

Southern Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council



STRATEGIC PLAN

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BACKGROUND/OVERVIEW

Starting Early is Starting Right on Time: The Importance of Making Investments in Early Childhood

The returns on early childhood are multi-faceted, and researchers have begun to put an economic value on the numerous ways educating our youngest children benefits communities and society as a whole. A child who is supported and challenged through high quality early educational programs is more likely to complete high school and become a productive member of the community.



Great strides have been made in understanding brain development and the impact of early stresses on a child's long-term well-being. Research has shown that the quality of the earliest relationships and experiences contributes to school success, health, and future workforce productivity.

During a young child's life, 700 new neural connections are formed every second. These connections are eventually reduced through a process called pruning, so that brain circuits become more efficient. Researchers agree that connections are created and pruned in a set order, with more complex brain circuits built upon existing simpler circuits.

The brain is most flexible, or "plastic", early in life. As it becomes more mature and specialized, it is less capable of reorganizing and adapting to new or unexpected challenges, and plasticity declines. This means that it is biologically more efficient to prevent problems with brain development and functionality than to remedy issues that have already developed.

The human brain develops more rapidly between birth and age five than during any other subsequent period. More than 85 percent of the foundation for communications, critical thinking, problem solving, and teamwork is developed by age five, before children enter kindergarten.

In Nevada, there are over 195,000 children under the age of five. When children are healthy, appropriately nourished, well cared for, and developmentally stimulated, parents and caretakers are able to focus on work. Investing in early childhood, whether by devoting time, attention, money, or other resources, is an opportunity to contribute to the success of both today *and* tomorrow.

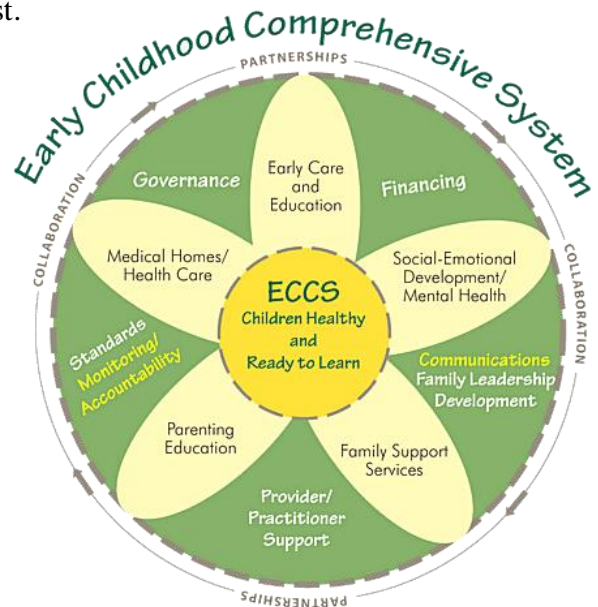
*Source: Starting Early is Starting Right on Time: The Economic Benefits of Investing In early Childhood in Nevada
Prepared by the Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy*

Nevada’s Early Childhood Advisory Council

In March 2008, the Nevada Head Start State Collaboration Office developed state Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) to meet the needs identified in the Reauthorized Head Start Act. Nevada’s Early Childhood Advisory Council’s members represent populations and service sectors that are committed to a common vision. Nevada’s ECAC will pool their knowledge to account for the work that has been done and still needs to be done, what the current accomplishments are, and what issues still exist.

The vision of the Nevada ECAC is 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.”

In an effort to represent the needs of the entire state, the ECAC is establishing local councils across the state. Local advisory councils will have representation on the state council.



Southern Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council

The first local advisory council was established in Southern Nevada in 2010 led by East Valley Family Services. The Southern Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council (SNECAC) convenes once a month and currently consists of 40 community members. Members of the SNECAC would like to create a collaborative, coordinated system that improves efficiencies and outcomes in the delivery of early childhood services. In addition the council would like to create a network that plans and executes improvements in Nevada’s early childhood services in conjunction with the state ECAC.

Mission & Vision

Southern Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council

Leadership is not a Spectator Sport

Mission: Creating a community where everyone knows that Early Childhood is priority one.

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.

5-Year Legacy:

- With a coordinated, comprehensive, and seamless service-delivery system families can get support through a multitude of doors and be connected with everything they need regardless of where they start.
- Nevada recognizes and supports early childhood development services and education, so that every child can develop to their full potential.
- The child care community is networked for service coordination and advocacy.
- Every parent has access to parenting assistance, and every child has access to a curriculum-based child care.
- Community stakeholders ensure developmentally appropriate practice in all childhood development programs.

Strategic Plan

GOAL 1: ADVOCATE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES IN SOUTHERN NEVADA

Objective 1.1 Establish a trained, coordinated network of advocates in Southern NV

Strategies:

- The Council will develop a list of individuals from organizations and families that are willing to participate in community advocacy activities to promote early childhood.
- Train early childhood community (parents, providers and other interested stakeholders) how to advocate effectively
- The Council will conduct or promote at least two advocacy training sessions to the early childhood community and other interested stakeholders.

Objective 1.2 Identify issues, policies, practices, etc. that are needed to improve the quality, availability, affordability, and accessibility of early childhood programs/services in Southern NV.

