

# EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES STUDY

2017 General Session SB 100  
Preliminary Report  
October 31, 2017



## Executive Summary

A child's experiences in the first five years of life are recognized as a cornerstone for lifelong learning, laying a foundation for school and life success. Brain development begins before birth and is most active in the early years. Negative childhood experiences, such as toxic stress and neglect, affect early brain development and become more difficult and costly to overcome as time progresses. High-quality early childhood services and resources can result in academic and intellectual gains, improving both the cognitive and social development of children. These early investments also benefit state economies and budgets, as the state realizes a greater return on investment for addressing needs early in life, realizing a more productive population and spending less on addressing interventions for adults with long-entrenched issues.

This report is submitted in accordance with Utah Code §35A-3-208, which requires the Department of Workforce Services, Office of Child Care (DWS, OCC) to prepare a study and analysis of services and resources for children ages 0-5 and their families in Utah. The statute requires a preliminary report by October 31, 2017, and final report before January 1, 2018. This preliminary report provides an update on the framework and progress of the report, and includes preliminary data and analysis.

Policymakers and practitioners in Utah are paying increased focus to the state's youngest residents, with good reason. Utah's fertility rate and household size are first in the nation, while its median age is the youngest. These demographics contribute to Utah having the highest number of young children per capita. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 13 percent of Utah children ages 0-5 are living below the federal poverty line. These children will soon enter Utah's school system, and eventually the state's future workforce.

This report establishes a framework for examination of early childhood services and programs in the state that encompasses multiple dimensions of a child's experience. It is important for a young child to have opportunities at home and elsewhere for growth and development, but it is also important for a child to live in a healthy and stable environment. In order to organize and explore the various programs, services, resources and needs of early childhood in Utah, four domains are identified as being equally important to children and families: family support and safety; health and development; early learning; and economic stability. In each domain, lead indicators are identified to establish a baseline from which to identify gaps and measure progress. In addition, the primary programmatic supports are highlighted in each domain. By considering each of these aspects and the interrelated nature of the four domains' contribution to the whole child, policymakers and practitioners can ensure that each Utah child is not just surviving, but thriving.

This preliminary report provides some key data points for policymakers and practitioners to begin identifying focus areas and noticeable gaps. The following are highlights that deserve additional attention:

*Family Support and Safety:* Home visiting programs can mitigate negative outcomes for babies and families; yet national survey data indicates that almost 90 percent of new parents in Utah did not receive a home visit. Additionally, as few as 5 percent of low-income families who could benefit most from voluntary home visiting services in Utah are estimated to have access to these programs.

*Health and Development:* Having access to quality health care is central to child well-being, yet 5 percent of Utah children under age 6 lack health insurance, as compared with 3.8 percent of children nationwide. In addition, only 25 percent of children ages 0-5 in the state receive a developmental screening, as compared with 30 percent of children nationwide. Utah children could benefit from greater access to health insurance coverage and greater access to developmental screenings.

*Early Learning:* Early learning programs in Utah are serving a small portion of the potential need. Early Head Start and Head Start programs are funded to serve roughly 17 percent of the eligible population. State funding programs that enable more students to attend high-quality preschool classrooms are early in their implementation and serve a small number of students; and just 20 percent of Utah students are attending public full-day or extended-day kindergarten.

*Economic Stability:* It is recommended that families need to earn an income equal to or above 200 percent of the federal poverty level in order to meet basic needs such as housing, food and child care. While Utah provides child care subsidies to 11,056 children under age 6, subsidies are only provided to families at 56 percent of the median state income, or roughly 166 percent of the federal poverty level. Increasing subsidy funding to more children could arguably benefit many families.

As a coordinated system, early childhood services and programs in Utah could be described as developing toward a full, robust system. Some programs meet a small demand of the potential need of those who might benefit most, and are early in their development, implementation and data collection. Efforts to coordinate and align early childhood data systems are in the early stages, and the lack of robust data collection makes data-informed decision making more difficult. Programs that are just beginning may take several years to collect data to show trends and outcomes. Utah is presented with a great opportunity of a robust and growing population to build a strong future. This report and the final early childhood services study represent an important step in better understanding and creating an early childhood system that will help Utah's youngest children reach their highest potential.

## Introduction

Early childhood is considered to be the most critical stage in human development. State governments are increasingly charged with ensuring the provision of early childhood care across a spectrum of services. This means providing access to health resources, family support

services, early intervention, child care and education for children after birth and up to 5 years of age. Investing in early childhood development also yields great benefits and cost savings to a state in the long run. The return on investment for states addressing needs in their most disadvantaged populations is higher when the investments are made at the earliest stages of this formative development period.<sup>1</sup>

DWS, OCC is required to prepare a study and analysis of services and resources for children ages 0-5 and their families in Utah, in accordance with Utah Code §35A-3-208. The statute requires DWS, OCC to submit a preliminary report by October 31, and final report before January 1, 2018, to the Economic Development and Workforce Services Interim Committee and the Education Interim Committee. The DWS, OCC contracted with the Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC) at the University of Utah to assist in the preparation of the report. This preliminary report provides an update on the structure and progress of the report, and includes preliminary data and analysis.

### Demographics of Utah's 0-5 Population

Utah enjoys a robust economy and strong population growth. Demographers at the University of Utah project that the state's population will reach 4 million in 2032, and 5 million in 2050, which represents a 67 percent increase from today.<sup>2</sup> Utah often stands out as having the highest or lowest indicators among the states. For example, Utah's fertility rate and household size are first in the nation, while its median age is the youngest. These demographic characteristics also position the state as having the highest number of young children per capita, which has funding and policy implications. While policymakers are well aware of the funding paradox this creates in public education, an emerging policy opportunity and funding priority exists for Utah's youngest children, even before they reach the state's public education system.<sup>3</sup> Table 2 shows single-year age estimates for Utah's age 0-5 population in 2016. Children 5 and under total over 300,000, nearly 10 percent of the state's total population.

Table 1. Selected Demographic Estimates, Utah and U.S.

	Population (July 1, 2015)	Median Age (2014)	Fertility Rate (2014)	Household Size (2014)	Family Size (2014)	% Under 5 Years (2014)
Utah	2,995,919	30.5	2.33	3.16	3.65	8.4%
U.S.	321,418,820	37.7	1.86	2.65	3.26	6.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2. Utah Single Age Population Estimates, Ages 0-5, 2016

	< 1 year old	1 year olds	2 year olds	3 year olds	4 year olds	5 year olds	Ages 0 - 5
<b>State of Utah Total</b>	50,638	50,916	50,694	51,509	50,080	51,612	<b>305,449</b>

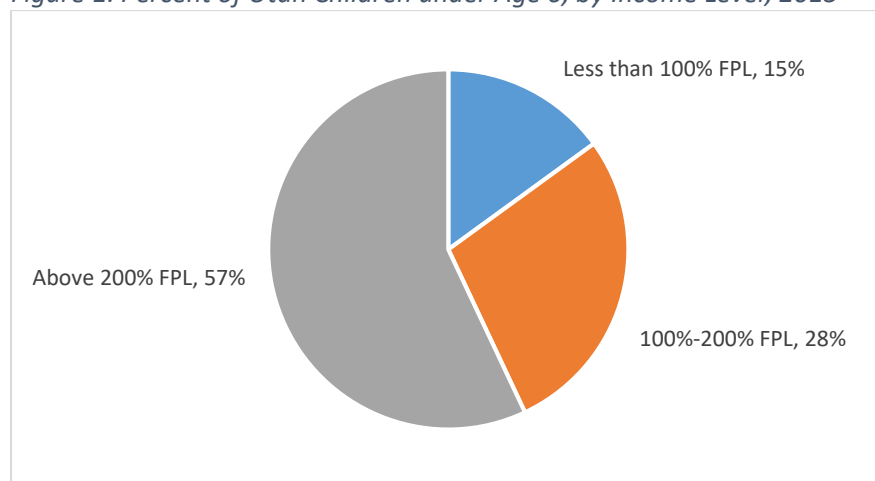
Source: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, University of Utah

## Poverty

Children are overrepresented among the nation's poor. Since the mid-1970s, children under age 18 have experienced higher rates of poverty than other age groups.<sup>4</sup> Living in poverty is known to place children at risk of falling behind in school, having adverse social, emotional, and behavior problems, and contributing to poor health. These risks associated with poverty have also been shown to be most stark for children when they are young, or experience poverty at the deepest levels.<sup>5</sup>

Children living in families experiencing poverty, as defined by the federal poverty level (FPL), are not the only children at risk of adverse childhood outcomes. Children living above the federally-defined poverty threshold but still in low-income households, typically defined as between 100 and 200 percent of the FPL, represent 28 percent of children age 0-5 in Utah. Studies have shown that families typically need incomes above 200 percent FPL to meet their basic needs.<sup>6</sup> This means that 43 percent of children in Utah under the age of 6 live in families that are likely struggling to provide basic needs. This has serious implications for the types of services needed in the state and expected outcomes of children and their families. Families that do not receive the support and services they need are less likely to have the ability to mitigate the challenges associated with economic instability for their children.

*Figure 1. Percent of Utah Children under Age 6, by Income Level, 2015*



Source: National Center for Children in Poverty, Utah Early Childhood Profile

## Intergenerational Poverty

Utah has been analyzing and tracking data on children experiencing intergenerational poverty since 2012. Utah law distinguishes intergenerational poverty (IGP) from situational poverty. IGP is defined as, “poverty in which two or more successive generations of a family continue in the cycle of poverty and government dependence.”<sup>7</sup> In 2016, DWS estimated that there were 59,579 children ages 0-17 living in intergenerational poverty. The youngest children in Utah

have the highest rates of intergenerational poverty. Half of the children in intergenerational poverty in Utah are ages 0-5, with 15 percent under the age of one. This further illustrates the importance of studying the needs of this particularly vulnerable age: data can provide the information needed to deliver adequate resources.

