

EARLY CHILDHOOD ALASKA

A Strategic Direction for 2020-2025

JUNE 2020

The Early Childhood Alaska project was supported by three grants: The Preschool Development Grant, funded by the federal Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care; The Impact Project with the State Capacity Building Center, a project of the Office of Child Care; and Indigenous Project LAUNCH through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Dear Alaskans,

A strong and equitable early childhood system is vital to the health and well-being of Alaska. The experiences and conditions during the first few years of a child's life are critical and have a powerful impact on their future.

For these reasons, we are pleased to share *Early Childhood Alaska: A Strategic Direction for 2020-2025* funded by a Preschool Development Grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is based on *A Needs Assessment of Alaska's Mixed-Delivery System of Early Childhood Care and Education* completed in December 2019 and was created collaboratively by Alaskans around the state.

As we all know, Alaska is unique in many ways and this plan builds on the inherent strengths of our state while also addressing the inequities and shortcomings in the system. There are three main goals of this plan:

1. Alaska's young children, aged prenatal through eight years, are healthy, safe, and stable,
2. Alaska's young children have quality early learning experiences
3. Alaska has a strong early childhood system infrastructure in place to support implementation of the plan.

We are proud of Alaska's cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity and this plan includes elements that celebrate and emphasize traditional knowledge, place-based learning, preserving indigenous languages and community-led initiatives. This plan also recognizes the importance of evidence-informed practices, trauma-informed care, and a healthy and well-compensated workforce. This plan calls for collaborative action and cooperation across sectors and provides a roadmap for how the state can stimulate system wide change

The Alaska Early Childhood Joint Task Force (JTF), along with the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council, provided advisory guidance as we heard from hundreds of Alaskans about what should be included in this strategic plan. We commend the members of the JTF for their many hours of work

As members of the JTF Leadership Team, and as Alaskans, we want to see a brighter tomorrow for our children, our families, our communities, and our state. This will only be possible if we prioritize and improve our current early childhood system. With this plan guiding us, we hope all Alaskans will contribute to creating a better future for our children, families, and communities.

Sincerely,

Early Childhood Alaska Joint Task Force Leadership Team



Alaska's Early Childhood Joint Task Force meeting, October 2019

Acknowledgments

Early Childhood Alaska: A Strategic Direction for 2020-2025 was made possible through the commitment, hard work, dedication, and energy of stakeholders across the state. Many people, including parents, families, educators, caregivers, system workers, and local, regional and tribal leaders and members of the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC) dedicated time and energy to this plan. Credit goes to those who participated in meetings, work sessions, and surveys, as well as to those who provided feedback throughout the development of the plan.

A special thanks is owed to the diverse group of leaders from the Alaska Early Childhood Joint Task Force (JTF), and the JTF Leadership Team* and contractors** who worked tirelessly to ensure the interests of all Alaskans were represented throughout the strategic plan. Their names and organizations are listed below.

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Early Childhood Alaska: A Strategic Direction for 2020-2025 was supported by the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5), Grant Number 90TP0012, from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 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.

PLAN AT A GLANCE



NORTH STAR TEN-YEAR VISION

Alaska's children and families thrive in a strong and equitable early childhood system.

GOAL 1

ALASKA CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE HEALTHY, SAFE, AND STABLE

Objective 1 | Strong and Resilient Families and Communities

Families, programs, and communities partner to build protective factors that increase family resilience, enhance child development and reduce abuse and neglect.

- Build social connections and positive family relationships that provide emotional, educational and spiritual support.
- Increase the number of family and early childhood professional partnerships that use best practices in child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, social-emotional and language development.
- Increase access to concrete supports in times of need caused by a lack of safe housing, food security, out of home placement, behavioral health treatment and equitable access to resources that support healthy and resilient communities.
- Increase the social emotional well-being of children, their families, and their caregivers.

Objective 2 | Integrated Physical, Mental and Dental Health

Children and their families have regular, ongoing access to health care services that are comprehensive, equitable and culturally and linguistically responsive.

- Increase the percentage of insured children and pregnant women.
- Increase the percentage of children with and without special health care needs having a medical home.
- Integrate primary care and behavioral health services.
- Increase access to infant and early childhood mental health supports including family supports, therapies, consultation and reflective supervision services.

GOAL 2

ALASKA CHILDREN HAVE QUALITY EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ARE PREPARED FOR SUCCESS IN SCHOOL

Objective 3 | Family Partnerships

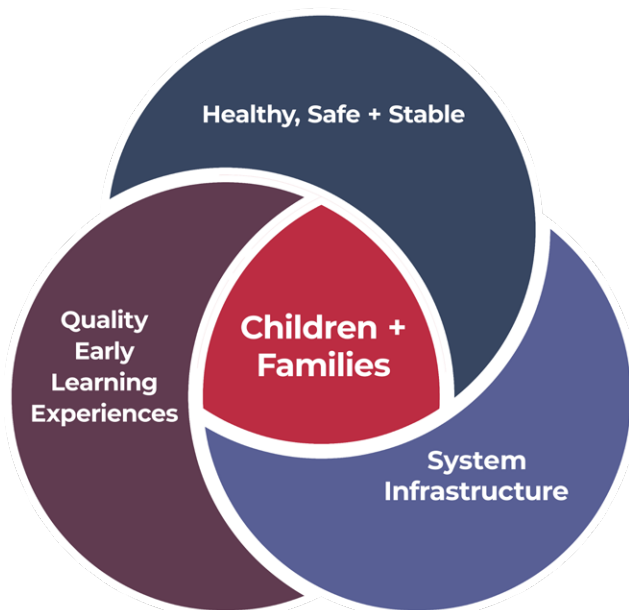
As a child's first and most important teachers, families are full partners in all early childhood education experiences and are supported by, and connected to, early childhood education programs and services in which their children participate.

- Families' opinions and ideas drive the design of system policies and programming.
- Early childhood programs meet the cultural and language needs of children and families.

Objective 4 | Accessibility

Families have access to early childhood education programs that are high quality, culturally responsive, and affordable. Families have access to information that allows them to make choices that meet their individual needs.

- Identify all programs that provide and support infant/early childhood education across the state.
- Increase the awareness of early childhood education programs for all stakeholders with the common understanding that stronger consumer awareness results in more access.



- Increase technical assistance opportunities from the state and partners to improve access to high quality early childhood education programs.
- Assess and address barriers to access including transportation, facility and physical space needs of early childhood programs.

Objective 5 | Affordability

Alaska families have affordable early childhood education program options.

- Decrease the amount of income families spend on child care or early childhood education program expenses.
- Adjust child care assistance eligibility requirements to ensure financial support for more families.

Objective 6 | High Quality

Alaska's children are in high quality early childhood education programs.

- Increase the number of early childhood education programs participating and advancing in Learn and Grow, Alaska's Quality Recognition and Improvement System.
- Provide information and tools to families on how to assess the quality of early childhood education programs for their children.
- Increase access to high quality inclusive in-home or community based early childhood education programming.
- Provide supports to decrease suspensions and expulsions in early childhood education programs.

Objective 7 | Transitions

Children and families experience supportive transitions and continuity of services within and across early childhood education programs and K-12 settings.

- Establish procedures and practices for collaboration and communication between early education programs and kindergarten that support all domains, including social emotional learning.
- Establish procedures and practices for programs, in partnership with families, to develop transition plans for a child any time they move within a program or to a different program.
- Provide information to parents about transition points and best practices.

GOAL 3

ALASKA CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE SUPPORTED BY A FUNCTIONAL, COMPREHENSIVE, MIXED-DELIVERY EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

Objective 8 | Elevation of the Early Childhood System

Alaskans recognize the critical role early childhood plays and advocate to foster healthy families, early childhood development and access to quality care and education.

- Partner with families and local communities in all planning and decision-making on system change.
- Develop and implement communications and marketing strategies to increase public awareness about the importance of early childhood.
- Develop and implement a statewide public policy agenda.

Objective 9 | Strategic Funding

Funding for early childhood care and education is coordinated, based on current data, and supports the goals of this statewide plan.

- Develop fiscal policy that moves system sectors toward delivery of services in a whole-child approach.
- Provide financial incentives for ongoing quality and system improvement.
- Identify new and strategic ways to maximize funding.

Objective 10 | Data Integration and Accountability

Collection and use of reliable data on early childhood is coordinated, centralized, accessible and actionable.

- Map and analyze current early childhood data systems in Alaska.
- Regularly review, update, and use data to guide continuous improvement and inform planning, policy, practice and operations.

Objective 11 | Workforce

The early childhood workforce is stable, qualified, fairly compensated, diverse, and supported.

- Increase cross sector recruitment and retention of early childhood professionals.
- Increase professional development opportunities for early childhood professionals.
- Improve wages and compensation for early childhood professionals.
- Increase diversity across the early childhood workforce.

Objective 12 | Coordinated Plan Implementation

An aligned and coordinated process is used to implement this strategic plan resulting in a permanent and improved early childhood system for Alaska.

- Ensure coordination to develop aligned policies, standards, and regulations across all sectors and settings.
- Create an improved, sustainable and accountable governance approach with decision-making authority.
- Establish roles and responsibilities to implement this strategic plan for both current and improved governance approaches.

