Cultivating the Good Life for all of our children.



nebraska children™
AND FAMILIES FOUNDATION



The challenge we face

Nebraska's children, families, and communities are full of untapped potential. When we nurture this potential, everyone thrives. While public resources exist, they're limited in scope and access, and often available only after a crisis. Private organizations help but often struggle with funding and support to make widespread impact. By bridging these gaps, Nebraska Children helps create a vibrant network of support that empowers every individual and community to turn potential into progress.

The opportunity

Every child and family has the potential to thrive. There's no one-size-fits-all solution, but a holistic, strengths-based approach makes a lasting difference. By working together with families and communities, we co-create the foundation for lasting success.

When communities unite—schools, churches, healthcare providers, law enforcement, businesses, and families—we build a stronger foundation for everyone's success.

Strong families don't just mean healthier communities—they mean a stronger workforce. When families have the support they need, employees are more focused, productive, and able to stay and succeed where they live.





Building well-being

At Nebraska Children, we bring people together—families, communities, public agencies, and private partners—to create real, lasting change. Through a powerful approach called collective impact, we turn collaboration into action.

It all starts with listening. We work side by side with children, youth, and families to uncover their strengths and identify what they need to thrive. Then, we co-create flexible, community-led solutions—whether it's launching innovative programs or transforming outdated systems.

But our work doesn't end there. We stay engaged, measure progress, share what we learn, and celebrate every win. Because this isn't just about fixing problems—it's about unlocking potential and building a future where every child has the chance to succeed.

Nebraska Children exists not only because of the clear need for prevention in our state's well-being data but also because government is a poor substitute for family. Large, top-down approaches like the child welfare system are expensive, hard on families, and by design, become involved only *after* a crisis has happened. Nebraska Children believes in doing business a different way.

Our well-being model is based on the belief that everyone faces challenges and that providing support early, before challenges turn to crises, improves outcomes for children, adults, and communities. Communities lead the way and identify their own challenges and strengths with the funding, support, and encouragement of many partners.

From Omaha to the Panhandle

Nebraska Children partners with 20 community-led collaboratives across the state to strengthen families and build healthier communities. These collaboratives bring together local voices, organizations, and resources to identify service gaps, apply proven strategies, and create long-term solutions that aren't dependent on a single agency or funding source.

Instead of defaulting to law enforcement or Child Protective Services, families in need can access voluntary support through a community-based system focused on prevention and well-being.

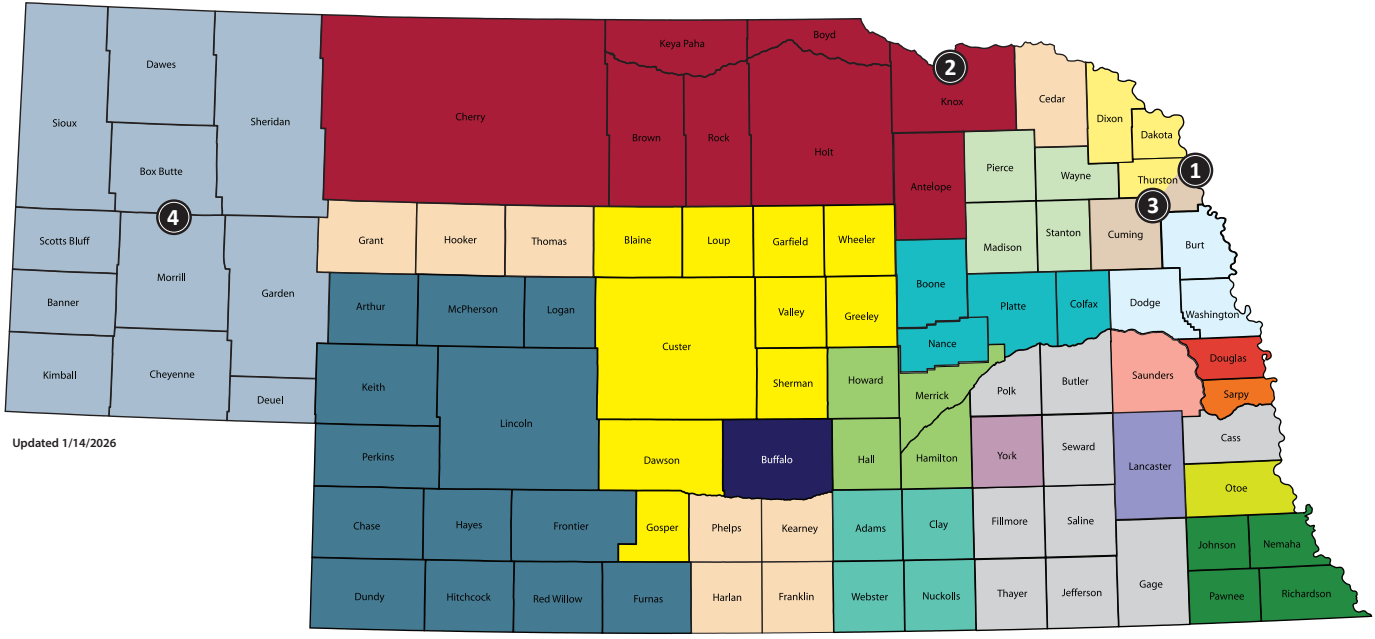
The impact is powerful: the majority of families who voluntarily engage in these services avoid involvement with the child welfare system—keeping families strong, supported, and together.

