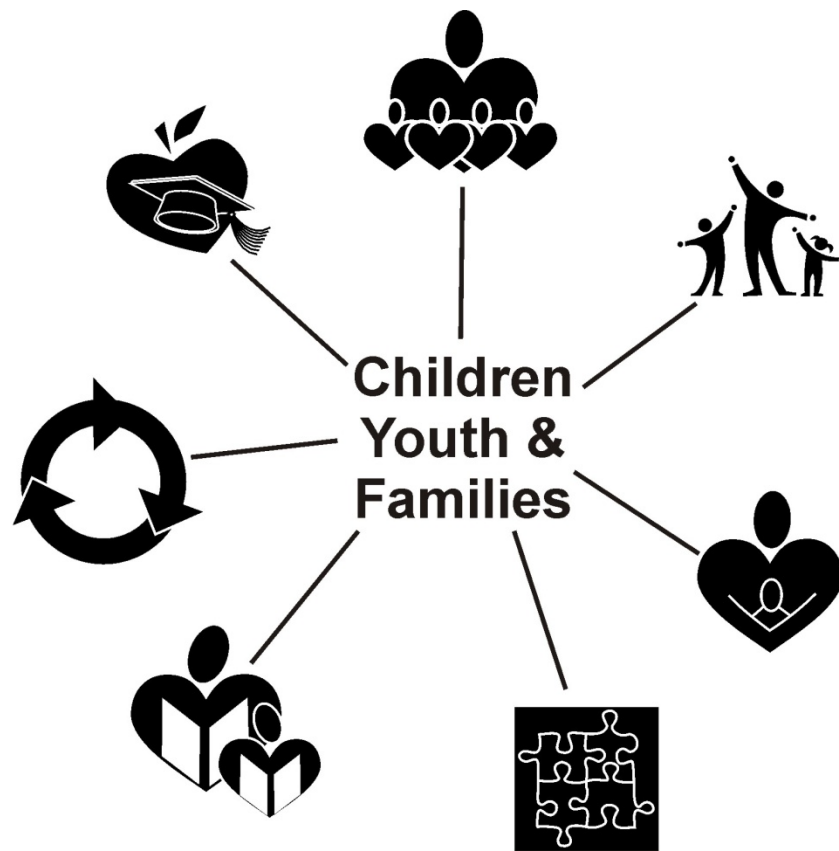




# Children, Youth, and Families Program Review and Needs Assessment

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension  
Western Area



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Western Area**

Jackie Reilly, M.S., Youth Development Specialist  
Dan Weigel, Ph.D., Human Development Specialist  
William Evans, Ph.D., Youth Development Specialist  
Sally Martin, Ph.D., CFLE, Human Development and Family Life Specialist

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# Program Review and Needs Assessment of Programs for Children, Youth, and Families

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# **Executive Overview**

## **Program Review and Needs Assessment of Programs for Children, Youth, and Families**

### **University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, Western Area**

#### **Introduction**

The University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) has a long history of helping Nevadans address critical needs throughout the state. To ensure that we are still on target with our educational efforts we periodically conduct reviews of our outreach efforts. This report summarizes the findings of a recent program review of our educational efforts addressing needs of children, youth and families in western Nevada. A similar review was completed in 1998 (Reilly, Behal, & Weigel, 1998).

#### **UNCE Mission**

UNCE is one of the primary outreach arms of the University of Nevada and part of the national Cooperative Extension System. The Cooperative Extension System encompasses a broad network of national, state, and local efforts with a mission to discover, develop, disseminate, preserve and use knowledge to strengthen the social, economic, and environmental well-being of communities nationwide. In Nevada, with local needs at the forefront, we develop educational programs in a number of ways – public presentations, workshops, demonstrations, publications and through the media. We also initiate a number of collaborative community efforts to solve local problems and deal with critical issues.

By identifying critical issues, UNCE can provide support and direction in resolving the needs of the community, both directly through programming and indirectly through a cooperative effort with other community-based organizations. Educational programs alone may not address every community need and organizations other than UNCE may better address some issues.

