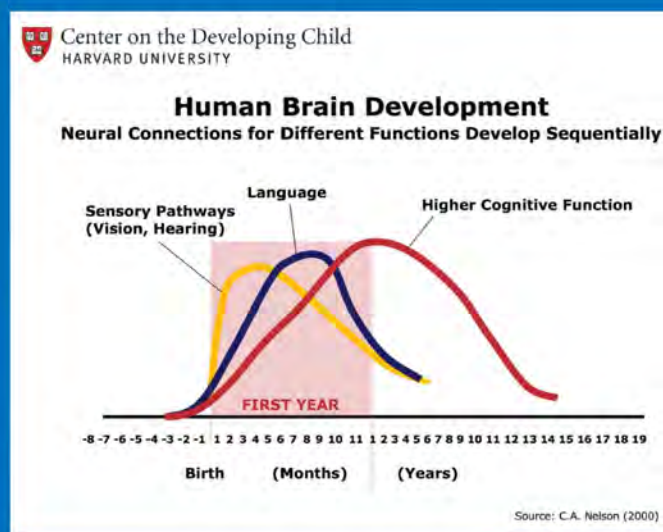
-Gov. Steve Sisolak in a statement



Given the influx of new funding, the Nevada ECAC is facing a period of significant opportunity and challenge that will require nimble, quick movement to build the infrastructure and systems to support the additional resources being invested in our state during this unprecedented season of our history. It also will be incumbent upon the Nevada ECAC to coordinate an early childhood system that performs well—most importantly, for the future of Nevada's children and families, and secondarily, positioning the state to continue attracting resources that can be invested in early childhood in the coming years.

## Investing in Young Children = A Lifelong Return

Years of research on early childhood development confirms that providing quality early care and education from prenatal through age eight 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.



**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 reinforce 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 lifelong well-being and achievement.







## 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, prenatal through age eight, 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 and coordinated infrastructure to achieve positive outcomes for children and families. It is aligned with:



- o NV Maternal and Child Health Needs Assessment (2020)
- o NV Department of Education PDG B-5 Needs Assessment (2019)
- o Nevada Early Childhood Care and Education Fiscal Feasibility Study (2020)
- o Pritzker Prenatal to Three Implementation Plan (2020)
- o 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/>.**



## This plan was informed by:

1.

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.

2.

Tools developed by the Early Childhood Systems Working Group

3.

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

4.

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

5.

Focus groups with Nevada ECAC subcommittees

6.

Individual interviews

7.

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 Nevada ECAC 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

