

**Nebraska Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC)  
November, 2020 Update**

**To: ECICC Members and Technical Assistants**

**Please review the following information submitted for the November ECICC meeting. Pay close attention to areas where feedback is requested. Attachments and/or web links are available in this message. We encourage you to ask questions or offer comments on any of the following updates by communicating with Karen Hoffman, Council Secretary.**

**Thank you!**

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**Nebraska Part C**

**Administered by Co-Leads: Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) & Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)**

The attached IDEA Part C State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) is required to be submitted on Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> of each year to the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The performance report is an evaluation of Nebraska's efforts to implement the IDEA Part C federal requirements, as measured against rigorous targets for the performance indicators established by the U.S. Secretary of Education (Secretary).

IDEA Part C federal regulations establish required functions of Nebraska's Early Childhood Interagency Council which include the following:

§ 34 CFR 303.604 Functions of the Council— required duties

Annual report to the Governor and to the Secretary:

(1) The Council must—

- (i) Prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and to the Secretary on the status of early intervention service programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families under Part C of the Act operated within the State; and
- (ii) Submit the report to the Secretary by a date that the Secretary establishes.

(2) Each annual report must contain the information required by the Secretary for the year for which the report is made.

Thus, the attached Part C Annual Performance Report is prepared for the Council's review in order to submit to Governor Ricketts and the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education on Feb 1, 2021. The annual report contains the required information for the reporting period of July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 established by the Secretary.

Additionally, IDEA Part C Federal regulations require that the State Interagency Coordinating Council provide certification that the Council is using the Nebraska Part C Annual Performance Report in lieu of submitting the Council's own annual report to the U.S. Secretary of Education. The Council Chair, Mary Phillips, will

complete this certification, acknowledging that the Council confirms that it has reviewed the State's Part C SPP/APR for accuracy and completeness and the annual report has been provided to Nebraska's Governor.

**Please review the performance data in the attached Part C Annual Performance Report and feel free to contact Amy Bunnell, Nebraska Department of Education, or Julie Docter, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, if you have any questions.**

[Amy.bunnell@nebraska.gov](mailto:Amy.bunnell@nebraska.gov)

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### **Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Children and Family Services**

On October 19, 2020, Governor Pete Ricketts announced a second round of Community CARES grant programs to help Nebraska's charitable organizations and care providers respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The grants are being funded by the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The Department of Health & Human Services is pleased to announce grants to Child Care Subsidy providers. All active subsidy providers who have billed DHHS at least once since July 1, 2020 through September 30, 2020, are eligible for a one-time grant of \$1,200. There is no application process. This grant will be automatically deposited in November.

The Department of Health & Human Services partnered with Nebraska Children to administer child care CARES funding opportunities. Opportunities include funding for stabilization and reopening child care programs. To learn more and apply, please go to: <https://www.nebraskachildren.org/childcare-providers-covid-19-information-and-resources.html>

**Nicole Vint, MSW | Child Care and Development Fund Administrator I**

**CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

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### **Preschool Development Grant (PDG)**

*From Susan Sarver, Buffett Early Childhood Institute, to the ECICC*

We would like to share two things with the ECICC members. Thank you for this opportunity. First, a summary of the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan. (*See attached.*)

(\*Please go to <https://www.nebraskachildren.org/what-we-do/preschool-development-grant/strategic-plan.html> where this document will be eventually posted You can simply search *NEearlychildhoodplan.org* as well. Other PDG updates are also found on this site.)

A few notes about the strategic plan to remind the ECICC:

- The full strategic plan was approved by the ECICC last year. This document is a summary and intended as a generalist piece most suited for those who have some familiarity with efforts to improve early childhood education in the state. It will be translated to Spanish shortly.
- This document will be available online as well as in print. (*See above reference* \*).
- Other public outreach and education materials are in development.

- The next step for the strategic plan is to reach out across the state to various groups and stakeholders for feedback on the plan and developing action plans.

Second, the needs assessment and strategic plan wish to target populations that were not reached last year. We would be most appreciative if any members would be willing to share contacts of individuals in the community working with children from birth to five years old. Specifically, we are seeking an opportunity to expand our data to reach families with the following characteristics:

- Black and African American
- Hispanic and Latinx
- Refugees and Immigrant
- Native American and American Indian
- Families of children with disabilities
- Families experiencing poverty and/or homelessness
- Families providing foster care
- Other

We are also looking for individuals that would be interested in leading a focus group with the families they serve. Our goal is to train focus group facilitators to recruit and lead families in a discussion about childcare needs, educational services, and other community resources that can enhance the lives of children in the community.

**We would greatly appreciate it if you would be willing to complete the google form with their contact information by Nov. 20, 2020:**

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSceQ8oQfnxtjiwEO5gicTq66SfXPGL70QsWgqNgh9qIMn1Qog/viewform>

**Susan L. Sarver**

Director of Workforce Planning and Development  
She | Her | Hers

### **Buffett Early Childhood Institute**

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### **Head Start Updates**

**Designation Renewal System (DRS) Changes** - Created in 2011, the Head Start Designation Renewal System is an accountability system to determine whether Head Start grantees are delivering high quality and comprehensive services. Determinations are based on seven conditions falling under three broader categories: service quality,

licensing and operations, and fiscal and internal controls. A ***single deficiency*** in one of the seven conditions could trigger a Head Start grantee to apply for their grant funding renewal through an open competition process.

