

**Prepared By**  
Marzano Research

**Prepared For**  
Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children  
Idaho State University

# Idaho School Readiness Project Statewide Strategic Plan

2025-2030

## Report



# Contents

- Acknowledgements .....3
  - Early Learning Collaboratives .....3
- Introduction .....4
- Overview of the Strategic Planning Process .....5
  - 1. Partner Engagement.....5
  - 2. Address Updated Needs Assessment.....7
  - 3. Align and Coordinate with Other Plans .....7
- Organization of the Plan .....8
- Use of the Plan .....8
- Measuring Success .....9
- Next Steps .....9
- Strategic Plan .....10
  - Goal 1. Increase access to learning and development .....11
  - Goal 2. Increase family support and engagement .....14
  - Goal 3. Support the early childhood workforce .....17
  - Goal 4. Promote collaboration and data use .....20
- Appendix: Strategic Plan Terms .....22

## Acknowledgements

Marzano Research prepared this Strategic Plan Report thanks to many individuals, state agencies, organizations, and committees that generously provided time, expertise, and support:

- Idaho families and early childhood professionals who responded to surveys and participated in focus groups, listening sessions, and interviews to share their experiences, perspectives, and ideas.
- The staff at the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children and Idaho State University, who provided expert direction, ample guidance, and helpful feedback throughout the process.
- The Idaho School Readiness Project Advisory Committee and subgroup members who provided input and recommendations on strategies, language, indicators of success, and alignment.
- The members of the 24 Early Learning Collaboratives throughout Idaho who provided input and recommendations on the strategies to ensure they are reflective of local community early learning needs and priorities.

## Early Learning Collaboratives

- ▶ American Falls
- ▶ Bannock County
- ▶ Basin
- ▶ Canyon County
- ▶ Castleford
- ▶ Clearwater Regional
- ▶ Emmett
- ▶ Fremont County
- ▶ Garden City
- ▶ Homedale
- ▶ Idaho Falls
- ▶ KJ7
- ▶ Kuna
- ▶ Lincoln County
- ▶ Magic Valley
- ▶ Marsing
- ▶ Meridian
- ▶ Murtaugh
- ▶ North Idaho
- ▶ Notus-Parma
- ▶ Teton Valley
- ▶ Treasure Valley
- ▶ West Central Mountains
- ▶ Wood River



## Introduction

Idaho is a state known for its natural beauty and dedication to support its families and early childhood professionals. Across the state, families and professionals work hard every day to provide children with the love, care, and support they need to grow and thrive. People in Idaho understand how important early experiences are for shaping a child’s brain and setting the foundation for lifelong success. They see the amazing potential in every child, the vital role families play, and the dedication of early childhood professionals. Together, they are working to create a system that supports children, families, and professionals to be healthy, successful, and thriving.

This Idaho School Readiness Project Statewide Strategic Plan reflects this shared commitment. It lays out clear goals and priorities to support Idaho’s youngest children, their families, and the professionals who care for them.

The Strategic Plan builds on Idaho’s 2021 Early Childhood Care and Education Strategic Plan and expands its focus in several ways:

- It responds to new insights from the 2024 Statewide Needs Assessment.
- It includes areas beyond early care and education, involving other sectors that support young children.
- It aligns with related plans across Idaho, creating a unified and coordinated approach.

This new Strategic Plan is designed for everyone in the early childhood system—from families and professionals working locally to leaders at the state level. Importantly, it was shaped by the voices of families and early childhood professionals, whose priorities are reflected in the plan’s goals and strategies.

The Strategic Plan is comprehensive and future focused. It includes programs and services that focus on family support, child learning and development, and building a strong early childhood workforce. It also emphasizes the need for better collaboration across services and a stronger system to support children, families, and professionals. Throughout the plan, there is a commitment to ensuring that programs and services are responsive to the needs of all children and families in Idaho, so they have access to the support they need to succeed. Key terms referenced throughout this report and used in the Strategic Plan may be found in the Appendix.

# Overview of the Strategic Planning Process

One key requirement of the federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B–5) is conducting a strategic planning process. To meet this requirement, the Idaho School Readiness Project Partners consisting of the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (Idaho AEYC) and Idaho State University (ISU) contracted with Marzano Research to conduct the strategic planning process.

Marzano Research was charged with carrying out three primary components for this activity.

1. Engage partners to ensure that the final Strategic Plan accurately addresses the needs and desires of children, families, and early childhood professionals in Idaho.
2. Address the updated 2024 Statewide Needs Assessment.
3. Align and coordinate with other related plans and strategies.

These components are described in more detail below.

## 1. Partner Engagement

Partner engagement played a critical role in the strategic planning process. The team conducted surveys, focus groups, key informant interviews, and community conversations to gather input on the plan and develop strategies. The **supplement document** provides additional details on the partner engagement process.