INTRODUCTION + PROCESS

Early Childhood Alaska: A Strategic Direction for 2020-2025 outlines a series of bold actions and improvements to benefit children and families across the state by 2025 and establishes a Ten-Year North Star Vision for Alaska's early childhood system. The three main goals focus on children from prenatal through age 8, their families, and their communities. This plan aims to provide children and families in all Alaska communities with equitable access to resources, quality affordable care and education, and every opportunity for them to succeed. While considering Alaska's fiscal challenges, the plan also recognizes the importance of elevating the early childhood system as a strategy to move us toward economic stability.

Why focus on early childhood?

As studies have repeatedly shown, the first years of a child's life are critical to brain growth and cognitive, physical, social, emotional and behavioral development. The way a child interacts with the people and the environment around them during this time significantly impacts their development and has lasting implications for the rest of their life. Positive experiences and healthy relationships can have an impact on healthy growth and development at the cellular level, which is why providing support during this time to children and families is crucial. At the same time, experiences of trauma, abuse, and neglect can have negative long-term effects. An estimated two in three Alaska children are exposed to traumatic experiences, which significantly affects their educational, social, health, and economic outcomes¹.

There are also important economic factors to consider when talking about early childhood. For example, research from the RAND Corporation shows there is a \$2-4 return for every \$1 invested in early childhood programs and initiatives.²

In Alaska, the early care and learning sector employs over 8,000 people and annually generates almost half a billion dollars in economic activity³. Supporting children during this period can have long-term positive effects on the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health of not only the child, but also their families, communities, and the entire state of Alaska. The early childhood sector drives the economy by allowing parents to access the workforce, generate income, and support their families.

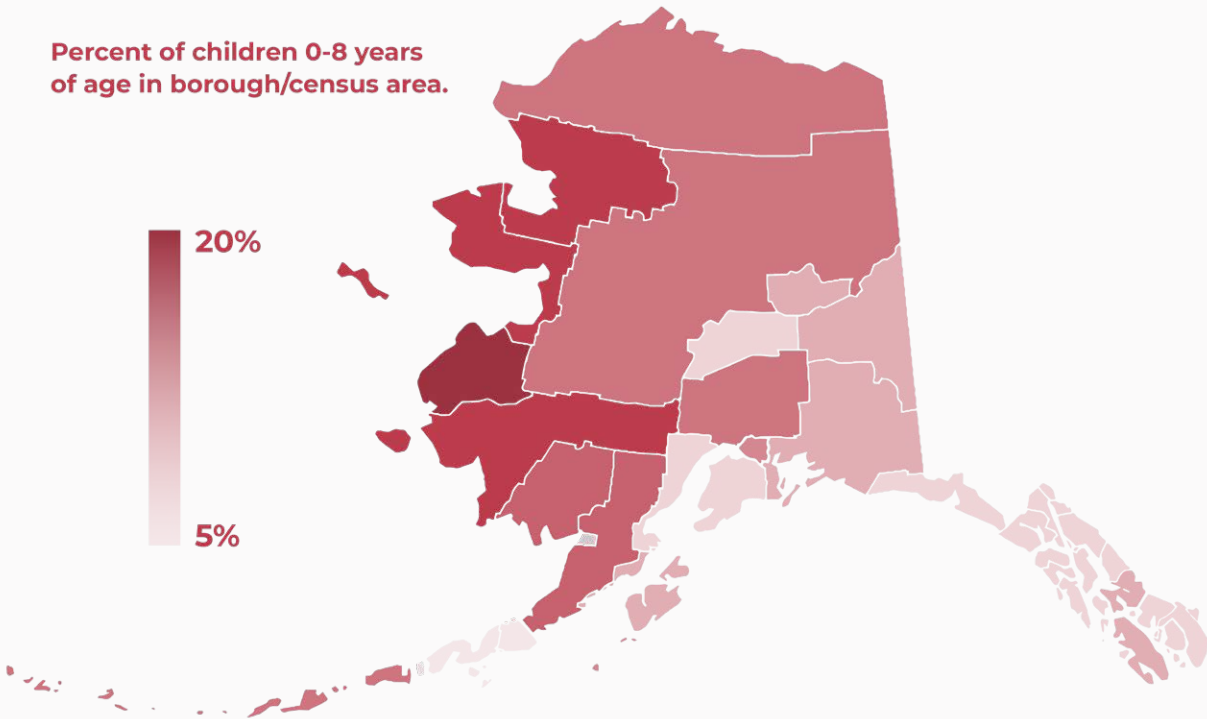


Who are Alaska's young children?

In the State of Alaska, there are 94,000 children, birth through 8 years of age, making up 13% of the state population. While these children are spread out across the state, about 19% of them live in more rural areas of the state.

Children birth through 8 years of age by borough/census⁴

Percent of children 0-8 years of age in borough/census area.



What is Alaska's Early Childhood System?

Alaska's early childhood system is a network of all programs and services focused on supporting young children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development that build a foundation for lifelong learning and well-being. These programs operate in a complex interchange of health, social, child care and education services that provide a holistic system of support for children and their families.

Government, nonprofit, tribal and private entities support the system by providing early childhood education programs; medical and mental health care; home visiting; early intervention; resources, referrals and support for families; and education and training for early childhood professionals who work in all these sectors.

The mission, purposes, and policies of these programs can often vary, which has resulted in a fragmented approach to serving families and children. This plan provides strategies and actions to strengthen and align the early childhood system.



What are our strengths?

Language and Culture

Rich cultural traditions and history are a source of strength for Alaska children and families. Each strategy in this plan incorporates a commitment to place-based learning, sustaining Alaska languages and a respect for traditional knowledge. One strength the state and this plan can continue to build upon is the diversity in Alaska, where over 100 languages are spoken at home and 30% of the total population of children under 6 are non-white. Of these children, about 28% are Alaska Native/American Indian, 68% are white, and 11% are of Hispanic origin⁴.

Family and Community Ties

Also among Alaska's strengths are a culture of caring for others and many strong connections among extended family members. Many of the state's rural communities are among the most remote in the nation and are located entirely off the road system. This necessitates strong community ties and strong networks of support among families and neighbors, who rely upon each other in times of need.

Nonprofit Organizations

Alaska children also benefit from a strong network of nonprofit organizations that are dedicated to improving outcomes and increasing supports for children and families.

A crucial component of this plan is leveraging resources and using the existing network of support to maximize capacity and increase cooperation across the state.

Tribal Governments

Alaska is home to almost half the nation's federally recognized tribes. Tribal governments are serving their members, building on community needs, unique social connections, and funding opportunities.

Advocates and Educators

Alaska has many passionate advocates and educators dedicated to improving the lives of young children and families through advocacy and action. In recognition of the critical role early care and education play in student well-being and success, the Association of Alaska School Boards in 2019 set "providing resources for a quality PreK experience for every child" as one of its six legislative priorities.

Innovation in Education

Alaska also has a history of innovation in education with many charter schools, public alternative schools, language immersion programs, distance delivery, and homeschooling programs.

Children Under 6 Years of Age by Race/Ethnicity Statewide, 2018^{4}*

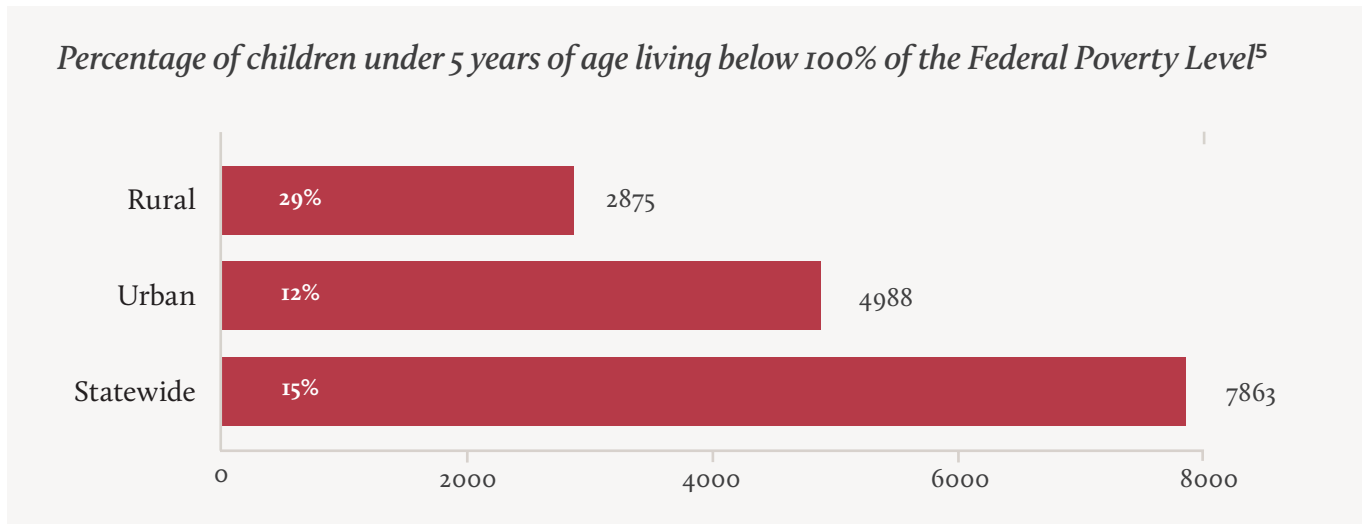
Race or Ethnicity (can select multiple)	Number of Children	Percent of Children under 6	Percent Change in Number of Children Under 6 since 2010
White	41,941	68%	-7%
Alaska Native or American Indian	17,325	28%	-3%
Black or African American	4,956	8%	1%
Asian	5,738	9%	2%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1,772	3%	-5%
Hispanic Origin (of any race)	6,871	11%	25%

* Race is alone or in combination, therefore columns will not add up to 100%

What challenges do we face?