#### **Programmatic Priorities**

To accomplish our mission in Nevada, UNCE has developed a team structure that facilitates community-based, educational programming. One such state team focuses on critical needs and issues for children, youth and families (CYF). In 2004, that team completed a statewide program planning process that has helped to define and shape educational programming activities across the state (Martin & Evans, 2004). From that process seven key statewide priorities for CYF programs were identified:

- Early Care and Education
- Family and Intergenerational Literacy
- Parenting Education
- Youth Development
- Capacity Building
- Juvenile Justice and Delinquency
- School Retention and Job Readiness

Community educational programming related to these program priorities is not offered in all areas of the state. Additionally, educational programs are at various stages of maturity (some

educational program activities are just starting or are in pilot stages; others have developed complimentary components and are actively being replicated at additional sites).

These statewide educational priorities helped to shape the current CYF educational program priorities in the Western Nevada Extension Area (Carson City, Douglas, Storey, and Washoe counties).

## **Overview of this Report**

This report consists of an overview of the status of our Western Area CYF programs, including:

- current educational programming, including current staffing, future program directions, accomplishments, key collaborators, summary of strengths and limitations
- future educational programming, including unmet needs, and resources needed for programming
- conclusion

In the Appendixes readers will find a brief explanation of the educational philosophy which guides UNCE CYF programming as well as detailed analyses on the status of each CYF programming priority in the Western Area. The program priority summaries include:

- an overview of the situation, including a definition of each priority, a brief description of its corresponding research base, and statistics related to the priority within western Nevada,
- descriptions of specific CYF educational program activities linked to the priority, as well as a list of the programmatic resources and collaborators that help make the programming possible,
- a synthesis and discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the current programming related to each priority, potential additional directions, and current and future resource needs.

## **Current Educational Programming**

The following section gives a picture of our current educational programming. Included in this section are:

- Program staffing
- Current status
- Program direction
- Program accomplishments
- Collaborators
- Strengths
- Limitations
- Unmet needs
- Resources

Table 1 includes a brief description, needs addressed by each program, the staff working on each program and the planned programming direction for the near future of UNCE CYF programs offered in western Nevada. The programs are grouped by program priorities:

- Early Care and Education
- Family and Intergenerational Literacy
- Parenting Education
- Youth Development
- Capacity Building
- Juvenile Justice and Delinquency
- School Retention and Job Readiness

### **CYF program staffing in the Western Area**

Both faculty and program staff work on CYF outreach education. Some employees are in positions with stable funding and some are supported by grant or other less stable funding. It should be noted that this summary does not include Extension Educators or State Specialists who support programming. There are a total of four Western Area CYF faculty and eight staff working in four of the seven CYF program priority areas, with fluctuating numbers of grant funded staff.

### **CYF program status and direction in the Western Area**

Programming direction is based on community needs assessments as well as mandates from federal, state, university and county entities. Additionally, programming is dependent on external funding. Please see individual program priority documents for further details of specific programs. Tables 1-4 present a summary of current program status and direction of program areas, based on programming goals of area faculty and staff. All of the tables are organized by program priority areas and provides a brief description of each program within the priority area, the needs addressed by the program, the staff working on each program and the expected future program direction. Table 1 provides program information about Early Care and Education, Table 2 Family and Intergenerational Literacy, Table 3 Parenting Education and Table 4 Youth Development programs. More detailed information about each program priority area and each program can be found in the Appendixes.

- Although not depicted in Tables 1-4, some educational programs have been phased out, transitioned to other agencies, or are on hold waiting needed resources. These programs are identified in the detailed program priority reviews in the Appendixes.

Definitions of the terms used in Tables 1-4 under Program Direction are as follows:

- Maintain – these programs will continue as programming is currently being presented and conducted and/or expanded as funding and cost recovery allows
- Modify – these programs will be modified in some manner. Modifications might include adding a new audience which may require modifications to fit the program to the new audience, further refinement or development, expansion to other areas, or other changes in delivery.