### Partners Engaged in ISRP Statewide Strategic Plan Update

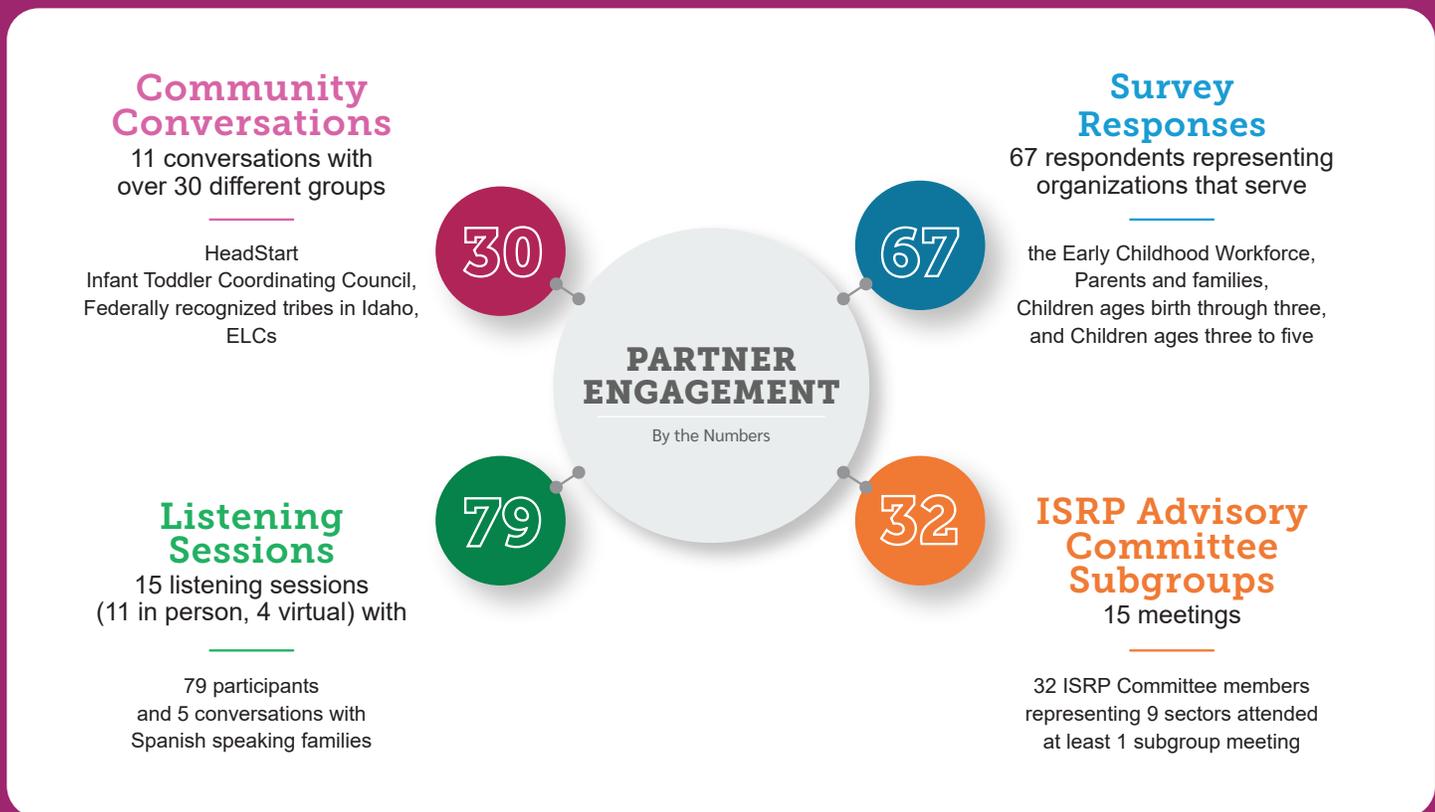
- Ada Community Library
- AIM Early Idaho
- Boise State University
- College of Eastern Idaho
- Idaho Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics
- Idaho Children’s Trust Fund
- Idaho Commission for Libraries
- Idaho Department of Education
- Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
- Idaho Department of Insurance
- Idaho Early Learning Collaboratives
- Idaho Head Start Association
- Idaho Head Start Collaboration Office
- Idaho Health Data Exchange
- Idaho Infant Toddler Coordinating Council
- Idaho Library Association
- Idaho Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting
- Idaho Public Television
- Idaho State University
- Idaho Voices for Children
- IdahoSTARS
- Lee Pesky
- North Idaho College Head Start
- St. Luke’s Health System
- Treasure Valley Family YMCA
- Twiga Foundation
- United Way of Southeastern Idaho
- United Way of Treasure Valley
- University of Idaho
- West Central Mountains Economic Development Council
- Western Idaho Community Action Partnership

In spring 2024, the team conducted a landscape survey to gather stakeholder input for updating the Strategic Plan. The survey primarily involved community-based organizations, Early Learning Collaboratives, and state government agencies. Stakeholders provided feedback on their engagement with the 2021 Strategic Plan activities and identified priorities for the update. They also shared suggestions for missing goals, objectives, or strategies that should be included in future updates. The team used this data to update and expand the strategies.

During a later phase, the team held statewide listening sessions to refine the Strategic Plan. These sessions gathered feedback on the strategies to ensure they reflected input from families and early childhood professionals and helped prioritize the strategies.

The team also engaged stakeholders who were not reflected in previous strategic plan development efforts. A consultant worked with early education staff from the five federally recognized tribes in Idaho to inform updates to the Strategic Plan. Marzano Research staff interviewed and conducted focus groups with five Spanish-speaking families in the Nampa region, generating several recommendations that informed updates to the Strategic Plan.

To align the Strategic Plan with local community needs, Marzano Research analyzed the Pillars of Strength Self-Assessment (Pillars) completed by 24 Early Learning Collaboratives. The analysis found strong alignment between the draft objectives for the Strategic Plan and the objectives identified in the Pillars self-assessment.



## 2. Address Updated Needs Assessment

The goals and strategies outlined in the Strategic Plan were directly shaped by the findings of Idaho's 2024 Statewide Needs Assessment. The comprehensive needs assessment for Idaho's Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) system identified critical needs and opportunities to enhance early learning statewide. The report synthesized data from multiple Idaho communities, including tribal regions, providing a holistic view of the ECCE sector's challenges and priorities. Needs assessment findings underscore the uniqueness of the state's population and families' universal desire for affordable, stable, high-quality ECCE. The demographic analysis revealed families face common barriers like limited preschool access and high child care costs. Tribal areas face compounded challenges due to unique factors, emphasizing a need for targeted support strategies. Key areas of need include enhancing preschool access and enrollment, addressing underutilization and staffing shortages in programs like Head Start, ensuring affordability, developing a well-trained early childhood workforce, and providing comprehensive provider support. The report also highlights the need for improved data collection and analysis to assess system capacity and guide effective planning and resource allocation.

The Strategic Plan addresses these critical needs by incorporating targeted strategies designed to meet the specific findings revealed in the assessment. By aligning strategic plan goals with the needs assessment findings, the plan ensures a focused and responsive approach to strengthening Idaho's ECCE system and improving outcomes for its youngest residents.

## 3. Align and Coordinate with Other Plans

The development of the Strategic Plan also involved a thorough review of 29 plans, reports, and frameworks in Idaho to ensure that it reflects and aligns with existing work. The strategic alignment of the Strategic Plan with initiatives outlined in other plans offers the opportunity for system partners to collaborate and advance shared objectives.

