

IDAHO ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN RELEASES NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR IDAHO PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT

Feb. 22, 2021 (BOISE, ID) – The Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (Idaho AEYC) announces the release of Early Childhood Care and Education in Idaho: Idaho Preschool Development Grant Birth-Age 5 Needs Assessment. The needs assessment is designed to help Idaho policymakers, administrators and stakeholders understand early learning needs for families and children in Idaho.

In 2019, Idaho AEYC was awarded a one-year \$3.3 million federal grant. Grant activities laid the foundation for a better connected early childhood system that will prepare Idaho children for a successful start in school and life.

Idaho AEYC partnered with the University of Idaho James A. and Louise McClure Center for Public Policy Research (McClure Center) to conduct research on children and families in Idaho, the nature of their needs and the quality and availability of the supports and services that allow them to thrive.

“Through analysis of early childhood systems and targeted studies and coordination with local and national research partners, we were able to present data on the current state of Idaho’s early childhood systems and determine where the systems are working and where they face challenges,” said McClure Center director Dr. Katherine Himes.

“This needs assessment – the first for Idaho – helps Idahoans understand the big picture of early childhood education needs in Idaho and how we can best support parents and families with children under 5.”

The needs assessment reveals four key findings:

1. **Idaho families experience a variety of unmet needs that inhibit their children’s ability to learn.** The study highlights the challenges facing many Idaho families, including poverty, hunger, housing insecurity, lack of health care and inconsistent access to the internet or a computer.
2. **Child care is unaffordable for many Idahoans.** Child care is one of the biggest expenses in a family’s budget and affordability is a huge factor when it comes to early childhood care and education (ECCE), particularly for low-income families. A typical family in Idaho spends 25% of its annual income on child care for an infant and a 4-year-old.
3. **Early childhood care and education is unavailable for nearly half of Idahoans.** Nearly 50% of Idahoans live in communities that either completely lack licensed child care

providers or the providers are so scarce that there are more than three children for every child care space. The lack of availability is greater in rural and low-income communities and in communities with higher percentages of people of color.

4. **Idaho lacks data connecting early childhood care and education settings and early literacy outcomes.** Idaho does not have systems to understand which types of early childhood care education settings (licensed or non-licensed, home- or center-based, etc.) are most effective in increasing school readiness and early literacy.

“The findings of this needs assessment will serve as a guide for how we address gaps and opportunities in our early childhood systems and will help map the course for an integrated, well-aligned and coordinated approach with high quality programs, supports and services for all Idaho children and families,” said Beth Oppenheimer, Idaho AEYC executive director. “The work is ongoing. This needs assessment and the subsequent strategic plan are first steps to improving early literacy and school readiness for Idaho children.”

In December 2020, Idaho received a three-year, \$6 million per year federal Preschool Development Grant to help build foundations of better connected early childhood systems in Idaho.

“An investment in early child care and education is an investment in the future success of Idaho,” Oppenheimer said. “While there is a lot of work to do to make impactful changes, we believe this is an important starting point to help Idaho’s families and caregivers better prepare for their children’s readiness for school.”

To read the entire needs assessment, visit Idaho AEYC’s [website](#).

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ABOUT THE IDAHO ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN

Idaho AEYC has a vision that all children thrive wherever they grow and learn.

The early years are a time of remarkable brain growth in children and lay the foundation for subsequent learning and development. Up-front investments in quality care and early education translate into direct returns for the state, our communities and society as a whole. Idaho AEYC works to improve the quality of child care and raise awareness about the importance of early education.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO JAMES A. AND LOUISE MCCLURE CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH



The University of Idaho James A. and Louise McClure Center for Public Policy Research was launched in 2007 and has become Idaho's most trusted and preeminent public policy research entity. Senator McClure was renowned for his attention to detail, digestion of policy implications and nonpartisan approach. The McClure Center's collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to addressing society's complex challenges sustains Senator McClure's remarkable legacy.