The Nevada Institute for Children’s Research and Policy (NICRP) is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to advancing children’s issues in Nevada. As a research center within the UNLV School of Public Health, NICRP is dedicated to improving the lives of children through research, advocacy, and other specialized services.

NICRP’s History:
NICRP started in 1998 based on a vision of First Lady Sandy Miller. She wanted an organization that could bring credible research and rigorous policy analysis to problems that confront Nevada’s children, but she did not want to stop there; Miller wanted to transform our research into meaningful legislation that would make a real difference in the lives of Nevada children.

NICRP’s Mission:
Our mission is to conduct community-based research that will guide the development of programs and services for Nevada’s children. For more information regarding NICRP research and services, please visit our website at https://nic.unlv.edu

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Nevada Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Workgroup

Annual Report Summary

Project Period: October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022

The Nevada Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Workgroup is collaborating to combat the ever-growing numbers of overweight and obesity in young children ages 0 to 8. Led by the Nevada Institute of Children’s Research and Policy, the workgroup is a coalition of individuals and organizations from across the state of Nevada who are committed to reducing rates of childhood obesity by promoting education and outreach, providing supports to early childhood providers and ensuring that appropriate resources are available to assist children and families in making healthy choices.

In partnership with workgroup members and organizations, the purpose of this workgroup is to implement Early Childhood Obesity State Prevention Plan activities to help improve weight status among children zero (0) to eight (8) years of age.

During this project fiscal year, the Nevada Institute for Children’s Research and Policy (NICRP) convened four (4) quarterly meetings on December 14, 2021, March 8, June 7, and September 20, 2022 with the Nevada Early Childhood Obesity Prevention (NECOP) Workgroup to track and evaluate the implementation of The Nevada State Early Childhood Obesity Plan. The next workgroup meeting for the first quarter of the 2023 fiscal year will be December 6, 2022. The workgroup consists of members from 14 partnering organizations within Nevada:

- Children’s Advocacy Alliance
- The Children’s Cabinet
- The Nevada Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
- The Nevada Department of Education
- Nevada Department of Agriculture
- Nevada Institute for Children’s Research and Policy (NICRP)
- Nevada Minority Health and Equity Coalition
- Nevada Department of Health and Human Services: Division of Public and Behavioral Health
- The Nevada Registry
- Nevada Quality Rating and Improvement System
- Southern Nevada Health District (SNHD)
- UNR Extension
- UNLV School of Public Health
- Washoe County Health District
During the quarterly meetings of this project year, the activities delineated under Year 1 of the State Plan were reviewed. The 2021-2026 state plan is divided into seven (7) overarching goals:

1. Early Care and Education Facilities
2. Awareness and Education for parents
3. Awareness and Education for providers and community partners
4. Establish Data Collection Systems
5. Increase knowledge of best practice and current research in Early Childhood Obesity prevention strategies
6. Increase number of Caring for our Children (CFOC) and Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) standards being met in Nevada
7. Increase sustainable funding to support NECOP efforts

These goals are inclusive of 39 objectives, further broken down into a total of 58 activities to be completed over the five (5) - year state plan. Workgroup members and organizations provide quarterly updates on progress toward each of these activities. Initial progress has been made on 55 of the 58 activities, with 8 total activities completed this year. The remaining activities are intended to be progressed throughout the subsequent four (4) years of the state plan.

NICRP developed an internal system for collecting and analyzing quarterly progress of all 7 goals among members and organizations. The following progress has been reported throughout this project year.
GOAL 1

Promote healthy nutrition and physical activity for young children (0-8) in Early Care and Education (ECE) facilities and support implementation of best practices/standards

Children’s Cabinet

- Training was provided to 7 community health workers (CHW), 166 programs, and 112 centers
- 107 newsletters were disseminated to providers and the community

Nevada Department of Agriculture

- Technical assistance was provided to 18 programs and 73 centers
- 111 ECE Programs were signed up for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- 4 programs and 44 centers improved their implementation of CACFP/nutrition standards

UNR Extension

- 48 newsletters were disseminated to providers and the community
- Technical assistance was provided to 25 centers
- Training was provided to 47 early childcare professionals from 5 different centers

A revised community garden curriculum was finalized by UNR Extension. The curriculum was conducted in 8 classrooms of 116 children and 18 teachers. A process evaluation was conducted on all 4 cohorts which resulted in feedback contributing to multiple iterations of the curriculum throughout FY22. Feedback from the final cohorts will be considered for future iterations in conjunction with a peer-review process initiated in July of 2022 (which is still under review). Results of the pilot demonstrated that 60% of children (n=47) improved their scores for identification of foods (t=3.420; p<.001); children improved (46%; n=46) in their ability to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy snacks (t=-1.712; p=.047); and 45% (n=47) improved in decision-making to choose a healthy snack over an unhealthy snack (t=-2.189; p=.017).