The major themes revealed during the review included the importance of:

- Serving all children and families.
- Supporting the early childhood workforce.
- Improving early care and education quality.
- Empowering family choice.
- Supporting transitions to kindergarten and kindergarten readiness.
- Increasing availability of funding for early care and education providers.



## Organization of the Plan

The Strategic Plan itself has three key components: goals, objectives, and strategies.



**Goals.** Broad, long-term outcomes that Idaho seeks to achieve to improve early childhood development and education. These provide overarching direction and reflect the vision for the state’s youngest residents.

**Example:** Increase family support and engagement.



**Objectives.** Specific, measurable milestones that contribute to achieving the goals of the strategic plan. Objectives focus on actionable priorities within the context of early childhood care and education.

**Example:** Maximize family knowledge and support through programs and resources tailored to meet their unique needs.



**Strategies.** The actionable steps or approaches Idaho will implement to accomplish the goals, utilizing resources and partnerships effectively to improve outcomes for children and families. They are written in such a way that people at multiple levels of the system can implement or contribute to each strategy.

**Example:** Empower and engage families in meaningful leadership and advocacy roles. Increase the engagement and influence of families in decision making about early childhood programs and systems with structures and supports for shared decision making. Ensure engagement opportunities actively empower parents, children, and other family members together. Provide individualized and responsive navigation support to reach all families.

## Use of the Plan

The Strategic Plan serves as a roadmap to guide the development, implementation, and improvement of programs, services, and supports for young children and their families and the professionals who care for them. Overall, the Strategic Plan is designed to be useful for a wide audience for the purposes of:

- Establishing a shared vision.
- Calling for collective action and collaboration towards common goals.
- Increasing public awareness of Idaho’s early care and education system.
- Informing advocacy and shared messaging.
- Developing policies.
- Allocating resources and setting priorities for investments.
- Guiding data use for ongoing monitoring and program improvement.

The first step in using the Strategic Plan is for early childhood system leaders, advocates, lawmakers, and other leaders at state and local levels to review the plan, individually and collaboratively. Together, they can identify what they and others are already doing to advance the plan’s goals, objectives, and strategies. Next, they can determine what other strategies in the plan align with the needs and priorities of their communities and consider how they can contribute to their implementation. Then, they can develop a collective action plan with clear action steps, roles, and timelines for implementation. They can also help to champion the plan and advocate for resources to support implementation and strengthen the system. Ultimately, the success of this plan will depend on the collective action of groups at multiple levels working in alignment to advance these shared priorities.

## Measuring Success

The Strategic Plan includes a range of success indicators to assess its progress and effectiveness. This menu of options empowers state and local partners to select indicators relevant for them and the strategies they are implementing, allowing flexibility to decide where to focus evaluation efforts and resources, what measures to use, and what targets to set towards the goals. Having a set menu of indicators also enables the possibility of shared measurement of and accountability for outcomes and impact across the state. Determining how to measure success in the context of collective action efforts is challenging. The ISRP Advisory Committee was critical in providing input and feedback in the development of these indicators, and they will continue to play a key role in the future as work continues on how to meaningfully evaluate Idaho's success in advancing these shared strategic priorities. The Strategic Plan includes two types of indicators, indicators of successful implementation and successful outcomes.

Indicators of successful implementation track what aspects of the strategies have been implemented (e.g., policy change, number of trainings provided). Examples of indicators to track successful implementation of the strategies across goals include:

- Policy changes.
- Number of trainings implemented, number of training hours and technical assistance hours provided, and number of training and technical assistance participants.
- Number of resources disseminated and/or number of recipients of disseminated resources.
- State- and local-level structures and activities implemented for families and providers to engage in shared decision making on early childhood system issues, and number of families and providers engaged in system-level decisions.
- Data systems developed and implemented, and systems designed for analyses of subgroups.
- Number of new community partnerships within and across sectors.

Indicators of successful outcomes assess the extent to which the strategies under each goal had the intended short-term effects (e.g., number of children served, knowledge increased). Examples of indicators are found below under each goal.

## Next Steps

The Idaho School Readiness Project Statewide Strategic Plan is a shared vision, collectively owned and implemented through the collaboration of state agencies, community organizations, educators, and families, ensuring that all young children have access to quality early learning opportunities. The Idaho School Readiness Project Advisory Committee continues to work together to prioritize strategies that address the most pressing needs first, carefully balancing impact with available resources to avoid overextension. By leveraging existing partnerships, we can create sustainable solutions to support the goals of the Strategic Plan. Now is the time for Idahoans across sectors to come together, strengthen our commitments, and move forward together, taking meaningful action that will shape the future of Idaho's youngest learners.

# Strategic Plan

2025-2030



## Strategies Icon Legend



Indicates newly developed strategies for the 2025 update based on inputs.



Indicates strategies that evolved from the 2021 Strategic Plan and are now in a new implementation phase.





## Goal 1

# Increase access to learning and development.

### Objective 1.1

Expand supports to increase high quality and developmentally responsive early care and education in formal and informal settings.

- ★ **1.1.1 EARLY LEARNING eGUIDELINES.** Increase awareness and use of the Idaho Early Learning eGuidelines for parents, caregivers, and the early childhood workforce. Explore funding to develop online materials, including an Early Learning eGuidelines app, videos, and additional resources to complement current use of the eGuidelines.
- ★ **1.1.2 UNIVERSAL DESIGN.** Increase the ability of early care and education professionals and programs to care for and educate all children by providing coaching, training, and materials designed for all children. Ensure all children, including those with IEP/IFSP services or identified as needing individualized support, can fully participate alongside their peers in learning and social activities and meet high expectations, facilitated by individualized accommodations and differentiated interventions and instruction.
- 🔄 **1.1.3 MATH NETWORK.** Continue to develop and implement a state Birth through Five Math Framework based on research and the work of the Erikson Institute to include strategies for early childhood educators and families to support early math. Develop and implement similar frameworks across other subject areas.
- 🔄 **1.1.4 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.** Promote and support access to and utilization of professional development for the early childhood workforce by providing instructional/coaching cohorts, early learning institutes, Professional Development Badges, and additional opportunities through multiple efforts and partners. Inventory and build from current professional development opportunities (i.e., RISE, AIM Early ID, Pyramid) and share best practices.
- ★ **1.1.5 SUPPORT SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.** Increase emphasis on social development and wellness supports offered to families and the early childhood workforce provided through resources and training to assist children in classrooms, centers, and homes.