**Key Changes in the Designation Renewal System Rule** - On August 27, 2020, the Office of Head Start released a [Program Instruction \(PI\)](#) announcing changes to the Designation Renewal System were published in a [Final Rule](#). Under this final rule, *the Designation Renewal System no longer requires competition for grantees with a single deficiency*. While all deficiencies are serious and substantial or systemic, changing the condition to require competition *if a grantee receives **two deficiencies*** during their five year continuous monitoring process period better reflects significant quality failures of an agency.

**Administrative Flexibilities for Monitoring Process** - Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 with closures for several months, the **2019–2020** school year. Program Information Report (PIR) was not required this year. Office of Head Start wanted to eliminate the reporting burden of the Program Information Report, as well as remove any confusion on how certain elements of the PIR could be collected and interpreted when programs are closed.

The Office of Head Start expects programs to maintain records of services they provided and those that were not provided. Many grantees have found it helpful to join [MyPeers](#) community to discuss particular situations with their colleagues. Head Start programs are not expected to make up the days missed due to COVID-19. Due to the continuation of COVID-19 pandemic and public health emergency, all monitoring reviews for the **2020–2021** school year will be conducted virtually. This decision was based on two principles that have driven OHS's decisions and guidance to programs throughout this period: (1) taking decisive actions to support each program's success and (2) keeping the safety of children and staff paramount.

**For additional information, please contact Joan Luebbers, Head Start Collaboration Director at [joan.luebbers@nebraska.gov](mailto:joan.luebbers@nebraska.gov) or Steph Knust, Head Start Association President, at [sknust@dheadstart.com](mailto:sknust@dheadstart.com).**

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### **Nebraska Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (N-MIECHV)**

The Nebraska-Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (N-MIECHV) program, housed in the Division of Public Health at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services implemented an expansion project in 2019-2020, adding 27 new home visitors and 269 family slots to the evidence-based home visiting program network. A formal partnership between the Division of Public Health and the Division of Child and Family Services enabled allocation of federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) dollars to the already existing N-MIECHV program sites.

The priority population for this expansion is pregnant or parenting families involved in child welfare, but maintaining legal, physical custody of the child, where the target child is under 24 months of age, and pregnant or parenting mothers who are a Ward of the State. Eligible families must also meet the enrollment criteria of the MIECHV federal program: families who struggle with significant life stressors such as poverty, exposure to violence or substance abuse, teen parenting, or military families with one or both parents in service.

Since the inception of the MIECHV program in 2010, Nebraska-MIECHV has received both federal MIECHV formula grants (approximately \$1M-\$1.2M per year) and State General Funds allocated specifically for evidence-based home visiting (\$1M/year since 2014.) These funds allowed for the operation of six home visiting program sites, implementing the Healthy Families America model to fidelity, as well as maintaining the collection and

analysis of data as required for the MIECHV program. Program capacity, at 175 family slots, was stagnant and growth was unfeasible due to level funding.

In 2018, greater attention to the implementation of prevention programs within child welfare came to light, due in part to the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) grant for evidence-based programs. Healthy Families America (HFA) model of home visiting was identified as a highly-rated prevention program with positive outcomes for families at risk of entering foster care. Since DHHS already had a program with HFA home visiting, the Divisions collaborated on the opportunity to use part of the FFPSA funds. In 2019, the collaboration was written into the DHHS Business Plan, utilizing a portion of TANF funds set aside for maternal- child health. This plan included expanding the existing HFA program sites to reach a greater number of families in the areas identified as “priority,” or most at-risk for child maltreatment, by the 2020 MIECHV Needs Assessment.

The 5-Yr DHHS Business Plan specifies \$1M the first year, and increases by \$500,000 each year. A tiered expansion plan of the existing sites began in October 2019, added three programs in January 2020, and three more in May 2020. In 2021 – 2023, six new Healthy Families America programs will be developed in identified priority areas whose early childhood community stakeholders agree upon the need for either an evidence based home visiting program, or additional resources in home visiting. N-MIECHV is committed to working with other state-level home visiting programs such as Sixpence and Early Head Start, and have involved those partners in the Needs Assessment and Capacity Assessment processes. Representatives from all three programs continue to work together at both the state and local levels as advocates for vulnerable families.

**For more information, please contact the N-MIECHV Program Manager, Jennifer Auman, at 402-471-1938 or [Jennifer.auman@nebraska.gov](mailto:Jennifer.auman@nebraska.gov) or visit [www.dhhs.ne.gov/homevisiting](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/homevisiting).**

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**Other:**

- Eleanor Shirley, Council Facilitator, has been included in a new listserv created for staff of State ICCs. This provides opportunities to share ideas and learn from other states in the country about their ICC recruitment, best practices, and relevant resources. If you have questions to pose to this listserv, please let Eleanor know. She may be reached at [diallogic.dimensions@gmail.com](mailto:diallogic.dimensions@gmail.com), or 402-981-1071.
  
  - Due to uncertainties still projected through the winter months related to the pandemic, we hope to meet next year in person but there is no guarantee. Please continue to watch your email for updated information. We thank you for your patience and perseverance! Please be safe and full of health through the holidays.
  
  - **Meeting Dates for 2021:**
    - February 19
    - May 7
    - August 20
    - November 19
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**Karen Hoffman**

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