**Table 1: Early Care and Education  
Children, Youth and Families, Western Area \***

<b>Early Care and Education</b>	<b>UNCE Programs</b>	<b>Needs Addressed by UNCE Program</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Program Direction</b>
	<b>Child Care Nevada and western Nevada</b> (research-based in-service education for caregivers through four mechanisms: 1) workshops presented across the state, 2) self-study modules available through libraries, 3) online materials, and 4) train-the-trainer opportunities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing training (professional development) for child care providers.</li> <li>• Foster quality care environments for Nevada’s children.</li> <li>• Create affordable, accessible, research-based training for child care providers</li> </ul>	Karen Mack Jackie Reilly Dan Weigel	Maintain
	<b>Caring 4 Kids</b> (self-study modules for child care providers available at libraries and Cooperative Extension offices throughout the state)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing training (professional development) for child care providers.</li> <li>• Foster quality care environments for Nevada’s children</li> </ul>	Karen Mack Jackie Reilly Dan Weigel	Maintain
	<b>Choosing Child and Infant Care</b> (checklists for parents to use to select quality infant and child care)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create ability for parents to identify quality infant and child care.</li> <li>• Provide parenting education regarding quality child care</li> </ul>	Dan Weigel	Maintain
	<b>Child Abuse Prevention</b> (training and curricula for caregivers to learn to recognize and report suspicions of child maltreatment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training for caregivers to recognized, respond to and report suspicions of child maltreatment</li> <li>• Support fulfillment of mandatory reporting requirements</li> </ul>	Jackie Reilly	Maintain

\* Extension Educators JoAnne Skelly and Steve Lewis, State Specialists Sally Martin, Bill Evans, Julie Brown and Karen Spears provide support for and work on various programs.



**Table 2: Family and Intergenerational Literacy  
Children, Youth and Families, Western Area \***

	<b>UNCE Community Programs</b>	<b>Critical Needs Addressed by Program</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Program Direction</b>
<b>Family and Intergenerational Literacy</b>	<b>The Family Storyteller</b> (a six-week parent-child early literacy program designed to enrich the literacy development of young children.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the amount and quality of time parents and young children spend together in literacy activities.</li> <li>• Target those families that may have limited language skills and few children's books at home.</li> <li>• Encourage parents to take an active role in the development of their children</li> <li>• Improve children's school readiness skills</li> </ul>	Yovanna Estep Dan Weigel	Maintain
	<b>Family Storyteller for English Language Learners</b> (for Spanish-speaking parents who are specifically interested in gaining English skills as well as helping enrich their young children's development and school readiness.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve English skills of parents and children.</li> <li>• Increase the amount and quality of time parents and young children spend together in literacy activities.</li> <li>• Target those families that may have limited language skills and few children's books at home.</li> <li>• Encourage parents to take an active role in the development of their children</li> <li>• Improve children's school readiness skills</li> </ul>	Yovanna Estep Dan Weigel	Maintain
	<b>Cuentos En Familia:</b> (version of Family Storyteller with the books, videos, and materials for families all in Spanish.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the amount and quality of time Spanish-speaking parents and young children spend together in literacy activities.</li> <li>• Target those Spanish-speaking families that may have limited language skills and few children's books at home.</li> <li>• Encourage Spanish-speaking parents to take an active role in the development of their children</li> <li>• Improve Spanish-speaking children's school readiness skills</li> </ul>	Yovanna Estep Dan Weigel	Modify
	<b>Native American Family Storyteller Project:</b> (version of Family Storyteller with the books and materials developed specifically for Native American families.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster greater cultural awareness for Native American families</li> <li>• Increase the amount and quality of time parents and young children spend together in literacy activities.</li> <li>• Encourage parents to take an active role in the development of their children</li> <li>• Improve children's school readiness skills</li> </ul>	Dan Weigel	Modify

\*Extension Educators JoAnne Skelly and Steve Lewis, State Specialists Sally Martin, Bill Evans, Julie Brown and Karen Spears provide support for and work on various programs.