Vulnerable and Underserved Populations

While there are many strengths inherent in Alaska's early childhood system, there are also obstacles faced by children and families on a daily basis. There is a large population of vulnerable and underserved children in Alaska, with almost 15% of children under the age of 6 living at or below the federal poverty level.



Rural and Remote Communities

While there are deep connections and unique local resources in each community, there are also many children who live in rural, isolated communities where resources for children and families are both inaccessible and unaffordable. Most remote communities are not connected by road or rail to hub communities, and the cost of airfare is a challenge. Several of the goals of this plan are directly related to these issues and hope to mitigate some of these challenges at both the statewide and community levels.



Infrastructure Support

Another challenge faced by Alaska's early childhood system is the need to strengthen statewide program coordination and infrastructure support. The plan outlines how to address gaps and build system-wide supports for early childhood programs, projects, and initiatives.

How was the plan created?

Statewide Needs Assessment

This strategic plan is built on **A Needs Assessment of Alaska’s Mixed-Delivery System of Early Childhood Care and Education**, which was finalized in December 2019. The assessment compiled and analyzed data about where Alaska’s children live, what their lives are like, and what their families, caregivers, and educators need. The report also analyzed the critical status of governance including funding, facilities, data and research; the status of the early childhood workforce; and the possibilities for alignment and collaboration for the entire mixed-delivery system. The needs assessment provided a foundation for an early plan framework, and its findings and data are referenced throughout the strategic plan document.

Alignment with Existing Statewide Plans

This document also builds upon existing plans for Alaska that address education, early childhood, mental health, trauma, homelessness, family services, and workforce development. The intent of this plan is to coordinate with and support these efforts as a means to advance the early childhood system in Alaska.



Alaska’s Education Challenge, State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development



Pathways to Prevention Statewide Plan, Pathways for Prevention Statewide Leadership Team



2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan - State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Office of Children’s Services



Strengthening the System: Alaska’s Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program Plan 2020-2024 - Alaska Department of Health and Social Services through partnership with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority



Child Care Development Fund Plan



Learn and Grow Strategic Plan



Alaska SEED’s 3-Year Professional Development Plan



2019 Alaska MCH Title V Five Year Action Plan



Healthy Alaskans (2030)

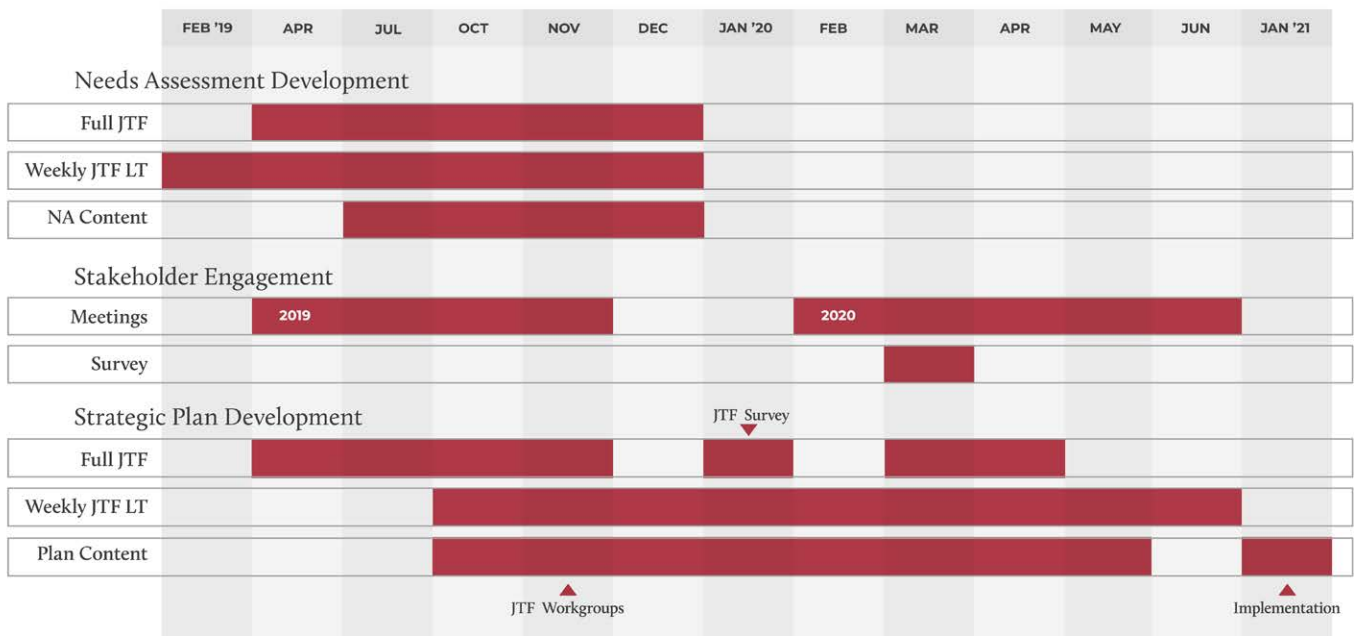
Alaska Early Childhood Joint Task Force (JTF) Meetings, Surveys, and Work groups

The JTF has an eight-member Leadership Team, which in turn engaged with and guided a full 40+ member early childhood JTF formed to align work on the early childhood needs assessment and strategic plan. This work was coordinated among three grants: the initial Preschool Development Grant B-5 received by the Department of Early Education and Development (DEED) and jointly managed by DEED and the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS); an Impact Project grant from the State Capacity Building Center to align early care and education systems with programs and services, led by the DHSS Child Care Program Office; and an Indigenous Project LAUNCH grant to prepare Alaska Native children 0-8 with skills to succeed in school, led by Southcentral Foundation, a health and wellness organization serving the Alaska Native population in Southcentral Alaska.

The JTF and Leadership Team provided important guidance on plan content and process throughout the strategic planning effort. This included face to face meetings on plan framework, content, feedback on process, workgroup participation, editing and ongoing support.