### Success Indicator Examples

- ▶ Increase in early childhood workforce knowledge of programs, services, and resources serving children and families across sectors in their community.
- ▶ Increase in number of providers participating in the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).
- ▶ Increase in number of early childhood workforce who participate in coaching or mentoring.
- ▶ Increase in number and percentage of providers that are rated as high quality.
- ▶ Increase in social development supports provided in early care and education settings.

## Objective 1.2

Increase availability of and access to affordable, high quality early care and education opportunities that meet child and family needs in a mixed delivery system.

-  **1.2.1 BUSINESS PRACTICES.** Provide business training, individualized coaching, peer mentoring, and consultation to strengthen providers' knowledge of sound fiscal management and business operations. Resources should be focused on best practices in business operations (e.g., human resources, computer, child care management software, customer relationship management support). Leverage existing training and coaching conducted by higher education and other training service organizations to deliver the technical assistance and support to directors and administrators in child care centers and family child care homes.
-  **1.2.2 CHILD CARE BUSINESS SUPPORTS.** Maintain, update, and promote business guides in multiple languages to new and existing early childhood directors and administrators, especially in family child care homes, to support connections to resources and the adoption of best practices, including public-private partnerships, the blending and braiding of funding streams, budgeting, regulatory compliance, and other operational functions of a small business.
-  **1.2.3 FUNDING MODELS.** Conduct a review of child care funding models that would include how other state and local governments subsidize care, including but not limited to grants to local communities or early childhood programs, public/private partnerships, and compensation strategies, and the impact on access, capacity, and quality of care. Facilitate a group of partners to utilize the review findings to develop a plan of action for expanding access to subsidized care in Idaho.
-  **1.2.4 NEW AND EXPANDING EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION GRANTS.** Provide early care and education grants to support start-up cost for equipment and materials, targeting providers serving infants, toddlers, or children with special health or developmental needs. Evaluate grants to understand capital, start-up, and expansion needs of early care and education programs.

### Success Indicator Examples

- ▶ Increase in number of business leaders and business support organizations engaged in supporting and investing in early care and education.
- ▶ Increase in number and percentage of children served in high quality early care and education settings that meet their and their families' needs.
- ▶ Decrease in number of providers closing their programs/businesses.
- ▶ Increase in number of early care and education providers and their capacity for serving infants and toddlers, serving priority populations, and offering care during non-traditional hours.
- ▶ Increase in reported collaboration among providers within and across sectors.



### Objective 1.3

Promote early childhood mental health.

- 🔄 **1.3.1 EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICES.** Monitor and support implementation of AIM Early statewide efforts to increase the number of providers with Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) endorsements qualified to deliver services throughout Idaho for infant and toddler mental health. Align and coordinate AIM Early with other IECMH field and key partners to facilitate statewide implementation of IECMH services that responsively meet the needs of children, families, and providers.
- ★ **1.3.2 EARLY CHILDHOOD TELECONSULTATION.** Invest in awareness and promotion of innovative service delivery options, including IECMH teleconsultation, to serve families and early childhood education providers in all communities. Leverage continuous quality improvement, change management, and data-driven decision-making practices to refine services; offer responsive training; and increase statewide access to needed services.
- ★ **1.3.3 MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.** Increase access to mental health services for young children and their families, including counseling and therapy options. Increase the number of local, qualified providers who can provide behavioral health services for children and who accept Medicaid.
- ★ **1.3.4 SUPPORTIVE CARE TRAINING.** Promote increased knowledge and application of supportive care practices across Idaho by offering a variety of curricula and training to the early childhood workforce and families.

#### Success Indicator Examples

- ▶ Decrease in suspensions and expulsions from early care and education programs.
- ▶ Increase in number of IECMH providers and teleconsultation.



## Goal 2

# Increase family support and engagement.

### Objective 2.1

Increase access to early intervention services for children with developmental delays and disabilities.

- ★ **2.1.1 DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS.** Increase the availability of developmental screenings, referrals, and ongoing monitoring processes in appropriate settings where children are served. Explore family education and other communication opportunities to ensure continuity of services for all children and families in all Idaho communities.
- ★ **2.1.2 EARLY INTERVENTION ACCESS.** Increase access to and knowledge of early intervention services.

#### Success Indicator Examples

- ▶ Families report feeling supported in caring for children with developmental delays or disabilities.
- ▶ Increase in number and percentage of children with disabilities or developmental delays receiving Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services in community-based settings and settings of parents' choice.
- ▶ Increase in number of screenings and monitoring families and children receive.
- ▶ Increase in number of community partners providing screening and monitoring services.
- ▶ Increase in percentage of children aged 3–5 enrolled in ECSE to maximize early participation of children with developmental delays and disabilities.
- ▶ Decrease in wait time for Early Intervention services.

### Objective 2.2

Increase family awareness and connections to needed resources and programs using practices tailored to family and community needs.

- ★ **2.2.1 COMMUNITY RESOURCE NAVIGATION.** Expand community resource navigation, engaging staff involved with Early Learning Collaboratives, IdahoSTARS Child Care Resource Centers, libraries, community schools, Family Resources Centers, and other community partners. Resource navigation should be available to families beginning in pregnancy for in-person and online resources that meet their needs and preferences.

- 🔄 **2.2.2 FAMILY RESOURCE EVENTS.** Provide support and resources for all communities statewide as they promote ongoing early childhood events, partnerships, and celebrations. Ensure resources actively empower parents, children, and other family members together.
- ★ **2.2.3 NO-WRONG-DOOR APPROACH.** Implement “no-wrong-door strategies” to ensure families can access information quickly that is in their preferred language and relevant to their priorities and values in order to make timely connections. Ensure families receive support regardless of their initial entry point or position in the early childhood system, including family child care homes, libraries, pediatricians, and family support programs like WIC.
- ★ **2.2.4 “WARM HAND-OFFS” AND REFERRALS.** Increase the capacity of early childhood professionals to effectively refer families to needed resources (or to resource navigators). Support “warm hand-offs,” meaning more personal and direct connections with referrals, to increase comfort, build trust, reduce barriers, and facilitate access and enrollment for all families. Strengthen and support partnerships and systematic coordination across organizations to improve families’ and children’s transitions across programs and settings.
- ★ **2.2.5 UNIVERSAL EARLY OUTREACH AND PARENT AWARENESS.** Create mechanisms that will provide all new parents at birth, and adoptive or foster families, with systematic opportunities to discuss their concerns and learn about the parent and child support resources available.