A quasi-experimental, pilot study was also conducted on 88 children in 8 classrooms including 5 classrooms (n=49 children) that did not receive the intervention and 3 classrooms receiving the intervention (n=39 children). Impact measured included 70 matched pairs with 33 children receiving the intervention and 37 for comparison. Preliminary findings showed that all groups were similar at pre-test. At post, using a one-way ANOVA test, children in the intervention group improved significantly in food identification (F=7.781; p=.007) and though they improved in snack selection and distinguishing between healthy and unhealthy, neither was significant between groups (F=.675, p=.414; F=.125, p=.724, respectively).
The Nevada Registry

Per the requirements of NAC 432A.323, two or more hours of training in wellness, including childhood obesity, nutrition, and moderate or vigorous physical activity, are required within 90 days of employment and each year thereafter in ECE facilities. These new requirements have been adopted into Nevada’s State Child Care Licensing regulations (Adopted Regulation of the State Board of Health LCB File R092-16). The Nevada Registry developed content guidelines for wellness courses as well as determining which approved trainers will be eligible to deliver training on specific topics. The training rubric outlines the content guidelines, course objectives and trainer qualification requirements for the required training. A draft of this completed rubric was presented to the workgroup at the 2022 Q4 meeting. Over the 2023 project year, The Nevada Registry will be reviewing current trainings in Nevada based on the updated rubric standards. The workgroup also discussed forming a subcommittee to assist with this review process.

Nevada Department of Health and Human Services: Division of Public and Behavioral Health

Secured and subgrant Preventive Health and Health Services (PHHS) funds to Washoe County Health District (WCHD), Southern Nevada Health District (SNHD) Nevada Institute for Children’s Research and Policy (NICRP), and Carson City Health and Human Services (CCHHS) for Prevention and Wellness initiatives.
GOAL 2

Increase awareness on the importance of preventing early childhood obesity among parents of children ages 0-8 through dissemination of educational resources, creating community environments where children can be physically active, and support of breastfeeding

Southern Nevada Health District (SNHD)

- 2,789 educational resources were distributed at community events
- 50 schools were enrolled in sponsored Safe Routes to School activities throughout Southern Nevada
- 19 parks in priority census tracts in Southern Nevada offer storybook walks and geocaching.
- During Q4, SNDH worked with the City of Henderson to install a new Story Book Walk trail at the Bird Preserve in Henderson.

Nevada Assembly Bill No. 343 (AB343)1 requires the development of plans for conducting walking audits of urbanized areas in Clark County. As outlined in the legislation, the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada’s Metropolitan Planning Organization (RTCSNV) developed a plan in collaboration with the Southern Nevada Health District, local governments, and the Nevada Department of Transportation. The plan was finalized May 2022 and describes roles, priority locations, community engagement approaches, checklists, reporting methods, and an action plan for ongoing walk audits. SNHD continues to support implementation of this plan.

The Health Study of the Regional Transportation Plan was finalized in August. Key components of the plan included increasing community awareness of the connection between transportation, health and equity, and engage key stakeholders including residents, public health, and local government. The plan can be found at: Regional Walkability Plan - Projects and Initiatives (rtcsnv.com)

In September as a part of Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, SNHD launched a campaign to promote the 5-2-1-0 Guidelines for children and families. The campaign ran in Southern Nevada in English, Spanish and Chinese in print, social media, billboards, and digital media (web banners). A press release generated two media opportunities with Channel 8 and the Elko Daily Free Press.

Nevada Institute for Children’s Research & Policy

NICRP created and disseminated social media toolkits for the National CACFP Week in March, Breastfeeding Awareness Month in August, and Childhood Obesity Prevention Awareness in September. Facebook ads were released weekly for both the breastfeeding and obesity prevention awareness months, reaching a total of 24,875 and 43,312 people respectively.