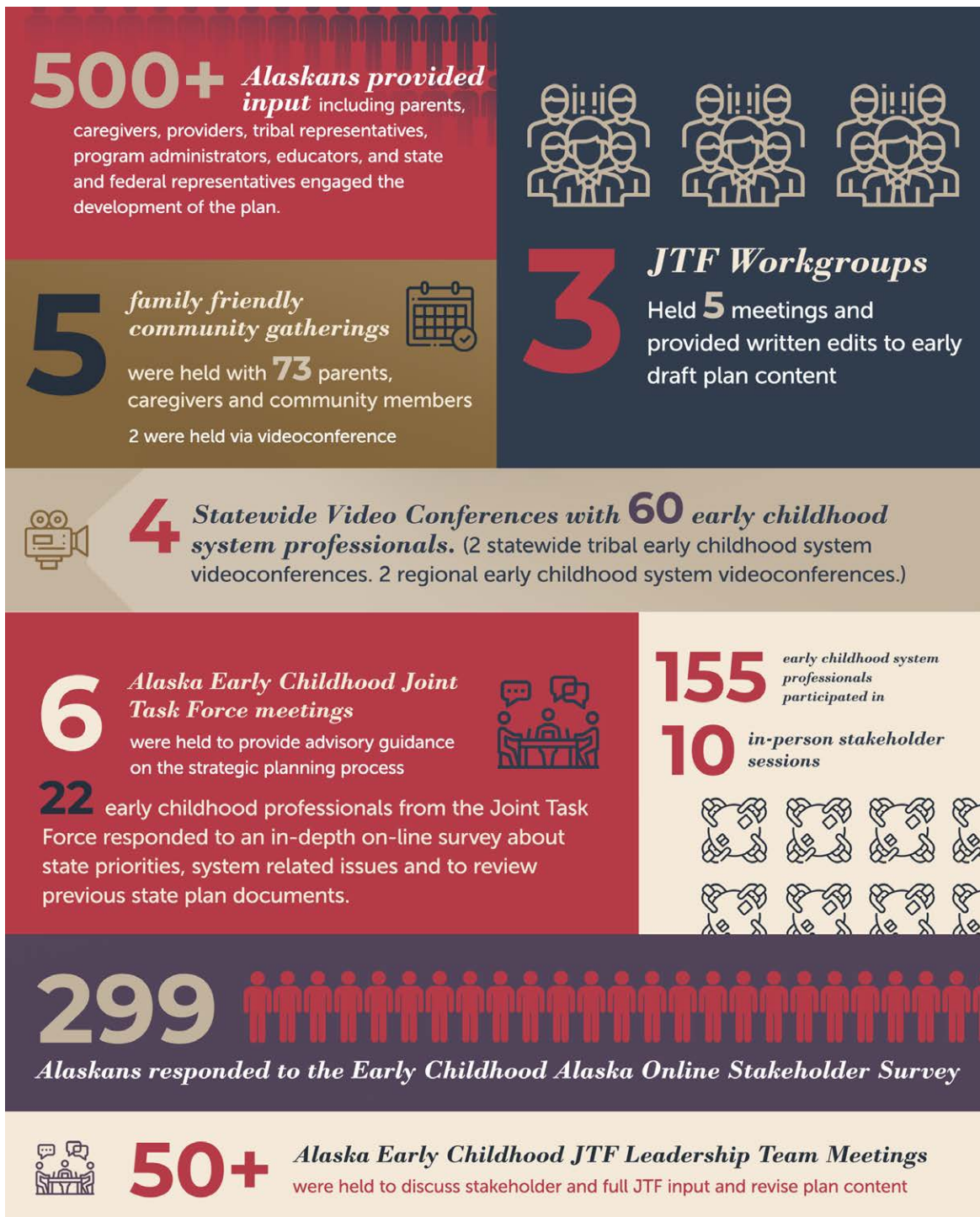


Early Childhood Alaska Strategic Plan Timeline

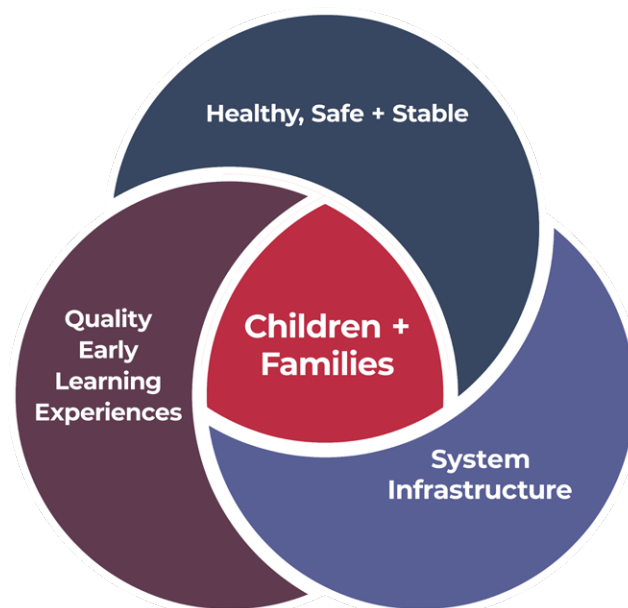


Stakeholder Engagement

During 2019 and 2020, face to face and virtual meetings were held with parents, families, community members, and people working in the early childhood system. A detailed recap of stakeholder engagement is provided in the **Strategic Planning Process Report and Appendices**. Nearly 300 Alaskans responded to an online survey and there were 288 participants who signed in to statewide in-person or virtual stakeholder meetings. A few individuals participated in more than one meeting, and some participated in both the survey and a meeting. The exact number of participants is unknown, yet the total number of people who provided input is conservatively estimated to be at least 500. The information gathered through this process was reviewed and considered in developing the strategic plan goals, objectives, strategies and actions.



PLAN FRAMEWORK



Strategic Plan Framework

North Star Ten-Year Vision	What Alaskans want to be true for children prenatal through 8 by the year 2030.
Early Childhood Alaska: A Strategic Direction for 2020-2025	This plan document establishes a strategic direction through the year 2025, with a new five-year plan to be developed at that time.
Guiding Principles	Our fundamental beliefs to be used throughout the development and implementation of Early Childhood Alaska: A Strategic Direction for 2020-2025
Goals	Priority areas where focused measurement is needed to change outcomes for Alaska children.
Objectives	Specific targets within each goal where we will focus our efforts.
Strategies	A coordinated set of actions designed to achieve the objectives.
Actions	Specific steps to drive change toward meeting our objectives. Actions will be time-sensitive and measurable.

EARLY CHILDHOOD ALASKA

A Strategic Direction for 2020 -2025



NORTH STAR TEN-YEAR VISION

Alaska's children and families thrive in a strong and equitable early childhood system.

Guiding Principles

Whole Child and Family Focus

Alaska's children and families are at the center of our work. Families are engaged, empowered and respected as a child's most important and constant teacher. All areas of a child's growth, development and learning are considered and developmentally appropriate.

Committed to Equality

Improving early childhood outcomes requires removing inequities. We are committed to providing resources, supports and services to all of Alaska's children and families regardless of geography, race, ethnicity, income, access, and lack of opportunity.

Inclusive, Honoring, and Respectful

All programs, services and supports must be inclusive, culturally relevant and respectful of the language, history and knowledge of all Alaska families. We acknowledge, honor and respect Alaska Native and other cultures' indigenous ancestral heritage, practices and values.

Research Informed

Strategies are informed by evidence and promising practices that are developmentally appropriate, locally influenced, actionable, measurable, and implemented by a capable and well-supported workforce.

Cultivating System Change

This plan is our road map to guide policy and build a comprehensive, coordinated, outcomes-focused, measurable, and accessible early childhood system in Alaska. It is intentionally designed to be informed by data that builds on our strengths and indicates areas for continued growth and development.



GOAL 1

Alaska Children and Families are Healthy, Safe, and Stable

OBJECTIVE 1

STRONG AND RESILIENT FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Families, programs, and communities partner to build protective factors that increase family resilience, enhance child development and reduce abuse and neglect.

Strategy 1.1

Build social connections and positive family relationships that provide emotional, educational and spiritual support.

Actions

- a. Identify successes, barriers, and gaps for families to access opportunities for social connections and supports.
- b. Increase community and neighborhood-based opportunities for culturally relevant activities that build social and family connections.
- c. Increase available training options for early childhood educators and health care providers to build skills, confidence and trust to strengthen partnerships with families.

Strategy 1.2

Increase the number of family and early childhood professional partnerships that use best practices in child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, social emotional and language development.

Actions

- a. Increase the training and support opportunities for early childhood educators and health care providers that build partnerships and relationships with families and link families to learning and information about child development.
- b. Develop information with families to ensure that it is relevant for diverse learning styles and is culturally and linguistically appropriate for all families.
- c. Provide education and training opportunities for families that are culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- d. Provide parents and families access to resources on

parenting, co-regulation, child development, and positive interactions with children.

e. Increase opportunities for families to receive home visits through available programs and encourage collaboration between existing community home visiting programs.

f. Increase the number of mentorship and mutual support opportunities available to families and partner with families to organize opportunities for parent-led discussions.

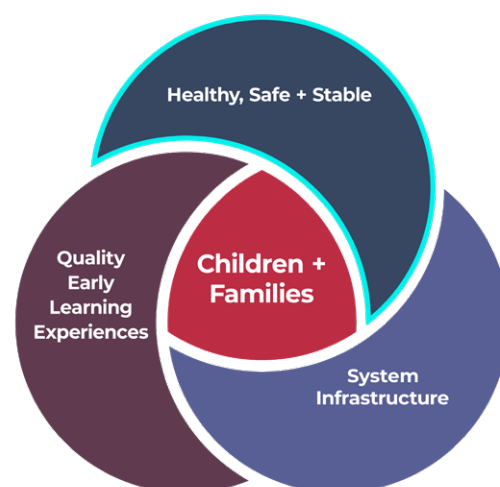
g. Provide parents and families access to resources on early literacy and language development.

Strategy 1.3

Increase access to concrete supports in times of need caused by a lack of safe housing, food security, out of home placement, behavioral health treatment and equitable access to resources that support healthy and resilient communities.

Actions

- a. Increase identification of families needing services through Social Determinants of Health screening and link families to services and opportunities.
- b. Promote practice-informed universal developmental screening efforts and early intervention services.
- c. Create an accessible system that connects families to appropriate resources quickly and seamlessly.
- d. Coordinate with lead organizations working to access



the safe housing, food security, out of home placement and behavioral health resources in each community and create a plan to address gaps that relate to early childhood.

Strategy 1.4

Increase the social emotional well-being of children, their families, and their caregivers.

Actions

- a. Promote the appropriate use of social emotional screening to families and providers.
- b. Implement evidence-informed social emotional education and increase competencies across settings and communities.
- c. Assist parents in supporting their child’s social and emotional development; include children’s social and emotional development in program activities and help children maintain their cultural identity.

OBJECTIVE 2

INTEGRATED PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND DENTAL HEALTH

Children and their families have regular, ongoing access to health care services that are comprehensive, equitable and culturally and linguistically responsive.

Strategy 2.1

Increase the percentage of insured children and pregnant women.

Actions

- a. Identify opportunities to facilitate families’ enrollment in public health insurance programs and engagement with a medical home.