### Success Indicator Examples

- ▶ Increase in number of families participating in family support and education programs and services.
- ▶ Increase in percentage of eligible families enrolled in family support and education programs and services.
- ▶ Increase in referrals of families to community resources.
- ▶ Increase in family awareness, understanding, and use of QRIS to find early care and education programs that meet their expectations for quality.
- ▶ Increase in number of families who report higher rates of family well-being.
- ▶ Increase in number and percentage of families with awareness of the community resources available.
- ▶ Increase in number of families enrolled in programs or services that provide support.
- ▶ Increase in positive child development outcomes (meeting child development expectations for their age across learning domains, and expected growth).



## Objective 2.3

Maximize family knowledge and support through programs and resources tailored to meet their unique needs.

-  **2.3.1 FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP.** Empower and engage families in meaningful leadership and advocacy roles. Increase the engagement and influence of families in decision making about early childhood programs and systems with structures and supports for shared decision making. Ensure engagement opportunities actively empower parents, children, and other family members together. Provide individualized and responsive navigation support to reach all families.
-  **2.3.2 FAMILY RESOURCES.** Expand access to existing resources and materials (e.g., Early Learning and Development eGuidelines, READY! for Kindergarten) for all communities to support child learning, health, and development. To fill content gaps, develop new resources that are research-based and engage parents as their child's first teacher. Ensure resources actively empower parents, children, and other family members together.
-  **2.3.3 KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION RESOURCES.** Develop materials and resources for families and the early childhood workforce to support children's transitions to kindergarten that are aligned with READY! for Kindergarten trainings and best practices. Provide in-person and online READY! workshops in communities throughout the state. Collect and use feedback from families to inform ongoing improvements to resources. Ensure resources actively empower parents, children, and other family members together.
-  **2.3.4 STRENGTHENING FAMILIES FRAMEWORK.** Expand the implementation of the Strengthening Families Protective Factor Framework™ and Building Blocks of Hope™ to promote family resilience and positive child development. Collaborate with organizations and networks, such as Idaho's Early Learning Collaborative Network, to reach all communities in Idaho.

### Success Indicator Examples

- ▶ Increase in family knowledge of entitlements, services, and supports for children with developmental delays or disabilities and their families.
- ▶ Increase in number of families and providers in leadership and advocacy roles.
- ▶ Increase in percentage of families and providers in leadership and advocacy roles.
- ▶ Families report positive child development outcomes.
- ▶ Increase in number of families engaged to learn about the entitlements, services, and supports for children with disabilities and developmental delays and to share their experiences and needs for support.
- ▶ Families report positive parenting practices.
- ▶ Families and providers report positive experiences in the engagement and shared decision-making opportunities.
- ▶ Increase in number of families participating in home visiting programs.



## Goal 3

# Support the early childhood workforce.

### Objective 3.1

Promote recruitment and career pathways for the early childhood workforce.

- ★ **3.1.1 APPRENTICESHIP.** Expand access to apprenticeship opportunities for early childhood professionals, including providing concurrent enrollment through apprenticeships for groups such as family, friend, and neighbor providers; retirees; and high school students.
- ★ **3.1.2 CAREER PATHWAYS.** Streamline career pathways and support training and coursework that would be valuable across roles in a career pathway. Identify and develop innovative entry pathways (such as expanding CTE programs) and provide scholarships and apprenticeship opportunities for high school students and others.
- 🔄 **3.1.3 CDA CREDENTIAL.** Provide Child Development Associate (CDA) scholarships to early childhood professionals, targeting geographic areas with known workforce shortages. Explore innovative ways to support the CDA credential as a workforce pathway, such as developing CTE programs.
- ★ **3.1.4 EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES.** Develop Idaho Early Childhood Educator and Director/Administrator Competencies grounded in research and best practices. Ensure trainings for professionals are aligned with competencies and available in multiple languages. Partner with higher education and training service providers to align course outcomes that reflect the competencies.
- 🔄 **3.1.5 EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE SCHOLARSHIPS.** Provide scholarships to the early childhood workforce taking coursework or training through institutions of higher education, career and technical centers, or other training service providers, targeting professionals in geographic areas with known workforce shortages.

### Success Indicator Examples

- ▶ Increase in number of professionals with certifications, credentials, or degrees.
- ▶ Increase in number of professionals serving in leadership roles.
- ▶ Increase in recruitment of new early childhood professionals.
- ▶ Increase in number of professionals who participate in apprenticeships or other models for paid on-the-job training.
- ▶ Increase in number of the workforce aligning with the populations served.
- ▶ Increase in number of professionals who are paid for time in professional development.
- ▶ Increase in number of professionals using scholarships to advance their qualifications.



## Objective 3.2

Increase early care and education workforce compensation with sustainable financing to promote recruitment and retention.

- ★ **3.2.1 EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE COMPENSATION.** Create a compensation task force to consult compensation studies, such as the workforce compensation study conducted as part of the statewide needs assessment, to explore strategies that ensure worthy and livable compensation for early care and education professionals in Idaho. Work to enhance compensation, including benefits, and create compensation parity across settings, sectors, and age of children served. The task force should develop recommendations to increase wages in Idaho aligned with qualifications to support recruitment and retention.

### Success Indicator Examples

- ▶ Increase in number of early childhood professionals with living wages.
- ▶ Increase in compensation across roles.
- ▶ Increase in compensation parity across types of programs.
- ▶ Increase in number of early childhood professionals with a range of benefits, including paid time off, health insurance, retirement savings, flexible hours, and others.

## Objective 3.3

Increase retention and wellness of the early childhood workforce.

