Fact Sheet: Quality Early Childhood Education and We Care for Kids

1. **The more we care about bringing quality early childhood education to all Nebraska families, the more we ensure Nebraska thrives.**

* Ensuring all families and children have access to affordable quality early education is key not only to the healthy growth and development of Nebraska's children but to the economic vitality and prosperity of the state.[4,10]
* Early childhood is regarded as the period of time in a young child's life from birth through age eight. The brain is developing more rapidly during these early years of life than at any other time.[1]
* Nearly 90% of brain development takes place during a child's first five years of life—spurred on by thoughtful, positive interactions with family, early educators, and peers.
* Children who receive quality childhood education are better prepared to learn and more likely to read by the fourth grade, graduate school, and go on to college.
* Forty-one percent of children in Nebraska age 5 and younger are considered at-risk of failure in school (62,729 children).[7]
* Just 1% of residents say all children birth to age five in Nebraska receive quality early care and education.[8]

2. **Quality early childhood education helps Nebraska work.** Families can work knowing their infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are being prepared for success by a caring and experienced early childhood educator.

* In Nebraska, more than 72% of children under age six live in homes where all adults work, which is higher than the national average of 67%.[2]
* Seventy-six percent of mothers with infants and toddlers are in the labor force in Nebraska.[5]
* Ninety-one percent of counties in Nebraska with child care facilities do not have enough available places to meet the current demand.[3]
* Eleven counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care facilities.[4]

3. **Quality early childhood educators need our support now. We don't have enough of them.** Early childhood educators are critical to quality learning—and a thriving future—for Nebraska's children and it's up to us to make sure they are appreciated, supported, and recruited to serve our children, families, and state.

- A recent survey found that two-thirds of licensed center-based providers said they were experiencing turnover, and of those providers, nearly 70% reported that staff had found jobs outside of early childhood. Nine out of 10 providers employing staff have had difficulty hiring for open positions, citing a lack of applicants and inability to offer sufficient pay.[11]
- Most providers are experiencing symptoms of stress, such as changes in sleep, difficulty concentrating, social isolation, and anxiety about the future.[11]
- Nearly 30% of home-based providers and 20% of center-based teachers depend on some type of public assistance.[10]
- More than 13% of home-based and center-based child care providers report that their own school-aged children qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.[9]

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