**Table 3: Parenting Education  
Children, Youth and Families, Western Area\***

	<b>UNCE Community Programs</b>	<b>Critical Needs Addressed by Program</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Program Direction</b>
<b>Parenting Education</b>	<b>Just In Time Parenting/Little Lives</b> (an age-paced newsletter series that provides practical parenting information for parents with children from birth to 36 months.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide research-based, timely parenting information to parents with young children</li> <li>• Provide support and reassurance to parents with young children</li> <li>• Offer low-cost method to reach a large number of parents with young children</li> <li>• Reduce potential for child abuse and neglect</li> </ul>	Dan Weigel	Maintain
	<b>Fun to Play</b> (a series of weekly parent/child group sessions aimed at improving the parenting skills of adolescent and other young parents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the amount of enriching learning activities and interaction they provide their young children.</li> <li>• Target families in which children are at risk for developmental delays and later school difficulties due to the young age, inexperience, or limited resources of parents.</li> <li>• Foster healthy early development of children in at-risk homes.</li> <li>• Encourage parents to take an active role in the development of their children</li> </ul>	Marilyn Morton Dan Weigel	Maintain
	<b>In Support of Parents</b> (over two dozen parenting brochures and pamphlets have been developed and are distributed to parents through a variety of collaborating agencies and organizations.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide research-based parenting information to parents with young children</li> <li>• Provide support and reassurance to parents with young children</li> <li>• Offer low-cost method to reach a large number of parents with young children</li> </ul>	Dan Weigel	Maintain

\* Extension Educators JoAnne Skelly and Steve Lewis, State Specialists Sally Martin, Bill Evans, Julie Brown and Karen Spears provide support for and work on various programs.

**Table 4: Youth Development  
Children, Youth and Families, Western Area \***

	<b>UNCE Programs</b>	<b>Needs Addressed by UNCE Programs</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Program Direction</b>
<b>Youth Development</b>	<b>4-H Afterschool</b> (educational positive youth development programming offered in afterschool programs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide positive youth development experiences</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for engagement in learning</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for youth to contribute to the well-being of the larger community</li> <li>• Provide opportunities to learn positive life skills, including science, engineering, technology, civic engagement, leadership and healthy living</li> </ul>	Jim Barcellos Sarah Chvilicek Shannon Montana Maureen O'Brien Jackie Reilly Adrienne Sawyer Cindy Smullen Sandra Wallin 4-H AfterSchool staff**	Maintain **
	<b>4-H Clubs and Groups</b> (educational positive youth development programming offered in out-of-school time settings, in clubs or other groupings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide positive youth development experiences</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for engagement in learning</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for youth to contribute to the well-being of the larger community</li> <li>• Provide opportunities to learn positive life skills, including science, engineering, technology, civic engagement, leadership and healthy living</li> </ul>	Jim Barcellos Sarah Chvilicek Shannon Montana Maureen O'Brien Adrienne Sawyer Cindy Smullen Sandra Wallin	Maintain
	<b>Professional Development for Youth Workers</b> (training, networking and professional development opportunities for youth workers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer professional development for youth workers</li> <li>• Increase awareness of the impact and need for quality out-of-school-time activities for youth.</li> <li>• Increase awareness of child maltreatment and mandatory reporting requirements</li> </ul>	Sarah Chvilicek Maureen O'Brien Jackie Reilly Cindy Smullen	Maintain
	<b>Special Interest, such as camp, Leadership Laboratory</b> (educational positive youth development programming offered in out-of-school time settings, including camps and other short-term formats)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide positive youth development experiences</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for engagement in learning</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for youth to contribute to the well-being of the larger community</li> <li>• Provide opportunities to learn positive life skills, including science, engineering, technology, civic engagement, leadership and healthy living</li> </ul>	Jim Barcellos Sarah Chvilicek Shannon Montana Maureen O'Brien Adrienne Sawyer Cindy Smullen Sandra Wallin	Maintain

	<b>Nutrition In the Garden: Grow Yourself Healthy</b> (a school-based program teaching nutrition and gardening skills and knowledge with a positive youth development and community building focus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for engagement in learning</li> <li>• Encourage family engagement in youth learning</li> <li>• Increase healthy nutrition awareness</li> <li>• Provide positive youth development experiences</li> </ul>	Marlene Rebori Jackie Reilly Kerry Seymour Nutrition Community Based Instructors**	Maintain **
	<b>Policy Education and Civic Engagement</b> (PEACE) (a five week interactive and participatory social studies curriculum for middle school students)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for engagement in learning</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for learning positive life skills, including civic engagement and leadership</li> <li>• Provide positive youth development experiences</li> </ul>	Marlene Rebori	Modify

\* Extension Educators JoAnne Skelly and Steve Lewis, State Specialists Sally Martin, Bill Evans, Julie Brown and Karen Spears provide support for and work on various programs.