Child Health and Well-Being Ages 0-3, Alaska Urban and Rural⁶



Development Screening

Child development questionnaire completed with healthcare provider in past 12 months.

Urban ————— | **82%**

Rural ————— | **47%**



Food Security

Ever enrolled in WIC.

Urban ————— | **48%**

Rural ————— | **79%**



Out of Home Placement

4116 total children in 2018.

Alaska Native children ————— | **62%**

Non-Alaska Native Children ————— | **38%**



Homelessness

Total number of homeless children.

119

Urban total (2016-2017)

380

Rural total (2017-2018)

b. Increase income guidelines for eligibility for Denali KidCare or expand access to Medicaid to ensure that all children and their families have reliable insurance.

c. Increase the number of employers providing insurance that covers mental health services to children and their families.

Strategy 2.2

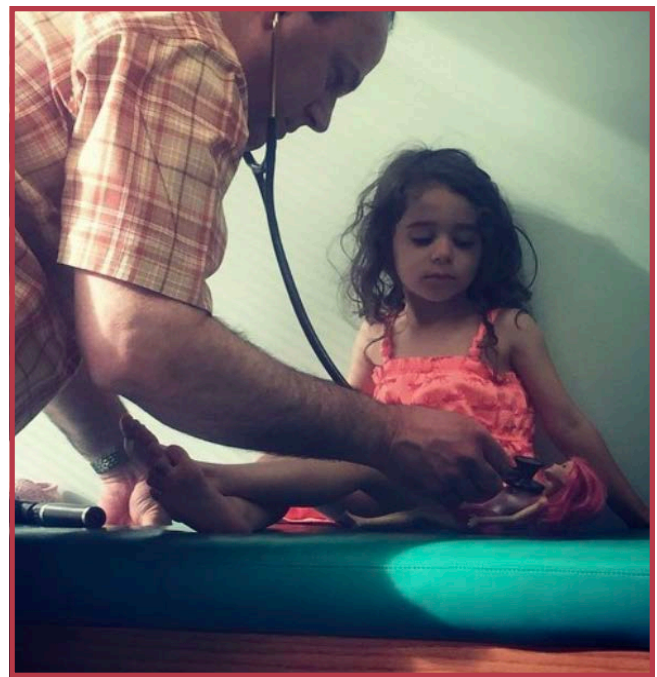
Increase the percentage of children with and without special health care needs having a medical home.

Actions

a. Develop and maintain a system for managing health care information for foster children and ensure families have current up to date medical records and connection to primary care medical home.

b. Promote standardized developmental and social emotional screenings in the medical home setting.

c. Implement marketing strategies that encourage families to establish a primary care medical home.



Strategy 2.3

Integrate primary care and behavioral health services.

Actions

a. Increase number of medical practices providing mental health services by educating providers on the requirements and reimbursement mechanisms available to them.

b. Educate health care providers about the importance of caregiver mental health on early childhood social emotional well-being and regularly screen primary caregivers for maternal depression, family violence, and adult mental health and substance abuse issues.

c. Recommend state reimbursement for adult care services when the child is the primary client.

Strategy 2.4

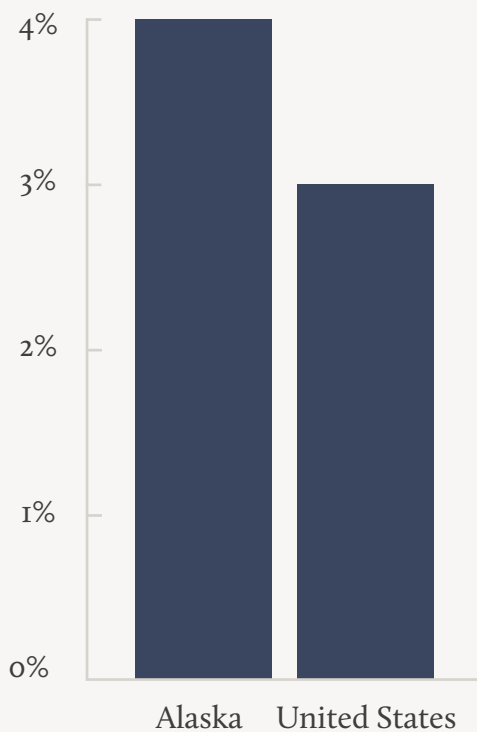
Increase access to infant and early childhood mental health supports including family supports, therapies, consultation and reflective supervision services.

Actions

a. Develop a system for all medical and educational professionals and programs working with families of young children to coordinate and fund early childhood mental health consultation.

b. Develop a system for all medical and educational professionals and programs working with families of young children to coordinate and fund reflective supervision.

Children Age 0-17 Who Didn't Get Needed Health Care, Alaska vs. United States, 2016-2017



GOAL 2

Alaska children have quality early learning experiences and are prepared for success in school.

OBJECTIVE 3

FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

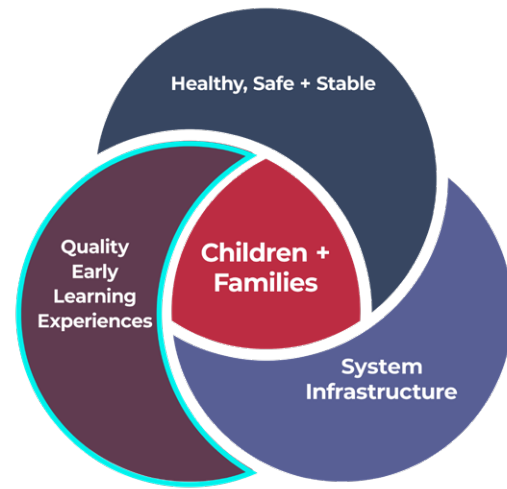
As a child's first and most important teachers, families are full partners in all early childhood education experiences and are supported by, and connected to, early childhood education programs and services in which their children participate.

Strategy 3.1

Families' opinions and ideas drive the design of system policies and programming.

Actions

- a. Identify, with families, models and programs, and communications methods that link families to quality and accessible programs.
- b. Train and educate the early childhood education workforce on skill building to partner with families and best practices for family engagement.



Strategy 3.2

Early childhood programs meet the cultural and language needs of children and families.

Actions

- a. Find out what families want and need through focus groups, dialogues and other conversations with families and caregivers.
- b. Identify cultural and language best practices, including Alaska Native language immersion programs for children birth to 8.
- c. Establish incentives and build program infrastructure to implement statewide best practices identified in Action b.

OBJECTIVE 4

ACCESSIBILITY

Families have access to early childhood education programs that are high quality, culturally responsive, and affordable. Families have access to information that allows them to make choices that meet their individual needs.

Strategy 4.1

Identify all programs that provide and support infant/early childhood education across the state.

Actions

- a. Produce and publicize an annual inventory of all early childhood education programs by community and region.
- b. Identify barriers and obstacles to accessing early childhood education programs, including equity of access, and

Need for Child Care and Pre-Elementary Programs⁸

	Statewide	Rural	Vulnerable / Disadvantaged
Children with all available adults in the workforce	39,500	7,300	6,100
Additional Need for Child Care and Pre-Elementary Programs Number of children in households in which an adult would join the labor force or work more hours if child care and pre-elementary program services were available.	6,500	1,900	1,600
Total Demand for Child Care and Pre-Elementary Programs	46,600	9,200	7,700

develop and implement strategies to address the gaps, needs, barriers and inequities.

Strategy 4.2

Increase the awareness of early childhood education programs for all stakeholders with the common understanding that stronger consumer awareness results in more access.

Actions

- Identify vulnerable and underserved children and families and focus outreach to increase access to high quality early childhood education services.
- Develop and implement a communication plan for stronger consumer awareness of existing early childhood programs.
- Support programs in responding to increased consumer awareness.

Strategy 4.3

Increase technical assistance opportunities from the state and partners to improve access to high quality early childhood education programs.

Actions

- Increase the number of licensed and regulated early childhood education programs, prioritizing equitable access in rural and underserved areas of the state.
- Increase support to tribal organizations to provide care and early childhood education in rural communities.

Strategy 4.4

Assess and address barriers to access including transportation, facility and physical space needs of early childhood programs.

Actions

- Conduct a statewide gap analysis of the ability of families to transport their children to early childhood education programs.
- Conduct a statewide gap analysis of the ability of communities to provide safe and adequate space for early childhood education programs.

OBJECTIVE 5

AFFORDABILITY

Alaska families have affordable early childhood education program options.

Strategy 5.1

Decrease the amount of income families spend on child care or early childhood education program expenses.

Actions

- Increase the percentile of market rate for child care assistance to pay a higher rate of child care costs.
- Further define the target percentile, which is currently at the 25th percentile of the 2017 Market Price Survey in Alaska while the national benchmark is the 75th percentile.
- Increase resources for child care assistance programs so that reimbursement rates meet the cost of delivering quality care across all types of care and ages.
- Identify a method and strategy to change child care assistance rates using best practices research.

Strategy 5.2

Adjust child care assistance eligibility requirements to

ensure financial support for more families.

Actions

- a. Map and identify the overall funding necessary to meet needs.
- b. Agree on optimal payment sources to include a mix of private and public sector initiatives.
- c. Agree on best methods for determining cost including sliding scale, scholarships and program grants and other options.

