



Early Childhood Care and Education in Idaho

**Idaho Preschool Development Grant
Birth-Age 5 Needs Assessment**

Acknowledgments

Completing a statewide needs assessment is a complex task that requires collaboration with multiple partners; analysis of local, regional, and national data; and input from people who are deeply involved in Idaho’s early childhood systems (ECS) and the Idaho families who rely on these systems. Idaho’s Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC); education experts; national partners; concerned parents, grandparents, caregivers, and community members; legislators; business leaders; and others provided their time, expertise, and support in the creation of this Needs Assessment.

Thank you to each community member who took the time to highlight how important the needs of Idaho’s young children are to the future of Idaho.

A special thanks to the McClure Center’s research assistant, Olive Swan, and stakeholder engagement partner, Danielle Horras.

Recommended citation: Whitney, G., Callahan, C. and Himes, K. (2021). *Early Childhood Care and Education in Idaho: Idaho Preschool Development Grant Birth-Age 5 Needs Assessment*. Report submitted to Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children and Idaho Early Childhood Advisory Council, February 2021.

This Needs Assessment was made possible by federal grant #90TP0077-01-00 and Idaho AEYC. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. You can learn more about the grant here: <https://idahoaeyc.org/pdg>.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary iv

Foreword viii

1. Introduction2

2. Why Early Education in Idaho Matters8

3. Idaho’s Families and Young Children 14

4. Needs of Idaho Families 22

5. Where are the Children? 42

6. Idaho Early Childhood Care and Education 46

7. Connecting Idaho Families to Early Learning Resources 74

8. Transitioning from Early Childhood Care and Education to School 80

9. Next Steps 84

Appendices 88

 Appendix A: Stakeholder Engagement Events 88

 Appendix B: Early Childhood Care and Education Programs and Resources 92

 Appendix C: Town Hall and Focus Group Materials 102

 Appendix D: Methodology 120

Executive Summary

This Needs Assessment is designed to help Idaho policymakers, administrators, and stakeholders gain an understanding of the children and families in Idaho, the nature of their needs, and the quality and availability of the supports and services that allow Idaho’s families and children to thrive.

High quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) has a lifelong, positive effect on children.¹ In the early years, this means ensuring that their environments are safe and healthy with access to food, shelter, and medical care. These environments also should be stimulating to meet their social, emotional, and developmental needs. This framework is vital to ensure that Idaho children achieve school readiness and the early literacy skills they need to succeed.^{2,3}

Idaho’s early childhood systems (ECS) are a broad network of diverse resources that assist Idaho children and families. These resources include ECCE programs and providers, health care services, housing and food assistance programs, and more. Without proper ECS supports for young children and their families, particularly those who are vulnerable and underserved, Idaho children will continue to fall short in terms of early literacy and school readiness.

To create this Needs Assessment, the McClure Center analyzed ECCE programs and ECS systems and related research, synthesized targeted studies, and sought input from Idaho’s Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC). The major components of this Needs Assessment are a literature review, synthesis of partner research studies, and stakeholder perspectives based on gathering primary source material. The Needs Assessment includes four key findings.

1 World Health Organization. (2020). *10 facts about early child development as social determinants of health*. https://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/child/development/10facts/en/
2 Morrissey, T., et al., (2014, March 1). *The short- and long-term impacts of large public early care and education programs*. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/report/short-and-long-term-impacts-large-public-early-care-and-education-programs>
3 Malik, R., et al., (2018, December 6). *America’s child care deserts in 2018*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/12/06/461643/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/>

Key Findings

Four key findings are described in this Needs Assessment. Idaho families experience a variety of unmet needs that inhibit their children’s ability to learn, many Idaho families are unable to afford ECCE, half of Idaho families live in areas where there are not enough ECCE programs to meet their needs, and Idaho lacks a clear picture of how different ECCE setting impact school readiness and early literacy outcomes.

Needs of Idaho Families

Many Idaho families face several critical challenges including poverty, hunger and housing insecurity, lack of health care, and inconsistent access to the internet or a computer. Forty percent of Idaho households struggle to afford necessities such as housing, food, child care, and utilities. Idahoans living in rural areas and minorities experience higher rates of poverty.⁴ In 2018, nearly 190,000, or 1 in 9 Idahoans, were food insecure. The rate for children was even higher with 1 in 8 facing food insecurity. Counties with the highest rates of food insecurity are disproportionately rural.⁵ In 2019, over 9,000 Idahoans experienced homelessness or sought homelessness support services in the previous year. Twenty seven percent were families with children.⁶

Child Care is Unaffordable for Many Idahoans

Child care is one of the biggest expenses in a family’s budget and affordability is a huge factor when it comes to ECCE, particularly for low-income families. Child care costs are on the rise in Idaho, increasing nearly 20% for a family with an infant and a 4-year-old from 2017 to 2018.⁷ As of October 2020, in Idaho, infant care costs a full-time minimum wage worker 50% of their salary and 13% of a median income family’s budget. Families with two children face an even larger burden. Child care for two children—an infant and a 4-year-old costs \$13,927 annually. A typical family in Idaho will spend 25% of its annual income on child care for an infant and a 4-year-old.⁸

ECCE is Unavailable for Nearly Half of Idahoans

Nearly 50% of Idahoans live in communities that either completely lack licensed child care providers or the providers are so scarce that there are more than three children for every child care space.⁹ The lack of availability is greater in rural and low-income communities and in communities with higher percentages of people of color.¹⁰ Moreover, if ECCE programs are available, it does not mean that all families have access to those programs. Circumstances such as cost, hours of operation, location, and the need for specialized services can prevent families from accessing child care, even if ECCE providers have child care spaces available. Idaho does not have a consolidated location for parents and families who provide ECCE in the home to access high quality educational materials.

4 United for Alice. (2020). *ALICE in Idaho: A financial hardship study*. https://www.unitedwaysei.org/sites/unitedwaysei.org/files/2020-06/2020ALICEReport_ID_FINAL-5-29-20.pdf
5 Feeding America. (2020). *Food insecurity in Idaho*. <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2018/overall/idaho>
6 Idaho Housing and Finance Association. (2019). *2019 state of homelessness in Idaho*. <https://www.idahohousing.com/documents/2019-report-the-state-of-homelessness-in-idaho.pdf>
7 United for Alice. (2020). *ALICE in Idaho: A financial hardship study*. https://www.unitedwaysei.org/sites/unitedwaysei.org/files/2020-06/2020ALICEReport_ID_FINAL-5-29-20.pdf
8 Economic Policy Institute. (2019, July). *The cost of childcare in Idaho*. <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/ID>
9 Malik, R., et al., (2018, December 6). *America’s child care deserts in 2018*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/12/06/461643/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/>
10 Bipartisan Policy Center. (2020). *Child care gap assessment - Idaho*. <https://childcaregap.org/>

Idaho Lacks Data That Connect ECCE Settings and Early Literacy Outcomes

Idaho does not have systems in place to understand which types of ECCE settings are most effective in increasing school readiness and early literacy. The state does not collect data on children before they enter elementary school, limiting information about how ECCE settings (either in the home or outside of the home) affect a child’s educational foundation, future literacy, and educational attainment. Data collected through licensing are minimal, as only programs with seven or more children are required to be licensed. This leaves a large gap in understanding ECCE programs in Idaho. Collecting and using these data will help Idaho policymakers, administrators, and stakeholders to understand these connections, and make decisions so all of Idaho’s children can access programs that help them develop the skills they need to be successful when starting school.

Next Steps

Moving forward, the needs identified in this Needs Assessment will guide the development of the statewide Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan will chart a path toward a well-coordinated, aligned, and integrated system of high quality programs, supports, and services for all Idaho children and families, supporting Governor Little’s goal of improved early literacy and the success of Idaho’s future community leaders and workforce.

This work will be ongoing. Many Idaho agencies and nonprofits currently working in ECCE are making improvements, adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic, and expanding services in response to the needs of Idaho families. This Needs Assessment and the Strategic Plan are first steps to improving early literacy and school readiness for Idaho children.



Foreword

Coronavirus and Idaho’s Families, Communities, and Early Childhood Systems

When Idaho’s early childhood systems (ECS) struggle, the difficulties extend to the families they serve. The coronavirus has cast a spotlight on the challenges facing Idaho’s ECS. As the pandemic drags on, these challenges including shortages of early childhood care and education (ECCE), food and housing insecurity, strained health care systems, and more, have intensified.

Multiple surveys have been conducted to gain first-hand knowledge about how the coronavirus has impacted the daily life of Idahoans. These surveys found that Idaho residents who are already economically vulnerable have experienced greater economic stress.

Families that earn above the Federal Poverty Level but cannot afford basic household expenses are considered Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE).¹ In July 2020, ALICE families reported more reduced hours and job loss than Idaho’s general population. Since the pandemic, 26% increased the balance on their credit cards to pay bills and nearly 24% relied on a food bank to meet their essential needs. More than 70% of ALICE households had one month or less of savings on hand to pay bills and 30% had less than a week’s worth of savings. Most ALICE respondents said their greatest financial need during COVID-19 was assistance paying rent/mortgage or other essential bills.²

1 United for ALICE. (n.d). *Meet ALICE*. <https://www.unitedforalice.org/>
2 United Ways of Idaho (2020, July). *COVID-19 impacts on families survey*.
3 Ibid.

In July 2020, ALICE families reported more reduced hours and job loss than Idaho’s general population.



Most ALICE respondents said their greatest financial need during COVID-19 was assistance paying rent/mortgage or other essential bills.³

Idaho’s unemployment rate jumped from 3% in March 2020 to 12% in April due to the state’s initial stay-at-home order, issued in late-March.⁴ Since this initial jump, the unemployment rate declined to a low of 4% in August, but increased to 6% in September.⁵ As a result and in anticipation of continuing fluctuations in unemployment, it is projected that in 2020 Idaho will face a 16% increase in food insecurity with 1 in 6 adults and 1 in 4 children lacking reliable access to affordable, nutritious food.⁶

Overall, ECCE providers are struggling to serve their communities, stay afloat financially, and protect the health and safety of their staff and the families they serve. National and Idaho-specific survey results show that more than 80% of ECCE programs will close permanently without substantial financial aid.⁷ Many Idaho ECCE providers report heightened health and safety measures such as smaller staff to child ratios and additional sanitization costs have increased their operating expenses while lower enrollment rates have reduced their revenues. One ECCE program operator was forced to lay off 70% of her staff in April.⁸

“After everything reopened, we were down 30% and still falling...This fall, we’re looking at a 50% or more decline as we go back to school.”

- Dana Russell, Sunny Day Child Care and Preschool in Ammon as told to the *Idaho Press*⁹

In mid-July, ECCE programs across the state, including at least five Migrant & Seasonal Head Start programs, were temporarily forced to close. Some of these closures were due to staff testing positive for coronavirus. Many programs closed because they were chronically understaffed due to the number of employees displaying symptoms or having to isolate after potential exposure and lengthy wait times (up to two weeks) for test results.¹⁰

“I’m saddened that our staff are willing to make every effort to serve the farmworker community, yet we’re unable to protect our staff 24/7 from this virus....We’re following all the CDC and health department guidelines, providing all the necessary PPE and disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizers. It’s just not enough.”

- Irma Morin, CEO Community Council of Idaho as told to the *Idaho Statesman*¹¹

4 Idaho Department of Labor. (2020, November 20). *State of Idaho resident labor force*. Research Analysis and Public Affairs. <https://lmi.idaho.gov/publications/2020/LAUS/statewide-unemployment-rates.pdf>
5 Ibid.
6 The Idaho Food Bank. (2020). *Hunger in Idaho*. <https://idahofoodbank.org/about/food-insecurity-in-idaho/>
7 Russell, B. (2020, August 4). Idaho’s child care industry ‘literally on the verge of collapse.’ *Idaho Press*. https://www.idahopress.com/news/local/idahos-child-care-industry-literally-on-the-verge-of-collapse/article_65590a90-f3c3-555b-b161-441a1fc357c2.html
8 The Langdon Group. (2020, July). Idaho child care program emergency grant focus group and survey report.
9 Russell, B. (2020, August 4). Idaho’s child care industry ‘literally on the verge of collapse.’ *Idaho Press*. https://www.idahopress.com/news/local/idahos-child-care-industry-literally-on-the-verge-of-collapse/article_65590a90-f3c3-555b-b161-441a1fc357c2.html
10 Foy, N. (2020, July 15). As Idaho prepared to reopen schools, COVID closes 5 migrant Head Start centers statewide. *Idaho Statesman*. <https://www.idahostatesman.com/article244204642.html>
11 Ibid.

When ECCE providers and programs close, reduce operating hours, or increase their prices, Idaho families feel the effects.

When ECCE providers and programs close, reduce operating hours, or increase their prices, Idaho families feel the effects. For low-income, vulnerable, and underserved families with young children, the challenges with child care are even worse. Nearly twice as many ALICE families had to completely leave the workforce due to child care issues compared to all of Idaho parents. Thirty-three percent of ALICE households that needed child care had their work hours negatively impacted, reduced, or eliminated during the pandemic due to child care issues. Twenty-four percent of minorities reported working reduced hours due to child care issues and 8% were no longer able to work due to child care issues.¹²

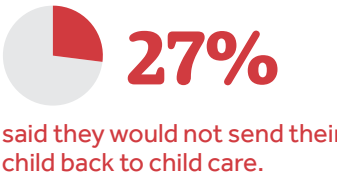
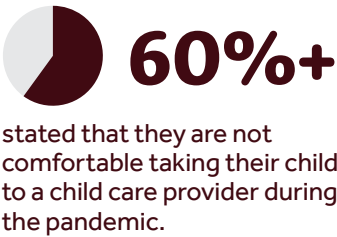
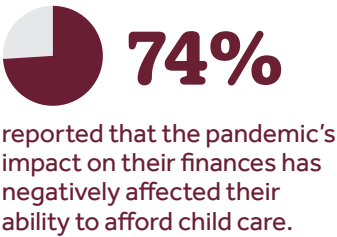
The coronavirus is also having significant effects on women and mothers in particular, with experts projecting that advancements in workplace equality could take women back a decade in terms of pay and advancement due to job loss.¹³

Nationally, the largest job losses are the ones that are most occupied by women—restaurants, retail, health care, and jobs within state and local government. Compounding this, when child care centers closed and schools shifted to remote learning, working mothers took on more of the added household responsibilities than fathers. Due to the pandemic, one-third of working women between 25- and 44-years-old became unemployed due to child care demands. Only 12% of unemployed men cited child care as a reason for unemployment.¹⁴

12 United Ways of Idaho. (2020, July). *COVID-19 Impacts on families survey*.
13 Taub, A. (2020, September 26). Pandemic will 'take our women 10 years back' in the workplace. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/26/world/covid-women-childcare-equality.html>
14 Cohen, P. (2020, November 17). Recession with a difference: Women face special burden. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/17/business/economy/women-jobs-economy-recession.html?action=click&module=Spotlight&pgtype=Homepage>

FIGURE I.1
Pandemic Impacts on Idaho Parents (2020)

300 parents responded to a statewide COVID impacts survey. Of these parents:



SOURCE: GS Strategy Group. (2020, July). *Family COVID survey for Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children*.

To face these hardships, Idaho has implemented new and expanded existing programs to provide safety, security, and stability to Idaho families.

Telehealth

In March 2020, Idaho Governor Brad Little lifted 125 regulations that required additional licensing for medical professionals to practice telehealth. This was designed to meet increased health care needs created by COVID-19, especially for people living in rural areas where practitioners are already scarce. Also in March, Idaho Medicaid temporarily expanded its definition of telehealth and its reimbursement policies. Various Idaho statutes and sections of administrative code have been removed to eliminate barriers to service and promote the appropriate use of telehealth services. Governor Little declared an intent to continue telehealth support post-COVID-19 and in June 2020, signed an executive order¹⁵ to make some of these changes permanent. These improvements are aimed at increasing access to telehealth and reducing barriers to the state's economic recovery.¹⁶

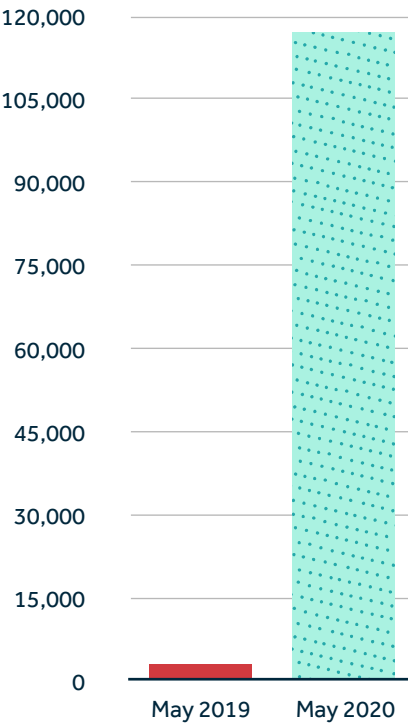
Idaho Rebounds: Our Path to Prosperity

This state government website describes Idaho's response to the coronavirus and includes a Resources for Business page that provides links to Idaho Rebound Cash Grants for Small Business, the Small Business Association's Paycheck Protection Program, COVID-19-Related Tax Credits, Disaster Loan Assistance, and more.¹⁷

15 Hyer, M. (2020, June 22). *Gov. Little cuts more red tape, preserves recent healthcare advances moving forward*. [Press Release]. <https://gov.idaho.gov/pressrelease/gov-little-cuts-more-red-tape-preserves-recent-healthcare-advances-moving-forward/>
16 Ramos, M.F., et al., (2020). *Supporting access to early childhood telehealth services in Idaho*. Child Trends.
17 Idaho Rebounds. (n.d.). *Resources for business*. State of Idaho. Accessed November 2020. <https://rebound.idaho.gov/resources-for-business/>

FIGURE I.2
Telehealth Visits (2019-2020)

In response to COVID-19, between March and May 2020, an estimated 117,000 telehealth visits were conducted compared to 3,000 telehealth visits during the same time frame in 2019.



SOURCE: Brown, R. (2020, June 22). Idaho Gov. Little signs executive order easing telehealth restrictions permanently. *Idaho Statesman*. <https://www.idahostatesman.com/article243713222.html>

Economic Rebound Advisory Committee

In April 2020, Governor Little convened this committee to provide recommendations that support Idaho’s recovery from the pandemic. Recommendations will be based on three phases, focused on 1) rebuilding of employee and consumer confidence, 2) business stability and growth, and 3) business promotion and attraction.¹⁸

Idaho Child Care Emergency Grants

On May 1, 2020, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare began accepting applications to “support the recovery of the child care infrastructure to support Idahoans’ ability to return to work.” Grants ranged from \$2,000 to \$15,000 depending on the provider type and the number of children they serve.¹⁹ Phase II of the Idaho Child Care Emergency Grant program was launched in August 2020 and provided additional funding for providers ranging from \$500 to \$5,000.²⁰

Strong Families, Strong Students

In late October, Idaho initiated a \$50 million program to provide families and students with grants that support their educational needs. Funds can be used for purchase or reimbursement of educational materials, devices, and services.²¹

18 Idaho Rebounds. (n.d.). *Advisory committee*. State of Idaho. <https://rebound.idaho.gov/advisory-committee/>
19 Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. (2020, May 1). *Idaho childcare emergency grant*. [Letter to Childcare Providers] https://idahostars.org/Portals/61/Docs/Providers/Announce/CCPLetterDHW_5-1-20.pdf
20 IDHWMEDIA. (2020, August 4). *More emergency funding available for childcare providers in Idaho*. Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Voice. <https://dhwblog.com/2020/08/04/more-emergency-funding-is-available-for-childcare-providers-in-idaho/>
21 Idaho Office of the Governor. (2020, October 19). *Strong families, strong students goes live Wednesday*. [Press Release]. <https://gov.idaho.gov/pressrelease/strong-families-strong-students-goes-live-wednesday/>



Introduction

When Governor Brad Little took office in 2019, one of his top priorities was to ensure that every child in Idaho is able to read at grade level by the end of the third grade. High quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) is key to achieving early literacy goals for families across Idaho. Governor Little is strongly committed to supporting communities and families in building opportunities that prepare children for school. In December 2019, Idaho was awarded more than \$3.3 million in federal funding to facilitate research, planning, collaboration, and coordination on early childhood systems (ECS) across the state.

The goal of Idaho's Preschool Development Grant Birth-5 is to strengthen the delivery of existing ECS for young children, promote language and literacy development, and better prepare low-income, vulnerable, and underserved children to enter kindergarten.



To understand the current landscape of ECS in Idaho, Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (Idaho AEYC) partnered with the University of Idaho James A. and Louise McClure Center for Public Policy Research (McClure Center) to draft a comprehensive statewide Needs Assessment. The purpose of this Needs Assessment is to help Idaho policymakers, administrators, and stakeholders gain an understanding of how Idaho’s ECS support children and families’ wellbeing and outcomes and where the state should go next to enhance and expand these systems. The results of the Needs Assessment will guide the development of a statewide strategic plan that will define the steps that need to be taken to improve ECS for all Idaho children and families.

In this Needs Assessment, there is an analysis of:

- The importance of ECCE;
- Idaho’s children and families, their needs, and the services that support them;
- The current state of ECCE programs’ quality and availability; and
- How Idaho families are connecting to the care and supports they need to thrive.

The McClure Center worked with several partners to create the Needs Assessment including Bipartisan Policy Center, Child Trends, Danielle Horras Consulting, GS Strategy Group, Policy Equity Group, and Social & Economic Sciences and Research Center (SESRC; Washington State University). **More than 2,000 Idahoans were contacted to gain firsthand accounts of Idaho ECS experiences.** Additional descriptions and materials related to the methods used to create this Needs Assessment can be found in Appendix D.

TABLE 1.1
Feedback from Idahoans

Lead Research Team	Event Product	Stakeholders
Child Trends	3 Reports, Survey, Town Hall, Interviews	810
Early Learning Collaboratives	14 Needs Assessments, 21 Surveys	900
GS Strategy Group	Survey	300
McClure Center	12 Town Halls and Focus Groups	206
Washington State University SESRC	Survey	465

SOURCE: McClure Center



Key Terms

ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed)

ALICE households are households that earn above the Federal Poverty Level but not enough to afford basic needs including housing, food, transportation, health care, and child care. Many people who are included in this definition are essential workers such as cashiers, nursing assistants, servers, laborers, security guards, etc.¹

Child Care Desert

A child care desert is defined as a community that either completely lacks child care options or where providers are so scarce that there are more than three children for every licensed child care space. Child care desert determinations do not include non-licensed providers such as relatives, friends, and neighbors whom parents may rely on for child care.²

Children in Rural Areas

Idaho defines rural school children as “fewer than twenty (20) enrolled students per square mile within the area encompassed by the school district’s boundaries” or a “county in which a plurality of the school district’s market value for assessment purposes is located contains less than twenty-five thousand (25,000) residents, based on the most recent decennial United States Census.”³

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Availability

Availability of ECCE services is determined by whether the number of spaces for children in high quality child care programs meets the needs of the community. Programs include center based care, licensed family child care, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, state pre-K programs, school based ECCE programs, and other licensed-exempt programs as identified by the state. Calculations of availability do not include unpaid, unregulated care provided by relatives, babysitters, nannies, etc.⁴

Mixed Delivery System

A system of ECCE services that are delivered through a combination of programs, providers, public schools, and other community based organizations that are supported by a combination of public and private funds.⁵

Quality ECCE

Licensed, early learning environments staffed by educated professionals that promote positive relationships; cultivate social, emotional, physical, and cognitive learning and development; empower parents to participate in their child’s education; and create safe, nurturing, and inclusive learning experiences.

Vulnerable or Underserved

Children at greater risk of poor outcomes include those who live in poverty or income constrained households; experience homelessness or housing insecurity; have needs that require intervention services; are dual language learners; have, had, or are having traumatic experiences (including placement in foster care); live in rural areas or areas with limited access to services; and belong to populations that are otherwise disproportionately underserved.

1 United for ALICE. (n.d). *Meet ALICE*. <https://www.unitedforalice.org/>
2 Malik, R. and Hamm, K. (2017, August 30). *Mapping America’s child care deserts*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2017/08/30/437988/mapping-americas-child-care-deserts/>
3 U.S. Census Bureau. (2012, July). Idaho: *2010 Population and housing unit counts*. <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/2010/cph-2/cph-2-14.pdf>
4 Friese, S., Lin, V., Forry, N. and Tout, K. (2017). *Defining and measuring access to high quality early care and education: A guidebook for policymakers and researchers*. OPRE Report #2017-08. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/resources/33432/pdf>

5 Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6301. (2015). Section 9212 (b)(5). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1177>

Why Early Education in Idaho Matters

“The foundation is more important than college.”