From 2018-2023, Nebraska received a federal Child Welfare Community Collaboration grant (CWCC). The goal of the CWCC grant was to standardize an accessible primary prevention system (in 5 targeted Douglas County zip codes with the highest rates of child removal) to build factors that buffer families from risk and offer services and supports to keep children safe and families together.

This pilot showed what's possible:

- 19% fewer referrals to Child Protective Services
- 17.8% drop in substantiated maltreatment cases
- 14.7% reduction in children removed from their homes.

Community-based supports meant fewer crises, fewer separations, and healthier families.



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Our Work

Bring Up Nebraska

Nebraska Children is proud to be the administrative lead for Bring Up Nebraska—a statewide prevention network that supports local community collaboratives that keep children safe, support strong parents, and help families address challenges before they become a crisis.

Our Initiatives

Each of Nebraska Children's initiatives is part of a larger well-being model. Initiatives can be connected to community collaboratives to address their needs and priorities.

Early Childhood

Sixpence Early Learning Fund

Sixpence provides support to parents of young children and early childhood caregivers so they can create safe, stimulating environments that spark learning through meaningful interaction. The fund, which braids public and private dollars, focuses on children ages 3 and under.

Rooted in Relationships

This initiative partners with communities to support the healthy social and emotional development of children ages 0–8. By empowering parents and other caregivers and strengthening early childhood mental health systems, we help children build strong relationships and cope with stress and adversity. Our work is grounded in proven, evidence-based practices that meet the real needs of kids and families.

Nebraska Growing Readers

NGR gives children from birth to age five access to books that spark curiosity, build early literacy, and inspire a lifelong love of reading. By encouraging caregivers to read together with their little ones, this initiative turns story time into a powerful start for lifelong learning.

In its successful pilot, NGR distributed over 900,000 books to Nebraska children.

School-age

Beyond School Bells

Beyond School Bells is a dynamic statewide partnership that brings schools and communities together to deliver high-quality afterschool and summer learning. We collaborate with a wide network of state and local partners to strengthen existing programs and launch new ones—especially in areas where they're needed most.

From hands-on STEM learning to real-world career exploration, we're reimagining what learning looks like—especially in rural communities. Recognized nationally for our innovative approach, Beyond School Bells is paving the way for the future of out-of-school learning.

Young Adults

Connected Youth Initiative

This youth-led, evidence-based initiative empowers young people with experience with foster care, juvenile justice, homelessness, or trafficking. Through Connected Youth Initiative programs, we help them build resilience, reach educational goals, find financial stability, and become active leaders in their communities.

Camp Catch-Up

This one-of-a-kind camp brings brothers and sisters (ages 8-19) from separate foster or adoptive homes together for a weekend of fun, adventure, and "catching up." It's a safe space where they can laugh, create lasting memories, and strengthen the ties that time and distance can't break.

You can help us build on the strengths of children, young adults, families, and communities across Nebraska.

Together, we can create a state where everyone can thrive.

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