Buffett Early Childhood Institute
at the University of Nebraska

Start early. Start well.

NEBRASKA EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE COMMISSION
AT A GLANCE

Summary

The Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission is a collaborative group of 39 public- and private-sector leaders convened by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska to develop a comprehensive plan of action for expanding and strengthening the state's early childhood workforce. The commission will meet quarterly over a three-year period beginning in 2017.

Why?

- In Nebraska today, nearly 80 percent of children from birth through age 5 are enrolled in some form of paid child care. Decades of research has shown that those who care for and educate these children play the single most important role in their early development and learning.
- There are tremendous challenges to growing and sustaining a high-quality early childhood workforce:
  - Shortage. The Nebraska Department of Education's Teacher Vacancy Survey lists both Early Childhood Education and Early Childhood Special Education as "Teacher Shortage Areas."
  - Preparation. Training requirements for individuals in the early childhood workforce are often inadequate or non-existent, and professional education requirements are uneven. For example, each of Nebraska's 20 early childhood degree programs includes at least one practicum experience, but the required supervised classroom hours vary from nine to 150.
  - Compensation. Salaries are so low that many in the workforce leave the profession for other jobs, contributing to high turnover and a lack of stability for young children. In 2015, the median wage for child care professionals in Nebraska was $19,620, which is below the poverty line for a family of three.
- These challenges exist across the state in both urban and rural areas. According to the 2016 *Kids Count in Nebraska Report,* 11 counties statewide had no licensed child care facilities in 2015, and roughly 75 percent of counties in Nebraska with child care facilities did not have enough available slots to meet the estimated current demand.

Goals

- Create consensus on a comprehensive statewide plan to transform and sustain a skilled, informed, and diverse early childhood workforce for all children from birth through Grade 3.
- Develop implementation plans that describe effective strategies, actions, and responsible parties.
- Facilitate and promote collaboration among stakeholders throughout the state and assist with public education and outreach.

Members

- Co-chairs: Dr. Marjorie J. Kostelnik, dean, College of Education and Human Sciences, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Dr. Samuel J. Meisels, founding executive director, Buffett Early Childhood Institute.
- Members: Membership is drawn from government, higher education, public schools, child care, philanthropy, health care, and the business community.