- Town Hall Participant



Development and Health

During the first three years of a child’s life, more than one million new neural connections form every second.¹ These connections are the foundation that shapes learning, behavior, and physical and mental health for the rest of their life.² During these formative years, how babies and children interact with the world and how the world interacts with them matters.

Research has proven time and time again that high quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) during these important phases of brain development improves children’s ability to succeed later in life. This is particularly true for vulnerable children and their families.³

The short- and long-term benefits of high quality ECCE are life changing.

Continuous access to high quality ECCE at an early age promotes strong relationships; positive interactions; enhanced social-emotional development (increased self-regulation and ability to pay attention); and advanced vocabulary, literacy, and math skills.^{4,5} Head Start programs have significant positive impacts on school readiness and these benefits are particularly pronounced for dual language learners and children with the lowest test scores.⁶ High quality ECCE also leads to significant decreases in special education placement and instances of children being held back in school.^{7,8}

1 Center on the Developing Child. (n.d.). *Brain architecture*. Harvard University. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/brain-architecture/>
2 Ibid.
3 World Health Organization. (2020). *10 facts about early child development as social determinants of health*. https://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/child/development/10facts/en/
4 Malik, R., et al., (2018, December 6). *America’s child care deserts in 2018*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/12/06/461643/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/>
5 Morrissey, T., et al., (2014, March 1). *The short- and long-term impacts of large public early care and education programs*. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/report/short-and-long-term-impacts-large-public-early-care-and-education-programs>
6 Bitler, M., et al., (n.d.). *Head Start programs have significant benefits for children at the bottom of the skill distribution*. University of California Davis Center for Poverty Research. <https://poverty.ucdavis.edu/policy-brief/head-start-programs-have-significant-benefits-children-bottom-skill-distribution>
7 Walsh, B. (2017, November 16). *The lasting payoff of early ed*. Harvard Graduate School of Education. <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/17/11/lasting-payoff-early-ed>
8 Morrissey, T., et al., (2014, March 1). *The short- and long- term impacts of large public early care and education programs*. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/report/short-and-long-term-impacts-large-public-early-care-and-education-programs>
9 Center on the Developing Child. (n.d.). *Brain architecture*. Harvard University. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/brain-architecture/>

During the first three years of a child’s life, more than one million new neural connections form every second.⁹

Multiple studies have shown that high quality ECCE has long-term economic, social, and health benefits. Researchers have found strong links between high school dropout rates and incarceration; 1 in 10 young males who drop out of high school experience jail or juvenile detention compared to 1 in 35 young males who graduate high school.¹⁰ Those who do not graduate from high school earn approximately \$8,000 per year less than high school graduates and about \$26,500 per year less than college graduates.¹¹

Children who have strong ECCE foundations are better prepared to succeed in school and graduate. As adults, children who participated in high quality ECCE are also less likely to binge drink, smoke, and use illegal drugs, and are at lower risk for health issues including heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.¹² These outcomes are not only positive for children and families, they are positive for Idaho communities and the state’s economy.

Economics

When families cannot find or afford high quality ECCE or when they experience disruptions to their child care, it impacts their ability to work.

In a February 2020 (pre-COVID-19) analysis of the economic impacts of child care, Idaho parents reported having to quit their jobs, reduce their hours, forgo advancements, and put higher education on pause due to difficulties with finding, affording, and maintaining ECCE.

10 Dillon, S. (2009, October 8). Study finds high rate of imprisonment among dropouts. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/09/education/09dropout.html#:~:text=On%20any%20given%20day%2C%20about,low%2Dskill%20workers%20is%20plunging>
11 Alliance for Excellence Education. (n.d.). *The high cost of high school dropouts: The economic case for reducing the high school dropout rate*. <https://all4ed.org/take-action/action-academy/the-economic-case-for-reducing-the-high-school-dropout-rate/>
12 Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (2020). *Early childhood development and education*. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/early-childhood-development-and-education>

FIGURE 2.1
Learning Foundation

Multiple studies have shown that high quality ECCE has long-term economic, social, and health benefits.



FIGURE 2.2
Economic Loss (2020)

Child care issues create an estimated \$479 million loss to Idaho’s economy.



SOURCE: U. S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry. (2020). *ID untapped potential: How childcare impacts Idaho’s state economy*. https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/EarlyEd_UntappedPotential_Idaho.pdf

FIGURE 2.3
Impacts of Child Care
Issues (2020)

Reported in Untapped
Potential, a pre-COVID
survey of Idaho parents.



of Idaho parents missed an
average of 12 days of work
over the past year.



of Idaho parents reported
significant negative impacts
on their employment.



of Idaho parents stopped
going to school or
workforce training.

SOURCE: U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and
Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry. (2020).
*ID untapped potential: How childcare impacts Idaho's
state economy.* https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/EarlyEd_UntappedPotential_Idaho.pdf

Parents also reported leaving their jobs altogether, with 4% of participants indicating they had been involuntarily separated from their employment and 12% voluntarily separated.¹³

The lack of child care options in Idaho serve as a barrier to employment. This barrier is greater for women who disproportionately take on caregiving responsibilities when outside child care is not an option.¹⁴ Parents, especially mothers, often provide child care instead of seeking employment.^{15,16} While this arrangement may be preferable for some families, for many Idahoans it is not economically viable. For these families, the need for access to child care is critical.

13 U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry. (2020). *ID untapped potential: How childcare impacts Idaho's state economy.* https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/EarlyEd_UntappedPotential_Idaho.pdf

14 Schochet, L. (2019, March 28). *The child care crisis is keeping women out of the workforce.* Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2019/03/28/467488/child-care-crisis-keeping-women-workforce/>

15 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017, April 27). *Employment in families with children in 2016.* United States Department of Labor. <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2017/employment-in-families-with-children-in-2016.htm>

16 Cohen, P. (2020, November 17). *Recession with a difference: Women face special burden.* *The New York Times.* <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/17/business/economy/women-jobs-economy-recession.html>

Taking just a few years off from work can create severe financial setbacks. A national study estimates that factoring in lost wage and retirement benefits, a person who leaves the workforce loses up to four times their annual salary per year.

For example, a 32-year-old woman earning \$44,000 per year would lose \$335,045 in wages, wage increases, retirement assets, and benefits over the course of her lifetime.¹⁷

These financial hardships hold true in Idaho too. In Idaho, it is estimated that disruptions to parents' work due to child care issues result in a \$479 million annual loss to the state's economy. **This includes \$414 million in direct employer costs related to turnover and absences and a \$65.4 million loss in annual tax revenues.**¹⁸

17 Madowitz, M., et al., (2016, June 21). *Calculating the hidden cost of interrupting a career for child care.* Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2016/06/21/139731/calculating-the-hidden-cost-of-interrupting-a-career-for-child-care/>

18 U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry. (2020). *ID untapped potential: How childcare impacts Idaho's state economy.* https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/EarlyEd_UntappedPotential_Idaho.pdf



Idaho's Families and Young Children

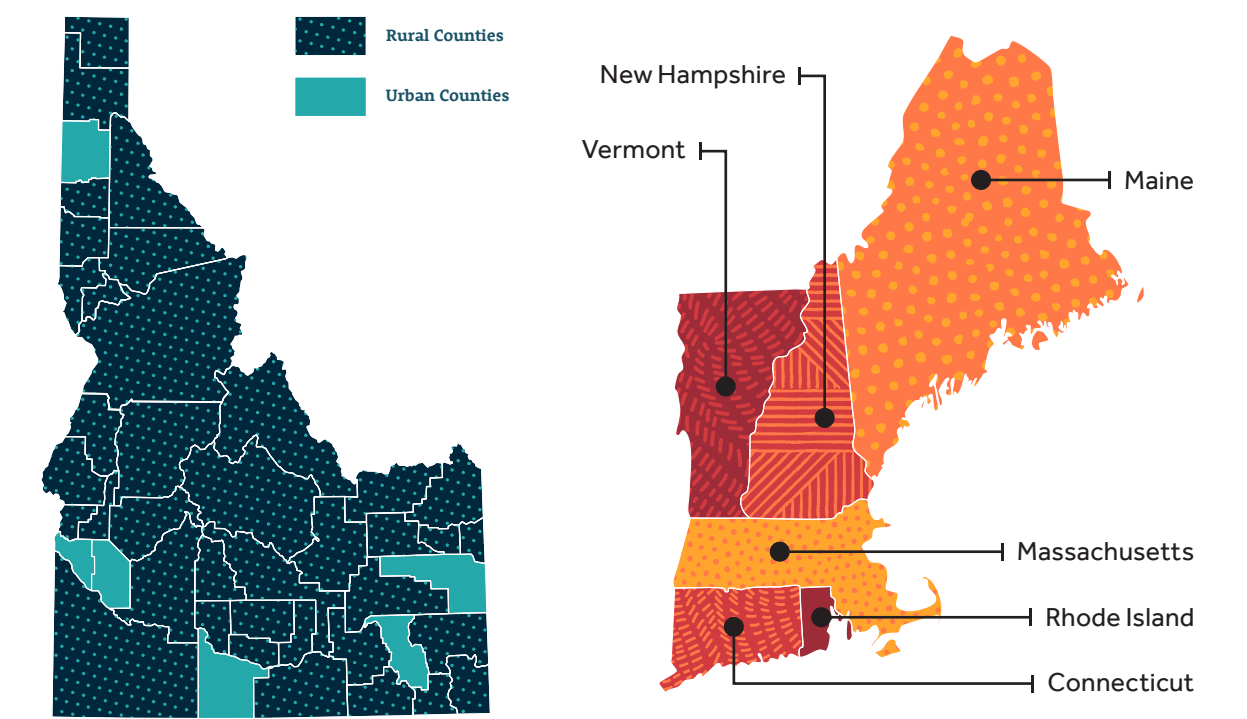
Idaho is renowned for the diversity and beauty of its landscape. No two corners of the state look alike, and each region is unique in culture and climate. The same can be said for Idaho's children and families. They are diverse, beautiful, and unique.



Idaho is a vast state, with a landmass greater than all of New England. Though large in size, the state's population is small with an average of 19 people per square mile.¹ Twenty-five Idaho counties are considered "frontier," with the least populated (Clark) having only 0.6 persons per square mile.^{2,3} Of Idaho's 1.7 million people, 32% (or 578,544) live in these rural areas.⁴

Idaho is a large and remarkably rural state.

FIGURE 3.1
Rural Idaho (2018)



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2018. Table DP05.

1 U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). *Quickfacts: Idaho*. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/ID>
2 National Center for Frontier Communities. (2018). *Frontier areas and populations densities 2010 Census*. <http://frontierus.org/resources/>
3 U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). *Quickfacts: Idaho*. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/clarkcountyidaho,ID/PST045219>
4 Rural Health Information Hub. (2020). *Idaho*. <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/states/idaho>

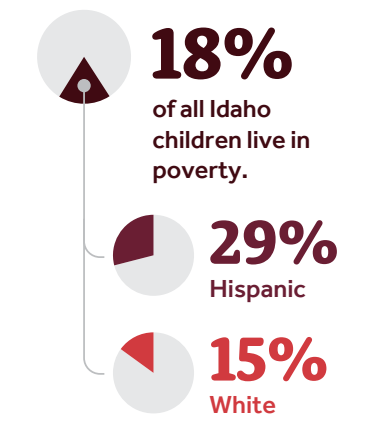
Idaho's 2018 median wage, \$34,260, ranks 43rd in the U.S. for earnings.⁵ Wages in Idaho have remained stagnant since the late 1970s. Adjusting for inflation, over the last 40 years, Idaho wages have increased 1.6% compared to a more than 21% increase seen by the average American.⁶

Idaho is home to over 115,000 children under five.⁷ Nearly 18% of all Idaho children live in poverty. Of these children, 29% are Hispanic and 15% are white. Nearly 25% of all Idaho children live in homes that receive assistance from SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), Cash Public Assistance Income, and/or Supplemental Security Income.⁸ Poverty rates in Idaho are higher in rural (14%) compared to urban areas (11%).⁹

Racial and ethnic diversity in Idaho has increased in recent years and these increases have been even greater among young children; in 2019, children under five in Idaho were more racially and ethnically diverse than adults. The Hispanic community has experienced the largest population growth.¹⁰ Nineteen percent of children under five in Idaho are identified as Hispanic compared to 12% of adults. Statewide, the highest concentrations of Hispanic children under 17 live in rural counties including Clark with 52%, Jerome with 49%, Power with 48%, Minidoka with 44%, and Gooding with 41%. Only one urban area, Canyon County, has a percentage of Hispanic children greater than 30%.¹¹ Seventeen percent of households speaking Spanish are limited English speaking households.¹²

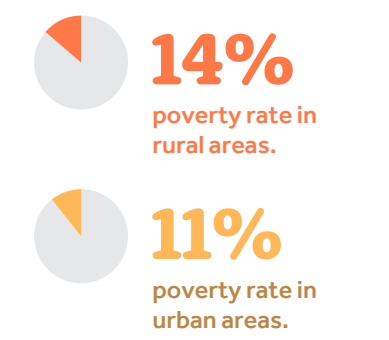
5 Russell, B. (2020, January 2). Idaho wages continue to rank low, labor market challenging. *Idaho Press*. https://www.idahopress.com/eyeonboise/idaho-wages-continue-to-rank-low-labor-market-challenging/article_4a677453-3ce6-5f48-a620-639ccc2cc0ef.html
6 Idaho Center for Fiscal Policy Brief. (2018, November). *Idaho jobs report*. <http://idahocfp.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/ICFP-Jobs-Report-Q12018-Release-November-2018.pdf>
7 Kids Count Data Center. (2017, February). *Child population by age group*. Annie E. Casey Foundation. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/8449-child-population-by-age-group?loc=14&loct=2#detailed/2/any/false/573,869,36/62,4096,4097,6,838/17084,17085>
8 Idaho Voices for Children. (2019). *Census data highlights: Child wellbeing in Idaho*. https://www.idahovoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2019-Census-Data-Highlights_12312019.pdf
9 Economic Research Service. (2020, October 29). *State fact sheets: Idaho*. United States Department of Agriculture. <https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?StateFIPS=16&StateName=Idaho&ID=17854>
10 Smith, G. and Tacke, K. (2020, July 14). *Idaho's Hispanic population growth continues in 2019*. Idaho Department of Labor. <https://idahowork.com/2020/07/14/idahos-hispanic-population-growth-continues-in-2019/>
11 U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2019. Table B01001.
12 U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2019. Table S1602.

FIGURE 3.2
Idaho Children in Poverty (2017)



SOURCE: Kids Count Data Center. (2017, February). *Child population by age group*. Annie E. Casey Foundation. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/8449-child-population-by-age-group?loc=14&loct=2#detailed/2/any/false/573,869,36/62,4096,4097,6,838/17084,17085>

FIGURE 3.3
Idaho Rural and Urban Poverty (2020)



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. (2020). *State fact sheet: Idaho*. <https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?StateFIPS=16&StateName=Idaho&ID=17854>

Approximately 2% of Idahoans identify as American Indian or Alaska Native.¹³ There are five federally recognized tribes within the state, and the majority of American Indians or Alaska Natives in Idaho live on one of five reservations.¹⁴ The tribes are geographically dispersed with the Coeur d'Alene and Kootenai tribes in the north; the Nez Perce tribe near the center; the Shoshone-Bannock tribe located in the eastern part of the state; and the Shoshone-Paiute in the southern part of the state, straddling the Idaho/Nevada border.¹⁵

Approximately 13% of children in Idaho were born outside of the U.S. or have at least one parent born outside of the U.S. Of these, the majority of families are from Latin America (78%), with smaller numbers of families from Asia (8%), Europe (7%), or Africa (2%).¹⁶

Refugee resettlement agencies are located in Boise and Twin Falls. From 2018 to 2019, the top five countries from which refugees arrived to Idaho were the Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Myanmar/Burma, and Sudan.¹⁷ Among children in immigrant families, 20% live in households where no person over the age of 14 speaks English “very well.”¹⁸

13 U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). *Quick facts: Idaho*. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/ID>

14 The United States Attorney's Office District of Idaho. (2019, April 4). *Tribal lands*. United States Department of Justice. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-id/tribal-lands#:~:text=There%20are%20five%20federally%20recognized,Kootenai%2C%20and%20the%20Nez%20Perce>

15 The National Atlas of the United States of America. (n.d.). *Federal lands and Indian reservations*. State Department of Idaho. <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/indian-ed/files/general/Idaho-Reservation-Map.pdf>

16 Kids Count Data Center. (2020). *Children in immigrant families by parent's region of origin in Idaho*. Annie E. Casey Foundation. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5923-children-in-immigrant-families-by-parents-region-of-origin?loc=14&loct=2#detailed/2/14/false/37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38/1767,1768,1769,1770/12549,12550>

17 Idaho Office for Refugees. (n.d.). *About refugees in Idaho*. <http://www.idahorefugees.org/resettlement-in-idaho.html>

18 Kids Count Data Center. (2009 - 2018). *Children living in linguistically isolated households by family nativity in Idaho*. Annie E. Casey Foundation. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/129-children-living-in-linguistically-isolated-households-by-family-nativity?loc=14&loct=2#detailed/2/14/false/37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38/78,79/472,473>

19 Sacks, V. and Murphey, D. (2018, February 20). *The prevalence of adverse childhood experiences, nationally, by state, and by race or ethnicity*. Child Trends.

20 U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2019. Table S1002.

21 Idaho Housing and Finance Association. (2019). *2019 state of homelessness in Idaho*. <https://www.idahohousing.com/documents/2019-report-the-state-of-homelessness-in-idaho.pdf>

22 Idaho Voices for Children. (2019, December). *Census data highlights: Child wellbeing in Idaho*. https://www.idahovoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2019-Census-Data-Highlights_12312019.pdf

23 Kids Count Data Center. (2020). *Children in foster care waiting for adoption by group in Idaho*. Annie E. Casey Foundation. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6675-children-in-foster-care-waiting-for-adoption-by-age-group#detailed/2/14/false/37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38/1889,2616,2617,2618,2619,122/13725,13726>

24 Idaho State Department of Education. (n.d.). *Assessment & graduation rate results*. <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/assessment/accountability/results.html>

25 Ibid.

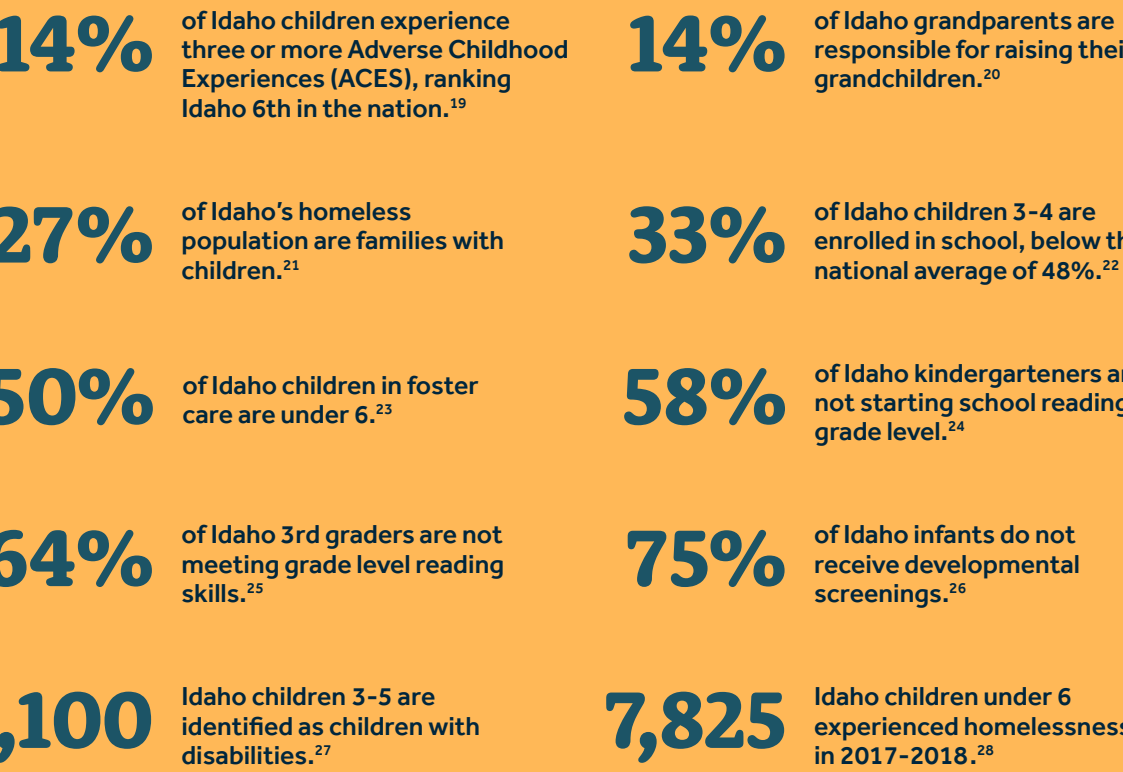
26 Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health. (n.d.). *Survey: 2018-2019 National survey of children's health: Idaho*. <https://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey/results?q=7699&r=14>

27 Idaho State Department of Education. (n.d.). *Special education: Public reporting*. <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/sped/public-reporting/>

28 Yamashiro, A., and McLaughlin, J. (2020). *Early childhood homelessness state profiles 2020: Data collected in 2017-2018*. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Washington, DC, 2020. <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/disadv/homeless/early-childhood-homelessness-state-profiles-2020.pdf>

Idaho's Vulnerable Children

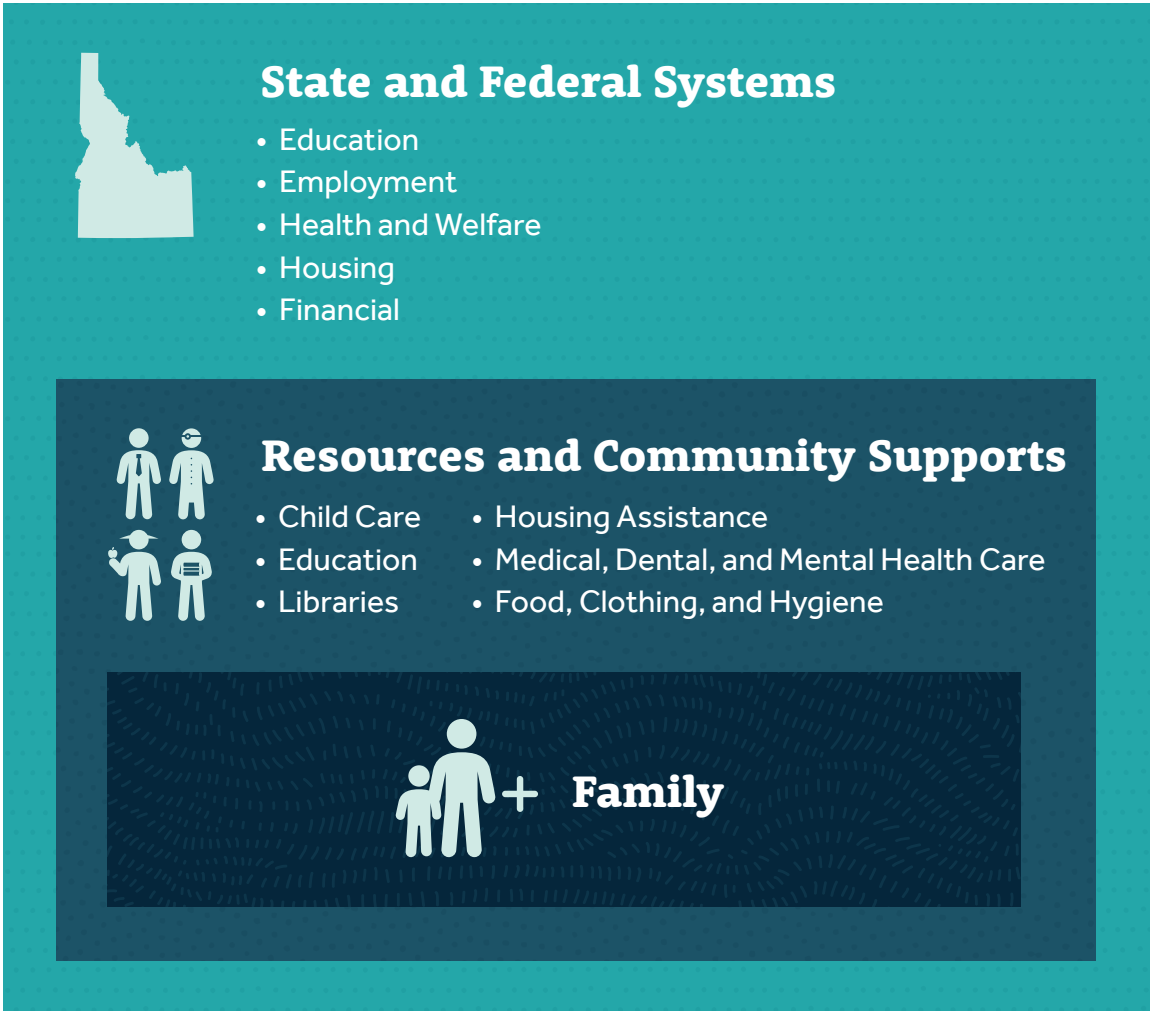
While there is a general picture of where Idaho children are located and how their demographics vary from region to region, knowledge about the characteristics of Idaho's most vulnerable children is limited.



