



nebraskachildren  
AND FAMILIES FOUNDATION

Cultivating

the good Life

for all of our children



## OUR APPROACH

Social problems affecting children are complex, with multiple dimensions and interwoven causes: poverty, child abuse and neglect, mental health, homelessness, and foster care/child welfare. And no matter how well a nonprofit functions, it's just not possible for one entity to tackle it all. That's why Nebraska Children and Families Foundation works to support communities by bringing together public and private funds, data, talent, and proven practices to strength and unify the systems that serve their children and families.

Our work stems from two beliefs:

- Prevention works. It's the most effective and fiscally responsible approach for keeping a family's challenges from becoming a crisis.
- Focusing a community's resources toward a common goal will maximize their effectiveness.

## BIG SOLUTIONS NEED EVERYONE TO GET INVOLVED

At Nebraska Children, we're working to ensure that every child in our state has the resources they need to reach their full potential.

We know from experience that amazing things can happen when you rally all of a community's resources – schools and churches, service providers and health care professionals, law enforcement, businesses, government agencies, and especially parents and youth – around the common goal of strengthening families and fortifying children.

## A DIFFERENT APPROACH FOR IMPROVED RESULTS

We know that preventing a problem now is more effective and less expensive than fixing a crisis later on. That's how we work. Nebraska Children pulls entire communities together to better serve vulnerable families today, so their children will thrive in school, in life, and in Nebraska's workforce tomorrow.



  
**1993**

The U.S. Congress passed the Family Preservation and Support Act to make funding available to each state to build community-based prevention services aimed at keeping families together and keeping kids out of the foster care system.

**1995**

The Commission held town hall meetings across the state. Input from these meetings formed the basis of the plan, which included the creation of a nonprofit that would serve as a public-private partnership.

**1994**

Governor Ben Nelson asked the Commission for the Protection of Children to develop a plan for the development of prevention services.

**1997**

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation was established as a nonprofit corporation to serve as a public-private partnership to bring innovative solutions to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect.

**1998**

Nebraska Children began working with communities statewide to help them work collaboratively to develop supports and services for children and families.

**2001**

A network of statewide child abuse prevention councils called Prevent Child Abuse Nebraska was created. PCAN became a state chapter of PCA America in 2003.

**2002**

With assistance from Jim Casey Youth Opportunities, Nebraska Children formed Foster Youth Councils across the state to give young people a voice in the policies that affect them.

Nebraska Children's work to develop Expanded Learning Opportunities outside the traditional school day began as a means to help close the achievement gap. Today this initiative is called Beyond School Bells.

**2006**

Nebraska Children played a key role in the creation of the Sixpence Early Learning Fund, a public-private endowment that funds statewide early childhood education experiences for babies and toddlers at risk.

**2007**

Nebraska Children convened older youth in foster care as well as service providers and community stakeholders to develop what is now known as Project Everlast. This groundbreaking model for helping unconnected youth is now expanding statewide.

**2013**

Nebraska Children added early childhood mental health work to the prevention portfolio with Rooted in Relationships, working with communities to train early childhood caregivers on helping children meet social-emotional development milestones.

**2016**

After a Lincoln Vital Signs report detailed the city's strengths and challenges, Early Childhood became one of the focuses for improvement. Nebraska Children became the backbone organization for this work. Nebraska Children also became a partner in implementing a behavioral health System of Care.

**2015**

A Social Innovation Fund grant made it possible to expand our successful older youth work to rural communities across Nebraska.

**2017**

Nebraska Children celebrates 20 years of positive change by working closely with national, state, and local partners to implement Nebraska's new prevention initiative – Bring Up Nebraska.