*Table 3. Number of Children experiencing Intergenerational Poverty, Ages 0 – 17, 2016*

Age of Child	Number of Children	Percent of Total	Age of Child	Number of Children	Percent of Total
<b>0</b>	<b>8,730</b>	<b>14.7%</b>	9	3,059	5.1%
<b>1</b>	<b>4,522</b>	<b>7.6%</b>	10	2,630	4.4%
<b>2</b>	<b>4,435</b>	<b>7.4%</b>	11	2,404	4.0%
<b>3</b>	<b>4,314</b>	<b>7.2%</b>	12	2,208	3.7%
<b>4</b>	<b>4,167</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	13	1,930	3.2%
<b>5</b>	<b>4,129</b>	<b>6.9%</b>	14	1,685	2.8%
<b>6</b>	3,898	6.5%	15	1,573	2.6%
<b>7</b>	3,795	6.4%	16	1,418	2.4%
<b>8</b>	3,483	5.8%	17	1,199	2.0%
			<b>Total</b>	<b>59,579</b>	

Source: Department of Workforce Services

### Minority Population

The majority of Utah's young children are white, with Latino(a) young children comprising the largest minority group. While Latinos(as) comprise the largest minority group, Asian Americans are the fastest growing group, at rates of 6 percent in 2015 and 2016.<sup>8</sup>

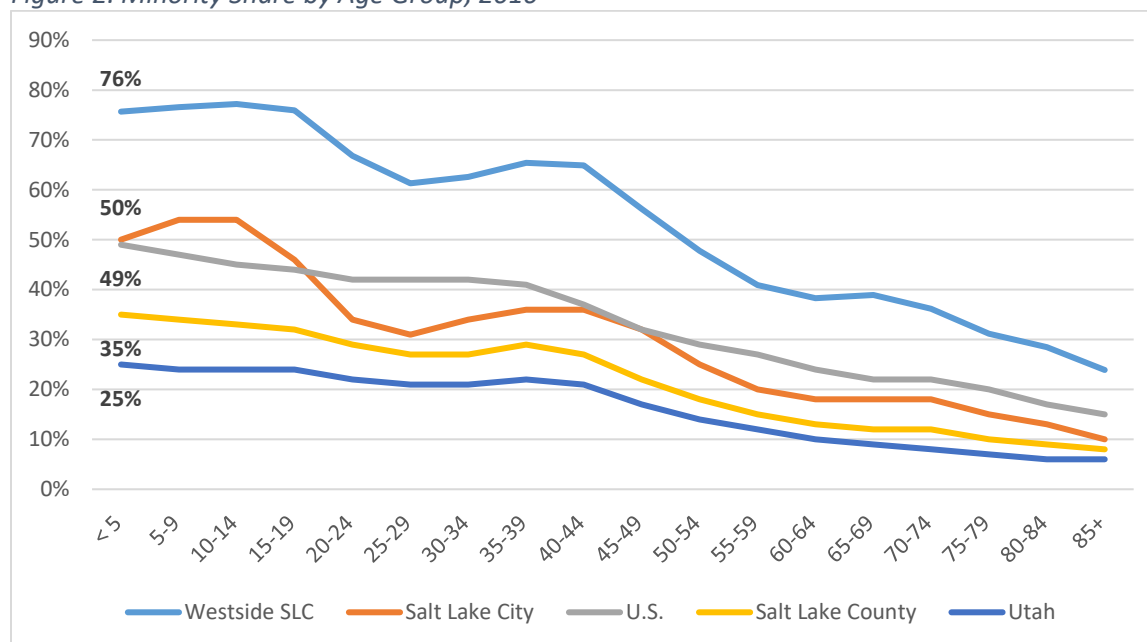
*Table 4. Racial Makeup of Utah Children, Under 5 Years Old, 2016*

Race	Percent of Children
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1%
Asian	2%
Black	1%
Latino(a), can be any race	18%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%
Two or More Race Groups	4%
White	73%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, reported in KIDS COUNT

The racial makeup of Utah and the U.S. is more diverse among its youngest children. Consequently, it is projected that by 2050, 30 percent of Utah's overall population will be comprised of individuals from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds<sup>9</sup>, and 62 percent of individuals under 18 will be from minority backgrounds. Although most at-risk children in Utah are white because most children in Utah are white, a larger percentage of children from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds experience poverty, poor health, and developmental delays.<sup>10,11</sup> Understanding Utah's changing demographics is an important step in proactively meeting the needs of the state's increasingly diverse population.

Figure 2. Minority Share by Age Group, 2010



Source: 2010 Census, as compiled and reported by Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

(<http://gardner.utah.edu/salt-lake-county-needs-assessment-data/>)

The Utah population has a relatively high number of babies, toddlers, and young children. By understanding and studying this population, state leaders, policy-makers and programs can better tailor services and resources to ensure a bright future for these youngest residents, and enjoy continued state prosperity.

## A System of Early Childhood

Early childhood systems are comprised of policies, programs and services that create an infrastructure of support for families with young children from birth to age five. States build comprehensive early childhood systems through an approach that includes governance, funding, technical assistance, staffing and staff training, and developing appropriate performance measures to support state and local infrastructure.<sup>12</sup>

### Utah's Early Childhood System

Early learning opportunities and early childhood services in Utah are administered by several state and local government agencies, private nonprofit entities, and community organizations, but state policies and programs often recognize a child's parents as the first and most influential teacher. Utah's early childhood landscape includes many stakeholders, and is resourced through various funding sources. Appendix C details some key components of Utah's early childhood system, including standards, governance, data systems, funding and workforce of Utah's early childhood system. The final report will explore these in additional detail.



## A Framework for Early Childhood in Utah

This report establishes a framework for examination of early childhood services and programs in the state that encompasses multiple dimensions of a child's experience. In order to organize and explore the various programs, services, resources and needs of early childhood in Utah, four domains were identified:

- Family Support and Safety
- Health and Development
- Early Learning
- Economic Stability

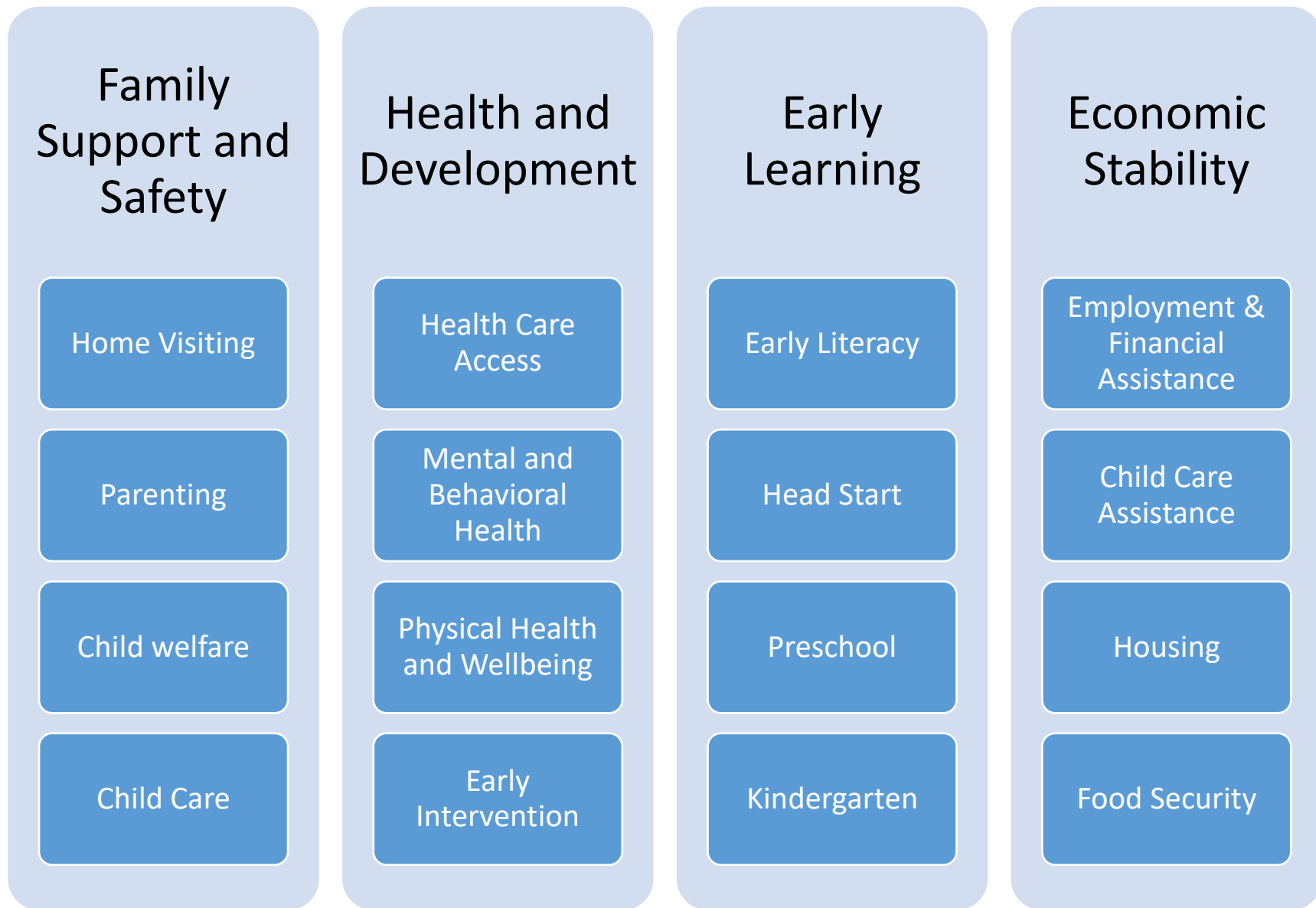
Within each of these domains there are programs, services and resources that can be categorized into key components or subcategories. It is important for a young child to have opportunities at home and elsewhere for growth and development, but also important for a child to live in a healthy and stable environment. By considering each of these domains and how each contributes to the whole child, policymakers and practitioners ensure that each Utah child is not just surviving, but thriving.

This study examines existing state and federal programmatic elements and corresponding data in these four domains. In order to gain a more comprehensive perspective on how early childhood development is influenced by many factors, policymakers desire to understand how family support and safety, health and development, early learning and economic stability align and coordinate together. As explored in this study, and in alignment with the framework that the Intergenerational Poverty Initiative uses, it is clear that the futures of low-income children may be especially precarious, given that the situations they are born into have already put them behind children with more economic security. For example, there is a positive correlation between a mother's education and income level and the likelihood that a baby will be born at low birth weight.<sup>13</sup> That is, the rate of low birth weight is higher among mothers from the lowest socioeconomic stats. In addition, babies who have low birth weight are at risk for poorer health outcomes from the day they are born, and these poor health outcomes may translate to developmental delays. Without adequate intervention, these delays may carry over into early learning. If the delays continue throughout childhood and young adulthood, they may affect economic productivity, which can result in economic insecurity, thus producing an unstable family support and safety structure for the next generation.

As this example illustrates, household stability is influenced by economic stability, good health, high educational achievement and access to family support and safety. Young children and families' needs and outcomes are improved by better aligning the services they receive since these outcomes are informed by multiple domains.



Figure 3. A Framework for Early Childhood in Utah



## Family Support and Safety

It is important to support families and parents so that they are able to support and care for their children. Families, parents and caregivers shape a child's first experiences, which evidence indicates are foundational to a child's life. What does it mean to support families and ensure the safety of their children? Utah's early childhood community should strive for a goal that all Utah families are able to keep their young children safe and support their healthy development.