Idaho's Early Childhood Systems (ECS) Supports

Idaho's ECS include the full range of programs, services, and funding that support children 0-5 and their families. These supports are particularly important for Idaho's vulnerable and underserved communities. Examples of Idaho's ECS include ECCE programs and providers, health care and behavioral health services, housing and food assistance programs, support for children with disabilities and developmental delays, services for families living in remote and rural areas, and more.

FIGURE 3.4
Early Childhood Systems and Supports



Needs of Idaho Families

“It is like Maslow’s hierarchy of needs: if they don’t have that shelter and food, how will they learn? So food—food banks—how can we make those more accessible? And housing, too.”

- Town Hall Participant



Many Idaho families face several critical challenges including poverty, hunger and housing insecurity, lack of health care, and inconsistent access to the internet or a computer.

When families experience hunger, housing insecurity, or are sick but cannot afford to see a doctor, their children’s ability to concentrate and learn decreases.

Poverty

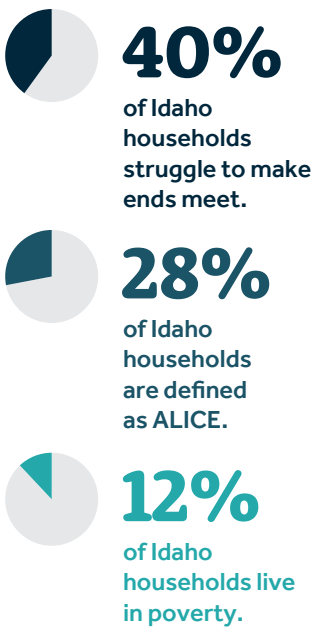
In Idaho, 40% of households struggle to make ends meet. Twelve percent of Idaho households live in poverty while another 28% of Idaho households are defined as ALICE (earning above the Federal Poverty Level [FPL], but are unable to afford basic household necessities including housing, food, child care, and more).¹ “Small increases in regular bills like rent, food, or gasoline; a decrease in wages or hours worked; or an unexpected emergency—such as a factory closing or a natural disaster—could destabilize a large number of households.”²

Among Idaho families with children:

- 47% of married-parent families fell below the ALICE threshold.
- 78% of families headed by single mothers fell below the ALICE threshold.
- 61% of families headed by single fathers fell below the ALICE threshold.³

Living in or on the edge of poverty leads to a host of needs including hunger, homelessness, lack of medical care, and more.

FIGURE 4.1
Idaho Households (2020)



SOURCE: United for Alice. (2020). *ALICE in Idaho: A financial hardship study*. https://www.unitedwaysei.org/sites/unitedwaysei.org/files/2020-06/2020ALICEReport_ID_FINAL-5-29-20.pdf

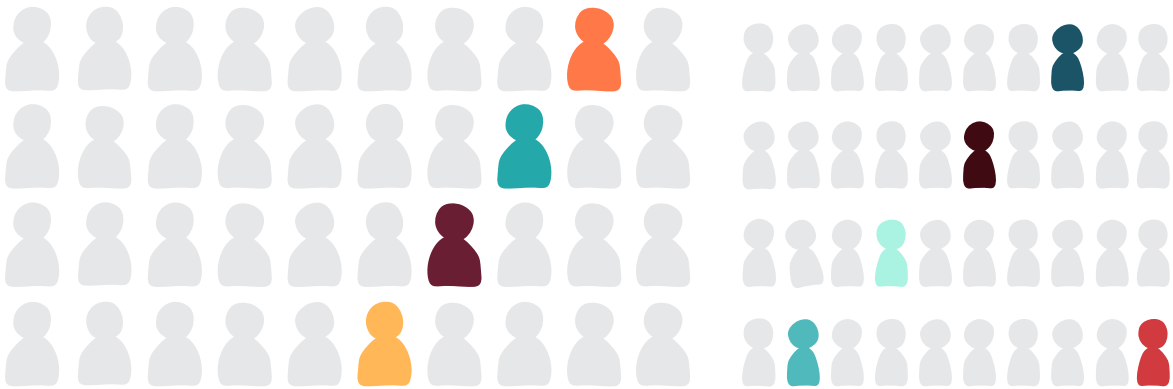
1 United for Alice. (2020). *ALICE in Idaho: A financial hardship study*. https://www.unitedwaysei.org/sites/unitedwaysei.org/files/2020-06/2020ALICEReport_ID_FINAL-5-29-20.pdf
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.

Hunger and Food Insecurity

Food insecurity occurs when people do not have reliable access to sufficient amounts of affordable, nutritious food. In 2018, nearly 190,000, or 1 in 9 Idahoans, were food insecure. The rate for children was even higher, with 1 in 8 facing food insecurity. Counties with the highest rates of food insecurity are disproportionately rural. The top four Idaho counties with the highest food insecurity are Shoshone (17%), Custer (16%), Lewis (15%), and Clearwater (15%).⁴ More than 50% of Idahoans who are food insecure do not qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) due to their income level.⁵

FIGURE 4.2
Idaho Food Insecurity (2018)

One in 9 Idahoans, nearly 190,000, were food insecure in 2018. One in 8 Idaho children were food insecure.



SOURCE: Feeding America. (2020). *Food insecurity in Idaho*. <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2018/overall/idaho>

4 Feeding America. (2020). *Food insecurity in Idaho*. <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2018/overall/idaho>
5 Idaho Food Bank. (2020). *Hunger in Idaho*. <https://idahofoodbank.org/about/food-insecurity-in-idaho/>

Homelessness and Housing Insecurity

Idaho is experiencing an explosion in population growth and the fastest rising housing costs in the country;⁶ however, income gains have not matched the increase in expenses.⁷ **In 2019, 46% of Idaho’s renters and 24% of homeowners spent 30% or more of their household income on housing costs, making them cost burdened.”⁸**

In 2019, 24% of Idaho households with children were cost burdened.⁹

When a household struggles to balance the costs of housing, transportation, child care, health care, and other daily living expenses, it puts them at risk for eviction or foreclosure. This is defined as housing insecurity. **Housing insecurity is associated with significant delays in families’ and children’s ability to learn, increased physical and mental health issues, poor job performance, and homelessness.**

6 Federal Housing Finance Agency. (2020, November 24). *U.S. house prices rise 3.1 percent in third quarter; up 7.8 percent over the last year.* [Press Release]. <https://www.fhfa.gov/Media/PublicAffairs/Pages/US-House-Prices-Rise-3pt1-Pct-in-3Q-Up-7pt8-Pct-over-the-Last-Year.aspx>
7 Idaho Center for Fiscal Policy. (2018, November). *Idaho jobs report.* idahocfp.org/idaho-jobs-report/
8 U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey 1-year Estimates 2019. Table DP04
9 Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2020). *Children living in households with a high cost burden in Idaho.* <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/7244-children-living-in-households-with-a-high-housing-cost-burden?loc=14&loct=2#detailed/2/14/false/1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133/any/14287,14288>

Housing Insecurity

When a household struggles to balance the costs of housing, transportation, child care, health care, and other daily living expenses, it puts them at risk for eviction or foreclosure.

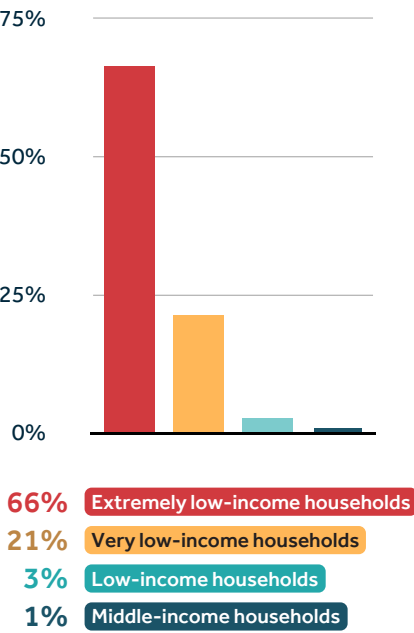
Severely Cost Burdened

When a household spends more than half their budget on rent and utilities.

In general, housing insecurity impacts lower-income populations most—in 2017, 66% of Idaho’s extremely low-income renter households were severely cost burdened compared to 1%, 3% and 21% of middle-, low-, and very low-income renter households, respectively.¹⁰

In 2019, the Idaho Point-in-Time Count found that more than 9,000 Idahoans experienced homelessness or sought homelessness support services in the previous year. Twenty seven percent were families with children.¹¹ The U.S. Department of Education expands the definition of youth homelessness to include children who “lack a fixed, regular, and nighttime residence.”¹² This definition includes families that are doubled up, staying in hotels, migratory children, and other indicators of housing issues. From 2017 to 2018, an estimated 7,825 Idaho children (or 1 in 18) experienced homelessness. Of these, 13% were served by Head Start, Early Head Start, or other federally funded early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs. The remaining 87% went unserved.¹³

FIGURE 4.3
Severely Cost Burdened Idaho Renters (2020)



SOURCE: National Low Income Housing Coalition. (2020). *2020 Idaho housing profile.* nlihc.org/sites/default/files/SHP_ID.pdf

10 National Low-income Housing Coalition. (2020). *2020 Idaho housing profile.* nlihc.org/sites/default/files/SHP_ID.pdf
11 Idaho Housing and Finance Association. (2019). *2019 state of homelessness in Idaho.* <https://www.idahohousing.com/documents/2019-report-the-state-of-homelessness-in-idaho.pdf>
12 Youth.Gov. (n.d.). *Homelessness & runaway: Federal definitions.* <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/runaway-and-homeless-youth/federal-definitions#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20Department%20of%20Education%20defines%20homeless%20youth%20as%20youth,an%20institution%20that%20provides%20a>
13 U.S. Department of Education. (2020). *Early child homelessness state profiles.* <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/disadv/homeless/early-childhood-homelessness-state-profiles-2020.pdf>



Access to Health and Mental Health Care

The number of uninsured Idahoans is increasing. This rise is greatest among vulnerable populations including children, people in poverty, and Hispanic communities. **From 2017 to 2018, the rate of uninsured people rose faster in Idaho compared to all other states with nearly 200,000 people uninsured.** The rates of uninsured children increased more than any other age group. Uninsured rates for children under 19 in households earning under 200% of the FPL rose from 4% in 2017 to 7% in 2018.¹⁴

TABLE 4.1
Health Insurance Coverage among Idahoans (2019)

Segment	Number Uninsured	Percent Uninsured
Children under 19		
White Alone, Non-Hispanic	20,685	5%
Hispanic	7,106	8%
Non-Elderly Adults 19–64		
White Alone, Non-Hispanic	139,588	16%
Hispanic	38,850	30%
All Ages		
White Alone, Non-Hispanic	161,325	10%
Hispanic	46,484	21%

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau. (2020) American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2019. Tables B27001A, B27001I.

In 2019, there were 3,379 active physicians serving Idaho’s 1.7 million residents, making Idaho 49th in the U.S. for the number of total active physicians per 100,000 people.¹⁵

Forty-two of Idaho’s 44 counties are designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) for primary care,¹⁶ 43 of 44 are HPSAs for dental providers,¹⁷ and all 44 counties are designated as HPSAs for mental health care providers.¹⁸ Only 109 psychiatric professionals provide critical mental health care in Idaho.¹⁹

14 Idaho Voices for Children. (2019). *Idaho children are losing health coverage*. <https://www.idahovoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/October-2019-Voices-Uninsured-Children-Report.pdf>

15 AAMC. (2019). *State physician workforce data report*. Washington, DC: AAMC. <https://www.fmr.idaho.org/app/uploads/sites/4/2020/01/aamc-2019-state-physician-workforce-data-report.pdf>

16 Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. (2018). *Idaho primary care health professional shortage area service areas*. <https://publicdocuments.dhw.idaho.gov/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=1807&dbid=0&repo=PUBLIC-DOCUMENTS>

17 Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. (2019). *Idaho dental health professional shortage service areas*. <https://publicdocuments.dhw.idaho.gov/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=1806&dbid=0&repo=PUBLIC-DOCUMENTS>

18 Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. (2017). *Idaho dental health professional shortage service areas*. <https://publicdocuments.dhw.idaho.gov/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=1808&dbid=0&repo=PUBLIC-DOCUMENTS>

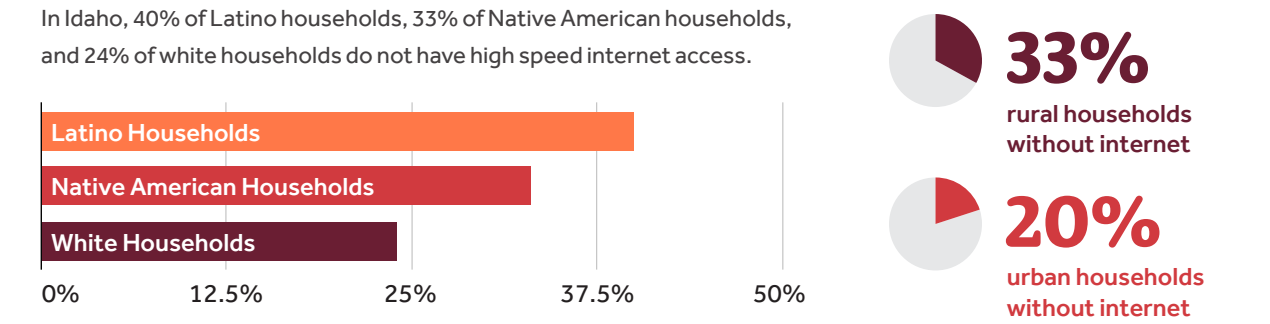
19 Kaiser Family Foundation. (2020, March). *Professionally active specialist physicians by field*. <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/physicians-by-specialty-area/?currentTimeframe=0&selectedDistributions=psychiatry&selectedRows=%7B%22states%22:%7B%22Idaho%22:%7B%7D%7D%7D&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>

Internet Access and Devices

Limited access to reliable internet and internet devices has a negative effect on families’ ability to access education and social service resources, work or look for employment, receive health and safety information, and more.

Nearly one-fourth of Idaho families do not have access to reliable internet services and the majority of those impacted are low-income, minority, and/or rural. Specifically, 44% of households with annual incomes between \$25,000 and \$50,000 do not have access to the internet compared to 10% of households with annual incomes of \$150,000 or more. Forty percent of Latino households and 33% of Native American households do not have high speed internet access compared to 24% of white households. Thirty-three percent of rural households have no high speed internet compared to 20% of urban households. Sixteen percent of Latino households do not have internet devices compared to 14% of Native American households and 6% of white households.²⁰

FIGURE 4.4
Idaho Households without High Speed Internet Access (2020)



SOURCE: Future Ready Schools. (n.d.). *Students of color caught in the homework gap: Idaho*. Alliance for Excellent Education. <https://futureready.org/homework-gap/#map>

20 Future Ready Schools. (n.d.). *Students of color caught in the homework gap: Idaho*. Alliance for Excellent Education. <https://futureready.org/homework-gap/#map>

Supports and Services for Idaho Families

The health and wellbeing of Idaho’s vulnerable families and their children are directly tied to the state’s early childhood systems’ (ECS) ability to provide services. Idaho families, particularly vulnerable families, often are unable to find resources that can help them. When individual organizations that make up Idaho’s ECS collaborate, more families and children have access to the resources they need to thrive.

Several programs in Idaho are successful in efficiently providing families with easy access to many of the services and supports they need to thrive.

Community Schools

Community schools are evidence-based programs that provide wraparound services to children and their families. The philosophy behind community schools is that when critical needs are met, children can come to school ready to learn.

Community schools typically include four pillars: 1) integrated student supports, 2) expanded learning time and opportunities, 3) family and community engagement, and 4) collaborative leadership and practices.

When these elements are in place, “Schools become hubs of the community where educators, families, nonprofits, community members, and others unite to create conditions in which all children learn and thrive.”²¹

Community schools connect vulnerable and underserved communities to abundant resources. These resources include free language classes and translation services; parenting resources; preschool; food and clothing pantries; household and hygiene supplies; school supplies; internet access; medical, dental, and behavioral health services; housing assistance; and other supports as needed.²²

To accomplish this, community schools are built on strong partnerships and collaborations. Using public schools as hubs, community schools bring together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families, and communities.

21 Oakes, J. and Daniel, J. (2017). *Community schools: An evidence-based strategy for equitable school improvement*. National Education Policy Center https://nepc.colorado.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Community%20Schools_0.pdf
22 Overgaard, W. and Coberly D. (2019, November 1). *Community schools in the Boise School District*. Idaho Education News. <https://www.idahoednews.org/voices/community-schools-in-the-boise-school-district/>

Community School in Action

In early 2020, Marsing, Idaho celebrated the opening of its community school, the HUB. Marsing is a small community with a poverty rate of 42%²³ and a large migrant population. Nearly 42% of residents speak a language other than English in the home.²⁴ Marsing has no pharmacy and their food pantry and senior center recently closed. In response to a lack of resources, the Marsing School District partnered with United Way of Treasure Valley, Valley Community Schools Coalition, the Idaho Food Bank, Idaho AEYC, and others to create the HUB.²⁵

The HUB includes Head Start programs, Husky Pup Preschool, an adult learning classroom, programs for dual language learners, a health center with an on-site nurse once per week, mental health services, migrant family liaison services, energy assistance resources for utility bills, and the Owyhee Sheriff’s Department substation.

At the HUB’s ribbon cutting ceremony, Marsing School District Superintendent, Norm Stewart, described the community needs that prompted the HUB, “If you are looking for some of the resources that our families seek, you have to travel to other communities...It may only be 10 miles away, but if you are talking about a family that is struggling to put food on the table, how can they put fuel in their tank for a 20-mile round trip?”²⁶

23 U.S. Census Bureau. (2020) American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018. Table S1701.
24 U.S. Census Bureau. (2020) American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018. Table S1601.
25 Spacek, R. (2020, February 7). Marsing School District opens new community school to address student, family needs. *Idaho Press*. https://www.idahopress.com/news/local/marsing-school-district-opens-new-community-school-to-address-student-family-needs/article_ba761c2b-cfdb-5fa5-8db6-8f843ecf735f.html
26 Ibid.

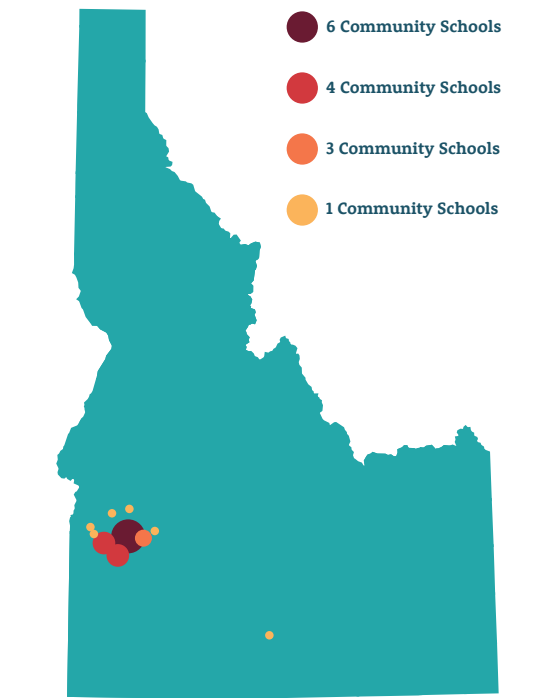


Currently, there are 22 established community schools in Idaho and an additional 11 that are either about to launch or are in the planning phase. Combined, they serve more than 14,500 students and nearly 40% of community schools include a preschool program.²⁷

The majority of Idaho community schools are located in the greater Treasure Valley area including six within the Boise School District, three in West Ada, four in Nampa, one in Caldwell, four in Kuna, one in Horseshoe Bend, one in Basin (Idaho City), one in Notus, one in Marsing, one in Jerome, and one in Emmett. Thirteen community schools provide on-site preschool services. Fourteen of the 33 established and emerging community schools serve rural Idaho.²⁸

Idaho community school evaluators have noted that in early stages of operation, community schools focus on meeting critical basic needs like food, clothing, and housing assistance. However, some community schools in later stages of operation have noted that after the most acute needs (food, clothing, and housing) are met, community schools can address complex challenges such as mental health, trauma, and poverty. For example, some community schools are embedding mental health services in the school building.²⁹

FIGURE 4.5
Number of Community Schools (2020)



SOURCE: Based on Idaho Community School Census. Provided by United Way of Treasure Valley. November 2020.



27 Based on *Idaho Community School Census*. Provided by United Way of Treasure Valley. November 2020.
28 Based on Information provided by United Way of the Treasure Valley. November 2020.
29 Turner, L. and Melville, D. (2020). *Transforming communities initiative: Year 4 community schools summary*. Initiative for Healthy Schools, Boise State University. <https://www.boisestate.edu/education-healthyschools/files/2020/12/Community-Schools-TCI-Summary-2020.pdf>

Libraries

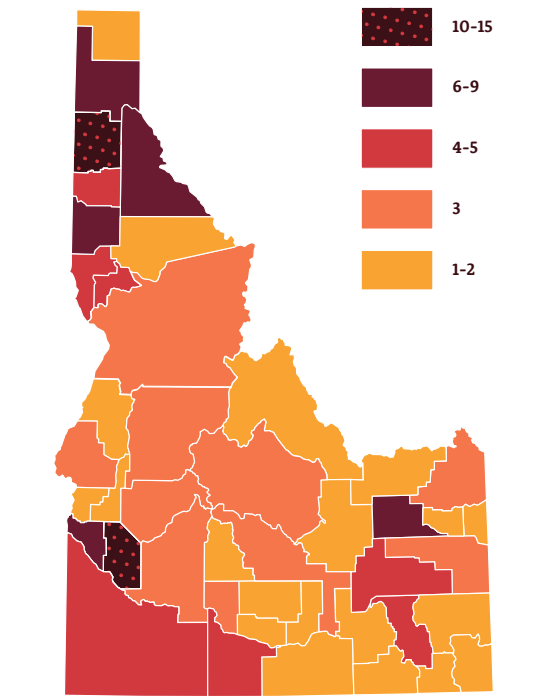
Libraries are a cornerstone in Idaho’s communities. Libraries help build healthy neighborhoods, towns, and cities—they provide a trusted place to meet and gather essential information including connections to health care, housing, literacy, and free legal services. Libraries offer services for a wide range of populations with particular needs including seniors, veterans, immigrants, and families with children.³⁰ Because libraries provide so many crucial services, some libraries across the country are including social workers on staff and library science programs are building community outreach into their curriculum.³¹

Idaho libraries, with guidance and support from the Idaho Commission for Libraries, work with community partners to provide programming and resources to children and families, tweens and teens, and adults.³² One of many examples is the Read to Me Program that arms Idaho libraries with information, training, and resources that foster children’s literacy skills. The Read to Me Program provides underserved Idaho children with books they can take home and keep, educates families on the importance of early literacy and partners, provides child care programs with books, and much more.³³

“There is a digital divide because families and kids in Fernwood don’t have access to internet and the only place they can get internet is libraries.”

