DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

It is critical that all agencies, policy makers, stakeholders and the public should have a common understanding and shared definitions of several key terms to successfully collaborate on making progress on the key strategies identified as a result of this needs assessment. This section includes definitions of several key terms critical to these efforts. These working definitions were developed in collaboration with the core team and the Nevada Early Childhood Council. All participants agreed that these definitions are not absolute and can change over times based on the needs of the community as well as emerging research in early childhood.

QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

Defining quality early childhood care and education was a complicated process that includes reviews of ideals of quality from national organizations such as BUILD Early Childhood, National and Nevada Association of the Education of Young Children, Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA), and the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children.

Nationally, quality rating and improvement systems were built as a way to quantify quality and provide parents with a method to assess child care and education sites. Build Early Childhood QRIS indicates that the categories of standards that should be evaluated should include licensing compliance, ratios, health and safety, curriculum, physical environment, teacher/director qualifications and professional development, family involvement, administration and management, diversity, inclusion, Early Learning Standards, child assessment, and accreditation (QRIS Learning Network, 2019).

According to the Nevada Silver State Stars Quality Rating and Improvement System, quality early child care and education begin at meeting the criteria for a three-star rating. To obtain a three star rating, a center must have a current child care license, currently registered with the Child Care Subsidy Program, submits completed Silver State Stars QRIS Center Information Worksheet, All Staff are current on The Nevada Registry, 60% of enrolled children have been screened using the Brigance Screen III and entered into the Online Management System, 50% of classrooms meet QRIS group sizes and ratios, Center has a minimum average ERS score of 3.50 with no classroom score under 3.00 and the Director has a minimum placement on the career ladder of 3.1 (Apprenticeship Certificate or 20 early childhood education college credits and 4000 hours direct experience). In addition, centers must meet a minimum of eight (8) Quality Indicators from each of the four categories (1. Policies & Procedures 2. Administration & Staff Development 3. Health & Safety 4. Family & Community Partners) be accredited by NAEYC, NAC and/or NECPA, or be a Head Start Grantee (Nevada Office of Early Learning and Development, 2019).

The criteria for a child care and education site that is under a school district or in a family childcare setting are slightly different but hold many of the same premises. Alterations are mainly due to state regulation requirements of those sites. For instance, the school district sites

do not have to have a child care license so there are alternative safety standards that cover similar criteria. It was intended that the models would accommodate different sites however remain consistent in the nature of the requirements.

While the QRIS models are still under development and being refined in many states it was important to the group that these were not the only criteria considered for quality, however that the definition of quality would still align with the Nevada QRIS. In addition, the QRIS list several quality indicators that a site can meet, but it is not clear if there are differences in quality based on the indicators that exist in the model. Therefore, the following is proposed as an alternative definition of what is needed for quality early child care and education. The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (2019c) created three documents that detail indicators of quality, those at the state level, program level, and the classroom level. While the state level indicators can support quality at the program level, the other two groups of indicators provide a nice overview of what should be considered to have a quality program. These indicators are in alignment with all the other resources mentioned and are suggested for use when considering how to explain quality programs.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

(Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, 2019b)

- INDICATOR 1: Program Inclusion Leadership Team The program participates in, or establishes, an inclusion leadership team comprised of administrators, program staff, family member(s), and community partners who implement action plans that guide, support, and ensure the availability of high-quality inclusive settings and the implementation of evidence-based inclusion practices.
- Indicator 2: Vision The program develops, implements, and widely shares a written vision statement on the inclusion of children with disabilities that embraces and affirms the unique contributions and identities of all children and families.
- Indicator 3: Family Engagement and Partnerships The program ensures families of children with and without disabilities participate in the development and implementation of policies and initiatives related to inclusion.
- Indicator 4: Awareness and Commitment The program intentionally promotes among staff, families, and the community an awareness about and commitment to inclusion.
- Indicator 5: Policies and Procedures The program develops and implements written inclusion policies and procedures that are reflective of the program's vision statement and support the use of evidence-based inclusion practices.
- Indicator 6: Fiscal Resources The program understands the available funding streams and resources, and reallocates, coordinates, and braids funds to design and implement evidence-based inclusion practices.
- Indicator 7: Formal Partnerships The program engages in formal agreements with community partners that detail collaborative strategies, processes, and resources, such as personnel, professional development, and fiscal, as needed to support inclusion.