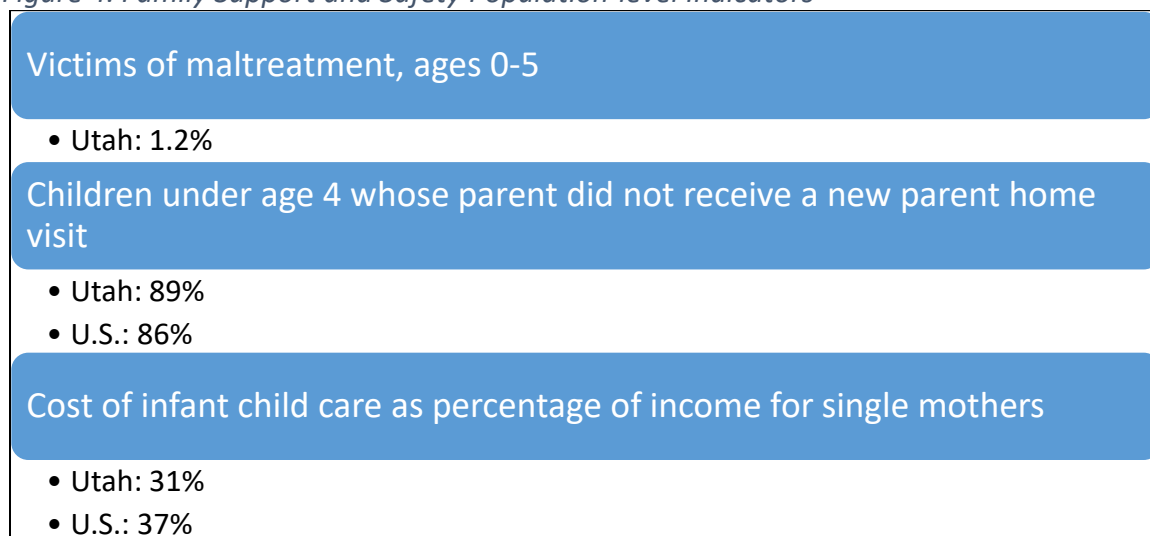
### Identifying and Tracking Indicators for Family Support and Safety in Utah

Keeping a child safe from abuse and neglect can be considered one of the most basic assurances of a healthy childhood. A child can suffer from both physical and psychological harm due to maltreatment. Each state investigates child maltreatment and reports to the federal government. Utah's rate of maltreatment for children under 18 is slightly higher than the national average (1.1 percent compare to 0.9 percent), and Utah's rate for children under 6 is 1.2 percent.

Being a new parent can be a joyful, yet overwhelming experience. Families receiving support and visits in their home gain skills to best nurture the healthy development of their children. Utah is providing new parent home visits at a lower percentage than the national average.

It is critical for a parent who participates in the workforce to feel comfortable and supported in who will be caring for their child while they work. While Utah's cost of infant child care is less than the national average, it is still a high cost burden for parents, especially single mothers.

*Figure 4. Family Support and Safety Population-level Indicators*



Sources: Utah Department of Human Services

Child Trends' analysis of 2011-12 NSCH, reported in [Kids Count](#)

2014 Child Care Aware, reported in Zero to Three's [State Baby Facts](#)

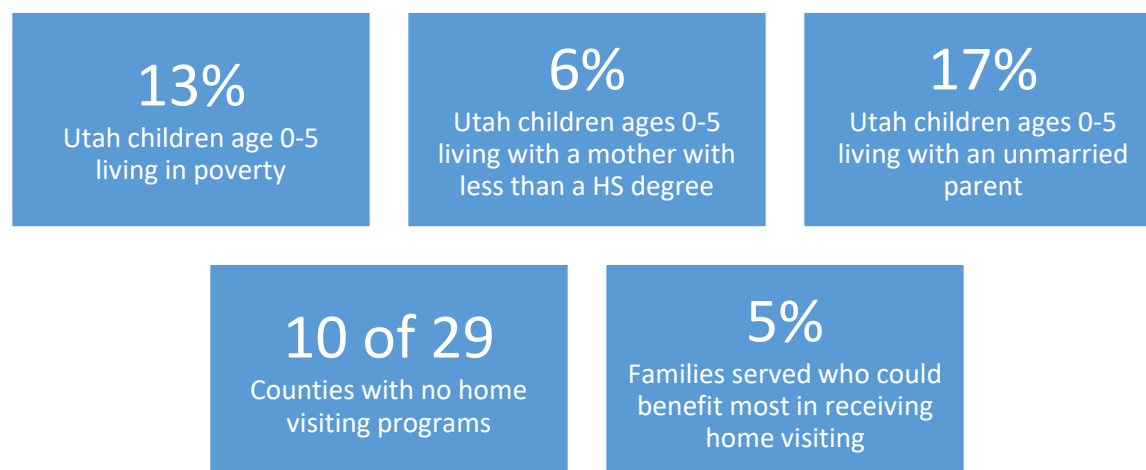
## Key Programmatic Components of Family Support and Safety

### Home Visiting

Home Visiting is a voluntary service for at-risk pregnant women or families with young children. These programs can address some of the risk factors and negative outcomes often present for families living in poverty. Evidence-based home visiting programs focus on maternal and child health (both mental and physical), positive parenting, preventing child abuse and neglect and the young child's development and school readiness.

The Utah Office of Home Visiting (OHV) in the Utah Department of Health acts as a support and resource center for entities interested in implementing an evidence-based or research-informed home visitation program. Local Implementation Agencies provide the home visiting service directly to families according to the parameters of the contract and with fidelity to the home visiting model being used. The OHV is currently funded to support home visiting programs in 14 of 29 Utah counties, although these funds are uncertain for the future. There are five additional counties with home visiting services supported with other funding sources, which still leaves ten Utah counties with no home visiting programs.<sup>14</sup>

As few as 5 percent of families who could benefit most from voluntary home visiting services are estimated to have access to these programs.<sup>15</sup> There is a greater need for home visiting services in the state considering the number of families with risk factors shown to benefit from home visiting services. Some of these risk factors include children age 0-5 living below the federal poverty level, children age 0-5 living with a mother who does not have a high school (HS) degree<sup>16</sup>, and children age 0-5 living with an unmarried parent.<sup>17</sup>

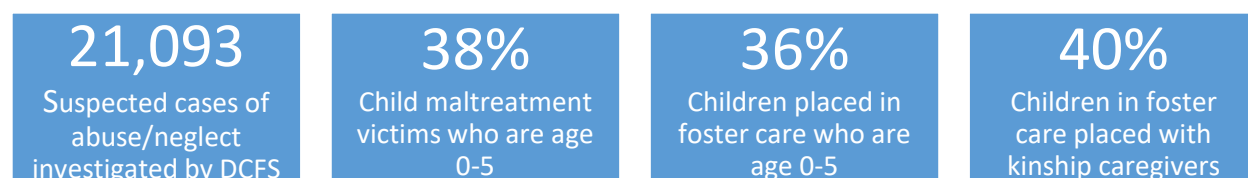


### Child Welfare

Utah operates a state-administered child welfare system, coordinated through five regions. The Utah Department of Human Services, Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) provides a continuum of services, from child abuse and neglect prevention and intervention, to supporting

youth transitioning out of foster care. Services may be provided in the home or out of the home, depending on the individual needs of the family. Services are administered by DCFS employees or contracted providers, and include: child abuse and neglect investigation; case-management; individual and family counseling; peer-parenting; parenting skills training and education; community-based family support services; post adoption services; family preservation services; respite day care; and sexual abuse treatment.

During fiscal year 2016, DCFS investigated over 21,000 allegations of abuse and/or neglect, and found that neglect was the most frequently confirmed allegation. This designation includes child endangerment, non-supervision, and deprivation of necessities. Utah's youngest children are especially vulnerable to maltreatment. Of all the maltreatment victims in Utah, 27% were between the ages of 0-3, and 23% were between ages 4-7.<sup>18</sup> When a child cannot remain safely in their home due to abuse or neglect, they are placed out of the home, either with a kinship or foster caregiver. Of all children in Utah foster care, 36% are ages 0-5.



DCFS utilizes several sources to identify at-risk populations and collaborates with various partners to identify populations most at-risk of maltreatment. These include:

- Families that may not be aware of available services due to ethnic, racial, cultural, gender and/or language barriers;
- Families isolated from programs and services due to their geographic isolation;
- Individuals or families who are economically disadvantaged or homeless; and
- Individuals who are substance abusers and their families.

DCFS has also identified the most prevalent issues facing children and families receiving DCFS services, and is focusing on resource development to enable children to stay in their homes. At-risk families experience issues and needs that include: substance abuse; domestic violence; trauma; mental health; family functioning; and access to concrete supports, such as financial resources and housing. By address these needs and filling the gaps in these areas, more children would be able to remain in their homes.

### Child Care

Each child having a safe and high-quality environment to be cared for outside the home is integral to an early childhood system. Similar to high-quality preschool experiences, high-quality child care programs prepare children for kindergarten with improved academic and social skills. It is important for families that child care is readily available, affordable, and high

quality. The provision of quality child care is also integral to Utah's economy, supporting parents' employment and furthering economic stability.

In Utah, child care is regulated by the Utah Department of Health, Child Care Licensing (CCL), and the Utah Department of Workforce Services, Office of Child Care. The Utah Department of Health regulates child care providers through its mission, "to support working parents by protecting the health and safety of children in child care programs we oversee." Both child care centers and home-based child care providers must meet minimum standards and rules. A child care license or certificate is required if a person is caring for more than four children who are not related to the provider, and for more than four hours per day. In 2016, there were 301 licensed child care centers and 770 licensed family child care providers,<sup>19</sup> which provided care to over 22,000 children ages 0-5.

In 2014, the Utah Legislature authorized CCL to regulate license-exempt programs, including requiring monitoring visits and background checks. Although this made significant progress in ensuring all programs caring for children provide a healthy and safe setting, there remains a substantial number of providers that are providing unregulated, illegal care. This unregulated care jeopardizes the health and safety of large numbers of young children in child care. It is difficult to estimate the number of illegal providers or the number of children in these settings because by the very nature of these programs, they are operating in the shadows.

DWS, OCC addresses child care needs through a comprehensive system of services including financial subsidies that help parents access child care, grants for providers to improve quality, the [Care About Childcare](#) website and child care resource and referral agencies, provider help lines, and professional development for the childcare workforce. The DWS, OCC develops effective partnerships with educational partners, child care providers, parents and the community in order to provide appropriate care for Utah's children.

There is substantial need for affordable, high-quality childcare in Utah, as 51 percent of Utah children ages 0-5 have all available parents working.<sup>20</sup> Yet there are six counties in Utah that do not have any licensed child care. Additionally, the cost of high-quality child care can be out of reach for many Utah families, particularly low-income or single mothers. The 2015 average annual income for Utah female heads of household with at least one child in the home was \$29,860.<sup>21</sup> This makes full-time, high-quality child care difficult to afford, as the cost of child care in Utah for a two-year-old at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile is \$10,440 per year.<sup>22</sup> The average single mother would be required to pay over one-third of her income in child care.

To better understand the child care needs of Utahns, DWS, OCC recently conducted a child care needs assessment survey. There are numerous important and detailed findings from the survey. One highlight is a finding on the extent to which there was unmet demand for quality, affordable child care among parents whose children did not spend time in non-parental care. The survey indicates that 44 percent of respondents with children age five and younger reported that "they would either be 'very likely' or 'somewhat likely' to use affordable, quality

paid child care for work, searching for work, or furthering education, if it was available nearby in the parents' community."

The survey also helped to identify challenges that families with children ages 5 and under were faced with when navigating the child care market. Some of the survey findings include:

- *55% of parents whose focal child age 5 and under who is in paid non-parental care reported that it was either somewhat or very difficult to find back-up care.*
- *48% noted that it was either somewhat or very difficult to find care during non-traditional hours while 43% noted difficulties in finding affordable care, and*
- *41% noted difficulties in finding care with early drop-off or late-pick-up.*
- *30% of the survey mothers reported that they and/or their spouse had adopted a reduced work schedule because of child care issues.<sup>23</sup>*

22,291

Utah children age 0-5  
in licensed child care

51%

Utah children ages 0-5  
with all available  
parents in workforce

6 of 29

Counties with no  
licensed child care  
programs

44%

of mothers surveyed  
would utilize child care  
if were available

## Health and Development

Good health and healthy development are integral to a child's well-being, particularly at the earliest ages. Utah's early childhood community should strive for a goal that all Utah's young children are healthy and developing appropriately at all stages of development.