OBJECTIVE 6

HIGH QUALITY

Alaska's children are in high quality early childhood education programs.

Strategy 6.1

Increase the number of early childhood education programs participating and advancing in Learn and Grow, Alaska's Quality Recognition and Improvement System.

Alaska Cost of Licensed Child Care as a Percent of Median Household Income⁹

 **12%**
Married couple households

 **23%**
Single male households

 **34%**
Single female households

Actions

- a. Ensure early childhood education support organizations have ability to provide consistent, reliable, and equitable resources to all programs choosing to engage in a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP) process to achieve and maintain high quality.
- b. Ensure early childhood education programs have the access and training to consistently implement culturally responsive, evidence-informed curriculums, child assessments, and teaching strategies for all children, including children with identified or unidentified emotional, cognitive, or physical needs and dual language learners.
- c. Ensure early childhood education administrators and leaders have access to ongoing resources for business administration support, staff retention and wellness.
- d. Ensure early childhood education programs are using evidence-informed strategies to increase parental participation and access to community supports and resources.
- e. Develop a marketing and outreach plan to inform families, early childhood education programs, communities and organizations about Learn and Grow supports, resources and benefits.
- f. Increase access to and availability of supports and resources for all early childhood education program types and educators such as coaching, early childhood mental health consultation and reflective supervision, professional development, and funding for staff planning time.

Strategy 6.2

Provide information and tools to families on how to assess the quality of early childhood education programs for their children.

Actions

- a. Adopt a shared definition of the continuum of quality to high quality of early childhood education programs.
- b. Develop and implement marketing strategies to assist families in understanding quality.

Strategy 6.3

Increase access to high quality inclusive in-home or community based early childhood education programming.

- a. Increase statewide access to highly qualified early childhood special educators and therapists.



b. Ensure early childhood education programs are using evidence-informed strategies focused on supporting children’s physical, cognitive and social emotional development and accommodate individual learning styles and dual language learners.

c. Increase coordination between support organizations for early childhood programs to assure children are being served in their natural environments and have equitable access to therapeutic, educational, and mental health and family service coordination.

Strategy 6.4

Provide supports to decrease suspensions and expulsions in early childhood education programs.

Actions

- a. Adopt a shared definition of and criteria for suspension and expulsion across the early childhood system.
- b. Provide families information about regulations to reduce exclusionary practices to support children’s social emotional development and continuity of care.
- c. Provide supports to families whose children are being suspended or experience expulsion from early childhood education programs.
- d. Increase funding and reimbursements for early childhood education programs to access Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health consultants and certified early childhood coaches.

OBJECTIVE 7

TRANSITIONS

Children and families experience supportive transitions and continuity of services within and across early childhood education programs and K-12 settings.

Strategy 7.1

Establish procedures and practices for collaboration and communication between early education programs and kindergarten that support all domains, including social emotional learning.

Actions

- a. Convene a statewide workgroup to propose a definition of kindergarten readiness.
- b. Set guidelines and publicize best practices for programs as they prepare 4-year-old children and their families for the transition to kindergarten.
- c. Evaluate to improve the use of a kindergarten readiness assessment tool and reliability training for teachers.

Strategy 7.2

Establish procedures and practices for programs, in partnership with families, to develop transition plans for a child any time they move within a program or to a different program.

Actions

- a. Identify and promote best practices and collaborations within and between programs in supporting smooth transitions for children in early childhood education programs.

Strategy 7.3

Provide information to parents about transition points and best practices.

Actions

- a. Identify supports for families navigating transitions.
- b. Create and implement a communications plan to inform families about these supports.

GOAL 3

Alaska children and families are supported by a functional, comprehensive, mixed-delivery early childhood system.

OBJECTIVE 8

ELEVATION OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

Alaskans recognize the critical role early childhood plays and advocate to foster healthy families, early childhood development and access to quality care and education.

Strategy 8.1

Partner with families and local communities in all planning and decision-making on system change.

Actions

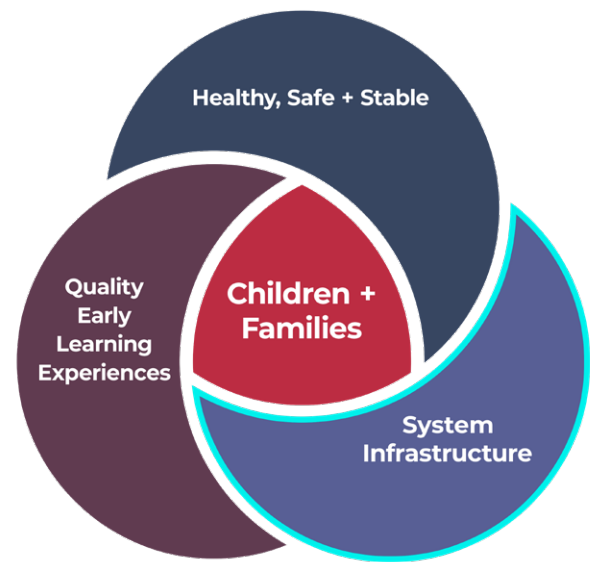
- Offer opportunities for families to build confidence in their role as early childhood development experts and advocates.
- Provide mentorship opportunities for parents, grandparents, caregivers and other family members to meaningfully participate in system change.
- Recognize parents and other family members as professionals by providing compensation to include options such as honoraria, funding for travel, and child care.
- In consultation with families, create guidelines and provide training for early childhood system organizations to increase participation by communities and families.

Strategy 8.2

Develop and implement communications and marketing strategies to increase public awareness about the importance of early childhood.

Actions

- Identify stakeholder audiences and develop strategies to engage each audience.
- Develop shared messages for a public information campaign about the importance and impacts of all aspects of early childhood.



- Establish roles and responsibilities and resources to deliver shared messaging to identified audiences.

Strategy 8.3

Develop and implement a statewide public policy agenda.

Actions

- Identify the broad spectrum of existing early childhood advocacy organizations in Alaska.
- Engage advocacy organizations in developing a shared policy agenda consistent with the priorities identified in this state plan.
- Establish roles and responsibilities to implement the policy agenda on behalf of families.

OBJECTIVE 9

STRATEGIC FUNDING

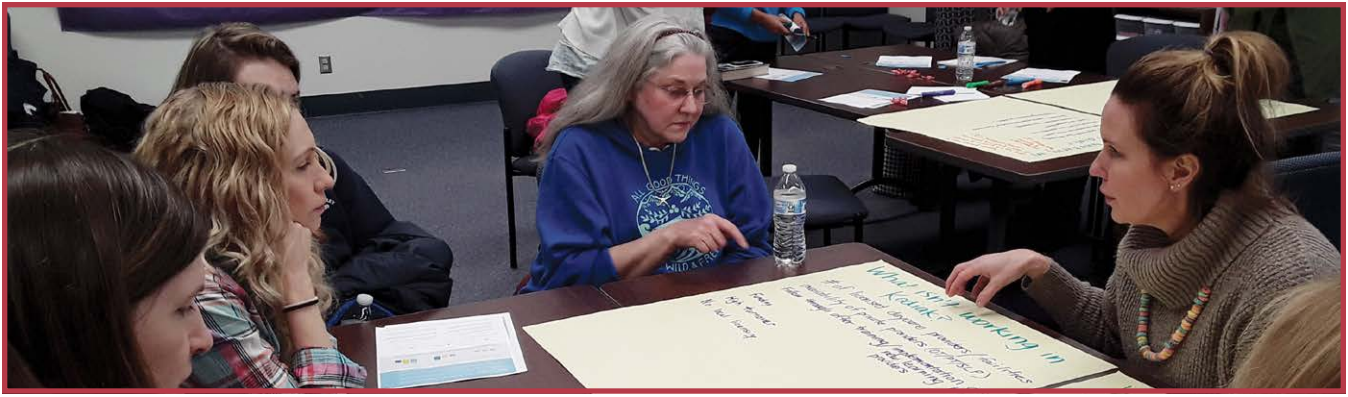
Funding for early childhood care and education is coordinated, based on current data, and supports the goals of this statewide plan.

Strategy 9.1

Develop fiscal policy that moves system sectors toward delivery of services in a whole-child approach.

Actions

- Map financing currently allocated for services to children and families to identify opportunities to connect policies across funding streams.



- b. Develop and agree on next steps and recommendations from Action a.
- c. Endorse and adopt policies based on findings from Action a.

Strategy 9.2

Provide financial incentives for ongoing quality and system improvement.

Actions

- a. Assess how current funding streams incentivize programs to meet higher standards, particularly for programs serving children in poverty.
- b. Partner with communities to leverage federal, state, local and private funding across these systems.

Strategy 9.3

Identify new and strategic ways to maximize funding.

Actions

- a. Convene a statewide work group to explore and report on additional funding opportunities from federal agencies, philanthropic and private sources and funding models used in other states.



OBJECTIVE 10

DATA INTEGRATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Collection and use of reliable data on early childhood is coordinated, centralized, accessible and actionable.

Strategy 10.1

Map and analyze current early childhood data systems in Alaska.