- Indicator 8: Personnel Policies and Structure The program's policies and structures support the delivery of early intervention, special education, and other specialized services within daily routines and activities enabling program personnel to collaboratively learn and implement evidence-based practices.
- Indicator 9: Collaborative Teaming The program provides adequate planning time and other supports for collaborative teams to work together on an ongoing basis to maximize the learning and development of children with disabilities.
- Indicator 10: Specialized Technical Assistance and Consultative Services The program identifies and accesses specialized technical assistance and consultative services to support the implementation of evidence-based inclusion practices and communicates to the state any additional supports needed.
- Indicator 11: Program Supports for Professional Development The program builds personnel confidence and competence in implementing evidence-based inclusion practices by providing opportunities and supports to engage in meaningful, on-going, evidence-based professional development, and coaching.
- Indicator 12: Curriculum The program effectively implements a developmentally appropriate curriculum which is modified when needed to meet the diverse needs of children with disabilities within the program.
- Indicator 13: Data Collection and Use The program collects and uses data, including ongoing observation and authentic assessment, for decision-making and quality improvement related to the environment, inclusion practices, and child experiences, to ensure full participation and improved outcomes for children with disabilities.

CHILD ENVIRONMENT CHARACTERISTICS

(Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, 2019a)

- Indicator 1: Promotion and Affirmation of Individual Differences - Personnel promote acceptance and appreciation of children's individual differences and varying abilities with a focus on children's strengths and contributions to an enjoyable, engaging and positive learning environment.
- Indicator 2: Family Partnerships - Personnel develop authentic and culturally responsive relationships with families that involve daily communication about children's learning and development and frequent celebrations of the child. Families are provided with multiple and varied opportunities to provide input into their child's learning and supports.
- Indicator 3: Social Emotional Learning and Development - Personnel foster positive and culturally responsive adult-child relationships, establish predictable routines, and intentionally teach a range of social emotional skills. When children engage in challenging behavior, a team-based approach is used to understand what the child is communicating, how to adapt the environment, and what social emotional skills to teach and/or strengthen.
- Indicator 4: Meaningful Interactions with Peers - Personnel use various strategies to promote interactions between children without disabilities and children with disabilities. This includes organizing the environment and teaching specific social skills to children that promote peer

interactions for all children, encourage peer interactions with multiple exchanges, and increase the complexity of peer interactions.

- Indicator 5: Curriculum - Personnel develop or modify and implement teaching plans that optimize the amount of time all children spend engaged in activities (small and large group, play, and other routines (e.g., arrival, snack)) and across all domains of learning. The planned activities consider the specialized equipment, assistive technology (low and high tech), and materials children with disabilities benefit from.
- Indicator 6: Instruction - Personnel present in the early care and education environment use child-led, culturally responsive, embedded, evidence-based and data-driven instruction during naturally occurring routines (e.g., small and large group activities, play, adaptive) to provide all children with sufficient opportunities to learn the skills that the team, including the family, has identified as important in a timely manner. Instructional supports are individualized, effective, considerate of varied learning styles (e.g., visual, auditory, tactile, etc.), and delivered by all staff.
- Indicator 7: Collaborative Teaming - Personnel demonstrate dispositions consistent with positive communication and collaboration (e.g., flexibility, coachability, ethics) with team members including the special educator, occupational therapist, speech and language pathologist, teaching assistant and families to gather and share information, review data, plan, implement and embed instructional supports and adaptations for individual children within the naturally occurring routines of the early care and education environment.
- Indicator 8: Assessment - Personnel use ongoing observation and authentic assessment practices that span all areas of development and are culturally responsive, non-biased, and in children's primary language to understand children's learning and development. Data about individual children's learning are monitored and inform the use of adaptations or additional supports for children.
- Indicator 9: Culturally Responsive and Identity Affirming Practices - Personnel use culturally responsive and identity affirming practices, including: (a) being conscious of the ways in which race, ethnicity, social class, gender, language, immigration and refugee status and disability are constructed and the impact of various intersecting identities (e.g., race and disability or gender and disability) on individual children and their families' experiences, (b) learning about and improving their own awareness of implicit and explicit biases, (c) forming relationships with children and families from various cultures, and (d) providing learning activities that connect to children's experiences, funds of knowledge, and cultural/familial norms.

AVAILABILITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

The definition of availability of care was revised from the NAECY definition of availability to be the following:

> Availability of early childhood education and care means that all counties and settings much provide families with equitable access to affordable and high-quality early childhood education.

Friese, Lin, Forry and Tout (2017) provide another definition of access that is complimentary which states:

> Access to early care and education means that parents, with reasonable effort and affordability, can enroll their child in an arrangement that supports the child's development and meets the parents' needs.

VULNERABLE OR UNDERSERVED CHILDREN

For the purposes of this grant, vulnerable or underserved families are those who
- are at or under 200% of the Federal Poverty Level
- reside in rural areas
- reside in tribal areas or are members of a tribe
- speak a language other than English
- Have a child with a disability
- Have a child under 3 years of age
- Experiencing Homelessness
- Involved with Child Protective Services, or
- Child has 4 or more adverse childhood experiences or environments
  ACES from CDC (2019)
    o emotional abuse
    o physical abuse
    o sexual abuse
    o mother treated violently
    o substance abuse in the household
    o mental illness in the household
    o parental separation or divorce
    o incarcerated household member
    o emotional neglect
    o physical neglect
  ACES from The Health Federation of Philadelphia (2018)
    o experiencing racism,
    o witnessing violence,
    o living in an unsafe neighborhood,
    o living in foster care
    o experiencing bullying

CHILDREN IN RURAL AREAS

Given the lack of resources even in what would be considered urban areas of Nevada, the consensus seems to be that all of Nevada should be considered rural. However, to narrow the areas a bit further, those who are more rural of those who live outside of one of the major cities in Clark or Washoe county (Reno, Sparks, Las Vegas area, North Las Vegas, Henderson, Boulder City). In addition to rural areas, Nevada has many areas that are considered frontier.

Frontier areas are the most remote and sparsely populated places along the rural-urban continuum, with residents far from healthcare, schools, grocery stores, and other necessities. Unfortunately, there also are many definitions of what is considered a frontier area.

The USDA Economic Research Service (USDA-ERS) and the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) developed the Frontier and Remote (FAR) area codes to be used in research and policymaking. The FAR codes use urban-rural data from the 2010 Census data to develop 4 level of frontier based on population density of an area combined with the distance from urban areas where they can access goods and services (USDA-ERS, 2010). The four levels are defined below:

Level 1
- Rural or urban areas of up to 50,000 people
- 60 minutes or more from an urban area of 50,000 or more

Level 2
- Rural or urban areas up to 25,000 people
- 45 minutes or more from an urban area of 25,000-49,999 people
- 60 minutes or more from an urban area of 50,000 or more people

Level 3
- Rural or urban areas up to 10,000 people
- 30 minutes or more from an urban area of 10,000-24,999
- 45 minutes or more from an urban area of 25,000-49,999 people
- 60 minutes or more from an urban area of 50,000 or more people

Level 4
- 15 minutes or more from an urban area of 2,500-9,999 people
- 30 minutes or more from an urban area of 10,000-24,999 people
- 45 minutes or more from an urban area of 25,000-49,999 people
- 60 minutes or more from an urban area of 50,000 or more people

In Nevada, there are 41 areas that are considered level 1 and level 2 frontier, 33 areas that are level 3 frontier, and 28 areas that meet the criteria for level 4 (see table below).