### **Identifying and Tracking Indicators for Health and Development in Utah**

Good health begins during pregnancy. Expectant mothers who receive regular prenatal care have lower risks of pregnancy complications and receive counseling on healthy dietary practices, both of which positively influence their babies' health. A higher percentage of women in Utah receive early prenatal care than women in the general U.S. population.

Part of maintaining good health involves regular access to medical care. On average, fewer children in Utah than in the U.S. have access to health insurance. Additionally, fewer children in Utah receive well-child visits as compared to the national average.

Children who receive developmental screenings may be identified and found eligible for developmental and behavioral interventions. Although fewer children in Utah are at risk for moderate to high developmental or behavioral problems as compared with children in the U.S., fewer children in Utah receive screenings by the time they are 6 years of age. Identifying and addressing developmental issues early is the best solution in mitigating the delay, and equips children to be more academically successful and avoids further challenges. Addressing delays after children are already in the elementary years is more difficult and costly, and by then children have lost the time to address the delay and benefit from the cumulative nature of learning.



Figure 5. Health and Development Population-level Indicators

<p>Babies born to women who receiving early prenatal care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utah: 80%</li> <li>• U.S.: 71%</li> </ul>
<p>Children under 6 who lack health insurance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utah: 5%</li> <li>• U.S.: 3.8%</li> </ul>
<p>Children under 6 receiving an annual well-child visit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utah: 88%</li> <li>• U.S.: 90%</li> </ul>
<p>Children under age 6 receiving a developmental screening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utah: 25%</li> <li>• U.S. 30%</li> </ul>
<p>Children age 4 months to 5 years at moderate to high risk for developmental or behavioral problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utah: 20%</li> <li>• U.S.: 26%</li> </ul>

Sources: United Health Foundation, reported in Zero to Three's [State Baby Facts](#)

U.S. Census Bureau, reported in [Kids Count](#)

Child Trends analysis of NSCH, reported by [Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health](#)

Child Trends analysis of NSCH, reported in [Kids Count](#)

National Survey of Children's Health, reported in Zero to Three's [State Baby Facts](#)

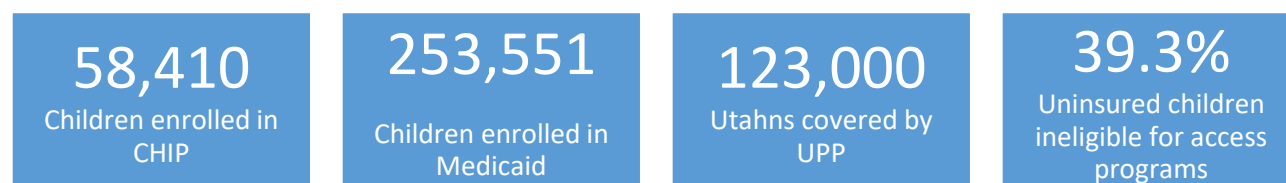
### Key Programmatic Components of Health and Development

#### Health Care Access

Access to health care early in life is correlated with positive health outcomes throughout life. For this reason, it is essential that expectant mothers be able to access prenatal and postpartum care. It is also important for Utah's youngest children to have access to regular and frequent well-child visits and access to health insurance, which covers such care. Medicaid, which is state and federally funded, provides access to physical health care services, mental health services and dental benefits. To qualify for Medicaid, household income levels must be below 139 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL). Utah's Premium Partnership (UPP) for Health Insurance is a program of the Utah Department of Health. UPP assists low-income families enrolled in private health plans with paying their health insurance premiums. Utah's Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP), provides access to medical care to low-income children

under the age of 19 who do not have health insurance and who do not qualify for Medicaid. To qualify for UPP and CHIP, household incomes must not exceed 200 percent of the FPL.

Medicaid, UPP and CHIP provide many low-income mothers and children with the insurance coverage and access to health care services they need: 253,551 Utah children are enrolled in Medicaid, 123,000 Utahns are covered by UPP,<sup>24</sup> and 58,410 Utah children are enrolled in CHIP.<sup>25</sup> However, not all Utah children have adequate health care access. Of the uninsured children in the state, 39.3 percent live in households whose incomes exceed 200 percent of the FPL, rendering them ineligible for Medicaid, CHIP and UPP.<sup>26</sup>



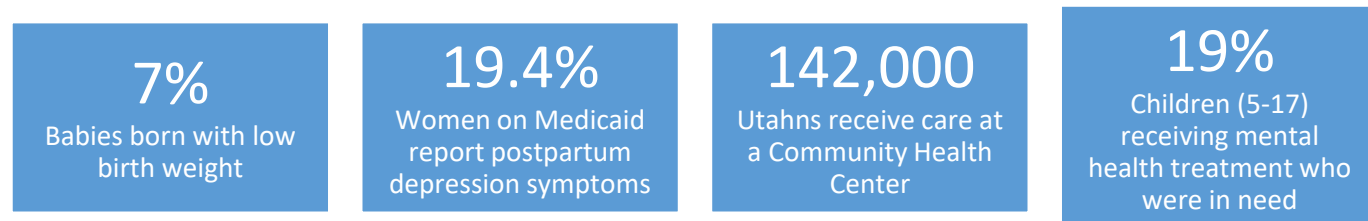
### Physical and Mental Health Services

Good physical and mental health is essential to leading a productive life. For example, having a low birth weight places a baby at risk of long-term health problems, which has the potential to affect the health of future generations as well. Children born at normal birth weight and who continue to experience good physical and mental health are more likely to perform well academically. In Utah, 7 percent of babies are born with low birth weight.<sup>27</sup> Providing expectant mothers with early prenatal care has long-term effects on their children's health and subsequent generations.

Investing in regular preventive physical care also reduces emergency room visits, which is cost effective in the long-term.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, providing care for mental health problems is important in preventing long-lasting and generational adverse effects. In Utah, 19.4 percent of women on Medicaid report postpartum depression symptoms.<sup>29</sup> Babies born to mothers who suffer from postpartum depression may also suffer developmental and cognitive delays.<sup>30</sup> Providing mothers with adequate postpartum care and mental health services is another example of how preventive health care access plays a large role in keeping Utah's young population healthy. Providing all parents with access to mental health services can result in healthier parent-child relationships and prevent the incidence of child abuse and neglect.<sup>31</sup>

Utah's federally-funded Community Health Centers play a big role in providing primary care services to patients. Such centers serve as medical homes to low-income families, as they offer medical, dental, vision and mental health services, charge fees based on a sliding scale, and accept patients regardless of insurance status. Statewide, 142,000 Utahns receive care at a Community Health Center.<sup>32</sup> The Child's Health and Evaluation Care (CHEC) provides preventive medical and dental care to children who qualify for Medicaid. In addition, the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) provides publicly funded behavioral services through state and county government entities. The DSAMH supports families and children by

providing Family Resource Facilitators, funding School-Based Behavioral Health, and funding Youth Mobile Crisis Teams. It is estimated that 100,193 children ages 5 to 17 are in need of mental health treatment, yet only 19 percent of them receive services.<sup>33</sup>



### Early Intervention

Early health and behavioral interventions have the potential to change the trajectory of a child's development. In addition, when early interventions can improve developmental outcomes, they result in cost savings down the line. It is estimated that 14 percent of Utah children ages 2 to 17 have one or more emotional, behavioral, or developmental conditions.<sup>34</sup> This indicates why early intervention is considered an essential component of supporting early childhood development. Estimates indicate there are 21,831 children ages zero to three who are at risk of developmental delays or disabilities.<sup>35</sup> In addition, children in poverty are at higher risk of delays. Subsequently, 78 percent of children ages 0-3 who receive services in Utah are low-income.<sup>36</sup>

Utah primarily offers services through the Utah Baby Watch Early Intervention Program (BWEIP), which provides identification and intervention services through local entities such as county health departments, universities, school districts and non-profits. Roughly 9,200 children are referred to Baby Watch annually, and over 5,000 children are deemed eligible to receive services. BWEIP has provided positive outcomes for families, as 77 percent of children who have exited Baby Watch in the past three years show improvement.<sup>37</sup> In addition to Baby Watch, programs such as Act Early and Help Me Grow Utah provide resources to help parents and providers identify developmental delays and find supportive services. Several home visitation programs, as previously outlined in the Family Support and Safety Section, also provide identification and prevention services.



## Early Learning

It is important that all children have opportunities for high-quality learning. What does it mean to have access to early learning opportunities for all of Utah's youngest children? Utah's early childhood community should strive for a goal that all Utah children entering kindergarten are prepared to learn.

### Identifying and Tracking Indicators for Early Learning in Utah

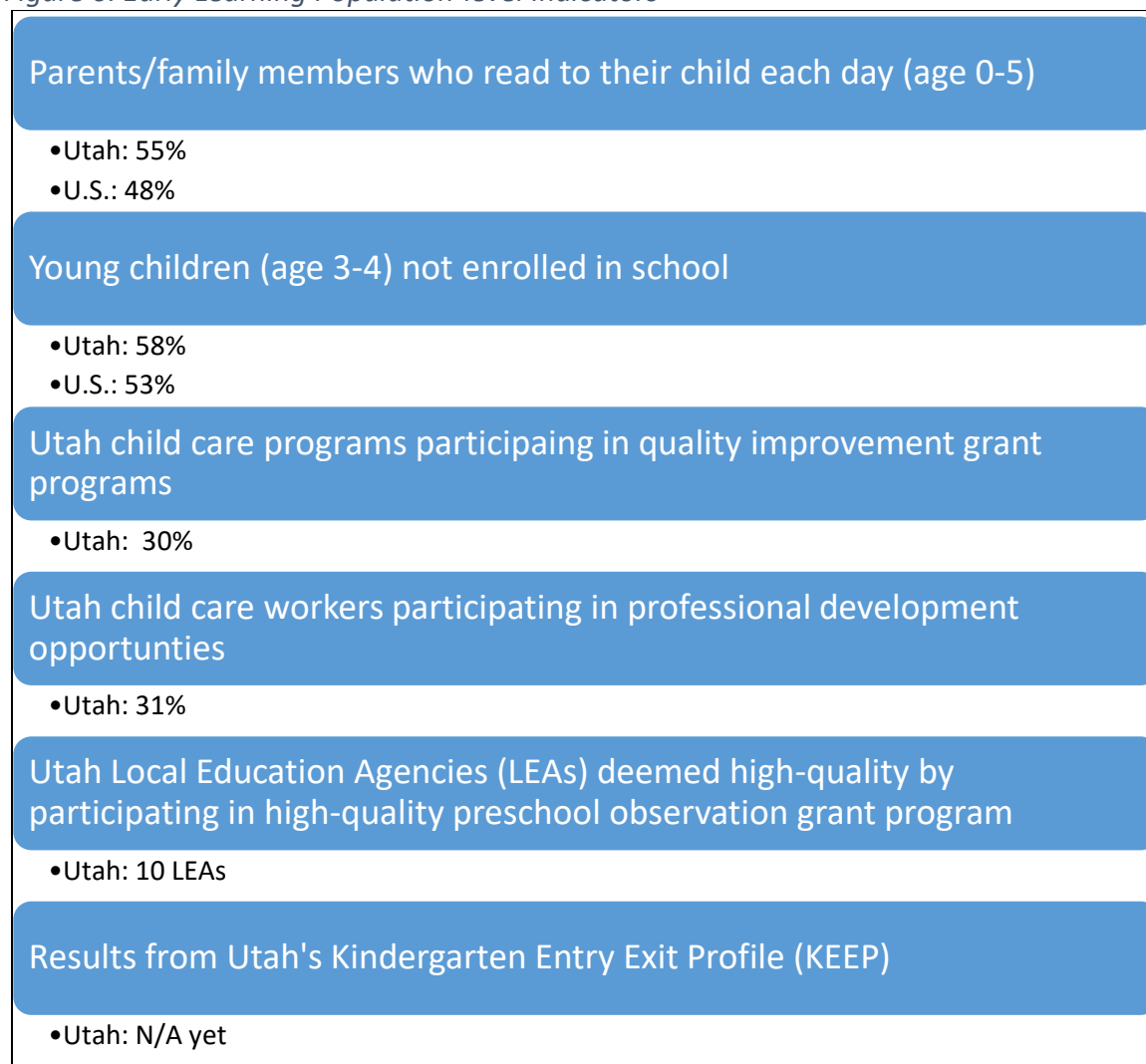
Gaps in student achievement are first identified in early education. Studies have shown vast disparities in the number of words that children from affluent households know compared to children from households in poverty, which is significant for early literacy. On average, 3-year-olds from affluent households were found to know 1,100 words and 3-year-olds from households in poverty were found to know just 500 words.<sup>38</sup>