Actions

- a. Establish how the data system will be created, who will manage and maintain it, and where it will be housed.
- b. Identify early childhood data that is being collected and identify opportunities to link and align existing data.
- c. Develop a strategy to create a unique child identifier to provide information about young children across services and programs.

Strategy 10.2

Regularly review, update, and use data to guide continuous improvement and inform planning, policy, practice and operations.

Actions

- a. Align and coordinate assessment and screening methods, definitions and resulting data to track progress on child development and outcomes.
- b. Create a dashboard and benchmark data to inform quality improvement and make data informed decisions.
- c. Produce a statewide public report of available early childhood data in a family-friendly format.

OBJECTIVE 11

WORKFORCE

The early childhood workforce is stable, qualified, fairly compensated, diverse, and supported.

Strategy 11.1

Increase cross sector recruitment and retention of early childhood professionals.

Actions

- a. Train, attract and retain the appropriate workforce to provide integrated health services.
- b. Collaborate with lead organizations that are addressing integrated health care workforce gaps.
- c. Convene a multi-sector statewide task force to identify and examine retention strategies for early childhood education professionals such as loan forgiveness, scholarships, mental health/stress/wellness/burnout and compassion fatigue, pay increase and benefits packages, and recruiting directly from the communities they serve.
- d. Increase the number of trained Relationship-Based Professional Development (RBPD) Coaches, Infant/EC Mental Health Consultants, technical assistance, and mentors to support the early childhood education workforce.

Strategy 11.2

Increase professional development opportunities for early childhood professionals.

Actions

- a. Develop and implement a strategy to educate medical providers on physical, dental and mental health best practices for screening and care of young children and their families.
- b. Increase the capacity of the current mental health and early intervention workforce by providing professional development opportunities in infant and early childhood mental health competencies and trauma informed interventions.
- c. Provide local, easily accessible trainings for early childhood educators with in-person trainers in communities, video training for onboarding of new staff and train the trainer courses.
- d. Identify and publicize statewide professional development resources and venues for early childhood professionals.
- e. Develop and implement training for early childhood professionals on best practices for family partnerships.



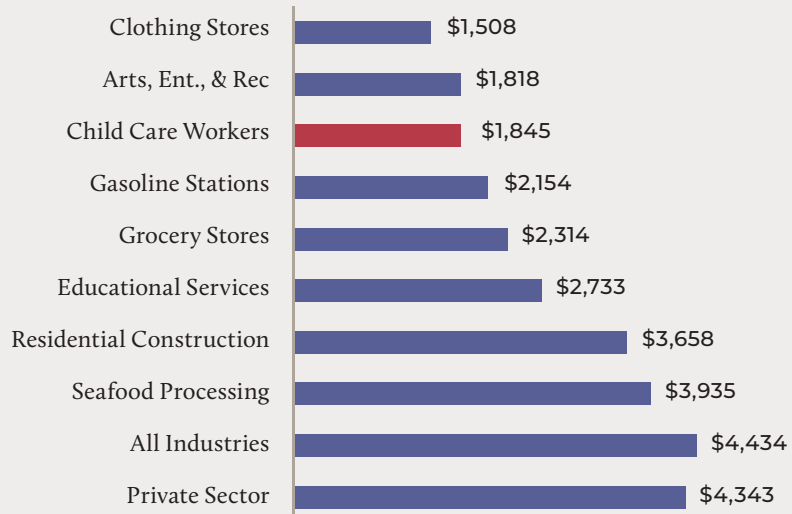
Strategy 11.3

Improve wages and compensation for early childhood professionals.

Actions

- a. Establish wage and compensation equity within the early childhood education field.
- b. Achieve parity for early childhood professionals with compensation comparable to professionals with similar responsibilities and qualifications in education and health care.
- c. Support early childhood education programs to establish their own transparent pay scale that reflects experience, years in the field, and education.

Average Monthly Wages for Selected Sectors, 2017¹⁰



Strategy 11.4

Increase diversity across the early childhood workforce.

Actions

- a. Identify opportunities to promote diversity of the early childhood workforce to better represent and be reflective of the children and families in programs.

OBJECTIVE 12

COORDINATED PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

An aligned and coordinated process is used to implement this strategic plan resulting in a permanent and improved early childhood system for Alaska.

Strategy 12.1

Ensure coordination to develop aligned policies, standards, and regulations across all sectors and settings.

Actions

- a. Strengthen collaboration and partnership within and between early childhood education systems.
- b. Strengthen collaboration and partnership within and between early childhood education providers at the local and state level.
- c. Explore new and effective ways for consistent collaboration between tribes and all other sectors of the early child-

hood system.

- d. Develop systems of shared monitoring activities among early childhood programs to increase efficiency and collaboration.
- e. Partner with tribal entities to evaluate current child care licensing requirements and make recommendations as to what areas can be streamlined without compromising quality.
- f. Establish a statewide work group to propose shared definitions of system wide terms including but not limited to; kindergarten readiness, expulsion, quality and high quality.
- g. Establish a statewide work group to propose a shared definition of the term region within Alaska and a shared determination of regional boundaries for the purpose of data alignment.
- h. Develop and implement trauma informed practices across all settings and sectors.
- i. Expand investment in the background check system so that it is efficient and accessible to early childhood education professionals to accelerate the employment and hiring process.
- j. Align quality standards across early childhood education programs.



Strategy 12.2

Create an improved, sustainable and accountable governance approach with decision-making authority.

Actions

- a. Form a work group with the specific goal of designing an improved approach to governance, with consultant support. Through a consensus-building process, the group will propose a design for a new approach to governance for the early childhood system that includes structure, form, function, and funding.
- b. Engage families, communities, public and private partners and other stakeholders in the design of an improved early childhood governance approach in Alaska.

c. Ensure the governance design includes sustainable staffing capacity for implementing this 5-year strategic plan.

d. Ensure the governance design includes funding for performance management and evaluation to implement the 5-year strategic plan.

e. Provide a written proposal for an improved design for governing Alaska's early childhood system.

Strategy 12.3

Establish roles and responsibilities to implement this strategic plan for both current and improved governance approaches.

Actions

- a. Begin initial implementation during year one under the existing framework of the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC) by reconstructing current work groups to align with the goals of the plan and establishing annual work plans.
- b. In the design of the improved governance approach, designate who will be responsible and accountable for overseeing implementation of this strategic plan.
- c. Establish a coordination plan for transitioning any implementation roles and responsibilities to an improved governance approach.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Achieving the goals of this plan will require all sectors of Alaska’s early childhood system working together. This document builds upon existing plans and many of the activities and strategies are already underway by partners across the state, however, there is a real need for ongoing coordination.

Early implementation of this plan will be established through the leadership of the AECCC. Additionally, a work group has been formed to write a proposal for a new approach to governing the early childhood system that will include considerations for establishing accountability for implementing the plan through progress measures, roles, responsibilities, and desired outcomes. Once adopted, the new governance body will establish these progress measures to guide implementation of the plan.

This plan will be disseminated widely across the state and can also be used as a road map for public and private decision-makers and local regional leadership to begin establishing their own early childhood system improvements.

The spirit of this plan is meant to encourage all early childhood stakeholders to leverage already existing planning efforts and resources through cooperation, alignment, and collaboration at all levels to make enduring and sustainable improvements in Alaska’s early childhood system. With dedication and commitment to the efforts outlined in this plan, Alaska’s children and families will thrive in a strong and equitable early childhood system.



GLOSSARY & CITATIONS

The following glossary presents a list of terminology and definitions that are nationally recognized by the Research Connections' Child Care and Early Education Glossary. Also included are Alaska specific terms where applicable.

Accessibility - The extent to which families are able to use services. Key elements of access include: physical accessibility, whether services are reachable without undue physical barriers, including distance or transportation barriers; financial accessibility, affordability or whether the cost of services impacts basic needs such as housing or food. This is often expressed as a percent of household income.

Affordability - The degree to which the price of child care is a reasonable or feasible family expense. States maintain different definitions of "affordable" child care, taking various factors into consideration, such as family income, child care market rates, and subsidy acceptance, among others.

Availability - The extent to which there are sufficient services within a geographic area (e.g. a state, county, or city), and whether there is a regular supply over time. For purposes of this study, "sufficient" means the numbers of services and slots are aligned with estimated need. Availability is more complex than matching total supply to demand in a given area. For example, there may be sufficient child care slots in a region, but insufficient infant slots and excess slots for 3 to 5-year-olds. This definition was also provided by the JTF.

Child Care Assistance - Any public or private financial assistance intended to lower the cost of child care for families. Also called child care subsidy.

Child Care Provider - An organization or individual that provides early care and education services.

Child Development - The process by which children acquire skills in the areas of social, emotional, intellectual, speech and language, and physical development, including fine and gross motor skills. Developmental stages describe the expected, sequential order of gaining skills and competencies that children typically acquire.

Co-regulation - Regulation from others is called co-regulation. A child learns self-regulation through co-regulation with a trusted caregiver. It is not possible to self-regulate without first having been co-regulated. Co-regulation always comes first. If a child has not experienced a co-regulating presence, it will be difficult for the child to understand how to self-regulate. An example of co-regulation is the way a mother comforts a child when she's upset.