Table 1. Frontier Areas of Nevada

Alamo	Eureka	Paradise Valley
Amargosa Valley	Gabbs	Pioche
Austin	Gerlach	Round Mountain
Baker	Golconda**	Ruby Valley
Battle Mountain***	Goldfield	Schurz
Beatty	Hawthorne***	Silverpeak
Caliente	Hiko	Spring Creek**
Carlin **	Imlay**	Tonopah
Crescent Valley New**	Jackpot	Tuscarora
Deeth**	Lovelock	Wells
Denio	Lund	West Wendover***
Elko**	Luning	Winnemucca**
Ely***	Mountain City	Yerington***
Empire	Orovada	

** only meets criteria for Level 1&2
***only meets criteria for Level 1, 2, and 3.

DESCRIPTION OF THE NEVADA EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM

In the first strategic plan of the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council, Silver State Strong, definitions were created to describe what it would take for children to entering school ready to learn. Three definitions included *Ready Families, Ready Educators, Ready Schools, Ready Communities and Ready System.* It is important to look back at the foundation of what the early childhood community in Nevada described in order to determine how to best move forward. Below are the definitions of each of these components extracted from the Silver State Strong strategic plan (Social Entrepreneurs, 2014).

> **"Ready Families"** have adults who understand they are the most important people in the child's life, understand age appropriate development, and support school readiness. They recognize their role as a child's first and most important teacher, provide steady, supportive care, ensure safe and consistent environments, promote good health, and foster excitement about learning.

> **"Ready Educators"** are skilled teachers who understand age appropriate development, possess the skills to develop appropriate curriculum based on children's development, recognize, reinforce, and extend children's strengths and who are sensitive to cultural values and individual differences, including children with special needs.

> **"Ready Schools"** accept all children and provide a seamless transition to a high quality developmentally appropriate learning environment by engaging families and the whole community. A ready school welcomes all children and their families with opportunities to enhance and build confidence in their skills, knowledge, and abilities. Children in ready schools are supported by ready educators.

> **"Ready Communities"** provide support for families in their role as primary stewards of children's readiness. Ready communities, including businesses, faith- based organizations, early childhood service providers, community groups and local governments, work together to support children's school and long-term success by providing families affordable access to information, services, high- quality child care, and early learning opportunities.

> **"Ready Systems"** describes the availability, quality, and affordability of proven programs that influence child development and school readiness. It also includes the degree to which public and private agencies promote policies and practices, including data collection, that enhance access to needed supports, information, and tools that help all other components (family, educators, schools and children) enable children to be ready for school.

In a recent report put together by the B-3 workgroup, Kauerz and Burnham (2019) provided an overview of the current state structure of the system of early care and education (see Figure 2). An excerpt from their report is provided below along with a graphic that depicts the relationship.