These early gaps can have a long-term impact on educational outcomes over the lifetime of an individual. While it has been generally accepted that the investment of time and money in early childhood education is positive for children and society,<sup>39</sup> access to high quality early education is not always available in urban or low-income areas.

It is important that parents access high-quality child care and preschools, ensuring that their children are exposed to positive learning experiences in a safe and nurturing environment. This includes having well-trained and educated staff who are knowledgeable in child development and early learning pedagogy.

Although Utah has not had a uniform kindergarten readiness assessment used throughout the state, local education agencies (LEA) have indicated that children entering kindergarten in Utah show varying levels of readiness based on individual LEA assessments. The State Board of Education offered Utah's new Kindergarten Entry Exit Profile (KEEP) assessment to every LEA in the state for the 2017-18 school year. Results from this first administration will be available before the end of the school year. Studies indicate that compared to half-day kindergarten programs, full-day kindergarten increases students' academic achievement, literacy and language development, readiness for the primary grades, and can also benefit children socially and emotionally, and increase attendance in later grades.<sup>40</sup> Full-day programs can have benefits for all children, but are especially important for those children who have not had opportunities to develop their readiness for kindergarten.

Figure 6. Early Learning Population-level Indicators



Sources: 2011-12 National Survey of Children's Health, reported in Zero to Three's [State Baby Facts](#)

U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2015, reported in [Kids Count](#)

For child care programs and workers: Utah DWS-OCC Care about Childcare

Utah State Board of Education HQSR-E program

KEEP results will be available by the end of the 2017-18 school year

### Key Programmatic Components of Early Learning

#### Early Head Start and Head Start

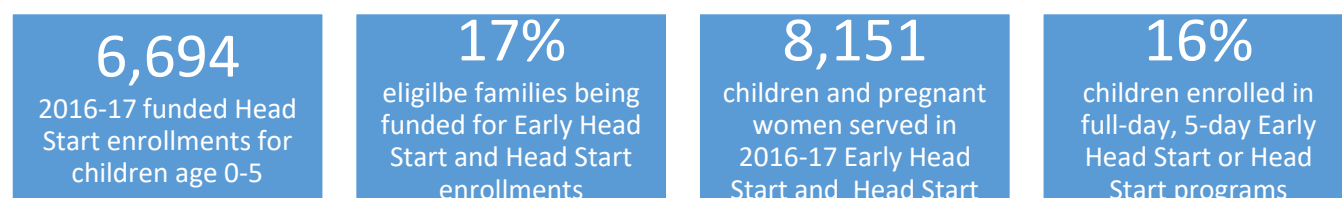
Early Head Start and Head Start are federally funded programs that serve low-income families through agencies in local communities. The funding model is unique among federal programs in that the funding flows from the U.S. Department of Human Services directly to local entities, instead of through a state agency. These programs support the comprehensive development of children from birth to age five in centers, child care partner locations, and in their own homes. The programs offer a variety of service models, depending on the needs of the local community. Early Head Start serves pregnant women, infants, and toddlers, until the child is ready to enter Head Start at age 3 or another early learning program. Head Start serves children

ages 3-5, and promotes school readiness by focusing on services including early learning, health, and family well-being.

The Utah Head Start Association and the Utah Head Start Collaboration Director, located in the Department of Workforce Services, jointly serve Utah's Head Start community. Twelve Head Start service providers have 143 program locations throughout the state. Families are eligible for the programs if their income is below the federal poverty level (FPL), with some allowance for a portion of the enrollment from families slightly above FPL, if the program is not able to fill all the available slots.

Utah's funding source for Head Start enrollments is solely from federal funds, which does not cover the full need. For the 2016-17 school year, there were 6,694 funded Early Head Start and Head Start enrollment slots. When comparing these slots to the 39,000 children ages 0-5 in Utah who are estimated to be living below the FPL, Utah's Early Head Start and Head Start programs have funding to serve only 17 percent of eligible population. Early Head Start and Head Start programs in Utah served over 8,000 pregnant women and children during the 2016-17 school year through the funded enrollment slots.<sup>41</sup>

There are several barriers for low-income families participating in Head Start programs. Because the families accessing these programs face socioeconomic barriers and tend to be more mobile, there is program attrition. Additionally, the majority of the programs are not offered for a full day or a full calendar year. Of the center-based programs, the majority operate for part-day enrollment, four days per week. There are some full-day five-day programs, but just 16% of children are enrolled in these full-time programs. This limited schedule presents challenges for working parents who need full-time care, while also failing to provide continuity of care for children, a critical developmental requirement for young children. Fortunately, many Head Start programs in Utah received additional funding to provide six hours of care and operate year-round. Another barrier to accessing the programs is transportation. Some families, especially in rural areas, have long distances to travel to attend a Head Start program. While each county is contained in a service region, there are some counties where there is no program within the county.



## Preschool

High-quality preschool programs can have a substantial impact on early learning and development for all children, but especially for those children who may not be able to access these resources on their own.<sup>42</sup> Early childhood education provides educational foundations

that have concrete academic outcomes as children enter kindergarten ready to learn and engage in education.<sup>43</sup>

Under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), children with special needs are entitled to a free, appropriate public education beginning at three years old. Some school districts offer these special education services in their schools, and some contract with other providers to enroll the students. Utah's local school districts provided preschool services for 10,199 3- and 4-year-old special education students in the 2016-17 school year.

Although Utah has various state and locally-run programs, the state does not have a comprehensive statewide pre-kindergarten program.<sup>44</sup> Because of this fragmented system of programs, there is not uniform or complete data collection on preschool programs in the state, or the number of children served by all types of preschool providers. For the 2016-17 school year, 650 public schools in Utah offered kindergarten. Of these schools, 54 percent (352 schools) submitted preschool enrollment figures to the State Board of Education. That year, 21,472 children participated in public preschool. This number includes both 3- and 4-year-old students, including those receiving special education services. Identifying a cohort of 4-year-old public preschool students that is analogous to a cohort that would start public kindergarten the following year can give a clearer picture of public preschool. During the 2016-17 school year, public preschools in Utah schools served a cohort of 12,128 4-year-olds. This includes 4,793 special education students with an individualized education plan.<sup>45</sup>

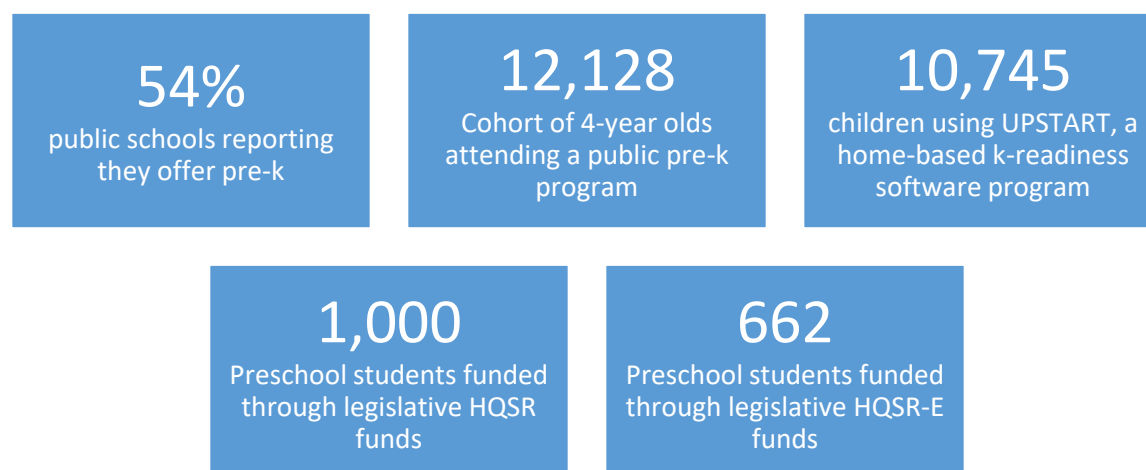
**UPSTART.** Utah's first state-funded preschool service, the UPSTART program, began as a pilot program in 2008. The legislature created the Utah Preparing Students Today for a Rewarding Tomorrow (UPSTART) program to provide a kindergarten-readiness computer software program for families to use at home. It offers 4-year-olds an individualized reading, mathematics, and science curriculum with a focus on reading. All Utah children are eligible to participate in the program. However, participation priority is given to low-income families and families who are not native English speakers. Qualifying families without the necessary resources may receive a Chromebook and Internet during the time they are in the program. The UPSTART population for the 2016-2017 school year consists of approximately 10,745 children. Over half (52.5 percent) of the current UPSTART population live in suburban areas, 37.5 percent in urban areas, and 10 percent in rural areas. The program requires at least 30 percent of the participants to be from low-income families, which was met with 42 percent of cohort eight participants coming from low-income families.<sup>46</sup>

**High-Quality School Readiness (HQSR) Initiatives.** Beginning with the 2014-15 school year, Utah began implementing the School Readiness Initiative, created by 2014 General Session House Bill (HB) 96. The School Readiness Initiative was designed to fund high-quality preschool programs by leveraging private money from investors, only to be paid back by the state if the outcomes of the program meet the prescribed goals. This program is a "Pay for Success" program, the first of its kind in Utah. It also funded grants for existing public and private early education programs to allow the programs to increase their quality. During the 2016-17 school



year, the Pay for Success funding in the HQSR Initiative provided 1,000 children the opportunity to attend high-quality programs.