- Town Hall Participant

FIGURE 4.6
Number of Idaho Public Libraries (2020)



SOURCE: Idaho Commission for Libraries. (2020). *Idaho library directory*. https://libraries.idaho.gov/idaho-library-directory/?filter_directory_category%5B%5D=301&filter_directory_category%5B%5D=306&filter_location_address%5Bradius%5D=5&filter=1&sort=post_title

Access to public libraries is especially important for low-income families because libraries provide information on social services and job opportunities, free internet and computer access, and more. In 2019, there were more than 2.4 million uses of Idaho library wireless networks.³⁴ Several Idaho libraries across the state are meeting the needs of Idahoans who do not have internet at home by checking out mobile hot spots.³⁵ In September 2020, the Idaho Commission for Libraries received \$2 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to provide rural libraries with funds to purchase equipment and related internet and broadband services in order to boost the broadband capability of public libraries in communities with fewer than 10,000 people. This allows participating libraries to make their public Wi-Fi available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and with enough range to reach outdoor areas, allowing users to access the internet from the parking lot or surrounding areas.³⁶

In response to the growing need for electronic materials for families that do not have a library close by, the Idaho Commission for Libraries is expanding e-book and e-audio materials that are available through public and school libraries, while making these materials obtainable to Idahoans who do not have access to public libraries in their communities.³⁷

Idaho public libraries serve more than 85% of Idaho’s population through 150 public library branches and 12 bookmobiles. While this is a large percentage, there are approximately 280,000 Idahoans who do not have library access.³⁸

34 Idaho Commission for Libraries (2020). *2019 Annual public library statistics*. <https://libraries.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/15Oct2019IDPLStatisticsPrintPub.pdf>
35 Idaho Commission for Libraries. (2020). *Circulating mobile hotspots*. <https://libraries.idaho.gov/broadband/circulating-mobile-hotspots/>
36 Idaho Commission for Libraries. (2020, September 2017). *\$2 Million in CARES funding going to Idaho libraries to boost broad band 24/7 in small rural Communities*. [Press Release]. <https://libraries.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/release-ICfL-CARES-bb-libraries-grantees-20200917.pdf>
37 Idaho Commission for Libraries. (2020). *IDEA Idaho Digital E-Book Alliance*. <https://libraries.idaho.gov/idea/>
38 Idaho Commission for Libraries (2020). *2019 Annual public library statistics*. <https://libraries.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/15Oct2019IDPLStatisticsPrintPub.pdf>

30 Brookings Institution. (2020). *How public libraries help build healthy communities*. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2017/03/30/how-public-libraries-help-build-healthy-communities/>
31 Dwyer, C. (2019 July 17). *Your local library may have a new offering in stock: A resident social worker*. National Public Radio. <https://www.npr.org/2019/07/17/730286523/your-local-library-may-have-a-new-offering-in-stock-a-resident-social-worker>
32 Idaho Commission for Libraries. (2020, October). *ICfL services and programs provided to Idaho libraries*. <https://libraries.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/ICfL-Programs-and-Services-FactSheet-20201030.pdf>
33 Idaho Commission for Libraries. (2020). *Early literacy*. <https://libraries.idaho.gov/rtm/>

Refugee Resources

Idaho welcomes refugees from all over the world—Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Near East—and they bring tremendous diversity in language, culture, and experiences.³⁹ The Agency for New Americans⁴⁰ in Boise, the International Rescue Committee⁴¹ in Boise, and the College of Southern Idaho Refugee Center⁴² in Twin Falls are Idaho’s three resettlement agencies. They collaborate and partner with government agencies, local organizations, and volunteers to provide refugees and their families with the supports that meet their immediate and long-term needs. These resources include items needed to set up their households (clothes, computers, transportation, etc.); health and medical referrals; immigration services; cash assistance; translation and interpretation; cultural and community orientation; classes and training; mentorship; and youth programs. Resettlement agencies coordinate education for children and help adults build job, computer, and financial literacy skills.

The Economic Opportunity (EO) Program Refugee Child Care Business Development project helps refugees in Idaho open in home child care businesses that provide high quality, safe, and affordable care. The EO Program sets participants up for success by offering knowledge, financial skills, and support to grow their own businesses through microlending, credit education, and mentoring programs.

Zainab and her four children arrived in Boise from Somalia in 2013. In Somalia, Zainab was a nurse. She was eager to put her education and entrepreneurial skills to work in her new home.

She enrolled in the EO Program. With support from the project, Zainab set up a child care business, providing safe, healthy, and high quality care to children 6 days a week. Zainab’s business was so successful that in 2017 she was able to buy a house for herself and her children.

Zainab recently passed her U.S. citizenship test, and two of her children attend classes at Boise State University.⁴³

39 CSI Refugee Center. (n.d.). *Refugee programs*. <http://refugeecenter.csi.edu/>
40 Agency for New Americans. (n.d.). *About ANA*. <http://www.anaidaho.org/about.html>
41 International Rescue Commission. (2020). *The IRC in Boise, ID*. <https://www.rescue.org/united-states/boise-id#how-does-the-irc-help-refugees-in-boise>
42 CSI Refugee Center. (n.d.). *Refugee programs*. <https://refugeecenter.csi.edu/>
43 Based on program details provided by Economic Opportunity staff at Jannus. December 2020.



Photo courtesy of Jannus

Hispanic Resources

Idaho is home to a thriving and vibrant Hispanic community. Most of the Hispanic community lives in rural areas along the Snake River Plain in eastern and southern Idaho where agriculture and dairy production are prevalent. Seventeen percent of households speaking Spanish are limited English speaking households.⁴⁴ Hispanics earn significantly less than non-Hispanics, with median household incomes of \$45,231 compared to \$53,280 for non-Hispanics.⁴⁵

Community Council of Idaho (CC Idaho) is the largest nonprofit serving Latinos in Idaho, supporting more than 14,000 Idahoans every year. Established in 1971, CC Idaho is a rural-centered, multiservice nonprofit with a mission to improve the social and economic status of local communities through workforce preparation, education, cultural awareness, civil rights advocacy, and wellbeing services. CC Idaho operates 10 Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Centers throughout southern Idaho, offers employment and training programs in five community centers, operates five multi-family housing projects to provide affordable and safe housing for farm labor families and families experiencing homelessness, and provides primary and behavioral health services at three federally qualified health centers in eastern Idaho.⁴⁶

44 U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2019. Table S1602.
45 Callahan, C. (2019). *Idaho at a Glance: Hispanics - An overview*. University of Idaho. <https://www.uidaho.edu/-/media/UIdaho-Responsive/Files/president/direct-reports/mcclure-center/Idaho-at-a-Glance/Idaho-at-a-glance-10-1-hispanics.pdf>
46 Community Council of Idaho. (2018). *About Community Council of Idaho mission, vision, history*. <https://communitycouncilofidaho.org/about/>

Tribal Resources

The majority of American Indians in Idaho live on one of five reservations. Each tribe is culturally distinct and geographically dispersed. There are several resources for tribal members and the supports and services vary from tribe to tribe. The COVID-19 pandemic limited outreach to tribal communities; information provided below comes from tribal public webpages.

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe Social Services Department provides programs that are designed to be complementary and fill in gaps in services that are offered by other agencies. The Coeur d'Alene Social Services Department oversees programs including the Family Healing Center, career services, food distribution, Indian Child Welfare and Youth Shelter, the Older Americans Program, and STOP Violence Against Indian Women.⁴⁷

The Kootenai Tribe operates an onsite health clinic that delivers health care services to tribal members. The clinic offers services including labs, immunizations, and a diabetes prevention program.⁴⁸

The Nez Perce Tribe provides social services that support the wellbeing of families. These services include a children's home for children under 18 who are referred by child protective services; financial assistance for high heating costs, elder care, burial services, and emergency housing; financial literacy classes; a senior citizens program; food and nutrition services; a veterans program; and the Women's Outreach Program that provides services for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and elder abuse.⁴⁹

The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes' Health and Human Services Department offerings include counseling and family services; clinical services spanning women's health, well child checks, immunizations, family planning, health screening, acute care and chronic care management; Community Health Representatives that provide outreach and are trained to use traditional tribal concepts to improve the community's health and safety; the Diabetes Project that coordinates community services and medical care; drug and alcohol treatment; financial assistance for medical expenses; and the Victims Assistance Program that provides 24 hour crisis intervention, shelter, advocacy, and counseling.⁵⁰

The Shoshone-Paiute Tribes offer social services that include increasing access to nutritious food to low-income households living on the Duck Valley Reservation; the Owyhee Community Health Facility that provides health services to enrolled or descendants of federally recognized tribes or individuals living on or near the Reservation; and the STOP Violence Against Native Women Programs.⁵¹

47 Coeur d'Alene Tribe. (n.d.). *Social services*. <https://www.cdatribe-nsn.gov/ss/>
48 Kootenai Tribe of Idaho. (n.d.). *Health clinic*. <http://www.kootenai.org/health.html>
49 Nez Perce Tribe. (2018). *Social services*. <https://nezperce.org/government/social-services/>
50 Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. (2020). *Tribal health and human services*. <http://www2.sbtribes.com/tribal-health-and-human-services/>
51 Shoshone-Paiute Tribes. (n.d.). *Home*. <https://shopaitribes.org/spt/>



Telehealth

For some Idaho families, especially those that live in remote areas where centralized services such as early care, health, and intervention services are not available or accessible, bringing these resources into the homes by telehealth can provide an enormous benefit. Telehealth allows these families the ability to receive services from a wide variety of specialists including behavioral health providers, hearing and speech therapists, and more. Early childhood programs have offered services through the telehealth service delivery model, particularly within the health and social service fields.

Several Idaho programs have stepped up to meet the telehealth needs of Idaho families. For example, the Idaho Infant Toddler Program has pilot tested a portable telehealth system in the form of a laptop with satellite internet access that providers could bring with them into family homes.

Early childhood programs that have utilized the telehealth service delivery model include home visiting programs, pediatricians and other health service programs, mental health programs for both mothers and children, and parent training programs. These programs serve a wide range of populations including children with developmental delays and disabilities, families at elevated risk of child abuse or neglect, and families living in remote or hard-to-reach areas. Through telehealth, these programs provide a wide range of services to meet the needs of children and families. By doing so, telehealth increases parent knowledge and choice by expanding information of service options and allowing families to pick from a wider range of services and resources.⁵²

52 Ramos, M.F., et al. (2020). *Supporting access to early childhood telehealth services in Idaho*. Child Trends.



Where are the Children?



There is no centralized way to understand which Idaho children and families access multiple services (such as Head Start, disability services, and more) and which children and families access none.

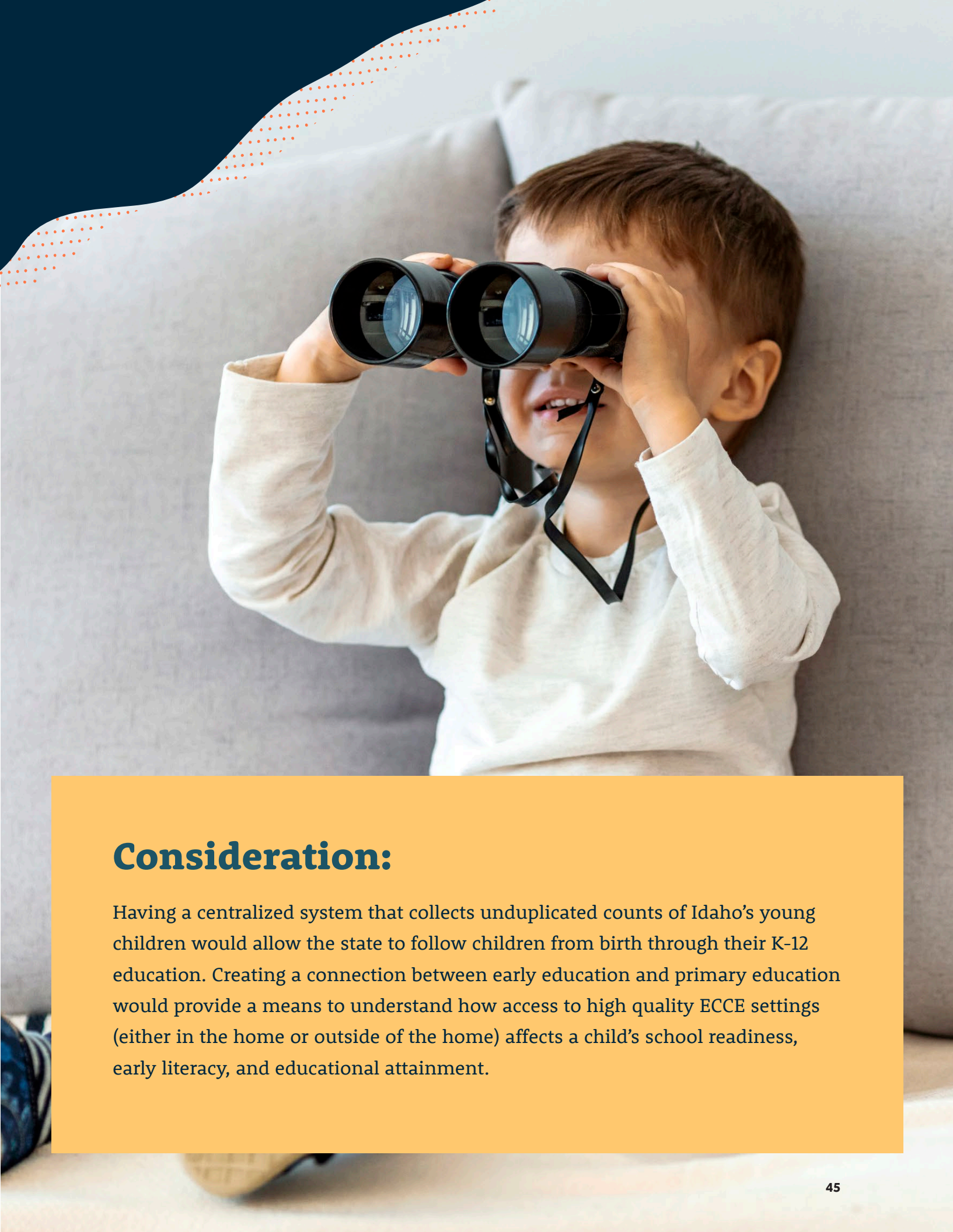
It is important to understand how many Idaho families are receiving early childhood care and education (ECCE) services and how many are not.

Without this information, it is not possible to assess where children are receiving ECCE, how many would benefit from these services but do not have access to them, and how this affects their school readiness, early literacy skills, and their ability to succeed in grade school, high school, and beyond.

While estimates of the number of ECCE programs and providers working in Idaho are available, information about the number of children in those programs and where ECCE programs are located is lacking. Idaho does not have a system to collect information about how all Idaho children experience ECCE including non-licensed and early learning activities conducted in the home. There is no centralized way to understand which children and families access multiple services (such as Head Start, disability services, and more) and which children and families access none. **Because there is no current way to create an unduplicated count of children and understand who is receiving service and who is not, some families receive an abundance of support and others receive none.**

Gaps in Data

In Idaho, as is the case in many states, collecting data on individuals is approached on a program-by-program basis. There is no central statewide system that cross references data on individuals as they participate in programs offered by various departments or enroll in programs connected to nonprofit organizations. To collect information about Idaho children and early education, researchers must rely on data from Idaho state agencies (such as the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and the Idaho State Department of Education), nonprofit partners, city licensing authorities, and state licensing authorities.



Consideration:

Having a centralized system that collects unduplicated counts of Idaho’s young children would allow the state to follow children from birth through their K-12 education. Creating a connection between early education and primary education would provide a means to understand how access to high quality ECCE settings (either in the home or outside of the home) affects a child’s school readiness, early literacy, and educational attainment.

Idaho Early Childhood Care and Education



State and Federal Funding

Idaho is one of four states that does not fund preschool.¹ State education funding can only be spent on children five and older. Any school district pre-kindergarten programs are supported by school district levies, school district revenues, grants, and private funding.

While the state of Idaho does not fund any preschool programs, it invests in some early childhood support programs. In a 2015 Idaho Legislative Services Office report, all early childhood support programming were funded by \$82 million (federal) and \$22 million (Idaho) resources.²

TABLE 6.1
Idaho Funding for Early Childhood Support Programs (2015)

Program	State Funds
Early Childhood and Blended Teaching Certificates, Birth through Age 8 at Boise State University, College of Southern Idaho, Idaho State University, Lewis Clark State College, and University of Idaho	\$430,000
Early Childhood Special Education	\$6,700,000
Head Start Collaboration Office	\$40,000
Idaho Child Care Program	\$2,080,000
Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind	\$1,140,000
Infant Toddler Program	\$4,410,000
Read to Me Library Program	\$335,524
Ready to Learn Television Programming	\$70,000
State Children’s Insurance Program, Medicaid Services in Private Settings, Birth to Age 5	\$5,130,000
State Children’s Insurance Program, Private Settings, Birth to Age 5	\$520,000
TOTAL	\$22,020,000

SOURCE: Idaho Legislative Services Office. (2016). *An inventory of government-funded early childhood development and education programs in Idaho*. Public Records Request November, 2020.

1 Parker, E., et al., (2019, February). *Trends in pre-K education funding in 2017-2018*. Education Commission of the States. <https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Trends-in-Pre-K-Education-Funding-in-2017-18.pdf>
2 Idaho Legislative Services Office. (2016). *An inventory of government-funded early childhood development and education programs in Idaho*. Public Records Request November, 2020.

Current Quality and Availability of ECCE

“...there are a lot of ... child care centers that are good and have a high QRIS [Steps to Quality] rating, which means the waitlist is high.”

- Town Hall Participant

The decision to seek child care outside of the home and family unit is complex. Families select early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs based on availability, access, and personal preference. Some families may prefer center based care, ECCE that aligns with their religious beliefs, or to educate their children at home.

In Idaho, ECCE is accomplished through a mixed delivery system. There are multiple public and private entities that provide services and resources for children 0-5. This mixed delivery system includes families, private child care businesses, faith based programs, state and city licensed programs, child care and education support programs, nonprofit programs, and other resources with the goal of increasing school readiness and early literacy of children under six.

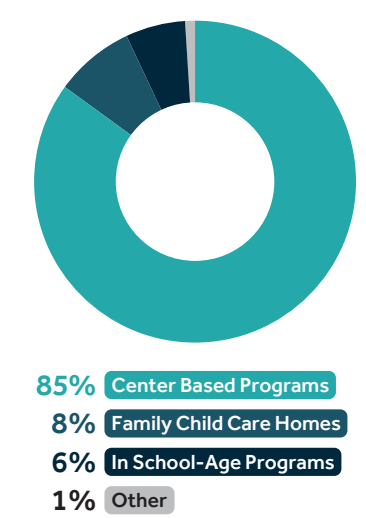
Nearly all parents (99.5%) who participated in a survey for this Needs Assessment ranked a safe and healthy environment as their number one priority when looking for ECCE programs for their child. Nearly 98% searched for programs that focus on child-friendly activities. For 84% of parents, licensing and national accreditation were high on their priority list.

Where Children Receive Care

In 2020, pre-COVID, there were approximately 55,845 spaces/slots for children 0-5 in Idaho.³

However, it is unclear how accurate these estimates are in terms of capturing the total supply of ECCE. Idaho does not require providers serving fewer than seven children to be licensed by the state; meaning there are neither requirements nor inspections (and therefore no data collection) for unlicensed providers. Idaho also does not collect comprehensive, statewide data on the number of children who are in the care of friends, family, and neighbors. As a result, it is impossible to get a complete picture of the availability, quality, and impact of ECCE on school readiness and early literacy in Idaho.

FIGURE 6.1
Child Care Spaces in Idaho by Type (2020)



SOURCE: Bipartisan Policy Center. (2020). *Child care gap assessment - Idaho*. <https://childcaregap.org>

Center Based Programs

Larger programs that generally operate out of non-residential buildings and often group children by age.

Preschool Programs

Typically offered to children 3-5-years-old and may be offered through a school, nonprofit, or faith based organization and/or child care center.

Family Child Care Homes

Providers care for small groups of children in a residential building.

School-Age Programs

Typically provide child care before and after school hours and may offer care during the summer and on holiday breaks.

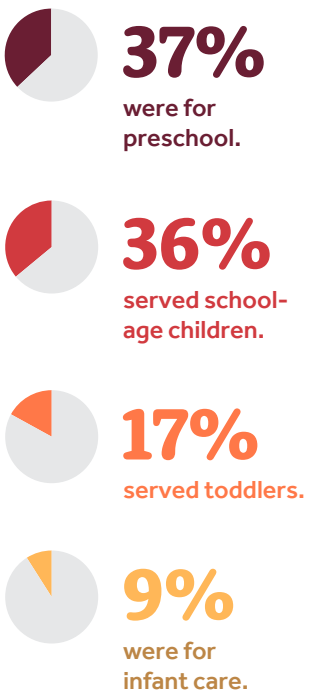
Friend, Family, or Neighbor Care

Care that is provided in the caregiver's home by a family friend, relative, babysitter, or nanny.

³ Bipartisan Policy Center. (2020). *Child care gap assessment - Idaho*. <https://childcaregap.org/>

FIGURE 6.2
Child Care Spaces in Idaho by Age (2020)

In pre-COVID 2020, of the 55,845 child care spaces for children 0-5 in Idaho:



SOURCE: Bipartisan Policy Center. (2020). *Child care gap assessment - Idaho*. <https://childcaregap.org>

A small survey of Idaho parents with children under six was conducted, during the pandemic, in the summer of 2020. Of the 365 respondents:

- 51% reported that their children stayed at home with another parent, adult, or relative living in the household;
- 26% sent their children to child care;
- 10% responded that their children go to someone else's home; and
- 3% reported that their children stay in their home with a friend, neighbor, or babysitter (friend, family, or neighbor care).
- 41% of parents surveyed agreed that "it is hard to find a relative, neighbor, friend, or babysitter" to watch their children compared to 43% who did not find it difficult.
- Respondents were split in terms of difficulty finding child care, day care, or preschool programs, with 34% stating they had difficulty, 39% reporting they do not find it difficult, and 27% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.⁴

Consideration:

Going forward, it will be important to learn more about where children who are not currently in licensed facilities receive ECCE. It is important to learn if those arrangements are preferred by families or if these arrangements are due to limited or no access to licensed ECCE. This information would provide communities and policymakers the knowledge they need to enhance access to high quality ECCE or other supports and resources for young children.

⁴ Le, L. and McCall, J. (2020). *IDAEYC: Early learning in Idaho*. Social & Economic Sciences Research Center. Washington State University.

85% of Idaho parents surveyed stated that it was important that child care or early learning programs be licensed or nationally accredited and 85% reported that they feel quality child care or early learning programs are important in helping children develop the skills and ability they need to be successful when starting school.⁵

- IDAEOC: Early Learning in Idaho, September 2020

Quality

In this Needs Assessment, quality ECCE is defined as *licensed, early learning environments staffed by educated professionals that promote positive relationships; cultivate social, emotional, physical, and cognitive learning and development; empower parents to participate in their child’s education; and create safe, nurturing, and inclusive learning experiences.*

In Idaho, a state license for an ECCE program is required only if a provider is paid to care for seven or more children. Cities can create their own licensing structure, as long as it meets minimum state licensing guidelines. Eight Idaho cities have their own licensing requirements.⁶

Training is required only for ECCE providers that are licensed. Additional training requirements vary for ECCE providers depending on their program’s licensing participation in different state initiatives, like *Steps to Quality* (STQ) or the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP). Individuals at state-licensed programs must complete 4 hours of training in child development each year, while some cities with separate licensing systems require more training, ranging from 8 to 14 hours. Individuals at programs participating in ICCP must complete 2 hours of training in health and safety and an additional 10 hours in elective trainings each year.⁷

IdahoSTARS, a joint project between the University of Idaho Center on Disabilities and Human Development and Idaho AEYC, administers STQ, a voluntary, quality improvement program for Idaho’s ECCE providers. The STQ program seeks to improve the physical space for ECCE programs by having facility benchmarks at each quality rating. ECCE providers and programs participating in STQ are rated on standards that are guided by health, safety, and wellness; business practices; child development; curriculum and instruction; environment; inclusion and diversity; and partnerships with family and communities. Out of 1,646 licensed ECCE providers in Idaho, 219 are participating in STQ.⁸

TABLE 6.2
Providers Participating in Steps to Quality (2020)

Total Providers*	Steps to Quality Participants**	Lowest Level	Highest Level	Participating, Not Yet Rated
1,646	219	23	38	76

*SOURCE: Bipartisan Policy Center. (2020). *Child care gap assessment - Idaho*. <https://childcaregap.org/>
**SOURCE: Based on RISE database numbers provided by IdahoSTARS. November 2020.