NDE's leadership includes oversight of the NECAC, which will maintain direct lines of communication with the Governor's office via the State Superintendent, who sits on the Governor's Cabinet. Additional leadership for programs and services will be administered by NDE via the repositioning of several. Participating State Agencies to NDE that are currently housed within DHHS, including the Head Start Collaboration and Early Childhood Systems Office and the Office of Early Care and Education, which administers CCDF quality dollars that fund Silver State Stars TQRIS, ELD programs accreditation, the Nevada Pre- K Standards, T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Nevada and the Nevada Registry. The NECAC will provide monitoring and guidance for the reform agenda, reporting directly to the State Superintendent. The NECAC serves at the Governor's pleasure, having been established by Executive Order in 2009. Legislation was passed in 2013 that revised the provisions of the statute defining the NECAC's role and membership, in order to promote better alignment and cross- agency coordination related to Nevada's early childhood system. The NECAC will serve as the cross- system monitor of the plan and will report to the public on the progress of Nevada's reform efforts. The NECAC will also establish a more formalized structure to support coordination with local ECACs and other critical entities (e.g. P- 20W Advisory Council, NevAEYC) with a role in the implementation of the SILVER STATE STRONG. (Kauerz and Burnham, 2019).
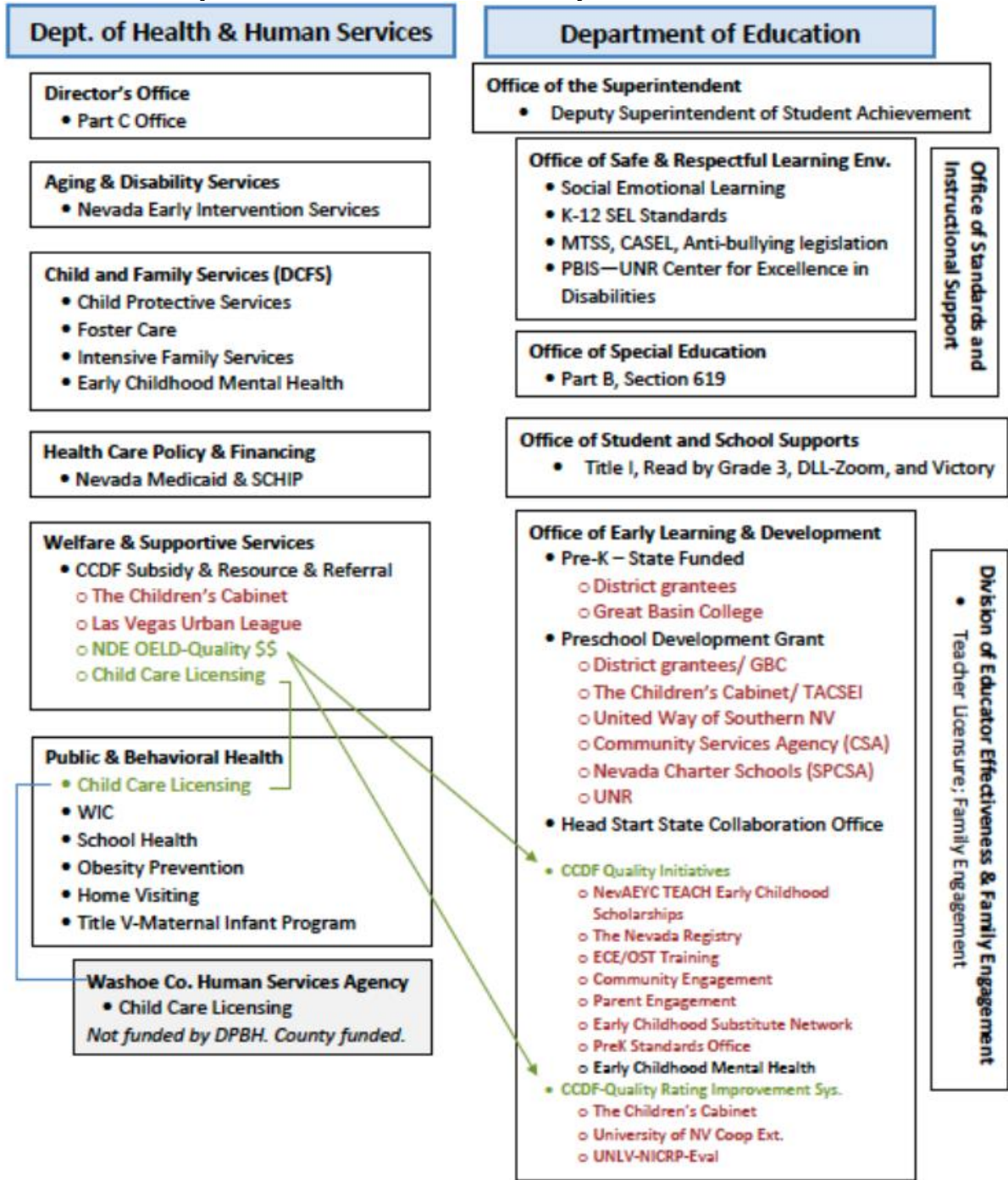
Figure 2. Nevada Early Childhood Education and Care System

Figure from Kauerz, K. & Burnham, M. (2019).