



# EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL 2010 Strategic Report to the Governor on the Status of Early Childhood

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC)

The Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council was created to advise and assist the collaborating agencies in carrying out the provisions of the Early Intervention Act, the Quality Child Care Act, sections 79-1101 to 79-1104, and other early childhood care and education initiatives under state supervision [Section 43-3401, Neb.Rev.Stat.], and Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The ECICC is also identified by the governor as the State Early Learning Council to meet the federal requirements of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act [December 2007, PR110-134]. A biennial report to the Governor on the Status of Early Childhood is required by the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council Act. This abbreviated version serves as the Executive Summary of the Report.

### Foundations of Early Childhood Work:

Today's young children are tomorrow's business leaders, policymakers, and parents. Capable children are the basis of a prosperous and sustainable society. Our future prosperity starts with children's success.

Foundations of our work:

- ❖ Brain architecture-Like a house, the brain is built from the bottom up, step by step. As it emerges, the quality of the architecture establishes either a sturdy or fragile foundation for all the development and behavior that follows.
- ❖ Interactions-Child development relies on the process of relationships—the interactions that children have every day with caregivers at home and in their community can either promote development or delay development.
- ❖ Toxic Stress- Stressors like chronic poverty and violence in the home and community damage the wiring of young brains.
- ❖ Getting it Right Early-Early childhood is a complicated time when cognitive, social and emotional development are tightly connected in young children. Learning, behavior and physical and mental health are tied to this development. Getting things right the first time is easier and less costly than trying to fix them later.



## Special Projects, Plans, Goals of ECICC

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Federal stimulus funds administered out of the US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Head Start provided funds for a project of the Council over a three-year period with a focus on two priorities, as follows:

- Promote school readiness for preschool children.
- Develop recommendations for a unified early childhood data system that can inform the state regarding early childhood program effectiveness and children’s success in school and in life.

ECICC’s Strategic Plan was developed in partnership with Together for Kids and Families, an Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems initiative implemented by Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Lifespan Health, and membership across state agencies and local programs. This plan encompasses the four goals and twelve strategies.

### Goals:

- Early Care and Education in Nebraska is high quality, developmentally appropriate and accessible to all children.
- All Nebraska children have access to a dental/medical home, and receive high quality health services.
- The early childhood social, emotional and behavioral health needs of Nebraska’s children are met.
- Nebraska families support their children’s optimal development by providing safe, healthy, and nurturing environments.

### Strategies:

- Implement the dental/medical home as a standard of care.
- Establish the infrastructure to support a comprehensive system promoting access to oral health services including preventive oral health care.
- Promote and support evidence-based home visitation services for families with young children
- Promote integration of parent-to-parent peer support systems, when appropriate, into programs and services for families.
- Increase access to respite services to meet the needs of families.
- Coordinate statewide systems for sharing comprehensive information with families.
- Through a mixed delivery system, provide access to voluntary, high quality, early childhood education and care programs and services that meet the needs of all young children and their families.



- Develop and refine a system of support to improve the quality and effectiveness of early childhood education and care programs and services.
- Develop early childhood health and safety communication network(s).
- Disseminate data-driven and evidence-based training and material resources to improve health and safety in child care.
- Assist communities to develop/enhance an effective system of care to support the social, emotional and behavioral health needs of Nebraska’s young children.
- Build the capacity of individuals who interact with young children to support social, emotional and behavioral health.

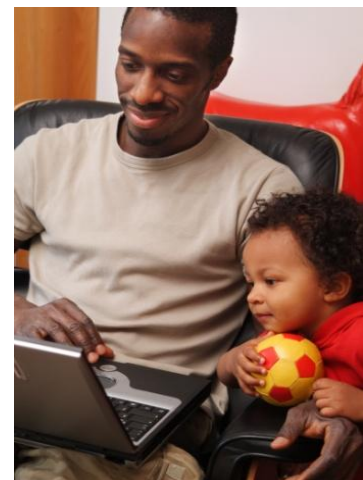
## 2010 Recommendations from the ECICC

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In conjunction with and consideration of the Strategic Plan, the Council has also selected the following recommendations to include in the Status Report to the Governor.

### Parent Education and Family Support

1. Continue to provide information, resources and supports to all families with young children acknowledging that parents are a child’s first teacher.
2. Fund and support community capacity building to provide respite, home visitation, and mentoring models for parent education and family support.
3. Stabilize the child care subsidy system to support families in the workforce by moving the income eligibility rate to 185% of poverty.



### Social-Emotional Development/Mental Health

4. Fund statewide implementation of a comprehensive framework that promotes the social and emotional competence of young children and their families in all early childhood settings.
5. Support DHHS’ efforts to improve outcomes of children in both in-home and out-of-home care.
6. Support Mental Health Consultation for children ages 0-8 through targeted prevention funds and expanded partnerships with regional behavioral health systems.
7. Utilize technology, including telehealth and help lines, to support early childhood mental health service delivery and consultation.
8. Expand the availability of appropriately trained, credentialed, and licensed professionals; and additionally, the availability of para-professionals in order for Nebraska to provide sufficient behavioral support services for young children.
9. Ensure that all children from birth through age eight are screened for social-emotional development delays and referred for support services when needed.

## Early Care and Education

10. Improve school readiness and ready schools by sustaining and expanding the availability of quality early childhood care and education settings through Nebraska's Early Childhood Education Grant Program and Early Childhood Education Endowment Program (Sixpence) in collaboration and coordination with community programs including Head Start and Early Head Start.
11. Promote physical activity and healthy nutrition practices in all early care and education settings.
12. Continue to investigate quality improvement models that can be applied in partnership with all early care and education settings.
13. Continue to promote inclusive practices for children with special needs in all early childhood care and education settings, school districts, and before and after school programs.
14. The proposed draft of the Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Regulations should move to public hearing, be revised and approved.

## Medical and Dental Home and Health Services

15. Increase the number of dentists serving young children and families in a dental health care home that provides regular routine dental care and education and recommendations for any special dental health care the child might need.
16. Support, promote and expand a medical home approach to ensure continuity of health services for all young children and their families.
17. Focus outreach to eligible families and health providers to improve EPSDT (Early Periodic Screening and Diagnostic Testing) utilization rates.
18. Improve access to comprehensive health services for women of childbearing age to improve birth outcomes.

To access the full 2010 Strategic Report to the Governor on the Status of Early Childhood go to:  
<http://www.education.ne.gov/ecicc/index.html>

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