- CACFP Week_Social Media_Toolkit_Revised by NDA3.7.pdf (unlv.edu)
- Breastfeeding Awareness Month Toolkit - August 2022 (unlv.edu)
- Childhood Obesity Awareness Toolkit (unlv.edu)
**UNR Extension**

UNR extension maintains a wide variety of health and wellness resources and events on its website. Analytics for the website are provided below in Table 1.

**Table 1. Quarterly Google Analytics for UNR Extension Website**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Healthy Message Boards in ECE Centers</th>
<th>Community Events</th>
<th>Healthy Kids Resource Center</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>6 centers reaching 466 children, caregivers, and teachers</td>
<td>3 events reaching 2,877 people</td>
<td>1,424 pageviews from 1,051 unique users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 centers reaching 752 children, caregivers, and teachers</td>
<td>0 events</td>
<td>635 pageviews from 457 unique users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>11 centers reaching 972 children, caregivers, and teachers</td>
<td>1 event reaching 56 people</td>
<td>613 pageviews from 450 unique users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>8 centers reaching 745 (341 children, 341 caregivers, and 63 teachers)</td>
<td>1 event (Kickoff to Kindergarten) reaching 121 adults &amp; 176 children</td>
<td>562 pageviews from 439 unique users</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GOAL 3

Increase awareness among Non-Early Care Education providers and community partners who work with or have contact with children ages 0-8

Southern Nevada Health District

In September as a part of Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, SNHD sponsored a Walk with A Doc event. Walk with a Doc is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit which offers free, physician-led walking groups throughout the year, with over 500 chapters worldwide. Walks begin with a brief discussion on a current health topic and then participants enjoy a healthy walk and conversation. This was the first in-person Walk with a Doc event in Southern Nevada in over 2 years. The theme of this event was the 5-2-1-0 Guidelines, which encourage at least 5 fruits and vegetables per day, 2 hours or less of recreational screen time, 1 hour or more of physical activity, and 0 sugary drinks. Camine con un Doctor (Spanish) was held in August with the same 5-2-1-0 topic.

SNHD works with faith-based food pantries to implement the Supporting Wellness at Pantries (SWAP) program. SWAP is a stop light food ranking system that allows pantry clients to identify and make healthier food selections. It also includes policy, systems, and environmental change strategies in the pantries to make healthier foods more accessible. SNHD is working with 6 faith-based pantries to support SWAP implementation including: ICLV, TCMI, No Greater Love, Iglesia Maranatha, Iglesia Puertas de Alabanza Ministerios de fe, and Al Maun.

Nevada Department of Health and Human Services: Division of Public and Behavioral Health

Secured and subgrant Preventive Health and Health Services (PHHS) funds to Washoe County Health District (WCHD), Southern Nevada Health District (SNHD) Nevada Institute for Children’s Research and Policy (NICRP), and Carson City Health and Human Services (CCHHS) for Prevention and Wellness initiatives.
GOAL 4

Establish data collection systems to enhance knowledge of existing efforts of childhood obesity prevention in Nevada

Nevada Institute for Children’s Research & Policy

- In collaboration with the Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC), a Data Dashboard for Childhood Obesity in Nevada is under development

NICRP created a Policy Brief on Childhood Obesity Data in Nevada, which is currently being reviewed and edited by the workgroup to be included in the 2023 Legislative Briefing Book. This policy brief provides an overview of the current landscape of childhood obesity in Nevada, a comparison of current data tracking systems in Nevada compared to the rest of the United States, and recommendations for improvement.

NRS 392.420 (2) was recently amended in July 2021 to require biennial height and weight assessment of children in 4th and 7th grade in school districts with a population of at least 100,000. NICRP contacted Nevada school districts of populations under 100,000 to determine any potential barriers limiting the ability to conduct annual height and weight assessments, inclusive of all rural school districts (beside Clark and Washoe counties). Of the 15 rural counties, 5 responded to this request. Of these responses, 3 counties stated that reporting and resources were the greatest limitation, and 2 reported a lack of equipment. New scales, stadiometers, and privacy screens were ordered and shipped to both of these school districts.