Cost of Care - The monetary cost of providing early care and education services. Major contributors to the cost of care include

staff wages and salaries, benefits, rent, supplies, professional development, and training. The cost of care can be different from the actual price of care charged by the provider.

Cultural Responsiveness - A term that describes what happens when special knowledge about individuals and groups of people is incorporated into standards, policies, and practices. Cultural responsiveness fosters an appreciation of families and their unique backgrounds and has been shown to increase the quality and effectiveness of services to children.

Developmentally Appropriate - Practices, behaviors, activities, and settings that are adapted to match the age, characteristics, and developmental progress of a specific group of children.

Disadvantaged - Populations in a given geographic area with higher relative rates of unemployment (more than 4% above the statewide average) and children in low-income families (area where the concentration of families living below 200% of the federal poverty level is more than 5% above the statewide average). Other potential measures include children with physical and developmental disabilities; children in state-mandated placement outside the home; homeless children; children of undocumented migrants; and children of incarcerated parents or caregivers.

Developmental Screening and Assessment - The practice of systematically measuring a child's development across multiple domains and looking for signs of developmental delays. Screening and assessment tools are typically administered by professionals in health care, community, or school settings with children and families and can consist of formal questionnaires or checklists that ask targeted questions about a child's development.

Early Childhood Care and Education - Programs and services focused on development of children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical functions that aim to build a foundation for lifelong learning and well-being. These programs operate in a complex interchange of health, social, child care, and education services that provide a holistic system of support for children and their families.

Early Childhood Professional - All individuals working in the early childhood system.

Early Childhood System - For purposes of the Alaska early childhood strategic plan, the early childhood system is broadly defined to include a wide range of critical touch points to young Alaskans. This may include but is limited to health, education, child care, early childhood center-based learning and care services, early childhood home and community based services, technical assistance, child protection, behavioral health, early intervention, family supports and programs that provide fiscal support, regulatory guidance, training and education.

Early Intervention (EI) - Services that are designed to address the developmental needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities, ages birth to three years, and their families. Early Intervention services are generally administered by qualified personnel and require the development of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Early Intervention is authorized by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C.

Early Literacy - Refers to what children know about and are able to do as it relates to communication, language, reading, and writing before they can actually read and write. Children's experiences with conversation, books, print, and stories (oral and written) all contribute to their early literacy skills.

Equitable/Equity - Equitable is the notion that each and every person will receive the necessary resources he/she needs individually to thrive, regardless of national origin, race, gender, sexual orientation, first language, being differently abled or other distinguishing characteristics.

Evidence-Informed Practice - A practice, regimen, or service that is grounded in evidence and can demonstrate that it improves outcomes. Elements of evidence-informed practice are standardized, replicable, and effective within a given setting and for a particular group of participants.

Expulsion - Permanent removal or dismissal from an early childhood education program.

Family Engagement and Partnerships - Refers to an interactive process of relationship-building between early childhood professionals and families that is mutual, respectful, and responsive to the family's language and culture. Engagement in the early years prepares families to support their children's learning throughout their school years and support parent/family-child relationships that are key to healthy child development, school readiness, and well-being.

Head Start and Early Head Start - A federal program that provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income families. The program is designed to foster stable family relationships, enhance children's physical and emotional well-being, and support children's cognitive skills so they are ready to succeed in school. Early Head Start works with children birth to three years of age and their families. Head Start works with children three to five years of age and their families. Federal grants are awarded to local public or private agencies, referred to as "grantees," that provide Head Start services. Currently the State of Alaska provides some grant funds to Early Head Start and Head Start grantees. Head Start is administered by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

High Quality Early Childhood Care And Education - Defined by the JTF for the purposes of this plan, a program that has a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP), not in response to non-compliance or enforcement, to which the program is held accountable (also see Quality Early Childhood Care and Education).

Home Visiting Programs - Programs that aim to improve child outcomes by helping high-risk parents who are pregnant or have young children to enhance their parenting skills. Most home visit-

ing programs match trained professionals and/or paraprofessionals with families to provide a variety of services in families' home settings. Examples of home visiting services can include health check-ups, developmental screenings, referrals, parenting advice, and guidance with navigating community services.

Inclusive - The principle of enabling all children, regardless of their diverse backgrounds or abilities, to participate actively in natural settings within their learning environments and larger communities.

Infant/Toddler Mental Health (ITMH) - Defined as the healthy social and emotional development of young children, birth to three years of age. ITMH builds on responsive relationships with primary caregivers (parents, family, child care) that build healthy attachment and foundations for life.

Licensed Child Care - Licensed child care providers/facilities are those facilities that possess a current license, issued by the Department of Health & Social Services or the Municipality of Anchorage, to operate a child care facility in the State of Alaska.

Medical Home - The Medical Home (also known as Patient or Family Centered Medical Home) is an approach to providing comprehensive primary care that facilitates partnerships between patients, clinicians, medical staff, and families. It is a medical practice organized to produce higher quality care and improved cost efficiency. In a medical home, parents can expect care that is coordinated across care settings and disciplines.

Mentoring - A form of professional development characterized by an ongoing relationship between a novice and an experienced teacher or provider to deliver personalized instruction and feedback. Mentoring is intended to increase an individual's personal or professional capacity, resulting in greater professional effectiveness.

Mixed-Delivery System - Programs, providers and settings (such as Head Start, licensed family and center-based child care programs, public schools and community-based organizations) that are supported with a combination of public funds and private funds.

Monitoring - The process used to enforce child care providers' compliance with licensing rules and regulations. States may use "differential monitoring" as a regulatory method for determining the frequency or depth of monitoring based on an assessment of the child care facility's compliance history and other quality indicators.

Parent Choice - Refers to families' ability to access child care that they want/desire. The term is often used to refer to families receiving a child care subsidy through the federal Child Care and Development Fund who should be able to access all legal forms of care.

Parenting Education - Instruction or information directed toward parents and families to increase effective parenting skills.

Prekindergarten (PreK) - In-home or center-based child care, Head Start, private preschool, and school district preschool programs serving 3-5 year old children.

Preschool - Programs that provide early education and care to children in the two or three years before they enter kindergarten, typically from ages 2.5-5 years. Preschools may be publicly or privately operated and may receive public funds.

Professional Development (PD) - Refers to a continuum of learning and support activities designed to prepare individuals for work with, and on behalf of, young children and their families, as well as ongoing experiences to enhance this work. Professional development encompasses education, training, and technical assistance (TA), which leads to improvements in the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions of early education professionals.

Protective Factors - Protective factors are conditions or attributes (skills, strengths, resources, supports or coping strategies) in individuals, families, communities or the larger society that help people deal more effectively with stressful events and mitigate or eliminate risk in families and communities.

Risk Factors - Refers to circumstances that increase a child's susceptibility to a wide range of negative outcomes and experiences. Risk factors for low school readiness may include parental/family characteristics such as low socioeconomic status and education, children's characteristics, such as whether the child has special needs, or community conditions and experiences, such as whether the child has access to high quality early care and education.

Quality Early Childhood Care and Education - As defined by the JTF for the purposes of this plan, a program that is licensed, certified, or approved and in good standing with their oversight agency. Such programs include, but are not limited to, Early Head Starts and Head Starts, State of Alaska or Municipality of Anchorage- licensed child care, public pre-elementary programs, tribally-approved child care, and child care approved by the military.

Rural - Alaska statute defines a rural community as one with a population of 5,500 or fewer not connected by road or rail to Anchorage or Fairbanks, or a population of 1,500 or fewer that is connected to those communities. A rural borough or census

area is defined as a geographic area in which rural communities predominate.

Social Emotional Development - Refers to the developmental process whereby children learn to identify and understand their own feelings, accurately read and comprehend emotional states in others, manage and express strong emotions in constructive manners, regulate their behavior, develop empathy for others, and establish and maintain relationships.

Special Needs - A term used to describe a child with an identified learning disability or physical or mental health condition requiring special education services, or other specialized services and supports usually delivered through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and/or Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP). See related: Early Intervention (EI).

Technical Assistance (TA) - The provision of targeted and customized supports by a professional(s) with subject matter expertise and adult learning knowledge and competencies. In an early education setting, TA is typically provided to teaching and administrative staff to improve the quality of services and supports they provide to children and families.

Trauma Informed - Refers to an approach used in working with children exposed to traumatic events or conditions. Children exposed to trauma may display heightened aggression, poor social skills, and impulsivity; they also may struggle academically or engage in risk-taking or other challenging behaviors. Service providers and family members that are trained in Trauma Informed Care (TIC) learn effective ways to interact with these children, such as helping them cope with traumatic "triggers," supporting their emotion regulation skills, maintaining predictable routines, and using effective behavior management strategies.

Workforce - The broad range of individuals engaged in the health care and education of young children. Members of the early childhood workforce may include teaching, caregiving, and administrative staff, as well as a wide range of health professionals.

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*A special thanks to the McDowell Group for providing original graphics which were adapted for use in this plan.

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