In the 2016 General Session, the legislature expanded this program with Senate Bill (SB) 101, and appropriated federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) reserve funds to provide additional slots for children to attend programs that were deemed high-quality (HQSR-E). In order to determine quality, staff from the Utah State Board of Education (USB) and the DWS, OCC conducted observations with nationally-recognized rating tools and some additional rubric criteria. Staff from USB received applications from 14 local education agencies (LEAs) to participate in the program, 10 of which were deemed high-quality. The HQSR-E program allowed an additional 662 eligible children to enroll in high-quality classrooms during the 2016-17 (552 at public and private providers through expansion grants, and 110 IGP students at public and private providers funded through IGP scholarships administered by DWS OCC).<sup>47</sup>



### Kindergarten

Once children enter the elementary education system, full-day Kindergarten options extend educational opportunities, especially for the most vulnerable students. Full-day kindergarten provides additional time to develop cognitively and socially, and is beneficial to students who may have experienced developmental delays, disabilities, or may not been afforded quality preschool opportunities. Developmentally-appropriate kindergarten and other early childhood programs capitalize on increased opportunities for creative and child-centered activities.<sup>48</sup>

Schools in Utah receive state per-pupil funding for kindergarten at about half the amount they receive for first grade in the Minimum School Program. This effectively means each school receives state funding to offer a half-day of kindergarten. Some schools use local or other discretionary funds to supplement this state funding to offer a full day of kindergarten. There are also additional state funds for schools to supplement kindergarten offerings, but these funds only provide for a small percentage of students. Regardless of funding source, 20 percent of Utah students are attending public full-day or extended-day kindergarten.

## Economic Stability

A family's economic stability is key to a child's growth and development. What do stable and strong families look like? Utah's early childhood community should strive for a goal that all young children in Utah live in families able to meet their basic needs.

### Identifying and Tracking Indicators for Economic Stability in Utah

A family's economic stability extends beyond income. A family that is economically stable not only has a reliable source of income but also access to food, stable and safe housing, and stable neighborhood relationships, which all affect well-being. A lack of economic stability has ripple effects on families and children, and can negatively affect educational attainment, child safety, toxic stress, and access to regular and quality health care.

In Utah, 13 percent of children live under the Federal Poverty Level, 20 percent of children have parents who lack secure employment, and 4 percent of children ages 0-5 do not have a parent in the labor force. While these numbers are lower than, or on par with, the national average, they are still indicators that some of Utah's younger children are at risk for food insecurity, homelessness and a life of instability. Additionally, 20 percent of Utah's youngest children face residential mobility, and 18 percent receive assistance for food security through the SNAP program.

*Figure 7. Economic Stability Population-level Indicators*

Children under age 6 living below the Federal Poverty Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utah: 13%</li> <li>• U.S.: 21%</li> </ul>
Children age 0-17 whose parents lack secure employment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utah: 20%</li> <li>• U.S.: 29%</li> </ul>
Children under age 6 with no parent in the labor force
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utah: 4%</li> <li>• U.S.: 8.7%</li> </ul>
Children under age 6 who experience residential mobility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utah: 20%</li> <li>• U.S.: 20%</li> </ul>
SNAP recipients under age 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utah: 18%</li> <li>• U.S.: 14%</li> </ul>

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, reported in [Kids Count](#)

U.S. Census Bureau, reported in [Kids Count](#)

U.S. Census Bureau, reported in [Kids Count](#)

National Center for Children in Poverty, reported in Zero to Three's State Baby Facts

Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service reported in Zero to Three's [State Baby Facts](#)

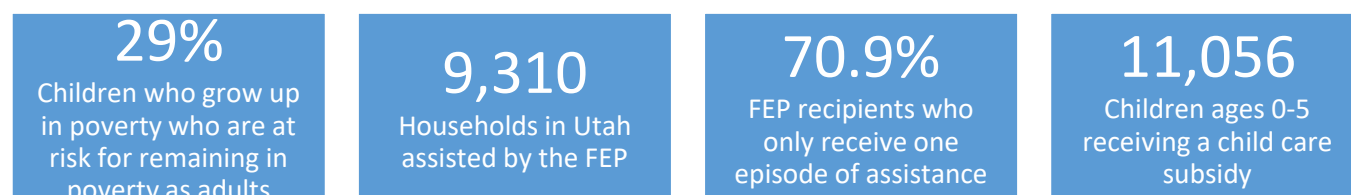
### Key Programmatic Components of Economic Stability

#### Employment & Financial Assistance

Having employable skills is essential to finding stable employment. The Department of Workforce Services (DWS) houses various workforce-training programs for adults to teach workplace skills, soft skills and life skills to assist individuals in finding permanent and stable jobs. While workforce-training programs serve adults, not children, the programs' positive effects on the lives of parents also positively affect young children.

DWS also provides temporary cash assistance to families in need of financial help. Such assistance helps families get back on their feet while they seek permanent income. DWS receives funding for these cash assistance programs from the federally funded Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant. There are three programs administered by DWS that directly use TANF funds to give cash assistance to Utah families: the Family Employment Program (FEP), the Family Employment Program-Two Parent, and Emergency Assistance- Homelessness Prevention Program. FEP recipients are required to participate in work training activities to encourage self-sufficiency.

The majority of FEP recipients (71 percent) only need assistance for one episode of time, and many of these recipients share characteristics that predispose them to only requiring short-term assistance.<sup>49</sup> For example, many short-term and one-time users have employable skills, have strong social support, are or have been married and do not have young children. For this population, temporary cash assistance is adequate in helping them re-enter the workforce. Those who require assistance for longer periods of time and who require multiple episodes of assistance, lack education, are single, and/or have very young children, all of which can serve as barriers to finding stable employment.



#### Child Care Assistance

Child care is essential to helping parents, particularly those who are low-income, maintain employment and earn enough income to support their families. Moreover, as noted within the early learning domain, child care supports a child's development and impacts kindergarten readiness. In Utah, approximately 74 percent of mothers of school-aged children work,<sup>50</sup> and 51 percent of children, ages 0-5 years old, have all available parents working. Many low-income

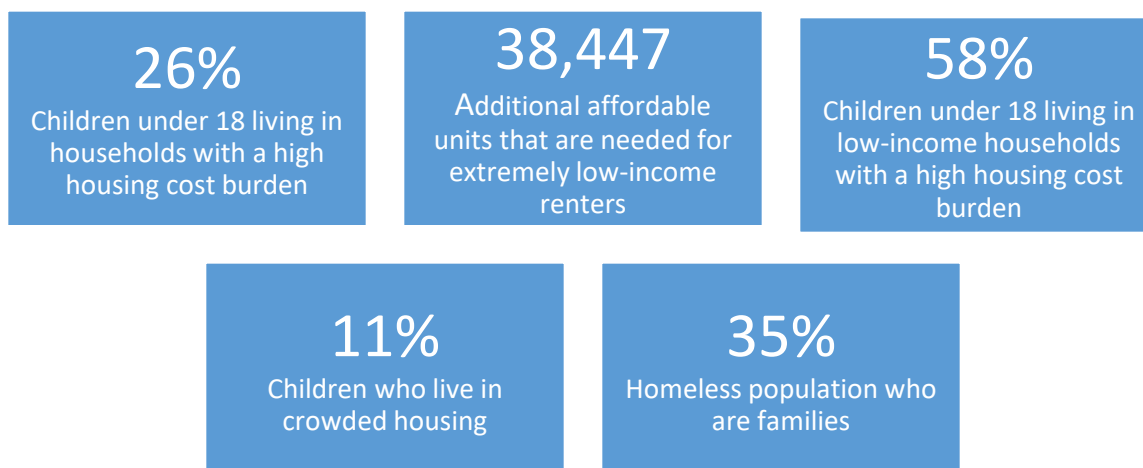
families struggle with the expense of child care. Subsidies provide a way for parents to earn a stable income for their families while their children are in a safe and caring environment. It is arguable that household incomes must be equal to at least 200 percent of poverty to pay for all basic needs, including child care.<sup>51</sup> Utah's Child Care Subsidy program is administered by the Office of Child Care and is funded through the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grants.

Child care subsidies are provided to eligible families through Utah's Employment Support Child Care (ESCC) program or through the Family Employment (FEP Child Care) program. The majority of subsidies are provided to families through the ESCC, which requires a single-parent to work at least 15 hours per week or 30 hours per week in a two-parent household. Although the minimum work requirement must be met to be eligible for ESCC, child care subsidies may also cover approved training and educational activities. During FY16, DWS OCC provided child care subsidies for 11,056 children ages 0-5.

### **Housing**

Housing is one of the most basic human needs. Homelessness affects Utah residents of all ages, including young children. Among Utah's homeless, 35 percent are families.<sup>52</sup> Homelessness negatively impacts children in physical, emotional, cognitive, social and behavioral ways. Research indicates that nationally, homeless children are two times more likely to have learning disabilities than children who are not homeless, and three times more likely to have an emotional disturbance than children who are not homeless.<sup>53</sup> Reducing and preventing homelessness, particularly among young families, is an important step in preventing these negative outcomes.

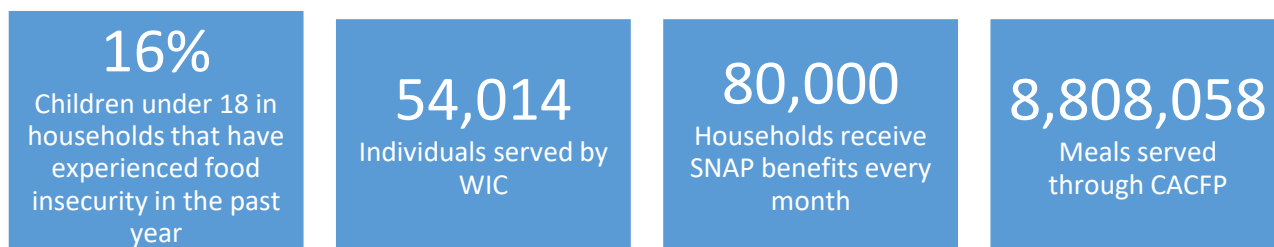
Unfortunately, there is a shortage of 38,447 affordable housing units for extremely low-income renters.<sup>54</sup> As a result, 26 percent of children under 17 live in households with a high cost burden, and 58 percent of children under 17 in low-income families live in homes with a high cost burden.<sup>55</sup> Another result of the lack of affordable housing is that 11 percent of children live in crowded housing.<sup>56, 57</sup> A number of programs in Utah are designed to address this problem by assisting families with housing costs through subsidy programs that offer financial assistance directly to families to help cover the cost of rent or mortgage. Housing subsidies include programs such as the Section 8 Housing Program and the Olene Walker Housing Fund.



### Food security

Food security is essential to learning, good health, and productivity, which are factors that affect the state and nation's economy. Yet 16 percent of children under 18 live in households that have experienced food insecurity in the past year.<sup>58</sup> Programs that address food insecurity are often targeted towards young children, as research has demonstrated that adequate access to food is correlated with better health and learning outcomes. In Utah there are several programs ensuring young children have access to nutritious foods, including Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Child Nutrition Program (CNP). These programs cover all families who are eligible.