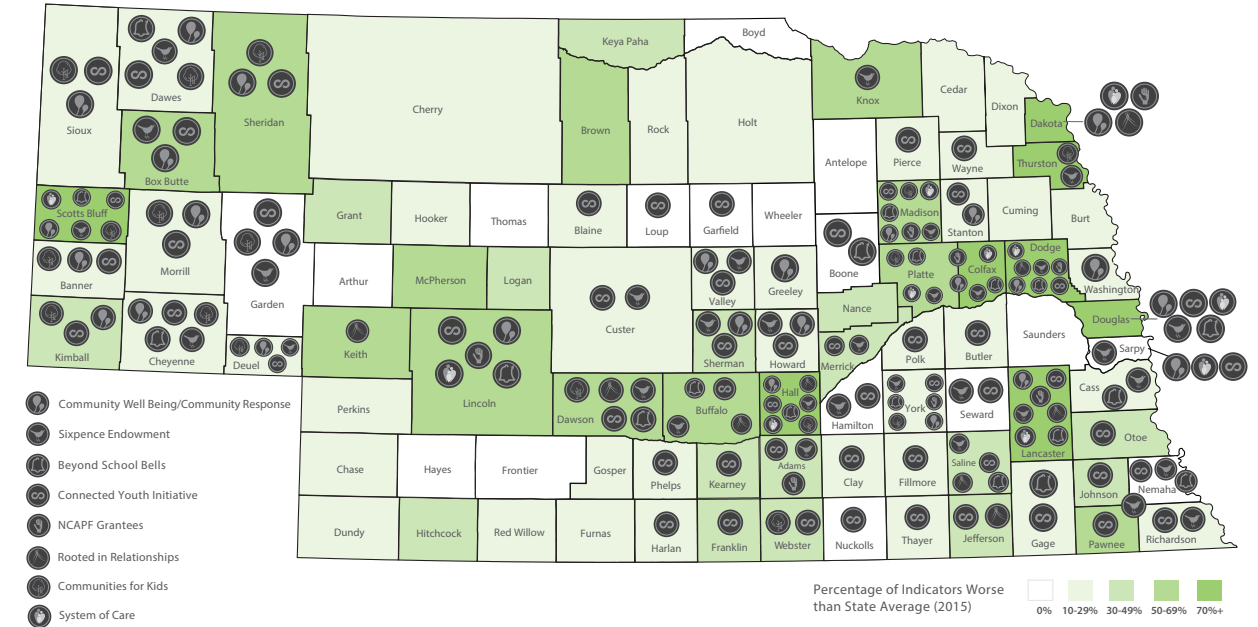


## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Nebraska Children's collaborative approach is designed to tackle the complex issues that put children and families at risk. Our programs are preventive in nature, designed to keep children from needlessly entering the child welfare and criminal justice systems.

The map to the right shows our presence across the state and the community collaboratives we work with. The collaboratives are prevention-focused and community-owned, working toward strengthening vulnerable children and families. From Omaha to the Panhandle, we're using proven approaches to:

- Prevent child abuse and neglect
- Coach parents how to be their child's first and best teacher
- Create early learning environments that prepare children to succeed in school
- Eliminate the achievement gap for low-income students with high-quality afterschool and summer learning opportunities
- Help unconnected youth become productive, independent adults





Nebraska Children evaluates the landscape of issues facing vulnerable families based on key risk indicators, including:

- Juvenile arrests
- Poverty
- Graduation rate
- Infant deaths
- Number of state wards
- Child abuse and neglect
- Births to teen parents
- English as a second language
- Reading proficiency at third grade
- Number of single-parent households

With this data, Nebraska Children finds the areas of greatest need, where the community is ready to engage in a collaborative initiative and where outside support and investments will maximize the difference made to the community's children. From there, we review and determine what investments should be leveraged for the greatest benefit.

## THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Communities are best situated and most motivated to identify their own challenges and create solutions.

By forming local community collaboratives where anyone and any organization interested in being engaged is invited to the table, we are able to utilize every resource we have available to magnify the positive change for families. Collaboratives can identify gaps in services, be innovative in engaging families, and use the latest strategies and data to develop long-term plans that maximize resources – plans that aren't reliant on one person or one funding source.

The result is a community-based collaboration that strengthens the efforts of all contributing parties. And the collective impact of having everyone working together means there are alternatives to calling law enforcement or Child Protective Services (CPS) when a family has a problem.

Nebraska Children brings the data to get community stakeholders reading from the same playbook, the facilitation to guide everyone in the right direction, the proven practices to move the needle, the measurement tools to make sure everything is working, and the funding that makes sustained action possible.

The results – like the collaborative process – are transformative to Nebraska's communities:

- Fewer child neglect and abuse cases
- Fewer children entering governmental systems
- Greater school success
- Thriving families
- Brighter futures for Nebraska's children

## OUR WORK

Each of our initiatives is part of a larger prevention portfolio. Initiatives can be plugged into community collaboratives to address specific issues along the cradle-to-career spectrum.

### CRADLE TO CAREER

#### Bring Up Nebraska/Community Response

Bring Up Nebraska is a statewide prevention initiative designed to give local community collaboratives the ability to develop plans using the latest strategies and data to prevent life's complications from becoming a crisis for many Nebraska families and children.

Community Response is one way community collaboratives strengthen families and enhance community well-being without the intervention of the child welfare system. By

working within communities and bringing all of their strengths and services together in a coordinated way, families can be supported before challenges become a crisis.

Participants in a Community Response are nonprofit service providers, doctors, mental health practitioners, schools, churches, transportation and housing services, and utility companies. The goal is to give families what they need to thrive so they can stay together, remain self-sufficient, and support the health and learning of their children.