Strategies:

- Identify promising programs, practices, and policies from other jurisdictions
- Track pending policy related to early childhood systems
- The Council will review the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council legislative agenda and make recommendations to the state wide council, and if needed, complete an Early Childhood Advocacy Agenda for Southern Nevada

Objective 1.3 Educate the public and policy makers regarding the importance of early childhood

Strategies:

- The Council will develop a list of family members and individuals from organizations that are willing and trained to speak to speak publicly (e.g. media, policy makers) about the importance of quality early childhood programs.
- The council will support, either by hosting, attending, or publicizing, events (press conferences, legislative hearings, phone banking, etc.) that will educate policy makers.

Objective 1.4 Establish a coordinated system for sharing up to date information and action alerts.

Strategies:

- Appoint a council member to track legislative activities and send email updates to the SNECAC members.
- Post updates on Facebook and Twitter as appropriate.
- Establish a phone tree or email network that will rally advocates for events or phone blasts to policy makers.

**GOAL 2: IMPROVE NETWORKING AMONG SOUTHERN NEVADA
EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICE PROVIDERS; ENSURING MEMBERS ACTIVELY
USE THAT NETWORK.**

Objective 2.1: Improve communication, leveraging, and sharing of resources among local community agencies.

Strategies:

- The Council set up and maintains an electronic system (e.g., a web site, Google calendar, an electronic billboard, etc.) whereby the community can have a central place to share information about upcoming events, projects, funding opportunities, announcements etc.
- Create a matrix of Council members programs to promote networking within the council. This will be updated as program information changes and is distributed electronically. This will also be available on the SNECAC website.
- All council members will update their information on Nevada 211 and will continue to promote Nevada 211 as a resource for organizations and families in Southern Nevada and encourage organizations to maintain up to date information on that system.

Objective 2.2: Improve communication with the State and other local early childhood advisory councils.

Strategies:

- Use social media outlets to provide updates to the state and other local councils such as the state Facebook and Twitter accounts.
- All agencies who currently have a Facebook or Twitter account should Like/Follow the activities of the state and other local councils.
- The SNECAC should ask the state ECAC to send out information or requests through their statewide listserve as needed to support the local council.

**GOAL 3: ALL YOUNG CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES ARE HEALTHY AND
THRIVING, AND HAVE ACCESS TO COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES.**

Objective 3.1: Coordinate services among early childhood service providers in Southern Nevada.

Strategies:

- Identify gaps in services in Southern Nevada to improve early childhood services to create a coordinated, comprehensive, and seamless service delivery systems in the following areas:

- Social, emotional, and mental health development
- Medical care/physical health
- Infant and early childhood care and education
- Parent education
- Family support services
- Workforce Development
- Food Security
- Develop a network whereby council members share information and network around the subject of unmet client needs.

Objective 3.2: Ensure that an effective, educated workforce is caring for children in quality early childcare education settings.

Strategies:

- Increase competency based professional development for the early and education workforce.
- Articulate career pathways and build accountability and quality into leadership development.
- Establish recruitment and retention strategies.
- Support efforts to implement quality early care and learning standards such as the Silver State Stars Quality Rating Improvement System.
- Establish a uniform system of program monitoring for all early care and education programs.
- Establish uniform standards for all early care and education programs.
- Support efforts to improve breastfeeding, nutrition, and physical activity standards.

Objective 3.3 Develop strategies aimed at decreasing disparities in access and utilization across all child-serving systems.

Strategies:

- Build capacity among service providers in all child-serving systems to identify and respond to the social-emotional needs of young children and their families.
- Promote innovative service delivery systems including colocation of health and wellness services.
- Increase social-emotional and health screenings in vulnerable populations including homeless children, children in foster care, and children whose parents are in vulnerable circumstances.

GOAL 4: DEVELOP A SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE WITHIN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS THAT PROMOTE HEALTHY CHILDREN, STRONG FAMILIES AND EARLY LEARNING.

Objective 4.1: Create a public-private body to provide strategic guidance to the SNECAC on early childhood issues and to assist in improving early childhood systems and services.

Strategies:

- Review current list of SNECAC members and identify key stakeholders that should be included on the council.
- Establish a finance workgroup to examine how to maximize public-private dollars to support early learning.

Objective 4.2: Increase early childhood program accountability through program standards and tracking identified outcome indicators.

Strategies:

- Support efforts as needed to create a unified early childhood data system.
- Support efforts to establish the Silver State Stars Quality Rating Improvement System in Southern Nevada.
- Support efforts to share existing data in a centralized location to increase access and information available on early childhood.

Objective 4.3: Increase support among civic and business leaders for early childhood initiatives at the local level.

Strategies:

- Develop and implement a public engagement campaign to inform and obtain the support of leaders of the general public for early childhood initiatives that coordinates with current advocacy initiatives.
- Support training efforts for all professional who come into contact with young children and their families on children's health, learning, and social-emotional development.

Objective 4.4: Create a sustainable structure for the Southern Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council.

Strategies:

- Determine long term sustainability of the council purpose and activities throughout the year.
- Create committees and terms of reference.
- Evaluate the strategic plan every six months in order to effectively

monitor the progress of the council. The following will be examined:

- Achievement of goals and objectives
 - Timeliness of the completion of goals and objectives
 - Relevance of goals and objectives
- Define the council's membership and identify gaps in membership participation.

Objective 4.5: Provide input and support to the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council and other local councils to create a statewide network of support and solidarity in early childhood systems.

Strategies:

- NECAC updates will be provided at every SNECAC meeting.
- SNECAC will review materials as needed by the NECAC and provide feedback in a timely manner.
- SNECAC will collaborate with other local councils to align goals and objectives when appropriate.