- ★ **3.3.1 ALTERNATIVE BENEFITS.** Explore and implement innovative methods to support and retain the early childhood workforce, such as mental health and physical wellness strategies, affordable housing benefits, subsidized child care, loan forgiveness, tuition reimbursement, mileage reimbursement, shared service benefits, etc., in addition to providing traditional benefits like health insurance, retirement plans, and paid time off.
- ★ **3.3.2 COACHING/MENTORING.** Implement supports for early childhood coaches, such as data-informed training and reflective practice through IdahoSTARS, and collect data on the effectiveness of their support. Ensure that coaches are well-qualified and equipped to address the needs of all individuals in the early childhood workforce. Increase opportunities for peer mentoring and explore additional coaching opportunities to increase retention of the early childhood workforce.

### Success Indicator Examples

- ▶ Increase in early childhood workforce retention rates.
- ▶ Decrease in workforce turnover rate within programs.
- ▶ Decrease in number of early childhood professionals leaving the field.
- ▶ Increase in number of providers reporting adequate operational funds.
- ▶ Increase in number of programs reporting they are fully staffed.
- ▶ Decrease in number of programs reporting staff shortages.
- ▶ Decrease in number of professionals reporting high levels of stress or mental health challenges.
- ▶ Increase in number of professionals reporting positive working conditions and job satisfaction.
- ▶ Increase in number of professionals reporting wellness.





## Goal 4

# Promote collaboration and data use.

### Objective 4.1

Increase the alignment and coordination of services.

- ★ **4.1.1 COORDINATED COMMUNITY PLANNING.** Support local collaboration among Early Learning Collaboratives and community partners to create one cohesive early childhood plan for their individual communities to help all children and families thrive (rather than multiple community plans across sectors), reduce redundant planning, and increase the efficient use of resources.
- 🔄 **4.1.2 LOCAL ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY.** Partner with Early Learning Collaboratives, Family Resource Centers, Community Schools, libraries, and leadership organizations to identify, prioritize, and implement strategies to strengthen local collaboration and increase the capacity of local organizations to provide services to children and families. Continue implementation of Pillars of Strength Self-Assessment and Strategic Plan cycles to identify service gaps and implement comprehensive early childhood services in alignment with community plans developed by local coordinating organizations.
- ★ **4.1.3 STATE ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT.** Expand ongoing coordination and collaboration across state agencies, including the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Idaho Department of Education, and Idaho Governor’s Office, to improve child and family outcomes. Identify and address system and administrative barriers within and across the agencies.
- ★ **4.1.4 TRIBAL COMMUNITY of PRACTICE.** Establish a Community of Practice (CoP) for early childhood initiatives that engages members of the five federally recognized tribes in Idaho to ensure that programs, services, and resources meet the needs of children, families, and early childhood workforce in these communities. The CoP may explore Indigenous language revitalization, development of an Indigenous language database, and fostering an Indigenous language teacher pipeline.

#### Success Indicator Examples

- ▶ Increase in coordinated advocacy coalitions and activities.
- ▶ Increase in coordinated funding applications by multiple partners in a community.
- ▶ Increase in number of coordinated community plans.
- ▶ Increase in positive child development outcomes (meeting child development expectations for their age across learning domains, and expected growth).

## Objective 4.2

Strengthen data infrastructure, data collection, and data use practices for system improvement.

- ★ **4.2.1 COORDINATED COMMUNITY DATA USE.** Support Early Learning Collaboratives and community partners to identify and implement aligned approaches to data collection, sharing, and use, including but not limited to school district data and data related to social drivers of health.
- ★ **4.2.2 EARLY CHILDHOOD DATA SYSTEM.** Develop an early childhood integrated data system to support state- and community-level information on the early childhood system and aid data-driven decision making. Develop consistent and replicable processes for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating summary information to partners at state and local levels. Disaggregate data by key subpopulations (i.e., rural and urban) to ensure data practices benefit all.

### Success Indicator Examples

- ▶ Increase in number of state legislators formally introduced to early care and education data indicators.
- ▶ Increase in use of data to inform decision making at the state and local levels.
- ▶ Data on key indicators is routinely shared within and across programs at the state and local levels.
- ▶ Data is consistently disaggregated by subgroups to increase understanding of need.



## Appendix: Strategic Plan Terms

The Strategic Plan uses the following definitions:

**Apprenticeship:** *An arrangement between an employee and employer that allows the worker to gain direct experience with working with children through supervised on-the-job learning in conjunction with the completion of required coursework and/or training. At the end of the apprenticeship, the employee may earn a recognized credential or certificate.*

Adapted from: Child Care Aware of America & National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2023). *Early care and education professional development: Training and technical assistance glossary.* [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/new\\_glossary.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/new_glossary.pdf)

**Child Development Associate (CDA):** *A widely recognized early entry credential in early childhood education administered by the Council for Professional Development. The CDA Credential guides early child care professionals as they work toward becoming qualified teachers of young children. The CDA may be earned as part of a ECE professional preparation program at the secondary or postsecondary level or without professional preparation.*

Adapted from: Child Care Aware of America & National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2023). *Early care and education professional development: Training and technical assistance glossary.* [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/new\\_glossary.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/new_glossary.pdf)

**Coaching:** *A relationship-driven strategy designed to enhance professional development for child care providers through a cyclical process of learning and improvement. Coaching can take on many frameworks; organizations like IdahoSTARS use practice-based coaching that focuses on utilizing strengths and implementing effective teaching practices that promote healthy child development and learning. Practice-based coaching helps child care providers achieve professional goals, improve teaching quality, enhance child outcomes, and develop a network of supportive relationships, all while practicing self-reflection and solution-focused thinking.*

*The coaching process involves three core steps:*

- *Joint Planning: Setting shared goals and creating actionable plans.*
- *Focused Observations: Observing practices to identify strengths and areas for growth.*
- *Reflection and Feedback: Engaging in reflective discussions to celebrate successes and identify strategies for improvement.*

Adapted from: Idaho Center on Disabilities and Human Development. (2025). *IdahoSTARS Coaching: Tailored support for child care providers.* <https://idahocdh.org/news/cdhd-idahostars-coaching>

**Community resource navigation:** *People or other supports provided by community organizations to help families access and understand the benefits and resources available in their community.*

**Community Schools:** *Neighborhood public schools where parents, educators, and community partners work together to expand the support available to families and create meaningful learning experiences for students.*

Adapted from: Idaho Coalition for Community Schools. (2024). *ICCS home.* Retrieved February 20, 2025, from <https://idahocoalitionforcommunityschools.org/>

**Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) availability:** Determined by whether the number of spaces for children in high quality child care programs meets the needs of the community. Programs include center-based care, licensed family child care, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, state pre-K programs, school-based ECCE programs, and other licensed-exempt programs as identified by the state. Calculations of availability do not include unpaid, unregulated care provided by relatives, babysitters, nannies, etc.