5 Le, L. and McCall, J. (2020). *IDAEOC: Early learning in Idaho*. Social & Economic Sciences Research Center. Washington State University.
6 Carlson, J., et al. (2020). *Exploring the strengths and challenges of early care and education programs in Idaho*. Child Trends.
7 Carlson, J., et al. (2020). *Exploring the strengths and challenges of early care and education programs in Idaho*. Child Trends.
8 Based on RISE database numbers provided by IdahoSTARS. November 2020.

An important part of offering high quality ECCE is making sure that the environments where children learn and play are safe and healthy. The STQ rating system and state and city licensing requirements are Idaho’s only mechanisms to ensure the facilities where ECCE programs are located are safe and provide a healthy atmosphere for early learning. These requirements are guided by fire codes and capacity limits as set by the state or city issuing the license.

Consideration:

Currently, participation in STQ is voluntary and very few of Idaho’s licensed ECCE providers participate. Many ECCE providers report that achieving the minimum standards for state or city licensing is burdensome, which may discourage providers from pursuing quality standards that require additional time and effort. Another reason that providers might not want to participate in STQ is one of the standards for increasing quality ratings requires a staff to child ratio that is smaller than what state or city licensing requires.⁹ Increasing staff costs could extend to increased costs for families, which could be problematic as many families have a hard time affording care to begin with.

9 Blasberg, A., et al. (2020). *Understanding Steps to Quality: A validation study of Idaho’s quality rating and improvement system*. Child Trends.

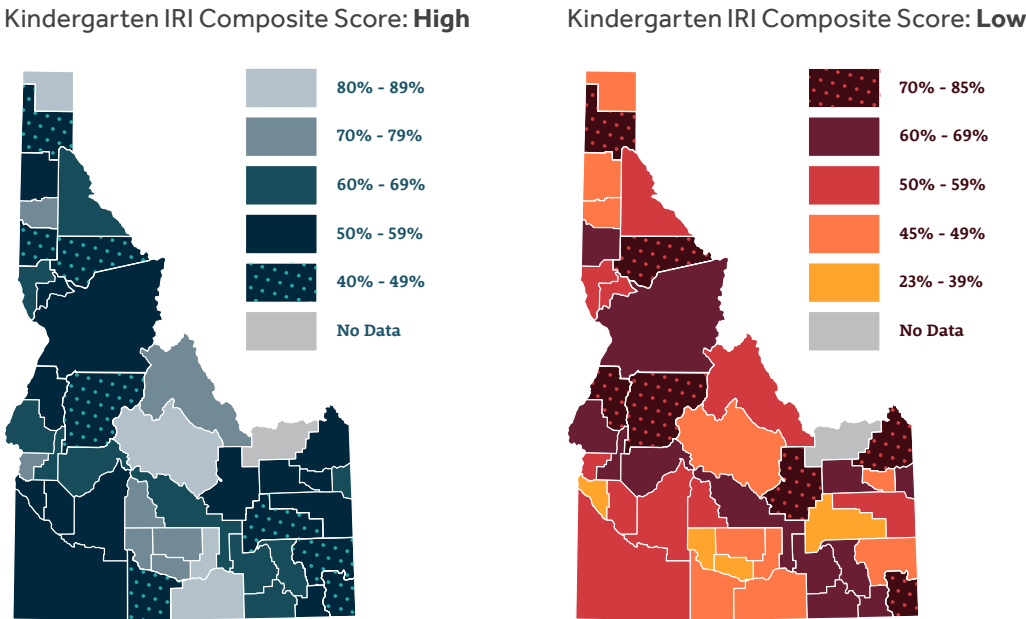
ECCE Settings and Outcomes

Research studies show that every early experience a child has is educational, due to rapid brain development.¹⁰ The location of these experiences (in the home with parents, extended family, and friends or in a child care program) does not matter, but the quality of these experiences is essential.¹¹

When children are in clean and healthy environments and receiving care that is developmentally appropriate, consistent, and emotionally supportive, there are positive impacts on the child and their family—including increased school readiness.^{12,13,14} However, when children are in environments that are poor quality (inside or outside of the home), they are far more likely to have unmet socioemotional needs and are less prepared for school.¹⁵

Every child in Idaho is given a literacy screening when they enter kindergarten, the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI). The IRI is administered in the fall and in the spring. Scores from the IRI administered in the fall indicate literacy levels when children begin kindergarten. Scores from the IRI administered in the spring indicate literacy levels children have as they exit kindergarten. As Idaho’s only measure of early literacy, IRI scores are essential to understanding how children fare in terms of early literacy and school readiness.

FIGURE 6.3
Spring IRI Composite Scores (2018–2019 School Year)



SOURCE: Idaho State Department of Education. (n.d.). *Assessment & graduation rate results*. <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/assessment/accountability/results.html>

10 Donoghue, E. and Council on Early Childhood. (2017). Quality early education and child care from birth to kindergarten. *Pediatrics* 140 (2) e20171488. <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/140/2/e20171488>
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Morrissey, T., et al. (2014, March 01). *The short- and long-term impacts of large public early care and education programs*. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/report/short-and-long-term-impacts-large-public-early-care-and-education-programs>
14 Bitler, M., et al. (n.d.). *Head Start programs have significant benefits for children at the bottom of the skill distribution*. Policy Brief 6 (1). Center for Poverty Research. University of California Davis Center for Poverty Research. <https://poverty.ucdavis.edu/policy-brief/head-start-programs-have-significant-benefits-children-bottom-skill-distribution>
15 Donoghue, E. and Council on Early Childhood. (2017). Quality early education and child care from birth to kindergarten. *Pediatrics* 140 (2) e20171488. <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/140/2/e20171488>

TABLE 6.3
Fall IRI Composite Scores (2019–2020 School Year)

Population	Kindergartners Performing at Grade Level
American Indian and Alaska Native	22%
Asian or Pacific Islander	53%
Black	32%
Economically Disadvantaged	27%
Foster	20%
Hispanic	22%
Homeless	23%
Limited English Proficiency	8%
Migrant	8%
Military	39%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	35%
Students with Disabilities	21%
White	48%
ALL STUDENTS	42%

SOURCE: Idaho State Department of Education. (n.d.). *Assessment & graduation rate results*. <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/assessment/accountability/results.html>



Idaho state and city licensing requirements and STQ help ECCE providers ensure that learning environments are safe and healthy for children. However, state and city licensing does not require that ECCE environments provide children with the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive learning and development that are necessary for school readiness and early literacy. One of STQ’s quality domains focuses on child development and includes training on teaching practices, lesson plans, and increased effort on literacy and numeracy.¹⁶ As noted previously, participation in STQ is voluntary and few ECCE programs participate.

National data demonstrate that high quality federal programs designed to help vulnerable, underserved, and rural children have significant, positive impacts on school readiness.¹⁷ These benefits are particularly pronounced for dual language learners and children with the lowest cognitive test scores.¹⁸ **While Idaho has some of these federal programs, services are limited and there is not enough capacity to meet the need.**¹⁹

Idaho Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant & Seasonal Head Start, and Native American Head Start programs provide comprehensive, family-focused preschool for low-income and vulnerable children. In 2018-2019, Idaho Head Start programs provided services to 642 children with disabilities, 252 children in foster care, 452 children experiencing homelessness, and 273 children in the care of their grandparents or other relatives.²⁰

Idaho Head Start and Early Head Start programs provide services through:

- Home based options—services are provided through weekly home visits and bimonthly group activities;
- Center based options—children are provided care in centers and families receive ongoing education and family support through two home visits per year;
- Family child care options—care and education are provided in a private home or family type setting; and
- Combination of home based and center based services.²¹

16 Blasberg, A., et al. (2020). *Understanding Steps to Quality: A validation study of Idaho’s quality rating and improvement system*. Child Trends.
17 Bitler, M., et al. (n.d.). *Head Start programs have significant benefits for children at the bottom of the skill distribution*. Policy Brief 6 (1). Center for Poverty Research. University of California Davis Center for Poverty Research. <https://poverty.ucdavis.edu/policy-brief/head-start-programs-have-significant-benefits-children-bottom-skill-distribution>
18 Ibid.
19 Idaho Head Start Association. (2018). *Annual report program year 2018-2019*. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56a6964e5827c30d9e0a278b/t/5e7e7b64e8e5be5d588e8ff2/1585347431935/IHSA+-+2019+Annual+Report+%28Web%29.pdf>
20 Ibid.
21 Idaho Head Start Association. (2016). *Head Start & Early Head Start*. <https://www.idahohsa.org/head-start-and-early-head-start>

Head Start and Early Head Start programs operate in 39 of Idaho’s 44 counties, the majority of which are rural. There are three Tribal Head Start Centers serving the Coeur d’Alene, Nez Perce, and Shoshone-Bannock tribes. Community Council of Idaho—Migrant & Seasonal Head Start supports migrant and seasonal farmworker families in 20 counties across the state. Ten percent of Head Start spaces per program are reserved for children with disabilities.

While Head Start and Early Head Start programs are proven to significantly increase school readiness, only 6% of eligible Idaho children 0-3 have access to early Head Start programs and approximately 2,000 Idaho children are on Head Start and Early Head Start waiting lists across the state.²²

The Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE) provides migrant children with preschool support by working closely with Migrant & Seasonal Head Start. Each school district is allocated funding based on the number of identified migrant students. It is up to the school district to decide how to best serve 3-5-year-old migrant children. Six Idaho school districts have allocated some of their Title I Migrant Student funding for migrant preschool programs.²³

Consideration:

Idaho does not have systems in place that document how different ECCE settings impact school readiness and literacy outcomes. The state does not collect data on children before they enter elementary school; this limits understanding of how ECCE settings (either in the home or outside of the home) affect a child’s educational foundation, future literacy, and educational attainment.

22 Idaho Head Start Association. (2018). *Annual report program year 2018-2019*. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56a6964e5827c30d9e0a278b/t/5e7e7b64e8e5be5d588e8ff2/1585347431935/IHSA+-+2019+Annual+Report+%28Web%29.pdf>
23 Based on an interview with Idaho State Department of Education, Migrant Education staff. November 2020.

ECCE Provider Education in Idaho

Continuing education training is advancing the ECCE workforce in Idaho. A 2020 report explored professional development and other support available to Idaho’s ECCE professionals through STQ and the Idaho Head Start Association.²⁴

Among the survey respondents, 75% reported participating in coaching, trainings, or other professional development activities over the past year. Seventy eight percent of center based respondents reported participating in professional development, compared to 66% of home based respondents.

Of those who participated in professional development activities, approximately half said that their participation was required for licensing (52%) or certification for ICCP (51%). A smaller number of respondents said their participation was a requirement of STQ (25%). The most common professional development topics reported by survey respondents were child development (80%); health, safety, and nutrition (73%); and behavior management (72%). The least commonly reported topics were school readiness (23%), working with dual language learners (19%), and program administration (18%).

The PDG B-5 grant commissioned a study of Idaho’s college and university ECCE degrees and programs, which is ongoing and scheduled to be finalized in 2021. This study will help Idahoans understand the strengths and challenges in Idaho’s higher education in terms of ECCE program students’ equitable access, success, development of core competencies, and employment in the ECCE field.

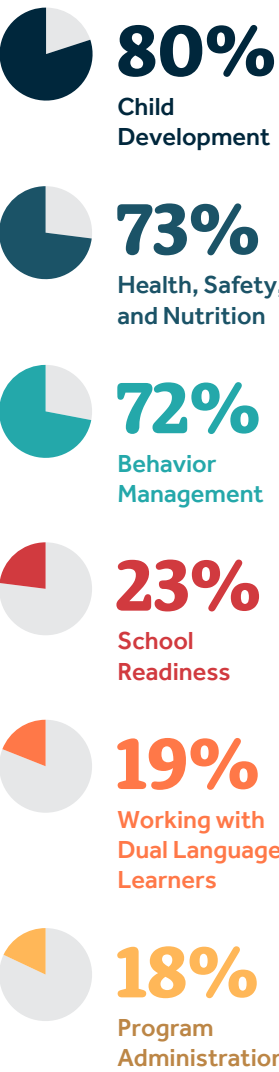
Specifically, the study will explore ECCE focused certificates and degrees in nine Idaho higher education institutions including Boise State University, Brigham Young University–Idaho, College of Southern Idaho, College of Western Idaho, Idaho State University, Lewis Clark State College, North Idaho College, Treasure Valley Community College, and University of Idaho. Across these institutions, there are 39 programs that encompass associate, bachelors, master’s, and Child Development Associate (CDA) degrees and certificates.

The study will include a survey and follow-up interview with a program lead at each college or university, surveys of the workforce (current students and alumni), and a curriculum map that explores the breadth and depth of alignment among degree programs.

²⁴ Carlson, J., et al. (2020). *Exploring the strengths and challenges of early care and education programs in Idaho*. Child Trends.
²⁵ Ibid.

FIGURE 6.4
Idaho ECCE Professional Development Topics (2020)

Survey of ECCE Providers:
Most and least common
ECCE professional
development topics in 2020.



SOURCE: Carlson, J., et al. (2020). *Exploring the strengths and challenges of early care and education programs in Idaho*. Child Trends.



Consideration:

ECCE providers expressed the need for more professional development training in particular areas such as special education and inclusion, equity, working with dual language learners, and program administration or business practices. In focus groups, home based ECCE providers expressed the desire for more networking and peer support around issues unique to the home based setting, such as accounting, marketing, and other business skills.²⁵

Approximately 74,600 Idaho children under six were in need of child care, with a gap of 20,663 child care spaces.²⁶

Availability

Availability of ECCE services is based on a sufficient number of ECCE programs and providers to meet the needs of the community they serve. However, circumstances such as cost, hours of operation, location, and the need for specialized services can prevent families from having access to child care, even if ECCE providers have child care spaces available.

In an ideal world, families that seek ECCE services outside the home would have abundant options that are high quality, affordable, close to home, and meet a variety of developmental and linguistic needs. However, this full range of options is not available to all Idaho families. Families must decide among the ECCE options that are available (if any) even if they do not fit all of the family’s preferences and/or needs. This could include taking their child to a non-licensed program because that is the only available program in their community or is the only program open during their working hours.

Child Care Desert

A community that either completely lacks child care options or where providers are so scarce that there are more than three children for every licensed child care space.

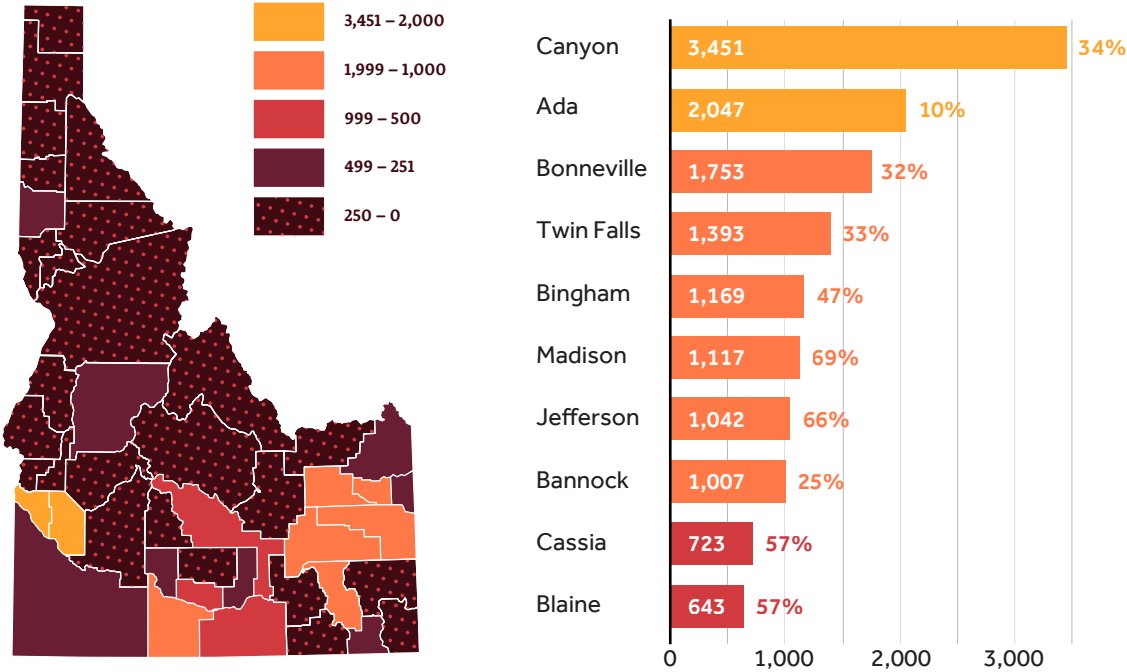
Forty-nine percent of Idahoans live in child care deserts.²⁷

In early 2020, there were an estimated 1,646 licensed facilities statewide with an estimated 55,845 child care spaces available. Approximately 74,600 children under six were in need of child care, with a gap of 20,663 child care spaces.²⁸

26 Bipartisan Policy Center. (2020). *Child care gap assessment - Idaho*. <https://childcaregap.org/>
27 Malik, R. and Hamm, K. (2017 August 30). *Mapping America's child care deserts*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2017/08/30/437988/mapping-americas-child-care-deserts/>
28 Bipartisan Policy Center. (2020). *Child care gap assessment - Idaho*. <https://childcaregap.org/>

The lack of available child care was more pronounced in rural Idaho, with a gap of 11,887 spaces compared to a gap of 8,776 spaces in urban Idaho.²⁹

FIGURE 6.5
Child Care Gap by County (2020)



SOURCE: Smith, L. and Bagley, A. (2020). *Child care gap assessment: Idaho*. Data supplied December 2020.

The child care gap is higher in areas of the state with greater percentages of lower income households.³⁰

TABLE 6.4
Idaho Child Care Gap and Poverty (2020)

Percent below Federal Poverty Level (FPL)	Children under 6 with Working Parents	Allocated Need	Gap	Gap %
<25%	62,098	45,240	16,858	27%
25% - 50%	11,451	8,114	3,337	29%
50% - 75%	1,062	630	432	41%
> 75%	55	19	36	66%
TOTAL	74,666	54,003	20,663	28%

SOURCE: Smith, L. and Bagley, A. (2020, October). *Child care gap assessment: Idaho*. Data supplied December 2020.

29 Ibid.
30 Smith, L. and Bagley, A. (2020, October). *Child care gap assessment: Idaho*. Data supplied December 2020.

Child care availability is very limited for Idaho’s minority populations. **The higher the percentage of minorities in a community, the greater the child care gap.** A child care gap of 26% on average was observed in areas with a minority population less than 25%, a gap of 38% on average was observed in areas with 50-75% minority population, and a gap of 58% on average was observed in areas with a minority population greater than 75%.³¹

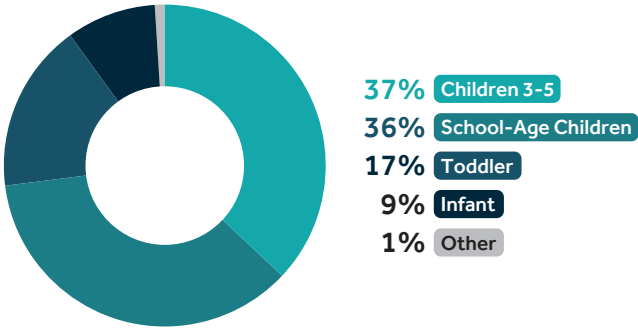
TABLE 6.5
Idaho Child Care Gap and Minority Communities (2020)

Percent Minority	Children under 6 with Working Parents	Allocated Need	Gap	Gap %
<25%	53,629	39,972	13,657	26%
25% - 50%	16,840	11,504	5,336	32%
50% - 75%	3,903	2,404	1,499	38%
>75%	294	123	171	58%
TOTAL	74,666	54,003	20,663	28%

SOURCE: Smith, L. and Bagley, A. (2020, October). *Child care gap assessment: Idaho*. Data supplied December 2020.

Availability of ECCE services for infants and toddlers is scarce. In 2019, of the total spaces in licensed programs in Idaho, 9% were for infants and 17% for toddlers compared to 37% for children 3-5 and 36% for school-age children. Fifty-nine percent of child care referral requests were for infants and 38% were for toddlers.³²

FIGURE 6.6
Total Licensed ECCE Spaces in Idaho (2019)



SOURCE: Child Care Aware of America. (2019). *2019 state child care facts in the state of: Idaho*. <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/3957809/State%20Fact%20Sheets%202019/Idaho%202019.pdf>

31 Ibid.
32 Child Care Aware of America. (2019). *2019 state child care facts in the state of: Idaho*. <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/3957809/State%20Fact%20Sheets%202019/Idaho%202019.pdf>



Barriers That Prevent Availability

“Understanding the supply of child care is only one piece of solving the U.S. child care crisis: In addition to geographic proximity, families consider cost, availability of child care assistance, operating schedule, facilities, and preferred characteristics of the potential caregiver.”

- America's Child Care Deserts in 2018³³

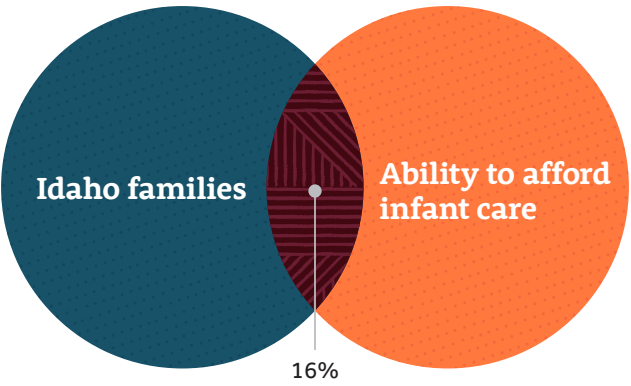
Affordability

Child care is one of the biggest expenses in a family's budget and affordability is a huge consideration when it comes to access to ECCE, especially for low-income families. Child care costs are on the rise in Idaho, increasing nearly 20% for a family with an infant and a 4-year-old from 2017 to 2018.³⁴ As of October 2020, in Idaho, infant care costs a full-time minimum wage worker 50% of their salary and 13% of a median income family's budget. Families with two children face an even larger burden. Child care for two children—an infant and a 4-year-old costs \$13,927 annually. **A typical family in Idaho will spend 25% of its annual income on child care for an infant and a 4-year-old.**³⁵

33 Center for American Progress. (2018). *America's child care deserts in 2018*. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/12/06/461643/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/>
34 United for Alice. (2020). *ALICE in Idaho: A financial hardship study*. https://www.unitedwaysei.org/sites/unitedwaysei.org/files/2020-06/2020ALICEReport_ID_FINAL-5-29-20.pdf
35 Economic Policy Institute. (2019, July). *The cost of childcare in Idaho*. <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/ID>

FIGURE 6.7
Infant Care Affordability in Idaho (2019)

Child care is considered affordable if it costs 7% or less of a family's income; by this standard, only 16% of Idaho families can afford infant care.



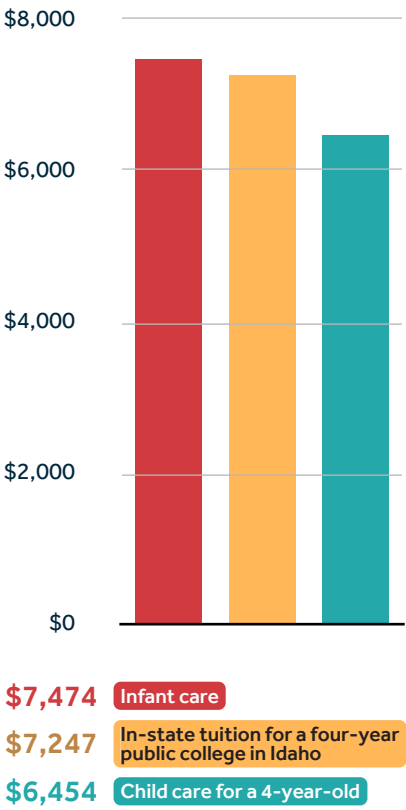
SOURCE: Economic Policy Institute. (2019, July). *The cost of childcare in Idaho*. <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/ID>

- In Idaho, the average annual cost of infant care is \$7,474 or \$623 per month.
- In Idaho, the average annual cost of child care for a 4-year-old is \$6,454 or \$538 per month.
- Infant care costs \$227 more per year than in-state tuition for a four-year public college in Idaho.³⁶
- In a survey conducted in the summer of 2020, 50% of parents stated that they “do not have enough money to pay for child care.”³⁷

Adding to the challenge of affordability, some families that qualify for income-based supports may not be using existing resources, such as ICCP, while other families need assistance to pay for child care, but make too much to qualify for support.³⁸ When families cannot afford child care, they may be forced to reduce work hours or even quit jobs. This affects Idaho families, communities, and the state economically.