Nevada Department of Health and Human Services: Division of Public and Behavioral Health

The Wellness and Prevention Program coordinated and developed the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Collecting and Reporting Students’ Height and Weight in Nevada Schools. The SOP does not only provide guidance and resources to collect and report Body Mass Index (BMI) school data, but it also provides guidance and resources to school staff and parents/guardians to prevent risk factors contributing to childhood obesity in Nevada.
GOAL 5

Increase knowledge of best practice and current research regarding Early Childhood Obesity prevention strategies

- Workgroup members participated in 25 community events throughout Nevada and distributed over 2,500 educational materials
- Dr. Anne Lindsay from UNR Extension has been accepted to present “I am a seed: A seed-to-table experiential journey for preschoolers” at the National Association for the Education of Young Children 2022 Annual Conference (November 16 – 19, 2022 in Washington DC)
- NICRP has been accepted to present the Early Childhood Obesity Prevention State Plan at the 2023 Early Learning Institute Virtual Conferences (February 25 – March 10, 2023)
- NICRP attended 8 Nevada Legislature joint committee on health and human services public meetings, 1 conference, and 5 webinars on early childhood

Recent publications by workgroup members and organizations:

GOAL 6

*Increase the number of standards being met in Early Care and Education (ECE) Programs*

Nevada Institute for Children’s Research & Policy

NICRP led a review of the Caring for Our Children (CFOC) Achieving a State of Healthy Weight (ASHW) Standards with the workgroup during the Q3 and Q4 meetings based on the legislative and regulatory processes plan presented during Q2. Nevada currently meets 15 of the 47 ASHW national standards, with 17 standards partially met and 15 standards unmet (Table 2).

**Table 2. ASHW Standards and the current Nevada ratings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASHW Standards: Category</th>
<th>Standards Met (n= 15)</th>
<th>Standards Partially Met (n= 17)</th>
<th>Standards Unmet (n= 15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Infant Feeding (n = 11)</td>
<td>6 (54.5%)</td>
<td>4 (36.4%)</td>
<td>1 (9.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition (n = 21)</td>
<td>8 (38.1%)</td>
<td>9 (42.9%)</td>
<td>4 (9.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Activity (n = 11)</td>
<td>1 (9.1%)</td>
<td>4 (36.4%)</td>
<td>6 (54.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limits on Screen Time (n = 4)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All values are presented as Count (Row %)*

In preparation for the 2023 Legislative session, NICRP reached out to both the CDC and ASHW regarding several of the 32 partially/unmet standards and were provided with guidance for legislative and/or regulatory changes in order for Nevada to obtain a “Fully Met” rating. Per this discussion, two (2) of the 32 standards will be updated by ASHW in the 2022 ratings as Nevada is now meeting the required criteria. A legislative and regulatory subcommittee of the NECOP workgroup was formed and led by NICRP to further review the remaining 30 partially/unmet standards in Nevada. This subcommittee met on two (2) occasions, July 14 and August 4, 2022. During both of these meetings, the subcommittee narrowed the 30 standards down to 23 and created a survey to send to all licensed ECE providers in the state of Nevada to gain insight on foreseen implications and barriers associated with the potential regulatory revisions. This survey was reviewed with all members of the workgroup at the Q4 meeting in September. The workgroup subcommittee reached out to several key stakeholders who are also addressing childcare regulations and invited them to the workgroup meetings. Additionally, the subcommittee met with SNHD in an effort to align state and district regulations related to childhood obesity.
GOAL 7

*Increase sustainable funding to support Nevada Early Childhood obesity prevention efforts*

**Nevada Institute for Children’s Research & Policy**

NICRP will continue to discuss with the workgroup and key stakeholders the ways to increase awareness of childhood obesity prevention in Nevada, including partnerships and funding opportunities. One pediatrician (Dr. Steven Shane) and one pediatric bariatric surgeon (Dr. Alexander Ayzengart) have begun to attend meetings and are collaborating toward future steps in improving multidisciplinary approaches to pediatric obesity prevention in our state.

In addition to each of the goals as outlined above, NICRP continues to be committed to sharing and discussing the state plan with key decision-makers, stakeholders, and potential partners during the next project year. Outside of attending meetings with key decision-makers, stakeholders, and potential partners, NICRP plans to continue attending webinars and conferences to learn about the best ways to impact and influence early childhood obesity within the state of Nevada.