\*\* Level of programming and staffing are dependent on funding availability.

As can be seen UNCE offers programs in four of the seven priority areas – Early Care and Education, Family and Intergenerational Literacy, Parenting Education, and Youth Development. We do not offer community education programs in western Nevada that directly address the needs and issues related to Capacity Building, Juvenile Justice, and School Retention and Job Readiness. Several of our programs in other priorities, however, do indirectly touch on issues related to these three areas. Further discussion of these issues can be found in the pertinent detailed reports in the Appendixes. There is no area faculty or staff directly devoted to Capacity Building, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency or School Retention and Job Readiness programming.

## Accomplishments

The CYF team in western Nevada has reached large numbers of participants who gained skills and knowledge and made changes in their lives as a result of programming efforts. This section summarizes those accomplishments documented between 1998 and 2008 in four program areas: early care and education, family and intergenerational literacy, parenting education, and youth development. Refer to individual program reports for detailed accounts.

### Since 1998, the Western Area CYF team has reached...

- more than 52,000 children and youth
- more than 18,000 parents
- more than 1,900 adolescent and other high-risk parents with young children
- more than 500 Spanish speaking families
- more than 100 Native American families

**We have increased...**

- the language and literacy skills of preschool-aged children
- the language and literacy skills of Spanish-speaking parents
- the amount of time parents and their young children read books together
- the knowledge and skills of parents in reading books with their children
- the enjoyment of and interest of parents and children in reading together
- the number of literacy and language enrichment activities done in the home
- the frequency of parents talking with their children about things that relate to money
- the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of parents with infants and toddlers
- the quality of care given to infants and toddlers
- the amounts of time adolescent parents play with, talk to, sing with, and provide learning activities for their babies
- the self-confidence of adolescent parents
- the odds against the occurrence of child maltreatment
- the skill and knowledge of caregivers and youth workers to recognize and report suspicions of child maltreatment
- the ability of youth serving agencies and child care centers to provide child abuse recognition and reporting of suspicions of child maltreatment training for staff
- the life skills of youth and leaders involved in 4-H Club programs
- the social skills and reading scores of children in our afterschool programs
- the knowledge and skills of child care providers in providing higher quality child care settings for young children
- the knowledge and skills of school age care providers in providing higher quality afterschool program settings

**We have trained...**

- 1,330 adult and youth volunteers
- 7,300 child care providers
- 570 school age care providers
- 270 early literacy workshop facilitators
- 95 parenting education mentors and volunteers
- 1,180 child care and youth workers about recognition and reporting suspected child maltreatment