36 Ibid.
37 Le, L. and McCall, J. (2020). *IDAEC: Early learning in Idaho*. Social & Economic Sciences Research Center. Washington State University.
38 Carlson, J., et al. (2020). *Exploring the strengths and challenges of early care and education programs in Idaho*. Child Trends.

FIGURE 6.8
Annual Child Care Costs in Idaho (2019)



SOURCE: Economic Policy Institute. (2019, July). *The cost of childcare in Idaho*. <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/ID>

“We need more production and factory-hour based daycares.”

- Magic Valley Early Learning Collaborative Needs Assessment³⁹

Hours of Operation

Families that work unpredictable or nontraditional hours face additional barriers to accessing ECCE. Nationally, 58% of low-income children under six have a parent who works between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m.⁴⁰ Idaho parents and caregivers have expressed the need for additional high quality ECCE programs that are open beyond regular business hours. Idaho surveys of ECCE stakeholders, especially those in rural or remote areas of the state, revealed that parents struggle to find child care due to facility operating hours.

Of the 1,215 providers in Idaho’s voluntary ECCE provider database, RISE, 81% reported being open Monday through Friday only. Six percent of Idaho providers offered 24 hour ECCE or extended hours and 7% operated seven days per week.⁴¹

Child Care Benefits and Accommodations

In a 2020 survey of the economic impacts of child care on Idaho families, 15% of respondents reported that their employers provided child care benefits. The most common benefits provided by employers were paid maternity leave and onsite child care. When parents were asked which benefits would be most helpful, they cited flexible working hours, onsite child care, and paid maternity leave.⁴²

Serving Vulnerable, Underserved, and Rural

Idaho has several initiatives under way that expand high quality ECCE access to vulnerable and underserved children and children living in rural areas.

39 Magic Valley Early Learning Advisory Council. (2020). IDAEYC preschool development grant birth-5 local needs assessment.
40 Malik, R., et al. (2018, December 6). America’s child care deserts in 2018. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/12/06/461643/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/>
41 Based on RISE database numbers provided by IdahoSTARS. November 2020.
42 U. S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry. (2020). ID untapped potential: How childcare impacts Idaho’s state economy. https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/EarlyEd_UntappedPotential_Idaho.pdf

Preschool the Idaho Way/Early Learning Collaboratives

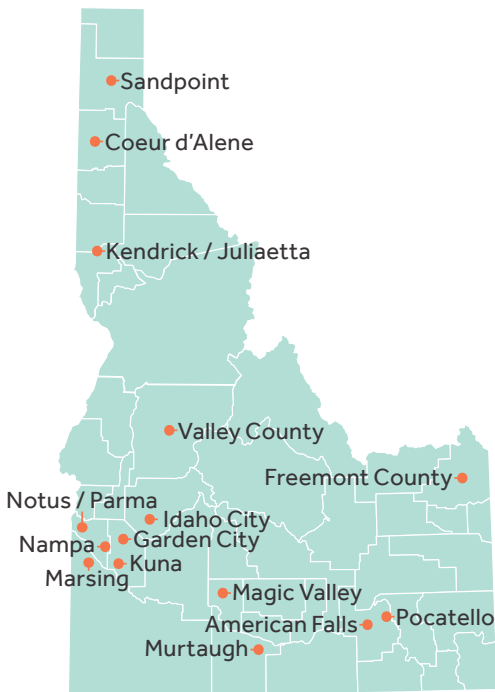
In 2018, Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (Idaho AEYC) launched Preschool the Idaho Way. Preschool the Idaho Way brings together communities and stakeholders across the state to create local early learning collaboratives (ELCs). The goal of the program is to increase access to high quality, affordable ECCE opportunities for Idaho families. Preschool the Idaho Way builds partnerships among local programs such as Head Start, in home and center based child care providers, faith based organizations, and school districts, allowing them to build upon existing resources and expand ECCE opportunities. Because the collaboratives are designed by local experts and stakeholders, they deliver early learning experiences that work for community’s unique needs and are guided by local solutions, rather than following a one-size-fits-all approach. By pooling resources such as space, transportation, and personnel, collaboratives can offer affordable, comprehensive early learning opportunities that otherwise would not be available to many families.⁴³ In 2019, Preschool the Idaho Way awarded implementation grants to 10 Idaho communities statewide, seven of which are in rural communities, to initiate ELCs. The ELCs are required to participate in STQ. With the development of these 10 ELCs, more than 350 new preschool seats were made available for Idaho families.⁴⁴

In 2020, Idaho AEYC continued to support the efforts of ELCs by providing funding to encourage communities to establish Early Learning Advisory Committees (ELACs). The ELACs conducted local Early Learning needs assessments to determine what ECCE systems and resources are currently in place in their communities. Based on their needs assessments, each ELAC will develop a local Early Learning Strategic Action plan and will identify and promote best practices to support transitions between early childhood and schools.⁴⁵ Fourteen ELACs were developed with this support, 10 of which serve rural areas.

43 Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children. (n.d.). Early learning collaboratives. <https://idahoeayc.org/earlylearningcollaboratives>
44 Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children. (2020, October). IDAEYC early learning collaboratives October 2020 update. [Report].
45 Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children. (n.d.). PDG B5 4.1 Local collaboratives: Community systems to support families and young children. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57ab3678be659454809bc46e/t/5ed97af15e6be5361eef3126/1591311123774/PDG-B5_4.1_Idaho_2020_LocalCollaborativesProjectOverview-May2020.pdf

FIGURE 6.9
Idaho Early Learning Advisory Councils (2020)

ELACs conducted local Early Learning needs assessments to determine which ECCE services and resources are currently in place in their communities.



SOURCE: Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children. (2020, October). IDAEYC early learning collaboratives October 2020 update. [Report].

Head Start

Head Start programs take a comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of Idaho’s families and children by providing education, health services, food assistance, parental involvement (including participation on policy councils and in workshops and classes on early child development), and outreach to families to determine additional services they may need.⁴⁶ In 2019, 4,352 children had continuous access to dental care; 4,640 had continuous access to health care; 104 pregnant women were served by Early Head Start; 2,960 families participated in health education; 364 families received job training; and 1,271 families received crisis intervention. In 2019, Head Start and Early Head Start conducted 26,796 home visits.⁴⁷

Idaho Migrant & Seasonal Head Start

Community Council of Idaho (CC Idaho) is the largest nonprofit serving Latinos in Idaho. CC Idaho operates 10 Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Centers throughout southern Idaho, offering full-day bilingual education and parent education and comprehensive health, nutrition, and disability services.⁴⁸ These services are provided to children under five whose families are low-income and primarily work in agricultural activities such as farming, dairy, or processing industries.

Migrant Preschools

The Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE) also offers migrant preschool programs. These preschool programs are connected to the migrant education programs in school districts. In Idaho, the ISDE migrant preschools are located in communities where agricultural migratory jobs are prevalent, many of which are in rural counties.

46 Idaho Head Start Association. (2016). *Head Start and Early Head Start*. <https://www.idahohsa.org/head-start-and-early-head-start>
47 Idaho Head Start Association. (2018). *Annual report program year 2018-2019*. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56a6964e5827c30d9e0a278b/t/5e7e7b64e8e5be5d588e8ff2/1585347431935/IHSA+-+2019+Annual+Report+%28Web%29.pdf>
48 Community Council of Idaho. (2018). *About community council of Idaho mission, vision, history*. <https://communitycouncilofidaho.org/about/>

Tribal ECCE

The COVID-19 pandemic limited outreach to tribal communities; information provided below comes from tribal public webpages.

The Coeur d’Alene Tribe Early Childhood Learning Center (ECLC) houses all ECCE programs for the Coeur d’Alene Tribe. The ECLC provides comprehensive services in the areas of education, disabilities, mental health, health, and nutrition to children and their families. Specific programs include Head Start and Early Head Start; the federally funded Child Care Development Fund that offers services to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with sliding scale tuition for qualifying families; the Native Youth Community Project that incorporates social/emotional components with culture-based creative arts, nutrition, and physical activity for preschool children attending school on the reservation; and First Steps, an early intervention program that provides developmental tracking, assessment services, intervention services, and service coordinators for children with diagnosed disabilities.⁴⁹

The Kootenai Tribe does not have public information available about their child care programs.

The Nez Perce Tribe supports families and their children 0-5 with early childhood development via their Native American Head Start program.⁵⁰

The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes operates a Head Start program that provides comprehensive health and education services to 75 low-income children 3-5. The average waiting list for income eligible children is 20. The Child Care Program provides services to working or student parents and guardians of children 0-12 under Child Care Development Funds. The Child Care Program serves 36 families and 53 children in toddler, preschool, and afterschool classrooms and has an average wait list of 81 children. The Early Intervention Program serves children, 0-5, across the reservation, who have or are at risk for disabilities. This program provides public awareness, monthly parent trainings, child/parent playgroup sessions, child developmental screening, special education service assistance, and other supportive services for newborn children through preschoolers.⁵¹

The Shoshone-Paiute Tribes provide ECCE from their Day Care Center. The Center cares for children 6 months to 6 years and is provided on a first come, first served basis. The goal of the Center is to “provide quality child care to the children residing on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation and to educate parents, staff, and community members on the importance of early childhood development.”⁵²

49 Coeur d’Alene Department of Education. (n.d). *Early childhood learning center*. <https://www.cdatribe-nsn.gov/education/eclc/#programs>
50 Nez Perce Tribe. (2018). *Education*. <https://nezperce.org/government/education/>
51 Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. (2020). *Early childhood program*. Early Childhood. <http://www2.sbtribes.com/early-childhood/>
52 Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation. (n.d). *Day care center*. <https://shopaitribes.org/spdaycare/>

Idaho Child Care Program

The Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP), a federal block grant, provides child care subsidies to eligible Idaho families that are low-income and/or underserved. The program allows guardians to receive child care from center based, home based, or faith based programs certified to participate in ICCP. Approximately 8,600 children per month are provided subsidies through ICCP.⁵³

Idaho Infant Toddler Program

The Infant Toddler Program (ITP) is a federally funded system of early intervention services to assist Idaho children 0-3 who have developmental delays or health conditions (such as prematurity, Down Syndrome, hearing loss) that may result in developmental delays. The ITP connects children with services that promote their physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development. This includes therapeutic, educational, and supportive services such as family education, speech therapy, occupational therapy, service coordination, counseling, home visits, and health services.⁵⁴

Special Education Preschool

This federally funded program provides services to children between 3 and 21 and is often connected to the ITP. Families that receive funding through the ITP begin planning to transfer to the Preschool Special Education program before their child’s third birthday. The program focuses on the child’s educational needs and includes an Individual Education Program (IEP) plan, measurable annual goals and short-term objectives, a description of the special education and related services to be provided, and a description of how the child’s family will be regularly informed of the child’s progress. Approximately 3,400 Idaho children are served through the Preschool Special Education program annually.⁵⁵

Home Visiting Program (Maternal Infant & Early Childhood Home Visiting; MIECHV)

The MIECHV program (also referred to as the Home Visiting Program), funded by a federal block grant, offers two home visiting programs, Parents as Teachers and the Nurse Family Partnership. These programs work with parents in their homes to help families develop healthy habits and relationships.⁵⁶ Because a child’s health and development begins before they are born, MIECHV provides home visiting to pregnant women. During these home visits, nurses, social workers, early childhood educators, and other professionals teach families how to create physically, socially, and emotionally healthy early learning environments in the home. Home visits are prioritized for families living in at-risk communities.

53 Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. (n.d.). *Idaho Child Care Program*. <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/services-programs/children-families/idaho-child-care-program>
54 Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. (n.d.). *Infant Toddler Program*. <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/services-programs/children-families/about-infant-toddler-program>
55 Idaho State Department of Education. (n.d.). *Special Education funding & fiscal accountability*. <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/sped/funding/#::~:~:text=In%20addition%20to%20the%20IDEA,to%20children%20ages%203-5>
56 Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. (n.d.). *Home Visiting Program: For Maternal Infant & Early Childhood Home Visits*. <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/services-programs/children-families/about-home-visiting>

Consideration:

While there are excellent initiatives in place to make high quality ECCE available for Idaho’s vulnerable, underserved, and rural families, there is not enough capacity to meet the needs. To fully understand the challenges Idaho families face when accessing ECCE, it would be beneficial to hear directly from families about their experiences looking for child care, paying for child care, or applying for programs like Head Start and ICCP. Through interviews and firsthand accounts, the state can determine if and how family characteristics such as rural, urban, employment, income, age, ethnicity, and others affect preferences for and access to ECCE programs.⁵⁷

Challenges to Improving ECCE Availability

“People can’t make a living off of child care, either as a business or as an employee.”

- Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) Meeting, October 2020

Workforce Pay and Incentives

Idaho ECCE providers are dedicated. They love their jobs and the children they care for and educate. However, beyond this love and dedication, there is often little financial incentive for them to remain in their professions. A theme that emerged from town halls and focus groups is that ECCE providers do not feel that their profession is respected and that often they are viewed as “babysitters.”

Idaho ECCE professionals participating in surveys and focus groups indicated they face challenges with finding staff who are qualified *and* willing to accept low wages and minimal benefits.⁵⁸

57 Carlson, J., et al. (2020). *Exploring the strengths and challenges of early care and education programs in Idaho*. Child Trends.
58 Ibid.

In 2019, hourly wages for Idaho child care workers ranged from an entry wage of \$8.40 to \$14.07 (90th percentile) per hour.⁵⁹ This equates to \$17,480 to \$29,270 annually. The median annual salary for a full-time child care worker was \$20,970.⁶⁰

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics defines child care workers as workers that, “Attend to children at schools, businesses, private households, and child care institutions...perform a variety of tasks such as dressing, feeding, bathing, and overseeing play...” and does not include preschool or special education teachers.⁶¹

Preschool teachers in Idaho earned slightly higher wages, from \$9.84 (entry) to \$17.55 (90th percentile) per hour with a median wage of \$11.52. This translates to \$20,470 to \$36,510 annually. The median annual salary for a full-time preschool teacher was \$23,960.⁶²



Sixty-eight percent of Idaho ECCE professionals participating in surveys and focus groups reported losing at least one lead teacher and 78% reported losing at least one assistant teacher in the past year, not related to COVID-19. On average, programs lost two lead teachers and four assistant teachers in the past year. For many programs, COVID-19 has exacerbated existing issues with staff retention. Just over half of all child care center administrators (53%) reported having to terminate or furlough staff during the last six months and programs on average reported having fewer lead and assistant teachers in August 2020 compared to January 2020.⁶³

Focus group participants spoke at length about the role of compensation in retaining teaching staff. **Many center based owners and directors shared that they felt they were in an impossible situation—they could not afford to pay employees more money without passing along the cost to families for whom the price of care was often already very high.** As a result, owners and providers often lost staff to other jobs with more competitive wages or benefits such as jobs in retail and food service. Programs in certain areas of the state also lost staff to ECCE programs in Montana and Washington that offered better compensation.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Idaho Department of Labor. (2020 May). *Occupational employment & wages survey*. <https://lmi.idaho.gov/oes>

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2018). *Standard occupational classification*. https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm

⁶² Idaho Department of Labor. (2020 May). *Occupational employment & wages survey*. <https://lmi.idaho.gov/oes>

⁶³ Carlson, J., et al. (2020). *Exploring the strengths and challenges of early care and education programs in Idaho*. Child Trends.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Consideration:

The lack of available ECCE programs and providers in Idaho is, in part, related to systemic issues including low wages for ECCE providers and overall funding for ECCE. Idaho ECCE programs would like to offer their staff better wages and benefits, but they are unable to do so without forgoing health and safety standards (such as increasing the child to staff ratio) or increasing costs for families that are already struggling to afford child care. Without additional funding for ECCE, whether funding from the state or a plan supported by the state to increase funding from other sources, it is unlikely that ECCE providers will be able to offer the ECCE quality and availability that are necessary to achieve Idaho’s school readiness and early literacy goals.

Connecting Idaho Families to Early Learning Resources



High quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs share many core principles. Programs are licensed and staffed by educated professionals that promote positive relationships. Programs cultivate social, emotional, physical, and cognitive learning and development and empower families to participate in their child’s education. As well, the learning environment is safe, nurturing, and inclusive.

While the definition of high quality is shared, in practice it can look different from center to center. To help families identify centers that are high quality, Idaho Association for Education of Young Children (Idaho AEYC) actively maintains a webpage dedicated to providing families with resources.¹ The IdahoSTARS project hosts a Quality Child Care web page that also gives families an overview of steps to use as a guideline when searching for high quality care. Information is provided in English and Spanish and there are several links to additional resources including the National Association for Education for Young Children, Child Care Aware Steps to Finding Quality Care flyers, and the Child Care Checklist.²

In addition to offering families information on what high quality ECCE looks like, the IdahoSTARS project offers two avenues to connect families with appropriate high quality ECCE. They host an online database that is searchable by provider name, address, city, and zip code. Results include provider contact information, the facility type, if they are enrolled in *Steps to Quality* and at what level, information on health and safety inspections and incident reports, and more.³ The IdahoSTARS project also partners with Idaho Careline (211) to offer access to local resource specialists that work with families over the phone to find the right care and education for their child.⁴

Live Better Idaho, an Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW) website that hosts a list of statewide services, has an Early Childhood Development page that links users to information about the Children’s Developmental Disabilities program, Head Start, the Infant Toddler Program (ITP), Parents as Teachers, and more.⁵

The IDHW website connects vulnerable families to a range of programs and services surrounding ECCE. The website includes information about the Maternal, Infant & Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program, the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP), screening and intervention services, and the ITP, which helps children with disabilities.⁶ The ITP is based on community outreach and collaboration with local community networks. Program staff use these community and local networks to connect with as many families with young children, especially in vulnerable populations, to screen children via personal visits. As children reach three years old, if they qualify, then they are transitioned to the Idaho State Department of Education’s Special Education programs. For more detailed description of ECCE supports and services in Idaho, see Appendix B.

1 Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children. (n.d). *Choosing quality child care*. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57ab3678be659454809bc46e/t/58547b24c534a52513a9b13a/1481931557552/Quality+Child+Care+Checklist.pdf>
2 IdahoSTARS. (2020). *Quality child care*. <https://idahostars.org/Families/Choosing-Quality-Child-Care>
3 IdahoSTARS. (2020). *Family portal*. <https://idahostars.org/Families?page13735=1&size13735=12>
4 Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. (n.d.). *Child care*. <https://211.idaho.gov/ChildCare/tabid/4265/Default.aspx>
5 Live Better Idaho. (n.d.). *Early childhood development*. <https://www.livebetteridaho.org/people-interested-were-also-interested/early-childhood-development>
6 Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. (n.d.). *Services & programs: Children & families*. <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/services-programs/children-families>



Consideration:

Idaho organizations provide multiple web pages to help families explore their ECCE options. However, not all of these resources are coordinated and the path leading families to the appropriate ECCE services for their child may be unclear. Often, families are left navigating multiple websites, which can be confusing and frustrating.

Engagement in the Home

When families are involved in their child's early learning, they have a better understanding of how to help their child develop the social, emotional, and educational skills their child needs to succeed.

Idaho has several resources that encourage families to engage in their child's early learning and development. Idaho AEYC, Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL), IDHW, Idaho Public Television (IdahoPTV), school districts, and others provide outreach and materials that help families understand important developmental milestones.

Home visiting programs offer resources for families to learn how to engage with children in developmentally appropriate, loving, and safe ways. Examples of these include:

MIECHV provides in home visits by nurses, social workers, early childhood educators, and other professionals.

The Parents as Teachers program stresses the importance of the families' role as their child's first and most important teacher and works with families to help them support their child.

Idaho Head Start and Early Head Start programs provide services through home based and center based options. Home based options include services that are provided through weekly home visits and bimonthly group activities.

IdahoPTV offers free television and online programming for Idaho families and educators. Their Parent Engagement Initiative focuses on the critical role families play in promoting early learning by equipping Idaho families with easy-to-follow strategies to build their child's reading, social emotional, and STEM skills. IdahoPTV also offers an array of online resources for ECCE educators and families including a partnership with public libraries that promotes play-based early literacy and STEM activities.

Idaho public libraries, with guidance and support from the ICfL, work with community partners to offer programming and resources to children and families, tweens and teens, and adults.⁷ One of many examples is the Read to Me Program that provides underserved Idaho children with books they can take home and keep, educates families on the importance of early literacy and partners, provides child care programs with books, and much more.

All of these resources are high quality and free to families and are easily accessed online. IdahoPTV and the ICfL have outreach campaigns to alert families about their services.

There are a few consolidated information points that direct families to high quality ECCE providers across the state. However, these programs such as the IdahoSTARS project online data base and resource specialists point families to providers that are voluntarily including their information in the RISE database. This means that non-participating providers will not appear in these searches. Another limitation is that the sites that provide families with information about quality and providers do not automatically inform families about resources they can use at home to foster early learning skills.

Consideration:

It is unclear how families that are unaware of resources to promote early childhood learning at home find high quality educational materials for their children. A 2020 survey asked Idaho families to identify where they go for information to help their children learn and grow. Responses included some formal sources such as teachers, Parents as Teachers, and Upstart, while the majority listed more informal sources such as church, intuition, online apps, workbooks, and homeschool curricula.⁸ While Idaho organizations have numerous web pages full of parent resources, there is little coordination among these entities to advertise, consolidate, and/or guide families to the programs that will provide the resources their children need.

⁷ Idaho Commission for Libraries. (Oct. 2020). *ICfL services and programs provided to Idaho libraries*. <https://libraries.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/ICfL-Programs-and-Services-FactSheet-20201030.pdf>

⁸ Le, L., and McCall, J. (2020). *IDAEYC: Early learning in Idaho*. Social & Economic Sciences Research Center. Washington State University.

Transitioning from Early Childhood Care and Education to School



The ways in which children and families are supported as they transition from early learning to kindergarten varies across Idaho.

Idaho school districts are independent, meaning districts must follow specific standards concerning preschool activities for special education and migrant students, but have flexibility to create early learning programs for children who do not qualify for those services.

A handful of Idaho school districts offer onsite preschool programs, but the majority do not. To help children transition to elementary school, the Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE) offers online resources about kindergarten readiness for families. Many school districts use family outreach to help prepare incoming kindergarteners. Some of these outreach activities include kindergarten readiness nights, online skills checklists, and resource links on their webpages.

There are targeted supports for vulnerable and underserved children. In 2015, the ISDE Migrant Education Program participated in a federal grant to further early learning support to migrant children. This grant culminated in the creation and distribution of over 300 preschool backpack kits. Since many migrant student families are Spanish speaking, the backpack kits are available in Spanish and include books in Spanish. The backpack kits are designed to help families interact with their children in ways that develop their social emotional, literacy, and physiological skills and get them ready for kindergarten. Each family that receives a kit also is given in home instruction sessions and access to free lessons on the ISDE website. In 2021, this website will be updated to include instructional videos in English and Spanish.¹

For students who qualify for special education preschool, there are supports in place for their transition from preschool to kindergarten. For many of these children, their preschool program is located in the same building as their kindergarten class, allowing them to begin kindergarten in a familiar place with familiar faces. These students are connected to the school district at age three. The administrative coordination for children with disabilities is standardized by state and federal agencies and policies.²

¹ Based on interview with Idaho State Department of Education, Migrant Education staff. November 2020.
² Based on interviews with Idaho elementary school administrators and Idaho Department of Health and Welfare staff. November 2020.



Consideration:

There are a few examples of collaboration between early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs and school districts. These examples include Head Start and Early Head Start, both of which have formal agreements in place that help guide student transitions from preschool to kindergarten. Another example of collaboration is community schools that have ECCE programs and preschools onsite. However, in communities where collaborations between ECCE programs and the school district are not in place, navigating the transition to kindergarten may be difficult or even unavailable depending on the efforts of their school district. ECCE providers in town halls and focus groups identified stronger collaboration and communication among ECCE providers, school districts, and families as an opportunity for improvement.

Next Steps



Several metrics have been identified to evaluate the successes and opportunities for improvement in Idaho’s early childhood care and education (ECCE) system. These include:

Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI): Every child in Idaho is given a literacy screening when they enter kindergarten. The IRI is mandated to be administered twice a year—once in the fall and once in the spring. It measures five domains of literacy: alphabetic knowledge, comprehension, fluency, phonetic awareness, and vocabulary with appropriate subtests at each grade level. As the state’s only statewide measure of early literacy, results from the IRI are important. Improvement in IRI scores is one way to measure the long-term impacts of the Preschool Development Grant Birth–Age 5 activities.

Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) creation and expansion: As Idaho communities use the Preschool the Idaho Way structure and resources to build new ELACs, the needs assessments and strategic plans they create and the initiatives they implement will provide information about the effects of collaboration in and creation of preschool programs across Idaho.

RISE and Steps to Quality (STQ) enrollment and use: The RISE database collects information about programs enrolled in STQ and professional development opportunities. RISE data can be used to track changes in ECCE provider and program enrollment in STQ and use of and demand for professional development trainings.

Website traffic: The success of outreach activities can be measured by collecting website traffic figures for the major webpages of the IdahoSTARS project, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, and other key ECCE programs.

State investment in ECCE: Legislative and gubernatorial resources allocated to ECCE programs and infrastructure will be key metrics to understand the state’s investment in and commitment to creating a high quality, statewide ECCE system.

The results of this Needs Assessment are guiding the creation of a statewide Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan will provide the framework for the implementation of activities to initiate, replicate, strengthen, and expand programs that support Idaho families and children.

The state should utilize the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) to drive collaboration and growth that is needed to enact the Strategic Plan. The momentum and partnerships forged during the initial PDG Grant will help Idaho take intentional steps to improving early literacy skills, school readiness, educational attainment, and success in life for generations.

Idaho has been awarded PDG Renewal grant funds to continue this work.



Appendix A

Stakeholder Engagement Events – Town Hall and Focus Group Findings

The McClure Center partnered with Danielle Horras Consulting to conduct **stakeholder engagement events** to gain family and parent, community, and broader stakeholder perspectives regarding the needs of Idaho families. Town halls were designed to gather information about community needs and focus groups solicited input from the Early Childcare Advisory Council (ECAC), business leaders, Idaho legislators, and early childhood care and education (ECCE) professionals.

Due to health and safety precautions associated with the coronavirus pandemic, town halls and focus groups were held virtually. The town halls were heavily advertised through email, social media, and newspaper. Focus groups participants were invited via email. Town hall recruitment materials, stakeholder event discussion prompts, and a sample event agenda are included in Appendix C.

Town halls and focus group meetings revealed broad, common themes with respect to the needs of Idaho families and early learning supports and services in Idaho. The stakeholder events were deliberately structured to elicit candid feedback; meetings were not recorded and participant information was anonymized. Discussions revolved around prompts; however, participants were encouraged to speak freely and responses were not limited to addressing the prompts.

The McClure Center calculated themes that arose from the stakeholder events using text analysis by quantifying the words of stakeholders and summing the use of common ideas and phrases. Text analysis utilizes the frequency of key ideas to determine larger themes expressed by participants.

Text analysis revealed 1,431 discussion points and 13 major themes.

By the Numbers

8 town hall meetings – 7 conducted in each of Idaho’s health districts and 1 open to participants statewide

- 163 attendees
- 9 hours of open dialogue

4 focus groups – Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), Idaho legislators, Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry (IACI), and ECCE providers

- 41 attendees
- 5 hours of open dialogue

Major Themes

Three major themes surfaced during every stakeholder engagement event. Each of these themes connected to the idea that Idaho should elevate quality ECCE.

Top Three Themes

Professional development for ECCE providers: Stakeholders felt that ECCE providers are not seen as a valuable part of the education system. There was a great deal of discussion about the perception that ECCE providers are viewed as akin to “babysitters” and the need to increase the understanding that ECCE providers are professionals that meaningfully contribute to early learning and education. This included elevating language from “child care providers” to ECCE “teachers and educators” to put them on par with K-12 educators. Changing how ECCE providers are compensated and trained also was central to this theme. Stakeholders expressed the need to recruit, retain, and pay ECCE providers in a way that fosters professional development in the ECCE field.

Family/Parent education and resources: Many stakeholder comments emphasized the importance of supporting families with the resources they need to thrive. Discussions about these supports included connecting families to the knowledge and the resources that are available in their communities and finding ways to expand the programs and resources so that they reach more families/parents. Many stakeholders highlighted the need to bring information into places where parents already are going, like pediatrician offices, child care centers, schools, and social media groups.

Outreach: There is a great need to educate families and parents, policymakers, and ECCE providers about the connection between high quality ECCE and a child’s future success in life. This point was present in all stakeholder events. Stakeholders also expressed the importance of communicating the return on investment in early learning programs for families and their children, the economy, and long-term goals of the state.

Additional Major Themes

Other themes were echoed throughout town halls and focus groups.

Accessibility of ECCE programs and providers needs to be addressed. Many stakeholders expressed concern that low-income families and families in rural areas are unable to access quality (or any) ECCE programs. Stakeholders discussed that this was due to high quality programs either not existing or having long wait lists.

Affordability of ECCE was discussed at length during all stakeholder engagements. Many comments focused on concerns that low-income families and families in rural areas are not able to access quality (or any) ECCE programs in their communities due to high cost. Many indicated that more resources need to be invested to reach these families.

Age limits on ECCE programs was mentioned in a majority of the town halls. Strict age requirements and limits on program enrollment or services can be barriers to services and have ripple effects on children’s education.

Availability of ECCE programs was mentioned repeatedly during every town hall and focus group. Many participants reported the need for more programs in their communities. Comments often connected availability with accessibility and affordability, particularly for low-income and rural families.

Children with Disability screening and services was also a topic mentioned during every town hall and focus group. Participants pointed out that the capacity of the system that identifies and supports children with disabilities is limited. They indicated there is a need to expand these services to hard-to-reach communities. Participants also identified the desire for better collaboration between the programs that support children with disabilities and the wider ECCE system.

Collaboration was a topic frequently mentioned during every town hall and focus group. Examples include collaboration between ECCE programs and school districts, collaboration among ECCE programs, collaboration among ECCE programs and other early childhood system supports, and more.

COVID-19 was also a topic identified during every town hall and focus group. The coronavirus pandemic has revealed the underlying challenges facing and strengths of Idaho’s current ECCE system. These discussions included ways ECCE providers have adapted to continue providing care and education for families and young children and the ways in which the pandemic has led to program challenges and even closures.

Funding/Subsidies was an often-described theme. Stakeholders noted the need for ECCE to be subsidized with state funds to overcome the larger issues of availability, affordability, accessibility, and professional development.

Quality of ECCE programs, care, and information was a theme mentioned during every stakeholder engagement event. Discussions centered around the importance of communicating to parents and communities what constitutes a “quality” ECCE program. There was mention of the IdahoSTARS project and *Steps to Quality* at a few events; however, the majority of comments focused on informing parents what quality is and which programs adhere to ECCE quality standards.

Standardization/State requirements was a clear call to create statewide, minimum ECCE standards for all programs, providers, and teachers so parents across the state can make informed decisions about the ECCE programs and options in their communities.

Limitations

Town halls and focus groups were held virtually and not in person, as planned, due to COVID-19. Marketing and outreach to promote town halls targeted communities through newspaper and social media advertisements and email invitations in advance of each town hall. The majority of town hall attendees were ECCE program providers and educators. A few community members and a number of library staff attended the town halls. Focus group attendees were invited through direct emails; attendance was lower than expected for in-person events.

Engaging and reaching parents and families was difficult even with targeted outreach efforts. This could be due to challenges associated with the pandemic such as fluctuating schedules due to limited child care and remote learning. Family perspectives will need to be explored further to gain greater understanding of their needs, the programs they use, and how to best support the early education needs of their children.

The COVID-19 pandemic also limited outreach to Hispanic and Tribal communities. Community members and ECCE program providers/teachers were unable to participate in town halls and focus groups. These voices and perspectives were and still are a priority for fully understanding Idaho’s ECCE landscape and family needs. Further outreach to and engagement with these communities needs to continue.

Appendix B

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programs and Resources

Idaho’s mixed ECCE delivery system has been built by years of program creation, expansion, and the extension of federal programs. Many programs are designed to further education of young children 0-5, foster kindergarten readiness, and offer training and resources for ECCE programs and providers. Several of the programs in Idaho’s mixed delivery system overlap and coordinate with each other. The following program profiles include a brief program overview and major service focal points. While this is a comprehensive list, it is not exhaustive.

Aim Early Idaho

Aim Early Idaho focuses on young children’s social and emotional development and infant mental health. Aim Early Idaho is designed to support existing early education and care systems with mental health resources. Every two years, Aim Early Idaho holds an “Early Years Conference” that attracts more than 400 attendees and offers strategies and best practices in the field of early childhood care.

Services:

- Infants (0-2)
- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)

Webpage: <https://www.aimearlyidaho.org/>

Economic Opportunity (EO) Refugee Child Care

The EO program helps refugees, primarily women, become self-sufficient and thrive while providing affordable, nurturing multi-cultural child care for all ages. The Economic Opportunity Refugee Child Care program partners with IdahoSTARS and offers health and safety training, business development information, and licensing with the City of Boise.

Services:

- Infants (0-2)
- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Low-income
- Minority Populations
- Multiple Languages
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Teacher Resources (training, materials, financial)

Webpage: <https://www.jannus.org/program/idaho-office-for-refugees/>

Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (Idaho AEYC)

Idaho AEYC is a statewide nonprofit with a vision of helping Idaho children thrive and grow in the best possible learning environments. Strategic priorities for Idaho AEYC include high quality early learning, childhood education profession, organizational advancement and excellence, leadership, and innovation. Idaho AEYC provides parents and professionals with access to numerous resources and programs to support children. Idaho AEYC is an affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Idaho AEYC operates under the NAEYC Accreditation in which early childhood professionals, families, and interested citizens can evaluate the quality of programs, make comparisons, and commit to strengthening ongoing programs in Idaho.

Services:

- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Quality Initiatives (quality metrics or quality improvement training)
- Spanish
- Teacher Resources (training, materials, financial)

Webpage: <https://idahoaeyc.org/resources>

Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP)

ICCP is a state program that helps low-income parents and families pay for child care. The amount of assistance varies by location and the type of provider. ICCP allows parents and families to receive child care assistance for center based, home based, or faith based programs as long as the program is certified to accept ICCP subsidies. ICCP is funded by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. IdahoSTARS provides the mandatory trainings, supporting documents, and links to ensure that child care providers meet the requirements for participation in ICCP.

Services:

- Infants (0-2)
- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Children with Disabilities (services for children with disabilities or children in special education)
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Spanish

Webpage: <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/services-programs/children-families/apply-child-care>

Idaho Children’s Trust Fund (ICTF)

In 1985, the Idaho Legislature created the ICTF to prevent child abuse and neglect. The ICTF is a state program that offers grants to train and educate parents and educators on child abuse and neglect. The ICTF performs statewide technical assistance to programs that work directly with children and their families. The ICTF coordinates statewide awareness activities that include bringing parents, practitioners, and other community members together to learn about best practices for prevention. The ICTF is a member of the National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds.

Services:

- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)

Webpage: <https://www.idahochildrenstrustfund.org>

Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL)

ICfL, a state program, assists libraries in Idaho to build capacity and better serve their clients. Libraries provide information, training, technical assistance, and resources for community members including programs designed to develop children as independent readers and lifelong learners. ICfL’s Read to Me programs and grants are available statewide and designed to strengthen families, help children be prepared for school, and improve early literacy. Read to Me programs include Early Literacy in Action, Elementary School Library Access Mini-Grants, Idaho Family Reading Week, Jump Start Kindergarten, Kindergarten Readiness Grant, My First Books, Outreach for Underserved Children, Read to Me Resources, Read to Me Training, School Library Access Mini-Grants, and El Dia. ICfL hosts a variety of events designed to provide inclusive environments and accommodate children’s different learning needs.

Services:

- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Low-income
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Spanish

Webpage: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/rtm/>

Idaho Digital Learning Academy

The Idaho Digital Learning Academy was created by the Idaho Legislature and Idaho educators to provide access to education methods for students and educators in Idaho. Idaho Digital Learning collaborates with 115 school districts to serve children. The Idaho Digital Learning Academy is a state program and an affiliate of the National Rural Education Association.

Services:

- Kindergarten Readiness (resources or content focused on kindergarten readiness)
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Quality Initiatives (quality metrics or quality improvement training)
- Rural
- Teacher Resources (training, materials, financial)

Webpage: <https://www.idahodigitallearning.org/>

Idaho Head Start Association

Idaho Head Start Association is a statewide organization composed of representatives from Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant & Seasonal Head Start, and Native American Head Start. The Idaho Head Start Association supports Head Start programs through advocacy, collaboration, and training. Head Start is designed to help low-income and at-risk children 3-4-years-old grow emotionally, mentally, physically, and socially and to help their families succeed in their children’s education. Early Head Start programs offer similar services for infants, toddlers, and pregnant women. The Idaho Head Start Association is a federal program and ensures collaboration and communication between and among Idaho Head Start programs.

Services:

- Infants (0-2)
- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Low-income
- Minority Populations
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Quality Initiatives (quality metrics or quality improvement training)
- Spanish

Webpage: <https://www.idahohsa.org/>

Idaho Maternal Infant & Early Childhood Visiting Program (MIECHV)

MIECHV is a federal program, administered by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, that provides home visiting to pregnant women and families to help them thrive. Home visits give families the necessary resources and skills to raise children who are physically, socially, and emotionally healthy and are ready to learn. Home visiting prioritizes families living in at-risk communities. Visits are conducted by a nurse, social worker, early childhood educator, and other professionals. MIECHV offers two evidence-based home visiting models: Parents as Teachers and the Nurse Family Partnership.

Services:

- Infants (0-2)
- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Children with Disabilities (services for children with disabilities or children in special education)
- Low-income
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Spanish

Webpage: <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/services-programs/children-families/about-home-visiting>

Idaho Parents
Unlimited (IPUL)

IPUL has three primary programs: 1) education through the Parent Training and Information Centers, 2) health through the Family-to-Family Health Information Center, and 3) arts through the Artist in Residence Program and the Work of Art Program. The Parent Training and Information Centers are authorized in Part D of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and are funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. These centers provide training and information for parents of children with disabilities. The Family-to-Family Health Information Center helps families make decisions about health care and provides training and resources for families of children with special needs. The Artist in Residence Program empowers and engages people with disabilities in the creative process through opportunities that are inclusive, educational, and participatory. IPUL operates statewide.

Services:

- Infants (0-2)
- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Children with Disabilities (services for children with disabilities or children in special education)
- Low-income
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Teacher Resources (training, materials, financial)

Webpage: <https://ipulidaho.org/>

Idaho Public Television
(IdahoPTV)

IdahoPTV is a statewide, non-commercial, broadcast telecommunication system and media provider. IdahoPTV conducts media campaigns to engage vulnerable families with young children in Idaho. IdahoPTV equips Idaho parents and families with strategies to build their child’s social and emotional development, literacy, and STEM skills through educational programming. IdahoPTV offers a variety of online resources for families and ECCE educators and offers PBS Kids apps, which support multiple learning goals through directed play.

Services:

- Infants (0-2)
- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Children with Disabilities (services for children with disabilities or children in special education)
- Kindergarten Readiness (resources or content focused on kindergarten readiness)
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Spanish
- Teacher Resources (training, materials, financial)

Webpage:

<https://www.idahoptv.org/>

IdahoSTARS

IdahoSTARS is the leading expert, resource, and referral source for quality child care in Idaho. IdahoSTARS empowers parents, families, and early childhood professionals to make safe, healthy, nurturing, and educational child care a top priority. IdahoSTARS provides child care professionals development and training opportunities to improve their early care and education services. Since 2003, IdahoSTARS has managed the child care provider eligibility component of the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP); provided a fully coordinated statewide Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) network; implemented a statewide Professional Development System (PDS) for child care providers; developed and directed *Steps to Quality*, a statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS); and has partnered with several Idaho agencies and organizations to coordinate ECCE throughout the state.

Services:

- Infants (0-2)
- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Low-income
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Quality Initiatives (quality metrics or quality improvement training)
- Spanish
- Teacher Resources (training, materials, financial)

Webpage: <https://idahostars.org/>

Idaho Training
Clearinghouse

Idaho Training Clearinghouse offers teachers, parents, and families resources to help children transition between educational settings. The Idaho Training Clearing House trainings are conducted in collaboration with the Idaho State Department of Education Special Education Office, and the Head Start Collaboration Office. Trainings are held in North (Coeur d’Alene, Moscow, Lewiston); Southeast (Idaho Falls, Pocatello, Twin Falls); and Southwest (Boise, Caldwell, Nampa) Idaho.

Services:

- Children with Disabilities (services for children with disabilities or children in special education)
- Kindergarten Readiness (resources or content focused on kindergarten readiness)
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Teacher Resources (training, materials, financial)

Webpage: <https://idahotc.com/>

Idaho Voices for
Children

Idaho Voices for Children is a nonprofit organization that utilizes policy, research, data, and community partners to identify strategies to support children. Idaho Voices for Children creates and works to enact policies regarding child safety, education, economic security, and health care. Idaho Voices for Children identifies current issues through research and data analysis; educates policymakers, elected officials, and constituents; advocates for change; and evaluates policy changes and their effects on communities.

Services:

- Policymakers (resources for policy making and community involvement)
- Rural

Webpage:

<https://www.idahovoices.org/>

Individual with
Disabilities Education
Act (IDEA)

IDEA is a federal law that governs special education services and IDEA Parts B and C govern the provision of services for children with disabilities. Programs are administered by the Idaho State Department of Education and the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. Part B is for children 3-21 and Part C applies specifically to infants and toddlers, 0-2. Families receiving early intervention services through Infant Toddler Programs under Part C will transition to Part B before the child’s third birthday.

Part B: Assistance for All Children with Disabilities: Part B includes provisions related to formula grants that assist states with providing free, appropriate education in the least restrictive environment for children with disabilities 3-21. These provisions are executed through the Idaho State Department of Education. Programs and services for children are administered by local school districts.

Services:

- Children with Disabilities (services for children with disabilities or children in special education)
- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)

Webpage:

<https://www.sde.idaho.gov/sped/>

Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Continued

Part C: Part C includes provisions related to formula grants that assist states with providing early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. Provisions for this act are executed and administered through the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare.

Services:

- Children with Disabilities (services for children with disabilities or children in special education)
- Infants (0-2)
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)

Webpage: <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/providers/infant-toddler-program/infant-toddler-program-provider-resources>

Infant Toddler Program (ITP)

The ITP is a federal system of early intervention services to assist Idaho children 0-3 who have a developmental delay or other health conditions that may result in a developmental delay. The ITP, administered by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, connects children with services to ensure their physical, cognitive, and social and emotional development while also supporting the needs of their families. These services can include therapeutic, educational, and supportive services, such as family education, speech therapy, occupational therapy, service coordination, counseling, home visits, and health services.

Services:

- Children with Disabilities (services for children with disabilities or children in special education)
- Infants (0-2)
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Spanish

Webpage: <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/services-programs/children-families/about-infant-toddler-program>

Lee Pesky Learning Center

The Lee Pesky Learning Center seeks to improve the lives of children who learn differently through prevention, evaluation, treatment, and research. Their one-on-one services include academic intervention, academic coaching, counseling, and evaluations for students in hopes of helping them become more prepared for school and thrive in an educational environment. They also offer financial assistance. The Lee Pesky Learning Center team works with educators to apply evidence-based practices in the classroom to meet the needs of all students. The Lee Pesky Learning Center is a nonprofit organization.

Services:

- Children with Disabilities (services for children with disabilities or children in special education)
- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- K-12 (programs and resources have a K-12 education component)
- Low-income
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Quality Initiatives (quality metrics or quality improvement training)
- Teacher Resources (training, materials, financial)

Webpage: <https://www.lplearningcenter.org/>

Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Centers

Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Centers, as part of the federal Head Start programs, are operated by Community Council of Idaho (CC Idaho) which is a rural-centered, multi-service nonprofit organization that offers support to Idaho communities. This early childhood education program is designed to help migrant and seasonal farmworker children succeed in school. Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Centers are open May through November, during harvesting season, and operate twelve hours per day.

This program is designed for children 0-5, agricultural migrant farmworker and seasonal farmworker families, and low-income families. Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Centers are of no cost to families and provide education, meals, and child care during non-traditional hours. Centers place an emphasis on child care being delivered in the child's native language.

Services:

- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Low-income
- Multiple Languages
- Quality Initiatives (quality metrics or quality improvement training)
- Rural

Webpage: <https://communitycouncilofidaho.org/head-start/>

Parents as Teachers (PAT)

PAT is a free, voluntary home visiting program, administered by the Idaho Central District Health Department, that provides parenting education. PAT's vision is to encourage parents to practice development-centered parenting and to enhance overall family wellbeing. PAT stresses the importance of the parent's role as their child's first and most important teacher and works with parents to help them support their child. PAT offers health services for families from pregnancy until kindergarten.

Services:

- Infants (0-2)
- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Kindergarten Readiness (resources or content focused on kindergarten readiness)
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Quality Initiatives (quality metrics or quality improvement training)

Webpage: <https://www.livebetteridaho.org/parents-teachers-pat>

Preschool the Idaho Way/Early Learning Collaboratives

Preschool the Idaho Way is a program created and launched by Idaho AEYC. The goal is to ensure that families across Idaho have access high quality, affordable learning opportunities. Preschool the Idaho Way works directly with communities to bring together stakeholders to create local preschool collaboratives called Early Learning Collaboratives (ELCs). ELCs can include city representatives, school leaders, parents, teachers, and local businesses that want to expand preschool opportunities for families in their communities. ELCs focus on building partnerships among existing local experts on early childhood education and include programs and entities such as Head Start, in home and center based child care providers, faith based organizations, and school districts.

Services:

- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)

Webpage: <https://idahoaeyc.org/earlylearningcollaboratives>

READY! for
Kindergarten

READY! for Kindergarten is an early learning program, led by Idaho AEYC, that is designed to support parents in their role as being their child’s first and most influential teacher. READY! for Kindergarten offers free workshops that encourage parents and child care providers to engage children through talking, singing, reading, and playing. The workshop curriculum is provided by the Children’s Reading Foundation and is based on current academic research.

Services:

- Infants (0-2)
- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Kindergarten Readiness (resources or content focused on kindergarten readiness)
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Spanish
- Teacher Resources (training, materials, financial)

Webpage:

<https://idahoaeyc.org/ready>

UPSTART

UPSTART is a combination of online instruction and support through family education liaisons. In Fall 2020, UPSTART began offering free, online kindergarten readiness programs for children 4-5 in rural areas across Idaho. UPSTART is at no cost to participating families and is designed for children who do not have access to kindergarten preparation. UPSTART provides personalized family education and coaching, computer and internet devices if needed, and educational software. UPSTART information and programs are offered in English and Spanish.

Services:

- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Kindergarten Readiness (resources or content focused on kindergarten readiness)
- Low-income
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Rural
- Spanish

Webpage:

<https://www.waterford.org/upstart/>

Zero to Three Idaho

Zero to Three Idaho was launched by the National Center for Clinical Infant Programs, which delivers programs, products, and services nationwide. Zero to Three Idaho programs are focused on supporting infants and toddlers in reaching their full potential to ensure future success. Zero to Three Idaho provides resources and tools for adults and early learners. Zero to Three Idaho works to ensure that infants and toddlers benefit from family and community connections.

Services:

- Infants (0-2)
- Early Learners (children 3-5)
- Parent Resources (training, materials, financial)
- Spanish

Webpage:

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/states/id>

Appendix C

Agenda for Town Halls and Focus Groups

Event begins-6pm MDT (sample time)
Event concludes-7:15 pm MDT (sample time)

1. Welcome and team introductions:

Consent form: *"You all received a consent form in your email from Crystal Callahan. Please return this as soon as possible as this is required to include your comments in our study."*

2. Attendees introduction/microphone and video check.

3. Technology overview:

- Tour of Zoom options
- Chat box
- Mute when not talking by dialing *6
- Raise your hand by dialing *9
- Technical difficulties can be addressed with tech team member.
- Everyone will be moved to breakout rooms automatically and returned to the main meeting.

4. High level overview of the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5):

The Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (Idaho AEYC) is the recipient of the federal award that was granted to the state of Idaho. This is the first time that Idaho ever applied for and received this award. We were authorized to do so because of our governor.

This one-year grant focuses on research, planning, collaboration, and coordination on early childhood systems across the state. There are many partners involved in the work including Idaho Public Television, Head Start, Child Trends, and IdahoSTARS.