WIC provides nutrition education, food, and health counseling to pregnant women and women with children age five and younger. In 2017, WIC served 54,014 individuals. SNAP provides electronic benefits equivalent to cash to spend on certain foods. Roughly 80,000 households in Utah receive SNAP benefits every month. The Child Nutrition Program houses 14 federal food programs and sub programs. One of its main goals is to ensure that Utah children have access to nutritious foods. CNP oversees programs including the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). In FY2016, 287 child care centers served meals, which included 1,979,162 breakfasts, 2,612,342 lunches, 342,255 dinners, and 2,892,299 snacks for a total of 7,808,058 meals.<sup>59</sup>



## Conclusion

This report provides a framework and some preliminary data related to Utah's Early Childhood System. It outlines a comprehensive, systems-based framework for understanding early childhood development and well-being, through the four domains of family support and safety, health and development, early learning, and economic stability.

The section on family support and safety highlights how programs such as home visiting can help to bolster parental skills, which in turn supports early childhood development. Health and development highlights how access to affordable and high-quality health care in the early years can influence a child's well-being for years to come. The section on early learning emphasizes how school readiness in the earliest years is essential in shaping a child's academic trajectory. Finally, the section on economic stability underscores how stable parental employment and income provides security for young children.

Examining early childhood development within all four of these domains, rather than with respect to just one of them, provides a fuller picture of what is at stake for the success of Utah's youngest population. The final report will highlight programs, services, and resources within each of the domains in more detail. In addition, the final report will provide data in each of the domains to indicate the extent to which these program, services, and resources are meeting the needs of Utah's children and families. In addition, the final report will describe potential policy opportunities, and provide policy recommendations.

## Appendices

### Appendix A. Utah County-level Single Age Population Estimates

*Utah Single Age Population Estimates, Ages 0-5, by County, 2016*

County or MCD	< 1 year old	1 year olds	2 year olds	3 year olds	4 year olds	5 year olds	Ages 0 - 5
Beaver	100	112	98	115	119	131	675
Box Elder	883	913	885	899	912	995	5,487
Cache	2,385	2,393	2,362	2,358	2,257	2,338	14,093
Carbon	264	267	269	334	340	342	1,816
Daggett	6	11	8	14	9	13	61
Davis	5,825	5,896	5,818	5,928	5,881	5,986	35,334
Duchesne	377	433	428	457	450	430	2,575
Emery	132	132	128	150	172	178	892
Garfield	53	50	63	63	68	60	358
Grand	93	116	132	120	125	139	724
Iron	843	875	835	825	804	823	5,005
Juab	215	181	207	177	203	225	1,210
Kane	85	81	85	77	92	84	503
Millard	199	196	206	203	199	218	1,222
Morgan	161	180	156	200	154	180	1,032
Piute	12	13	19	12	12	21	90
Rich	30	30	33	28	45	40	206
Salt Lake	17,402	17,330	17,451	17,775	17,225	17,539	104,721
San Juan	196	224	254	295	265	256	1,491
Sanpete	391	379	389	382	385	397	2,323
Sevier	302	330	314	286	302	375	1,910
Summit	420	436	403	412	436	493	2,602
Tooele	979	958	986	1,010	1,006	1,038	5,976
Uintah	603	697	741	747	698	697	4,183
Utah	12,180	12,152	12,039	12,241	11,545	11,965	72,122
Wasatch	451	491	452	449	431	447	2,721
Washington	2,098	2,151	2,131	2,011	1,969	2,179	12,537
Wayne	35	27	34	26	35	35	191
Weber	3,917	3,862	3,764	3,914	3,940	3,988	23,386
<b>State of Utah Total</b>	<b>50,638</b>	<b>50,916</b>	<b>50,694</b>	<b>51,509</b>	<b>50,080</b>	<b>51,612</b>	<b>305,449</b>
Bear River MCD	3,299	3,336	3,280	3,285	3,214	3,373	19,786
Central MCD	1,154	1,126	1,171	1,087	1,136	1,272	6,946
Mountainland MCD	13,051	13,079	12,894	13,102	12,413	12,905	77,445
Southeast MCD	686	739	784	899	902	915	4,924
Southwest MCD	3,178	3,269	3,212	3,091	3,052	3,277	19,079



Uintah Basin MCD	986	1,141	1,178	1,218	1,156	1,140	6,819
Wasatch Front MCD	28,284	28,226	28,175	28,827	28,207	28,731	170,450

Note: MCD is a multi-county district

Source: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, University of Utah

<http://gardner.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/Gardner-Policy-Institute-State-and-County-Projections-Data-2017.xlsx>

## Appendix B. Early Childhood State Systems

### Important Aspects of an Early Childhood System

Early childhood systems are comprised of policies, programs and services that create an infrastructure of support for families with young children from birth to age five. States can build comprehensive early childhood systems through an approach that includes governance, funding, technical assistance, staffing and staff training, and developing appropriate performance measures to support state and local infrastructure.<sup>60</sup> The important aspects for early childhood system programs to include are intervention, family support, health, mental health and nutrition support, child care services from birth through 35 months and child care, as well as early education programs for 3-5 year olds.

*Figure 8. Critical Early Childhood System Programs and Services*

<b>Intervention</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Services for families and children that ensure children are in nurturing environments with caring adults, that there are opportunities for early detection in problems which can be remedied, including health, mental health, and cognitive concerns.</li> </ul>
<b>Family Support</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Services for families and children that support parenting, family engagement, and the strengthening of families in general.</li> </ul>
<b>Health, Mental Health, &amp; Nutrition</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Services that provide access to comprehensive preventive health related care and foster community health.</li> </ul>
<b>Child Care</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Facilities that offer child care either in a home or in another environment for infants ( from birth to a child's third birthday) as well as facilities for children from age 3-5 including in home, in school or other institution, for children with and without special needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Early Education</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Services for early learning including Early Head Start, Head Start, pre-kindergarten, and other early literacy programs</li> </ul>

### Coordination and Alignment

Comprehensive public health systems, including, and especially, early childhood systems, should be unified in goals at the state level, whereby funding is provided to coordinate across child-serving institutions and staff from various child-serving agencies develop holistic, comprehensive systems for monitoring local child serving institutions and ensuring the local level is supported from top-down.<sup>61</sup> This begins with a mission for early childcare and development for the state, based on both the demand of services and a comprehensive structure supporting child development based on psycho-social research.<sup>62</sup>

The development of early childhood systems include aligning early learning standards, improving access and support for staff working with children within multiple settings (health,

day care, and education), registration and evaluation of child-serving institutions at the state level, and structured funding and technical assistance support at the state level to support local initiatives.<sup>63</sup>

### **Quality Rating Improvement Systems**

States with the most comprehensive early childhood systems work within a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) to assess standards of early and school-age care. The development of QRIS began in the 1990s as states sought ways to provide accreditation to early childcare providers with exceptionally high, research-based standards. The first statewide QRIS system was implemented by Oklahoma in 1998, and now, more than half of the states and the District of Columbia use statewide QRIS as a mechanism to ensure early child care systems are harnessed into an overall state structural capacity to ensure the developmental needs of all children.<sup>64</sup> This includes implementing coordinated data systems to evaluate programs and guide system improvement, monitor and address staff training and needs, providing a strong governance and administrative structure.

### **Children's Cabinets**

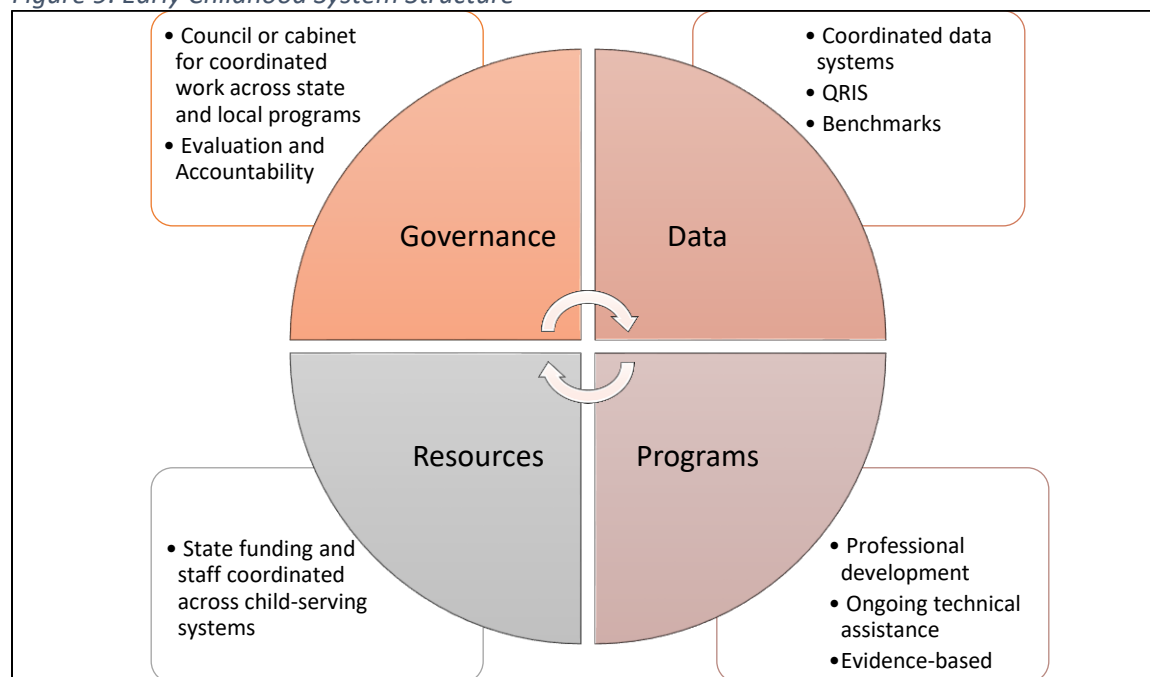
Nationally, states are beginning to establish *Children's Cabinets* to change the fragmented ways state and local governments work on behalf of children. Children's Cabinets are also known as P-20 councils, Early Childhood Advisory Councils or Early Childhood Commissions. They are typically comprised of the heads of state government agencies with child-serving programs and heads of other non-governmental agencies with a major state presence serving childhood needs. These cabinets meet regularly to align outcomes, coordinate services and collaborate on the development and improvement of child-serving programs and policies across institutional levels. Currently, 33 states participate in the Children's Cabinet Network.<sup>65</sup>

Several states have local or regional councils in addition to state early childhood councils. These local councils operate as public-private partnerships, are funded by state or other government grants, and report to state councils to coordinate efforts. Some councils emphasize advocacy or communications, while others focus on governance, strategic planning, policy and program implementation.<sup>66</sup> Regardless of the structure, states implementing early childhood councils or Children's Cabinets are leading efforts to coordinate comprehensive child-serving systems.

### **Early Childhood System Framework**

Based on the literature and the work arising from Children's Cabinets and P-20 Councils to date, state capacity to ensure a comprehensive early childhood system begins with developing a system structure under which all programs and policies can be aligned.