**We have provided...**

- more than 8,900 low-income school age youth with educational afterschool care

**Our educational materials have been adopted and used in...**

- 39 states
- 12 countries

**Our educational programs have received...**

- 8 awards
- National recognition

**We have obtained...**

- \$3,700,000 of additional funding to support our CYF programs and research

**We have published...**

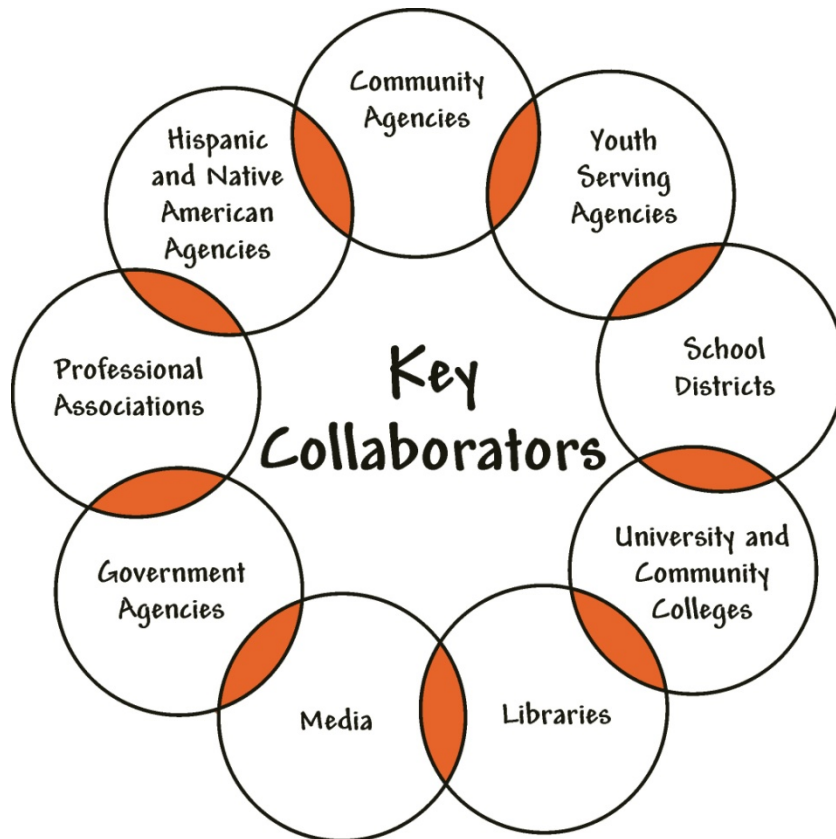
- 23 curricula
- 7 bulletins and special publications
- 13 fact sheets
- 9 audio video materials
- 8 Internet resources
- 4 programmatic Web pages
- 29 journal articles
- 6 book chapters
- 15 edited newsletter articles

**We have made...**

- 70 presentations at national and international conferences

**Key collaborators of Children, Youth and Family educational programs**

Educational programs such as those developed and offered by Cooperative Extension enlist the collaboration of various community agencies. This collaboration creates stronger, more effective community programs and at times allows access to target audiences. Collaboration includes development, implementation and evaluation of programs as well as funding, both in-kind and fiscal support. Numerous organizations and agencies, both private and public, for profit and not-for-profit are collaborators in our educational programs. The types of collaborating agencies and organizations are represented in the following graphic. For a detailed list of specific collaborators please see individual program documents in the Appendixes.



## **Strengths and limitations of current Children, Youth and Family educational programs**

There are both strengths and limitations to UNCE CYF programming in the Western Area. The following is a summary of strengths and limitations for all CYF programming regardless of priority.

### **Strengths**

- We have multifaceted programs to reach a variety of families, including in-depth workshops, ongoing club activities, school enrichment, publications, newsletters, Internet, and the media.
- Our educational programs are reaching at-risk families.
- We are involved in numerous collaborations, to both broaden and strengthen the impact of our educational programming.
- We have a long history and commitment to improving the lives of children, youth and families in western Nevada.
- We have a link with the University to bring resources and expertise to bear on critical issues in local communities.
- Our teaching programs have a strong research and evaluation base.
- We have high-quality, dedicated staff.
- Our teaching materials and curricula have been nationally peer-reviewed, are recognized for their excellence, and are being purchased by Extension systems across the country.

### **Limitations**

- Our programming has only reached a limited number of children and families compared to the potential number who could be involved in our programs.
- We have a lack of teaching materials and staff to fully reach nonnative speaking caregivers.
- There is an uneven distribution of our programs for children, youth and families throughout western Nevada, meaning that not all of our programs are equally reaching families in Carson City, Douglas, Storey and Washoe counties; the bulk of the effort has been directed at Washoe County.
- There is a lack of stable funding to provide consistent, ongoing delivery of educational programs throughout western Nevada.
- More program resources, greater participant contacts, and more staff training are required as programs seek to address the needs of higher risk audiences, and participant numbers often decline as a result.
- There are several critical issues we do not adequately address, such as capacity building, and juvenile justice, as well as school retention and job readiness. This is due to a lack of staff and resources, not because needs in these priority areas are low.