We are excited about this opportunity to bring resources into Idaho that will advance early childhood education as we prepare all children to enter kindergarten with the skills they need to be successful.

Description of town halls and focus groups, why participation is important to this study.

5. Expectations for this meeting:

We plan to break each group into smaller groups of at least four people per group and assign them to a breakout room.

Each breakout room will have a facilitator to moderate the discussions and provide additional prompts, if needed. The facilitator will also be responsible for listening for themes and clarifying responses. Each room will also have a notetaker to capture the conversation.

6. Breakout groups:

Each group and their facilitator will stay in one breakout room and spend 10 minutes each on the topics of KEEP/STOP/START.

What should Idaho keep doing, stop doing, and start doing in regards to services for children 0-5?

Keep: What is working in the current system to serve children 0-5 in Idaho?

Prompt 1: *What is your experience/perception of the quality and availability of early education programs/ resources in your community?*

Prompt 2: *Is it hard to find child care, day care, or preschool programs in your community? If it is difficult, why? What can be done to improve access to these programs?*

Stop: In our current system of services for kids 0-5, what is NOT working?

Prompt 1: *If you have concerns about the quality of the programs, then what are they?*

Prompt 2: *What can be done to improve the quality? What are the most critical needs of families with young children and what are the barriers to accessing services to meet those needs?*

Prompt 3: *Are there differences for families living in rural areas? How can services and supports for families be administered more efficiently?*

Start: What services could be created to serve Idaho kids most effectively?

Prompt 1: *What can be done to improve access to quality early childhood programs in your area?*

Prompt 2: *What is stopping Idaho kids from getting their early education needs met?*

7. Debrief (in the main room):

Each facilitator summarizes the major feedback from their session.

8. Ways to engage and stay informed:

*Visit the Idaho AEYC website for information about preschool development grant progress:
<https://idahoaeyc.org/newsletter>*

*Contact the team at the McClure Center for any other feedback you may have to provide:
mcclurecenter@uidaho.edu*

9. Meeting closes with thank you.



Greetings,

The [University of Idaho McClure Center for Public Policy Research](#) and the [Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (IdAEYC) invite you to attend a focus group in your community [Date, Time, location]. This focus group is intended to gather information on your experiences, challenges and successes connected services that support young children and childcare in your community. The meeting will last for approximately 90 minutes.

We hope you [a childcare provider, a provider of a program or service, an educator of children] will share your thoughts with us.

The focus group held in your area was made possible by federal grant #90TP0077-01-00 and IdAEYC. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. You can learn more about the grant here: <https://idahoeaeyc.org/pdg>.

The first step in this research project is to understand the needs, resources and programs across Idaho. Idaho is vast and varied, so we are 'visiting' each educational region to learn about the programs, successes and challenges in these distinct areas.

We are eager to learn from you and hope you attend this focus group. The input from stakeholders in each community will guide the future of services that support young children and childcare in Idaho.

Please RSVP to this focus group via email: mcclurecenter@uidaho.edu

[RSVP](#) [link]

If you have any further questions about this focus group, then please contact the McClure Center by email mcclurecenter@uidaho.edu or by phone (208) 364-4563.

We look forward to seeing you then.

Sincerely,

Katherine Himes, Ph.D.
Director, McClure Center for Public Policy Research



Greetings,

The [University of Idaho McClure Center for Public Policy Research](#) and the [Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (IdAEYC) invite you to attend a focus group in your community [Date, Time, location]. This focus group is intended to gather information on your experiences, challenges and successes connected services that support young children and childcare in your community. The meeting will last for approximately 90 minutes.

We hope you [a childcare provider, a provider of a program or service, an educator of children] will share your thoughts with us.

The focus group held in your area was made possible by federal grant #90TP0077-01-00 and IdAEYC. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. You can learn more about the grant here: <https://idahoeaeyc.org/pdg>.

The first step in this research project is to understand the needs, resources and programs across Idaho. Idaho is vast and varied, so we are 'visiting' each educational region to learn about the programs, successes and challenges in these distinct areas.

We are eager to learn from you and hope you attend this focus group. The input from stakeholders in each community will guide the future of services that support young children and childcare in Idaho.

Please RSVP to this focus group via email: mcclurecenter@uidaho.edu

[RSVP](#) [link]

If you have any further questions about this focus group, then please contact the McClure Center by email mcclurecenter@uidaho.edu or by phone (208) 364-4563.

We look forward to seeing you then.

Sincerely,

Katherine Himes, Ph.D.
Director, McClure Center for Public Policy Research

Supporting Early Learning in Idaho
Informed Consent for Focus Group

Dr. Katherine Himes, from the University of Idaho McClure Center for Public Policy Research is conducting a research study. The purpose of the research is to understand the current state of early learning programs and processes in place in the state of Idaho. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a parent/guardian of a young child, you are a service provider of childcare/early learning programs or you are a concerned community member.

Your participation will involve sharing your experience and insights on early learning programs and information in your community. The focus group should take about 120 minutes to complete. The focus group includes questions such as: How do you find out about childcare program in your community? What are the barriers to access quality program in your community? What is your experience with early learning programs for children?

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate. You can refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. There are no names or identifying information associated with your responses; the McClure Center is seeking regional/community level perspectives throughout Idaho. Any reports on the focus group will include general region information. There are no known risks in this study, but some individuals may experience discomfort or loss of privacy when answering questions. Data will be reported as anonymous from a particular region. All data will remain within the McClure Center, and no identifiable information will be available.

The findings from this project will provide information on how to improve early learning programs and networks in Idaho. If published, results will be presented in summary form only. If any quotes are used, they will be anonymously attributed.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call Katherine Himes at (208) 364-4549. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or about what you should do in case of any harm to you, or if you want to obtain information or offer input, you may call the University of Idaho Office of Research Assurances at (208) 885-6340 or irb@uidaho.edu.

By signing this form, you certify that you are at least 18 years of age and agree to participate in the above described research study.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Adult Participant	Signature of Adult Participant	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Research Team Member	Signature of Research Team Member	Date

Discussion Prompts – Town Hall Meetings and Focus Groups

Topics include:

1. Where are the children when they are placed in ECCE settings across Idaho, what is the quality of those settings and what is the impact on school readiness (and literacy outcomes, in particular)? Are there differences for vulnerable/underserved children or children living in rural areas? How are different ECCE settings impacting school readiness?
2. How well is Steps to Quality (Idaho’s Quality Rating and Improvement System) measuring quality and incentivizing providers to improve quality?
3. What are the gaps in the availability of ECCE programs that support parents’ ability to work and that promote school readiness? What are the major barriers to improving program availability and quality? Are there differences for vulnerable/underserved children or children living in rural areas?
4. What are the most critical needs of families with young children and what are the barriers to accessing services to meet these needs? Are there differences for families living in rural areas? How can services and supports for families be administered more efficiently?
5. How are parents made aware of programs and services and the importance of high-quality ECCE settings to support parent choice?
6. What strategies are being employed that support how children transition from ECCE programs to schools?

Sample questions:

- 1) Parents/Caregivers:
- a. Do you think preschool is necessary or important for your children?
 - b. Do you think preschool is necessary or important for other children?
 - c. Do you know where to access information about preschool programs?
 - d. How do you usually find your childcare resource information?
 - e. How do you usually find your early learning resource information?
 - f. Do you know where to access in-home resources for parents on preschool activities?
 - g. Where did you find the in-home preschool resources?
 - h. How would you prefer to learn about your options for early learning for children under five?
 - i. Are there any preschool programs in your community?
 - j. Have you selected a preschool program?
 - k. What is the most important factor in selecting a preschool program?
 - l. What is the biggest challenge you face in placing your child(ren) in a preschool program?
 - m. Do you know of any programs that can help you overcome that challenge?
 - n. If you do know about these kinds of programs, where did you learn about them?
 - o. Do you intend to send your child(ren) to kindergarten?
 - p. Which format of kindergarten do you prefer?
 - q. Do you know what skills your child(ren) need for success in kindergarten?
 - r. Where would seek the information to determine what skills are needed before entering the school system, for success in kindergarten and beyond?

- s. Do you believe your child(ren) have the skills necessary to succeed in kindergarten and beyond?
- t. Will your child(ren) be attending school at a public school, public charter school, private charter school, private school (faith-based), private school (not faith-based) and/or home school?
- u. Will your child(ren) be attending or is/are attending a preschool program?
- v. Is that program conducted by you (the parent/s), in a private out the home provider (paid), in a free out of the home provider, in a faith-based program (free), in a faith-based program (paid), through Head Start, included in a program run by the school district, included with paid childcare, not available with paid childcare and/or other.

2) ECCE Providers (early childhood education programs/educators):

- a. Do you think preschool is necessary or important for Idaho children?
- b. Do you know where to access information about preschool programs?
- c. Do the preschool programs and school districts collaborate in your community?
- d. Are children in your school district entering Kindergarten with the social and academic skills necessary for success?
- e. How do you usually find your child development/childcare resource information?
- f. Do you know where to access in-home resources for parents on preschool activities?
- g. Where do you find in-home preschool resources?
- h. How do you share that information with parents/clients?
- i. What would be a the most helpful resource for you to learn about early learning for children under five?
- j. What is the most important factor for parents in selecting a preschool program?
- k. What is the most important factor for providers in creating preschool programs?
- l. What is the most important barrier for parents in placing their child(ren) in a preschool program?
- m. Are there any programs that you know of that will help overcome barrier?
- n. Where did you learn about programs to assist parents in accessing resources to overcome barriers to accessing/delivering early learning programs?
- o. What is the most difficult barrier in providing a quality preschool program?
- p. Is the program you conduct in a private out the home provider (paid), in a free out of the home provider, in a faith-based program (free), in a faith-based program (paid), through Head Start, included in a program run by the school district, included with paid childcare, in collaboration with for-profit and non-profit partners and/or other.
- q. Do you know what skills children need for success in kindergarten?
- r. Where would seek the information to determine what skills are needed before entering the school system, for success in kindergarten and beyond?
- s. How do you share the information on school readiness?

3) Community Partners:

- a. Do you think preschool is necessary or important for Idaho children?
- b. Do you know where to access information about preschool programs?
- c. How do you usually find your child development/childcare resource information?
- d. What is the most important barrier for parents in placing their child(ren) in a preschool program?
- e. Are there any programs that you know of that will help you overcome that barrier?

- f. Where did you learn about programs to assist parents in accessing resources to overcome barriers to accessing/delivering early learning programs?
- g. Do you or your employer have any interactions with preschool programs or interest groups?
- h. What would be a the most helpful resource for you to learn about early learning for children under five?
- i. Are there any preschool programs in your community?
- j. What would be a the most helpful resource for you to learn about early learning for children under five?
- k. Do you know what skills children need for success in kindergarten?
- l. Where would seek the information to determine what skills are needed before entering the school system, for success in kindergarten and beyond?



Greetings,

The [University of Idaho McClure Center for Public Policy Research](#) and the [Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (IdAEYC) invite you to a town hall meeting in your community [Date, Time, location]. This town hall is intended to gather information on your experiences, challenges and successes connected to early learning programs and childcare in your community. The meeting will last for approximately 90 minutes.

We hope that you, as a parent of a young child, a provider of an early learning program, an educator of children or a community member, will share your thoughts with us.

The town hall held in your area was made possible by federal grant #90TP0077-01-00 and IdAEYC. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. You can learn more about the grant here: <https://idahoaeyc.org/pdg>.

The first step in this research project is to understand the needs, resources and programs across Idaho. Idaho is vast and varied, so we are ‘visiting’ each educational region to learn about the programs, successes and challenges in these distinct areas.

We are eager to learn from you and hope you attend this town hall meeting. The input from stakeholders in each community will guide the future of early learning resources and programs in Idaho.

Please share this invitation with others in your community who might be interested in attending this town hall.

[Date, Time, Location]

[RSVP](#) [link]

If you have any further questions about this town hall, then please contact the McClure Center by email mcclurecenter@uidaho.edu or by phone (208) 364-4563.

We look forward to seeing you then.

Sincerely,

Katherine Himes, Ph.D.
Director, McClure Center for Public Policy Research



Greetings,

The [University of Idaho McClure Center for Public Policy Research](#) and the [Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (IdAEYC) invite you to a town hall meeting in your community [Date, Time, location]. This town hall is intended to gather information on your experiences, challenges and successes connected to early learning programs and childcare in your community. The meeting will last for approximately 90 minutes.

We hope that you, as a parent of a young child, a provider of an early learning program, an educator of children or a community member, will share your thoughts with us.

The town hall held in your area was made possible by federal grant #90TP0077-01-00 and IdAEYC. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. You can learn more about the grant here: <https://idahoaeyc.org/pdg>.

The first step in this research project is to understand the needs, resources and programs across Idaho. Idaho is vast and varied, so we are ‘visiting’ each educational region to learn about the programs, successes and challenges in these distinct areas.

We are eager to learn from you and hope you attend this town hall meeting. The input from stakeholders in each community will guide the future of early learning resources and programs in Idaho.

Please share this invitation with others in your community who might be interested in attending this town hall.

[Date, Time, Location]

[RSVP](#) [link]

If you have any further questions about this town hall, then please contact the McClure Center by email mcclurecenter@uidaho.edu or by phone (208) 364-4563.

We look forward to seeing you then.

Sincerely,

Katherine Himes, Ph.D.
Director, McClure Center for Public Policy Research



The [University of Idaho McClure Center for Public Policy Research](#) and the [Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (IdAEYC) invite you to a town hall meeting (about 90 minutes) in your community.

This town hall is intended to gather information on your experiences, challenges and successes connected to services that support young children and childcare in your community.

The input from stakeholders in each community will guide the future of services, resources and programs in Idaho.

[RSVP](#) [link]

Questions? Contact us: mcclurecenter@uidaho.edu



The [University of Idaho McClure Center for Public Policy Research](#) and the [Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (IdAEYC) invite you to a town hall meeting (about 90 minutes) in your community.

This town hall is intended to gather information on your experiences, challenges and successes connected to services that support young children and childcare in your community.

The input from stakeholders in each community will guide the future of services, resources and programs in Idaho.

[RSVP](#) [link]

Questions? Contact us: mcclurecenter@uidaho.edu



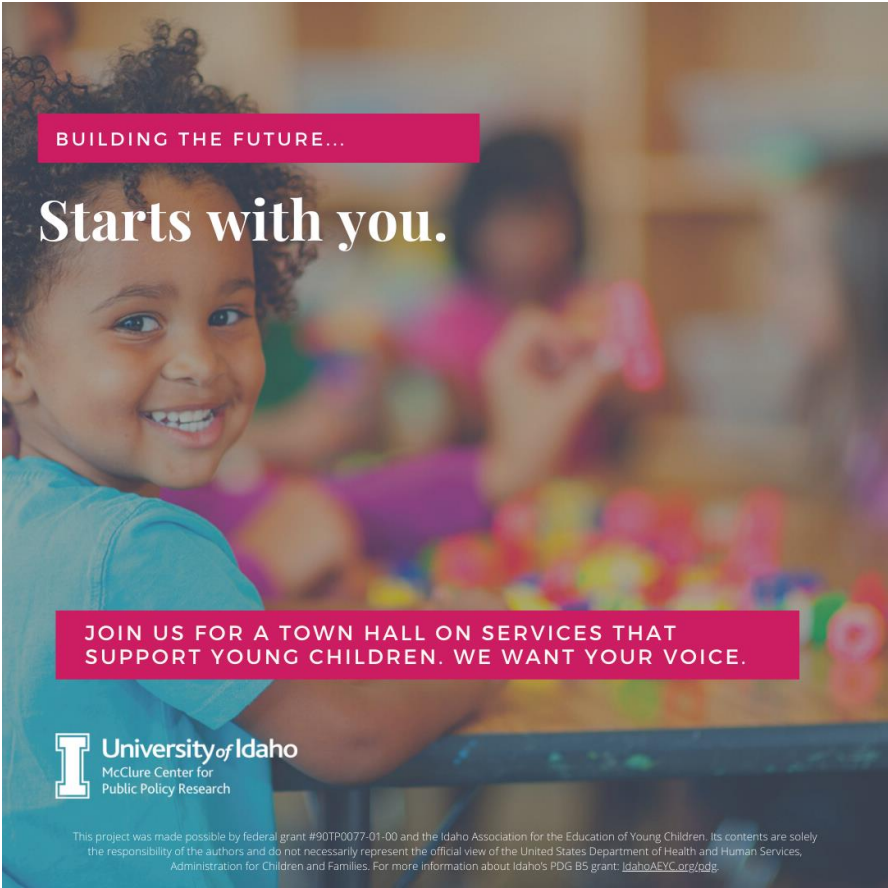
The [University of Idaho McClure Center for Public Policy Research](#) and the [Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (IdAEYC) invite you to a town hall meeting (about 90 minutes) in your community.

This town hall is intended to gather information on your experiences, challenges and successes connected to services that support young children and childcare in your community.

The input from stakeholders in each community will guide the future of services, resources and programs in Idaho.

[RSVP](#) [link]

Questions? Contact us: mcclurecenter@uidaho.edu



The [University of Idaho McClure Center for Public Policy Research](#) and the [Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (IdAEYC) invite you to a town hall meeting (about 90 minutes) in your community.

This town hall is intended to gather information on your experiences, challenges and successes connected to services that support young children and childcare in your community.

The input from stakeholders in each community will guide the future of services, resources and programs in Idaho.

[RSVP](#) [link]

Questions? Contact us: mcclurecenter@uidaho.edu



The [University of Idaho McClure Center for Public Policy Research](#) and the [Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (IdAEYC) invite you to a town hall meeting (about 90 minutes) in your community.

This town hall is intended to gather information on your experiences, challenges and successes connected to services that support young children and childcare in your community.

The input from stakeholders in each community will guide the future of services, resources and programs in Idaho.

[RSVP](#) [link]

Questions? Contact us: mcclurecenter@uidaho.edu



The [University of Idaho McClure Center for Public Policy Research](#) and the [Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (IdAEYC) invite you to a town hall meeting (about 90 minutes) in your community.

This town hall is intended to gather information on your experiences, challenges and successes connected to services that support young children and childcare in your community.

The input from stakeholders in each community will guide the future of services, resources and programs in Idaho.

[RSVP](#) [link]

Questions? Contact us: mcclurecenter@uidaho.edu

**Supporting Early Learning in Idaho
Informed Consent for Town hall Meeting**

Dr. Katherine Himes, from the University of Idaho McClure Center for Public Policy Research is conducting a research study. The purpose of the research is to understand the current state of early learning programs and processes in place in the state of Idaho. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a parent/guardian of a young child, you are a service provider of childcare/early learning programs or you are a concerned community member.

Your participation will involve sharing your experience and insights on early learning programs and information in your community. The town hall meeting should take about 60 minutes to complete. The town hall meeting includes questions such as: How do you find out about childcare program in your community? What are the barriers to access quality program in your community? What is your experience with early learning programs for children?

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate. You can refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. There are no names or identifying information associated with your responses; the McClure Center is seeking regional/community perspectives throughout Idaho. Any reports on the town hall meeting will include general regional information. There are no known risks in this study, but some individuals may experience discomfort or loss of privacy when answering questions. Data only will be reported as anonymous from a particular region. All data will remain within the McClure Center, and no identifiable information will be available.

The findings from this project will provide information on how to improve early learning programs and networks in Idaho. If published, results will be presented in summary form only. If any quotes are used, they will be anonymously attributed.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call Katherine Himes at (208) 364-4549. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or about what you should do in case of any harm to you, or if you want to obtain information or offer input you may call the University of Idaho Office of Research Assurances at (208) 885-6340 or irb@uidaho.edu.

By signing this form, you certify that you are at least 18 years of age and agree to participate in the above described research study.

_____ Name of Adult Participant	_____ Signature of Adult Participant	_____ Date
_____ Name of Research Team Member	_____ Signature of Research Team Member	_____ Date

Appendix D

Methodology

The Preschool Development Grant Birth–Age 5, administered by Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (Idaho AEYC), determined the partnerships and processes for the creation of this Needs Assessment.

Idaho Governor Brad Little created the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) in December 2019. The ECAC provided insight into the development of this Needs Assessment by formalizing definitions of key terms, providing subject matter expertise, and serving as final reviewers. ECAC will be involved with guiding the subsequent strategic plan.

The McClure Center was asked to lead the creation of a statewide needs assessment by analyzing ECCE systems and research, synthesizing targeted studies, and seeking input from ECAC.

The major components of this Needs Assessment are a literature review, synthesis of partner research studies, and stakeholder perspectives based on gathering primary source material.

Literature Review

To understand the landscape of the needs of Idaho families, the systems and supports that serve them, and the quality and availability of ECCE programs, the McClure Center conducted an extensive literature review. This included analysis of national, regional, and statewide data. For the literature review, the McClure Center reviewed and synthesized more than 400 articles, books, and webpages. These materials covered topics such as broadband internet, childhood development, community development, COVID-19, demographics, early child care, economics, elementary education, health, policy construction, special education, state programs, quality early education, workforce development, and related additional subjects.

Partner Studies

Idaho AEYC contracted partner organizations to conduct in-depth studies on specific topics, which included collecting primary data from stakeholders. Research partners are the Bipartisan Policy Center, Child Trends, GS Strategy Group, Policy Equity Group, and Washington State University’s Social & Economic Sciences Research Center.

The Bipartisan Policy Center conducted a Child Care Gap Assessment. Idaho was included as part of this large national effort to understand the availability of ECCE programs across the U.S. The Child Care Gap Assessment provided detailed information about the number of children under five in Idaho and the number of child care spaces that are available to serve them.

Child Trends produced three significant reports, each of which was used extensively in the Needs Assessment:

Exploring the Strengths and Challenges of Early Care and Education Programs in Idaho: A study of the strengths and challenges experienced by ECCE programs; barriers faced by ECCE programs in supporting children, families, and staff; and priority issues for policymakers, administrators, and advocates to consider as Idaho continues to develop its early childhood systems (ECS).

Supporting Access to Early Childhood Telehealth Services in Idaho: A feasibility study of innovative telehealth policies and procedures to increase service provision in remote areas and during inclement weather conditions, as well as to improve the state’s ability to stretch federal resources. This report identifies telehealth strategies used in other states and sectors and offers considerations for adapting and including telehealth strategies into Idaho’s ECS.

Understanding Steps to Quality: A Validation Study of Idaho’s Quality Rating and Systems Improvement: A validation study of *Steps to Quality (STQ)*, Idaho’s ECCE quality rating and improvement system. This report reviews the structure and processes of *STQ* and identifies the program’s strengths and areas for improvement.

GS Strategy Group conducted a survey of Idaho families about impacts of COVID-19. The survey responses informed the Needs Assessment’s *Forward, Coronavirus and Idaho’s Families, Communities, and Early Childhood Systems*.

Policy Equity Group is analyzing early childhood education degrees and certificate programs that are available at Idaho’s institutions of higher education. The study will ascertain gaps in Idaho’s higher education systems as they relate to four desired results: equitable access, student success, development of core competencies, and employment in the early childhood education field. The preliminary work done by Policy Equity Group outlined the current formal education structure that supports Idaho’s professional ECCE workforce. This study is ongoing and is expected to be completed in 2021.

Washington State University’s Social & Economic Sciences Research Center, guided by ECAC and Idaho AEYC, conducted a family survey to determine where children are receiving care and how families engage with early learning activities and programs. This survey helped inform the Needs Assessment discussion on Idaho parents and their practices and needs.

Another key point of Needs Assessment content input comes from the Local Early Learning Advisory Councils (ELACs) created as part of this federal award. Fourteen ELACs were granted funds to conduct a needs assessment for their local community. These assessments were key to understanding the needs of communities throughout Idaho.

Primary Source Material

The McClure Center partnered with Danielle Horras Consulting to host stakeholder engagement events and one-on-one interviews to gain family, community, and stakeholder perspectives regarding the needs of Idaho families. Town halls were designed to gather information about community needs, and focus groups solicited input from business leaders, ECAC, ECCE professionals, and Idaho legislators. Multiple one-on-one interviews

were conducted with Idaho parents, ECCE providers, school administrators, and others to gain perspectives that may have been missed during the town halls and focus groups, and to answer specific questions about Idaho's ECS structure and programs. The McClure Center also partnered with ECCE and human services professionals to use deidentified data for this Needs Assessment.

Using these sources, the McClure Center, with the assistance of project partners, created this comprehensive Needs Assessment.