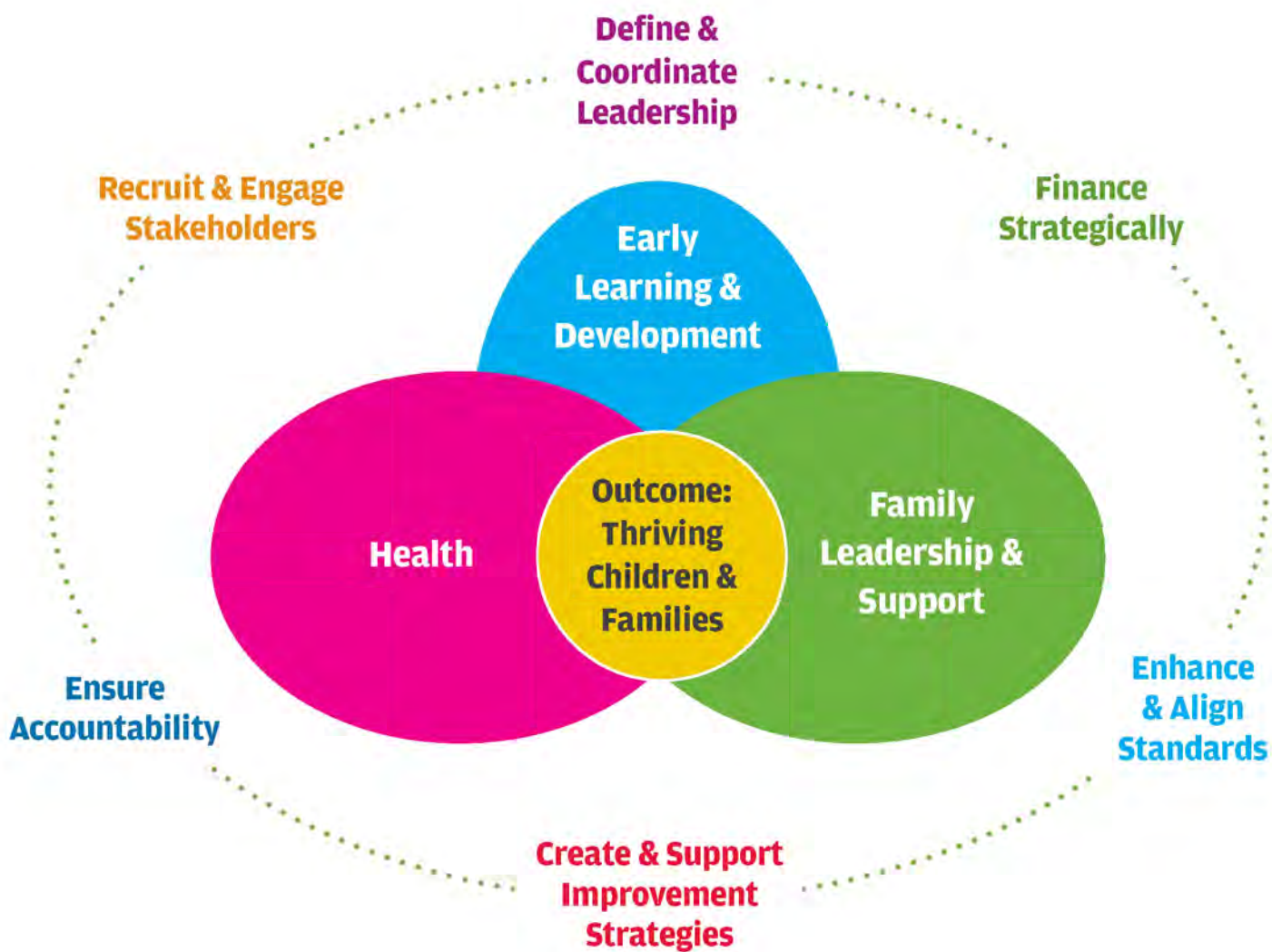
Every child in Nevada is our child, and is worthy of our commitment to their care, learning, and well-being. The following values and principles lay the foundation for this plan and the important work to follow:



- Reach all children and families, 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 (prenatal to age eight) to align policy and fiscal decision-making for the early childhood system across relevant agencies.
- Restructure the Nevada ECAC 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.

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## 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.
- Integrate cross-sector priorities, goals, and initiatives into the Nevada ECAC work 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.

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## 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.

**As Governor Sisolak has shared**, every child deserves the opportunity to succeed. The Nevada ECAC believes the same. The Every Nevadan Recovery Framework developed by Governor Sisolak, along with Treasurer Conine, Senate Majority Leader Cannizzaro, and Assembly Speaker Frierson, outlines a plan to address the immediate impacts of the pandemic while looking to the future with a longer-term focus to build a strong and stable foundation for a post-pandemic child-and-family-centered Nevada. The Nevada ECAC is eager to become a partner in this effort.



**With over 95% of funding** for early childhood programs in Nevada coming from the federal government, the Nevada ECAC also recognizes the importance of leveraging federal, state, and local government resources wisely while building a pipeline of support beyond public funding, one that is rooted in community ownership of positive outcomes for children and their families.

**The goals and objectives of this plan** build on a strong footing 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 have been intentionally designed to be 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.



**As we develop detailed implementation strategies, we need the continued input and participation of people from all sectors across the state who share the Nevada ECAC's commitment to providing equitable access to quality early childhood services that support children's healthy development from prenatal through age eight.**

**In Nevada and across the world, we know that when children can develop to their fullest potential, communities can as well. It is in that spirit that we view the Nevada Early Childhood Strategic Plan as a dynamic plan by and for Nevadans.**

**Learn more about how you can get involved and view the full plan at <http://nvecac.com/>.**





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