#### System of Care

System of Care is a framework for coordinating behavioral health services and supports for youth and their families who are dealing with a behavioral health challenge.

A System of Care connects and coordinates the work of State child-serving agencies, nonprofits, local governments, behavioral health care providers, families, and patient advocates. It helps children, youth, and families function better at home, in school, in the community, and throughout life.

### 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 focuses on at-risk children ages 3 and

under, ensuring that our most vulnerable kids have the best start possible.

#### Rooted in Relationships

This initiative partners with communities to enhance the social-emotional development of children, ages 0-8 by supporting caregivers including childcare providers, and enhancing early childhood mental health community systems. Social-emotional development is vital to the health and well-being of children so they can positively interact with others and learn how to deal with stress and adversity. Rooted in Relationships promotes the use of evidence-based practices that support the social-emotional needs of children and families.

### Prosper Lincoln

Prosper Lincoln is a community initiative/agenda that was developed with broad community input and support after the release of the Lincoln Vital Signs report. Prosper Lincoln is a response designed to improve the prosperity for all Lincoln residents with a focus on those most in need. Prosper Lincoln has a three-pillar approach: Early Childhood, Employment Skills, and Innovation/Entrepreneurship. Nebraska Children is the backbone organization for Prosper Lincoln's Early Childhood work.

### Communities for Kids

Communities for Kids aims to partner with communities' public and private entities to support and coordinate planning for access to high-quality early care and education for all

children from birth through age 8. These partnerships will be customized to address each community's unique assets and needs – so each community can grow and prosper well into the future.

## MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

### Beyond School Bells

Beyond School Bells is a statewide public-private partnership that supports sustainable, high-quality school-community collaborations that provide youth with the expanded learning opportunities they need to be successful in school and in life.

## TEEN/YOUNG ADULTHOOD

### Connected Youth Initiative/Project Everlast

This innovative, youth-led program has achieved success addressing the policies affecting youth aging out of foster care or otherwise disconnected from family support. These initiatives work to remove barriers that keep unconnected youth from achieving permanence, educational achievement, employment, housing, physical and mental health, personal and community engagement, and economic success.

### Camp Catch-Up

This unique camp allows siblings (ages 8-19) who have been placed in different foster or adoptive homes to reunite and “catch up” during a weekend of fun, adventure, and connection. We give them a safe, exciting weekend together to share memories, laugh, and rekindle their bond.

“To expect real change without this infrastructure is akin to planting a field and expecting it to grow without water and sunlight. Nebraska Children and Families Foundation is unique because they objectively provide support for collaborative work while ensuring that authentic voices of vulnerable children and families are consistently heard.”

–Kristin Williams,  
The Sherwood Foundation



# PREVENTION IN ACTION

## JILL'S STORY

Jill was referred to Community Response from the Bellevue area. She had no electric service, no working refrigerator, and was having problems providing payments toward school fees for her son to participate in marching band. She was maintaining food for her three children by purchasing fast food daily and going to the local convenience store for snacks.

### Community Response (CR)

After meeting with this family, CR provided the family with the utility assistance needed to restore the electric service and was able to get the bill to a zero balance. CR also purchased a new refrigerator so the family could maintain and store perishable food items in the home. The CR central navigator, along with school personnel, worked together with the family

to help with participation in fundraisers and other resources within the school to help with school fees needed for band.

This family also participated in ongoing financial education to help with household budgeting. The navigator met regularly with Jill to introduce some new tools to help with maintaining their overall household budget. This family has maintained their household expenses without any additional assistance for more than six months.

## CAROLE'S STORY

Carole was a mother fleeing domestic violence. She and her two teenage children took a Greyhound bus to Nebraska, where Carole had a sister. She was told her family could stay with the sister until they were able to get their own place.

Carole was able to find employment at a fast food restaurant. After Carole received her first paycheck, the sister put the family out and they were forced to live in an extended-stay motel.

During this upheaval, Carole's son was hurt playing football at high school and had to walk to school on crutches. Carole had no health insurance, so the son had not received ongoing care as recommended by the emergency room staff. Community Response received a referral for Carole's family from the public school.

### Community Response (CR)

When the CR navigator began working with the family, they were in need of food and could only afford a few more days at the motel. The family was approved for rent and deposit assistance for an apartment. The public school and a church provided some furniture, household items, and food.

After the family got settled in their new apartment, the navigator worked with Carole to get public benefits. Within a few weeks, the family was receiving SNAP (formerly food stamps) and then the children were approved for Medicaid.

Carole soon found a better job, which improved their financial situation. The family has maintained housing for more than 180 days, and the children now have access to health care.





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