



Quality Early Childhood Education
For All Nebraska Families

News Release

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We Care for Kids Week Celebrates the Importance of Early Childhood Education in Nebraska

*Locally-driven events will inform, motivate, engage, and activate community
leaders*

Nebraskans will come together Sept. 25 – Oct. 1 to celebrate the second annual We Care for Kids/*Por todos los niños* Week, building awareness that access to quality, affordable early childhood education affects everyone in the state. The week kicked off with a full-page [ad](#) in the *Lincoln Journal Star* from nearly 100 organizations calling on state leaders to come together to solve the child care crisis; features events in communities across the state; and will culminate with an official proclamation signing by Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen on Oct. 6, attended by dozens of partners committed to improving access to early childhood education for all Nebraskans.

“Nebraska relies on early childhood education teachers and programs to nurture children’s healthy development, enable parents to work, and keep businesses running,” said Kara Ficke, We Care for Kids campaign manager. “Unfortunately, Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis that risks our state’s reputation as a great place to live, work, and raise and family.”

Many Nebraska children and families do not have access to quality programs and services. Ninety-one percent of counties in Nebraska do not have enough available licensed child care slots to meet local demand. Over 80% of Nebraska voters say the lack of child care in Nebraska is a problem that will not solve itself and want Nebraskans to come together to solve the problem and invest in solutions. 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 affordable, quality early childhood options for families.

"All families should have the opportunity to access affordable, quality early childhood education," said Dr. Holly Hatton, Early Childhood Extension Specialist and We Care for Kids Advisory Group member. "Yet, a [recent survey](#) Nebraska Extension conducted in partnership with We Care for Kids found that nearly one-third of parents of children five and under said that they left the workforce because they couldn't find affordable child care. The child care crisis is impacting our children, families, communities, and our state's economy."

To mark We Care for Kids Week, communities will hold local events across Nebraska. From parties and luncheons to social media and letter-writing campaigns, the events all share a common goal: to continue community conversations, help all Nebraskans understand the importance of supporting young children and their families through quality early childhood education, and work toward solutions together. The campaign invites all Nebraskans to join the celebration and has resources and ideas available at NebraskaCaresforKids.org on how people can participate. Last year, 21 organizations registered to host live events, reaching an estimated 4,000 families across the state.

Governor Pillen will declare Sept. 30, 2023, We Care for Kids Day in Nebraska, emphasizing that access to affordable, quality child care and early learning is an important part of keeping the state a great place to raise a family and live a good life. The Governor will hold a celebratory signing of the proclamation on Oct. 6 at 9:00 a.m. to conclude We Care for Kids Week.

More information about We Care for Kids Week and the overall campaign can be found at NebraskaCaresForKids.org, available in both English and Spanish. We Care for Kids is proud to have supporters in all areas of the state ready to meet with community organizations and speak 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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