



Quality Early Childhood Education
For All Nebraska Families

News Release

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We Care for Kids Week to Highlight Link Between Early Childhood Education and Nebraska's Success

Locally-driven events, statewide telephone town hall to connect partners, community leaders, and families

State and community-based organizations will join together this week to celebrate the first We Care for Kids Week in Nebraska. Focused on helping people understand that early childhood education impacts all Nebraskans, the week of activities throughout the state will inform, motivate, and engage Nebraskans on this vital issue. Featuring community events, local conversations, and a statewide telephone town hall, We Care for Kids Week will culminate in an official proclamation signing by Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts on Oct. 3.

When Nebraska families have access to quality early childhood education, Nebraska's children, communities, and economy thrive. Yet in Nebraska today, many children and families do not have access to quality programs and services. For example, 91% of counties in Nebraska with licensed child care programs do not have enough available places to meet local demand. Between the state's low unemployment rate, the high number of working parents, and the shortage of quality programs and services, Nebraska is in urgent need of more early childhood options for families.

"Families need access to quality early childhood education so they can go to work with the peace of mind that their infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are in a safe, loving, and stimulating environment," said Kara Ficke, campaign manager for We Care for Kids. "Young children need to be able to learn and grow stronger with the help of skilled early childhood educators; doing so helps prepare children for success in school and life and helps our state grow and thrive."

The marquee event for the week is a statewide telephone town hall featuring experts and community members. Everyone in the state is invited to join on Wednesday, Sept. 28 from 6 to 7

p.m. CT by dialing (855) 756-7520. The hour-long interactive session will be moderated by Taryn Vanderford, News Anchor and Producer with KOLN TV, and include the following who will answer questions from Nebraskans calling into the town hall session.

- Dr. Tawana Grover, Superintendent, Grand Island Public Schools
- Deb Reiman, Assistant Vice President of Early Childhood, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
- Kelsee Sayer, Parent Ambassador, Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative

In addition to the town hall event, communities will hold local events across Nebraska to celebrate We Care for Kids Week. From parties and luncheons to social media and letter writing campaigns, the events all share a common goal: to help all Nebraskans understand the importance of supporting young children and their families through quality early childhood education.

More information can be found at NebraskaCaresForKids.org. The site also provides materials in English and Spanish that can be used to promote We Care for Kids Week. We Care for Kids is proud to have supporters in all areas of the state, who are available to meet with community organizations and who also are available for interviews with the media.

We Care for Kids is a partnership of diverse state and community-based organizations throughout Nebraska and is coordinated by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska. We Care for Kids works to ensure that all Nebraska families have access to quality early childhood education for their children. This project is made possible by funding received through Grant Number 90TP0079-03-00 of the USDHHS-Administration for Children and Families, Office of Early Childhood; Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services; Nebraska Department of Education; and Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, following grant requirements of 70% federal funding with 30% match from state and private resources. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Child Care, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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