Adapted from: Friese, S., Lin, V., Forry, N., & Tout, K. (2017). *Defining and measuring access to high quality early care and education: A guidebook for policymakers and researchers*. OPRE Report #2017-08. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/cceepa\\_access\\_guidebook\\_final\\_213\\_b508.pdf](https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/cceepa_access_guidebook_final_213_b508.pdf)

**Early childhood programs and systems:** *A broad range of formal and informal services, programs, and supports for expecting parents, young children and their families and caregivers, and the professionals who serve them.*

**Early childhood workforce:** *Includes those working with young children (infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children) in centers, homes and schools, and their families or on their behalf (in agencies, organizations, institutions of higher education, etc.), with a primary mission of supporting children’s development and learning.*

Adapted from: Child Care Aware of America & National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2023). *Early care and education professional development: Training and technical assistance glossary*. [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/new\\_glossary.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/new_glossary.pdf)

**Early Childhood Educator and Director/Administrator Competencies:** *Competency: The skill or knowledge needed to perform an activity.*

Adapted from: Colorado Department of Early Childhood. (2021). *Colorado’s Competencies for Early Childhood Center Directors and Related Administrators*. [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xo1uDg9bWzKHUE6W5o0KHAWF7QS\\_5PTI/edit#heading=h.k47oxba4n1r3](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xo1uDg9bWzKHUE6W5o0KHAWF7QS_5PTI/edit#heading=h.k47oxba4n1r3)

**Competencies:** *The knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to support high-quality practice across all early childhood education sectors, settings, and roles.*

Adapted from: National Association for the Education of Young Children. (n.d.). *NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) position statement Appendix B: Glossary*. Retrieved February 20, 2025, from <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/dap/glossary>

**Early intervention:** *A term used to describe the services and supports that are available to babies and young children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families.*

Adapted from: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. (n.d.). *Early intervention*. Retrieved February 20, 2025, from <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/parents/states.html#:~:text=Is%20the%20term%20used%20to,of%20the%20child%20and%20family>

**Early Learning Collaboratives:** *Groups that bring together essential stakeholders—such as city and school leaders, parents, teachers, and local businesses—who want to see high-quality learning opportunities for families in their community. The goal is to build partnerships among existing local experts in early childhood education to offer affordable, comprehensive early learning opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to many families.*

Adapted from: Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children. (2025). *Early learning collaboratives*. Retrieved February 20, 2025, from <https://www.idahoaeYC.org/elc>

**Early Learning and Development eGuidelines:** *Guidelines that:*

- *Provide a web-based foundational document about child development.*
- *Help adults understand, teach, and nurture children birth to age five.*
- *Cover all areas of development with research-based information.*
- *Supplement Idaho’s K–3 Standards in Social and Emotional Development and Approaches to Learning & Cognition up through 3rd Grade.*

Adapted from: Idaho Department of Early Childhood. (2013). *Early Learning eGuidelines*. [https://idahotc.com/Portals/13/Docs/8\\_25\\_14/e%20guide/Idaho%20Core%20Standard%20eGuidelines.pdf](https://idahotc.com/Portals/13/Docs/8_25_14/e%20guide/Idaho%20Core%20Standard%20eGuidelines.pdf)

**Family Child Care (FCC):** *When providers care for small groups of children in a residential building, such as a house, apartment, or condo unit. Other names for FCC include certified child care homes; family, friend, and neighbor care; legally exempt or license-exempt homes; licensed child care homes; licensed group family child care homes; and registered child care homes.*

Adapted from: Office of Child Care. (n.d.). *Family child care homes*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. Retrieved February 20, 2025, from <https://childcare.gov/consumer-education/family-child-care-homes>

**Family Resource Centers (FRCs):** *Community-based family support and strengthening programs. They are place-based and serve as welcoming hubs of community services and opportunities designed to strengthen families.*

Adapted from: Martin, T. (2023, August 31). *Request for proposal- FRC*. Idaho Children’s Trust Fund. <https://idahochildrenstrustfund.org/news/request-for-proposal-frc/>

**Federally recognized tribes in Idaho:** *Includes five federally recognized tribes:*

- *Coeur d’ Alene Tribe*
- *Kootenai Tribe of Idaho*
- *Nez Perce Tribe*
- *Shoshone-Bannock Tribes*
- *Shoshone-Paiute Tribes*

*Before statehood, the land base now called Idaho, was home to many tribes. Upon statehood and the establishment of reservations, the land the tribes called home became Idaho. The five federally recognized tribes in Idaho retain their respective ancestral homelands, provide economic impact for the state, employment opportunities for tribal and non-tribal people, and many other impacts for the benefit of the state. In addition to the five tribes, two additional federally recognized tribes demonstrated evidence that they were original occupants of Idaho before statehood and are officially documented as tribes of Idaho for in-state tuition education purposes only; the Eastern Shoshone (Wyoming) and the Northwest Band of Shoshone (Utah).*

Adapted from: Jones, J. (2024). *Tribal forum final report: Idaho School Readiness Project strategic plan*. Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children.