Figure 9. Early Childhood System Structure



## Appendix C. Key Components of Utah's Early Childhood System

Early learning opportunities and early childhood services are administered by several state and local government agencies, private nonprofit entities and community organizations. Policies and programs in the state often recognize a child's parents and family as the first and most influential teacher. Utah's early childhood landscape includes many stakeholders, and is resourced through various funding sources. This section of the report describes Utah's early childhood landscape.

### Early Childhood Core Standards

A high-quality early childhood system has evidence-based standards and guidelines that caregivers, providers and policymakers can use to guide and shape programs, services and resources. The Utah State Board of Education has adopted the Utah Early Childhood Core Standards. While it is not mandatory for programs to adopt these standards, and they are not required as part of child care licensing, these standards can help families, educators and communities make informed decisions about curriculum for pre-kindergarten children. When the standards are implemented effectively, they can improve a child's readiness for, and transition to, kindergarten, as well as address readiness and achievement gaps between different groups of students.<sup>67</sup> The standards are found here:

<http://www.schools.utah.gov/CURR/preschoolkindergarten/Core/StrategiesActivities.aspx>

The Early Childhood Core Standards were last updated in 2012, and the Utah State Board of Education approved a review of these standards during 2017. A team of stakeholders is in the process of reviewing the standards, and includes representation from state agencies, local education agencies, children and education-focused nonprofit agencies, advisory committees and institutions of higher education.

Utah does not have a mandatory statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The Utah Office of Child Care launched the website [Care About Childcare](#) (CAC) to provide parents information about childcare in Utah. Childcare providers registered with Utah's Child Care Resource and Referral Agency have a profile page with CAC and can display their center's criteria as a high-quality system under specific quality indicators. While this is a step in the right direction, it is not a comprehensive QRIS system aligned across state and local government bodies, collecting and evaluating the data necessary to ensure high quality systems of care for early childhood development.<sup>68</sup>

### Governance

Early childhood systems can help to connect learning, health and family support services together, making the whole system more effective and efficient. A strong governance structure also facilitates important functions of an early childhood system such as data sharing and integration, follow-up and referral pathways, and streamlined eligibility guidelines.

Different aspects of the early childhood system in Utah are governed or administered by different agencies, including the Department of Health, Department of Workforce Services,

Department of Human Services, the Utah State Board of Education, the State System of Higher Education, and Local Education Agencies (school districts and charter schools). In addition, numerous private, non-profit, community and religious organizations collaborate and coordinate to serve Utah's youngest residents. Utah does not have a Children's Cabinet, and does not participate in the national technical assistance to align child-serving systems offered by the [Forum for Youth Investment](#).

### **Early Childhood Utah (ECU)**

Although lacking a children's cabinet to coordinate the early childhood system, [Early Childhood Utah](#) is designed and functions for a similar purpose. ECU began as the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems State Team (ECCS) required by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration. The committee was later designated as the State Advisory Council (SAC) on Early Childhood Education and Care, which was required by the federal Head Start Act. ECU has evolved into a comprehensive, multidisciplinary group of early education stakeholders who seek to improve Utah's early childhood system. ECU promotes and encourages family engagement and collaboration in four domains:

- Access to health care and medical homes
- Social-emotional development and mental health
- Early care and education
- Parenting education and family support

Membership includes representatives from Utah governmental agencies, healthcare providers and insurers, health departments (state and local), parents and parent engagement and support providers, non-profits serving young children, child care administrators and providers, early childhood education specialists, administrators, and providers, and mental health providers and experts. Early Childhood Utah works on goals in each of its domains and is currently working to strengthen the data systems in early childhood for planning, collaboration, and accountability purposes.

In addition, many coordinating councils convene stakeholders around a specific topic or area. Many of these councils include specific seats for parents.

### **Data Systems**

#### **Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS)**

While there are numerous early childhood databases and data sources in the state, there is no uniform or longitudinal database that can uniquely identify children and track services and potential impacts across multiple systems. This kind of information can inform policy decisions and state investments. These data could also allow policymakers and researchers to better understand children's needs, and where gaps in the system occur, with opportunities for improvement.

The Utah Department of Health is engaged in a project that will begin this integrated data work, called the [Early Childhood Integrated Data System \(ECIDS\)](#). The stated purpose of ECIDS is to strengthen data systems for planning, collaboration, and accountability, while facilitating data sharing and coordination among early childhood programs in Utah.<sup>69</sup> Information could be shared from various health, child development, family support and educational programs to represent a spectrum of early childhood development. This database could provide researchers the ability to evaluate program outcomes, and therefore increasing policymakers' ability to answer policy questions and make data-driven decisions.

#### [Early Childhood Workforce](#)

In development for final draft.

#### [Funding and Financing](#)

In development for final draft.



## Appendix D. A Methodology for State Early Childhood Systems Gap Analysis

State governments are increasingly concerned with mapping the needs and addressing the gaps in public service systems. As such, many have been conducting early childhood needs assessments to determine state government goals and directions.<sup>70</sup> These assessments could also be understood as gap analyses, as they inventory services currently available to serve early childhood needs. Gap analyses of an early childhood system indicate a general capacity of a state government to service children. Results are presented in a manner to help policymakers build the structural and system capacity to address these needs.<sup>71</sup>

Measuring the needs of a public system such as early childhood is complicated. Documenting the capacity for a state to provide services across diverse geographic and demographic communities begins with documenting the types of services available in each area.<sup>72</sup> Current resources, as well as access to these resources (i.e. by location), enrollment and participation, and any sub-services in a given area must be inventoried.<sup>73</sup> Data collection typically includes elements that can document or highlight relationships between services provided and target populations by inventorying what is available, how much is used, and potential future demand.<sup>74</sup> Census data and population characteristics provide a basis for assessing the scope and reach of a state's system of services.<sup>75</sup> As available, statistics on children 0-5 are collected, including parent demographics such as race/ethnicity, education level, income, and health insurance coverage.<sup>76</sup> Once population characteristics and services are documented (differentiated by county, city, urban, or rural populations), services are examined by age and stage of early childhood development and whether these services fulfill a universal or specialized need.<sup>77</sup> Inventorying and documenting the services available across domains in this way can highlight the relationships between services provided to target populations and potential future demand.<sup>78</sup> Unfortunately, data for these types of analyses are not always available, and depend on state systems of data collection, reporting, and monitoring. The desired units of analysis for an initial early childhood system analysis are shown in Table 5.

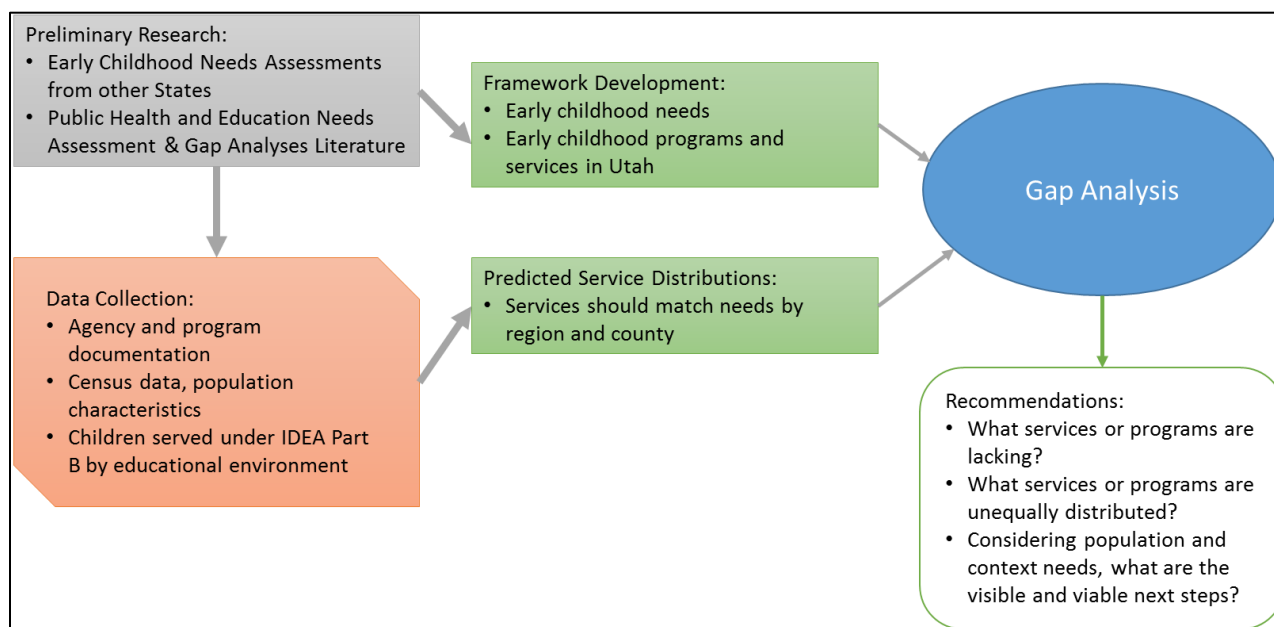
*Table 5. Desired Units of Analysis*

Type of Measure	Desired Level of Detail
Number of children needing early childhood services	By age
	By family income
	By family structure and work status
	By disability
	By geography (county)
Number of providers	By number of slots per age group
	By type of service provided
	By available capacity
	By geography (county)
Number of early childhood service slots	By child age
	By type of service
	By number of children served
	By geography (county)

### Analyses Conducted for this Report

The Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC) worked with the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) to refine a gap analysis plan for Utah based upon available data. Data collection and analyses were based on similar models used in public health, education, business and early childhood needs assessments conducted by other states (e.g., California, Oklahoma and Texas). Agency and program data were submitted to DWS and UEPC from a variety of government and non-governmental agencies serving the needs of children in the state. Information from these data was reviewed and compiled into an inventory. UEPC staff followed up with in-person meetings and interviews with key service providers to collect key program information. Demographic data was obtained from the Census Bureau and the University of Utah's Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, including age, education levels and health insurance coverage of children and families in Utah. UEPC staff also compiled data from the United Way's 2-1-1 program, and national sources such as the KIDS COUNT database and the U.S. Department of Education. Data were organized into four main domains: *Family Support and Safety, Health and Development, Early Learning and Economic Stability*. Services, resources and programs were coded by area of provision, capacity, location and ages served, as data allowed. See Figure 10 for a summary of the analysis process used in this report.

Figure 10. Utah's Early Childhood System Analysis Process.<sup>79</sup>



### Additional Analyses

The inventory and assessments provided in this report represent a review of the capacity of the state to serve the needs of early childhood care in Utah as a foundation for further analyses. Steps in a full-scale gap analysis include, first, a capacity scan for the services available for the public in a particular domain, followed by strategic data collection activities stratified across regions, areas with and without particular services, and family demographics (i.e. high versus low income families).<sup>80</sup> Specifically, parents of young children from a variety of geographic

locations should be solicited for input on what services they use that are available, what services they need that are not available, and their experiences in using particular services. Data is collected through focus groups, interviews and surveys. Target groups are selected based on stratified sampling techniques.<sup>81</sup>

The research for this report is able to document the various types of services available in Utah, and to some extent, the degree to which these services are used. Additional analyses could include surveying a sampling of parents and service providers from different counties and regions of Utah in order to assess how specifically the needs of parents and children are met by these services, and what additional services need to be provided.

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