**IdahoSTARS:** *The leading expert, resource, and referral source for quality child care in Idaho. IdahoSTARS empowers parents, families, and early childhood professionals to make safe, healthy, nurturing, and educational child care a top priority. IdahoSTARS provides child care professionals development and training opportunities to improve their early care and education services. Since 2003, IdahoSTARS has managed the child care provider eligibility component of the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP); provided a fully coordinated statewide Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) network; implemented a statewide Professional Development System (PDS) for child care providers; developed and directed Steps to Quality (STQ), a statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS); and has partnered with several Idaho agencies and organizations to coordinate ECCE throughout the state.*

Adapted from: Whitney, G., Callahan, C., & Himes, K. (2021). *Early childhood care and education in Idaho: Idaho preschool development grant birth-age 5 needs assessment 2020*. ISSUU. [https://issuu.com/uidaho/docs/early\\_childhood\\_care\\_and\\_education\\_in\\_idaho\\_2020](https://issuu.com/uidaho/docs/early_childhood_care_and_education_in_idaho_2020)

**Infant Toddler Program:** *Coordinates a system of early intervention services to assist Idaho children from ages birth–3 who have a developmental delay or who have conditions (such as prematurity, Down Syndrome, hearing loss) that may result in a developmental delay.*

Adapted from: Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. (2024, August 29). *Infant toddler program*. <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/services-programs/children-families/about-infant-toddler-program>

**Mentoring:** *A relationship-based process between colleagues in similar professional roles, with a more experienced individual with adult learning knowledge and skills. The mentor provides guidance and examples to the less-experienced protégé or mentee. Mentoring is intended to increase an individual’s personal or professional capacity, resulting in greater professional effectiveness.*

Adapted from: Child Care Aware of America & National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2023). *Early care and education professional development: Training and technical assistance glossary*. [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/new\\_glossary.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/new_glossary.pdf)

**Mixed Delivery System:** *A system of early childhood care and education services that are delivered through a combination of programs, providers, and settings, such as Head Start, licensed family and center-based child care programs, public schools, and other community-based organizations supported by a combination of public and private funds.*

Adapted from: Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children. (2020). *Idaho PDG local collaborative guidebook*. Advocacy and Communication Solutions. <https://www.advocacyandcommunication.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/PDG-Guidebook-Final.pdf>

**Pillars of Strength:** *Principles critical to our community’s children’s and families’ health, growth, and prosperity. These pillars encompass the importance of early childhood education, the role of families as primary caregivers and educators, the economic realities families face, and the long-term benefits of investing in early education.*

Adapted from: Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children. (2023). *Pillars of strength*.

**Professional Development Badge:** IdahoSTARS badges that recognize expertise in early childhood education. Each badge represents a different domain of child development or specialized area of accomplishment. Earn points through certification, training, Targeted Technical Assistance (TTA), employment history, and/or coaching cycles.

Adapted from: Bauder, S. (2022, March 2). *IdahoSTARS ECE badge guide*. Flipsnack. <https://www.flipsnack.com/E987F677C6F/idahostars-ece-badge-guide-tnf63fitk5.html>

**Quality ECCE:** Licensed early learning environments staffed by educated professionals that promote positive relationships; cultivate social, emotional, physical, and cognitive learning and development; empower parents to participate in their child’s education; and create safe and nurturing learning experiences.

Adapted from: Whitney, G., Callahan, C., & Himes, K. (2021). *Early childhood care and education in Idaho: Idaho preschool development grant birth-age 5 needs assessment 2020*. ISSUU. [https://issuu.com/uidaho/docs/early\\_childhood\\_care\\_and\\_education\\_in\\_idaho\\_2020](https://issuu.com/uidaho/docs/early_childhood_care_and_education_in_idaho_2020)

**Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS):** A voluntary, quality improvement program for Idaho’s ECCE providers administered by IdahoSTARS, a joint project between the University of Idaho Center on Disabilities and Human Development and Idaho AEYC. Steps to Quality (STQ) is Idaho’s child care QRIS, which measures the quality of care in center- and home-based ECCE settings.

Adapted from: IdahoSTARS. (n.d.). *Steps to quality*. <https://idahostars.org/Child-Care-Providers/Steps-to-Quality>

**READY! for Kindergarten:** An early learning program, led by Idaho AEYC, that is designed to support parents in their role as being their child’s first and most influential teacher. READY! for Kindergarten offers free workshops that encourage parents and child care providers to engage children through talking, singing, reading, and playing. The workshop curriculum is provided by the Children’s Reading Foundation and is based on current academic research.

Adapted from: Whitney, G., Callahan, C., & Himes, K. (2021). *Early childhood care and education in Idaho: Idaho preschool development grant birth-age 5 needs assessment 2020*. ISSUU. [https://issuu.com/uidaho/docs/early\\_childhood\\_care\\_and\\_education\\_in\\_idaho\\_2020](https://issuu.com/uidaho/docs/early_childhood_care_and_education_in_idaho_2020)

**RISE:** Idaho’s voluntary ECCE provider database.

Adapted from: IdahoSTARS. (n.d.). *RISE online management system*. <https://idahostars.org/Child-Care-Providers/RISE-Online-Management-System>

**Social drivers of health:** The conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. Social drivers of health (SDOH) refers to community-level factors. They are sometimes also called “social determinants of health.”

Adapted from: U.S. Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services. (2024, August 21). *Social drivers of health and health-related social needs*. Retrieved February 20, 2025, from [https://www.cms.gov/priorities/innovation/key-concepts/social-drivers-health-and-health-related-social-needs#:~:text=Social%20drivers%20of%20health%20\(SDOH,of%20life%20outcomes%20and%20risks](https://www.cms.gov/priorities/innovation/key-concepts/social-drivers-health-and-health-related-social-needs#:~:text=Social%20drivers%20of%20health%20(SDOH,of%20life%20outcomes%20and%20risks).

**Strengthening Families:** *A research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs, and communities in building five key Protective Factors:*

- *Parental Resilience*
- *Social Connections*
- *Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development*
- *Concrete Support in Times of Need*
- *Social and Emotional Competence of Children*

*Idaho AEYC provides customized professional development sessions, informal training, and community conversations at no cost to parents, professionals, and family-serving organizations. Strengths-based supports decrease stress in families, leading to better outcomes for children.*

Adapted from: Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children. (n.d.). *Strengthening families*.  
<https://www.idahoaeyc.org/strengthening-families>

**Universal design:** *A concept that can be used to support access to environments in many different types of settings through the removal of physical and structural barriers. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) reflects practices that provide multiple and varied formats for instruction and learning. UDL principles and practices help to ensure that every young child has access to learning environments, to typical home or educational routines and activities, and to the general education curriculum.*

Adapted from: National Association for the Education of Young Children. (n.d.). *NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) position statement Appendix B: Glossary*. Retrieved February 20, 2025, from <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/dap/glossary>