## Future Educational Programming

### Children, Youth and Family needs and resource requirements

Despite the efforts of UNCE and other community agencies, several needs remain. Table 5 lists some of the key needs and identifies the resources required for UNCE CYF programming in the Western Area to more fully address the issues. In Table 5 the unmet needs and the resources needed are listed in order of priority, based on the potential impact and funding required to provide educational programs. Additional program staffs to deliver programs which have been shown to have a measurable impact, such as Family Storyteller or child caregiver training, are the best use of fiscal and staff resources. The changing demographics of our area indicate that we need to provide more programming in a language that is understandable (Spanish) to our communities. Given the rate of school dropouts and high juvenile delinquency rates in our area, a new faculty member to focus on those issues is warranted. Other program priorities can continue to provide some parenting education and capacity building until such time as funding is available for a strong focus on these priorities. Greater detail by priority can be found in the in-depth priority summaries found in the Appendixes.

**Table 5: Unmet needs and resources needed for Western Area CYF programming**

Unmet Needs	Resources Needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are still a large number of families that could benefit from UNCE educational programs but have not been reached.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional teaching staff to reach a greater number of families.</li> <li>• Stable and reliable funding for teaching staff—full-time and part-time—in all counties in western Nevada.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With the ever-expanding numbers of families in western Nevada with English as a second language, there is a need to target programs specifically for these populations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff to focus on programs for nonnative speaking communities and support for existing staff to become bilingual.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current CYF programs do not directly address major issues such as teen suicide, school retention, job readiness and juvenile justice. Parenting education is being addressed only on a limited basis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty and infrastructure to focus on               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Juvenile Justice</li> <li>- School Retention and Job Readiness</li> <li>- Parenting Education</li> <li>- Capacity Building</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased CYF efforts are needed that target many at-risk subpopulations and nontraditional audiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater diversity among CYF staff.</li> <li>• A specialist focusing on diversity and nontraditional audiences.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term contact over a period of time is needed to have the desired impact of changing behavior and increasing quality of life through education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional teaching staff to reach a greater number of children, youth and families over sustained periods of time.</li> <li>• Stable and reliable funding for teaching staff—full-time and part-time—in all counties in western Nevada.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With a few exceptions, the bulk of CYF educational programs occur in Washoe County.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stable and reliable funding for teaching staff—full-time and part-time—in all counties in western Nevada.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although collaboration among agencies is</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuation and enhancement of collaborative efforts</li> </ul>



occurring, even greater efforts are needed to meet the needs of families in western Nevada.	to address priority needs of children, youth and families.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With the increasing number of youth and families adopting new technologies, there is a need to take greater advantage of these technologies to reach a larger number of children, youth and families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater investment of time, training and resources in the use of emerging technologies in educational programs.</li> <li>• Educational technology specialist.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a need for increased public awareness around the critical issues faced by families in western Nevada.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater time and effort directed toward social marketing campaigns aimed at priority CYF issues.</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

The purpose of this report was to present a program review of UNCE educational efforts addressing needs of children, youth and families in western Nevada, to identify strengths and limitations of those programming efforts, and to identify needs and future directions. Our educational programs have focused primarily in four priority areas—early care and education, family and intergenerational literacy, parenting education, and youth development. Three additional program priority areas were identified – capacity building, juvenile justice, and school retention/hob readiness. However we have little direct educational programming in these program areas. As can be seen in the preceding in-depth reviews, much has been accomplished by CYF faculty and staff over the past several years.

Although the Western Area CYF team continues to make strong contributions to the health and well-being of the audiences and communities our programs serve, it is clear that many needs remain. Currently, not all CYF programs are available in all Western Area communities due to limited staff and resources. In addition, emerging needs and issues not identified among the current statewide CYF programming priorities will continue to push Western Area faculty into developing creative ways to help address them. Difficult programming choices will continue, with staff availability, expertise, and organizational mission, linked with community needs and assets, helping to inform those decisions. This program review, however, has reinforced the notion that the Western Area CYF team should continue to build on current thematic program strengths, which will establish signature programming that can help garner resources, enhance programmatic competency, and build staff expertise. Based on this program review and needs assessment given additional resources our first priority would be to strengthen existing programs, building on our strengths and support of signature programs. The second priority would be to add an adolescent specialist faculty position to develop and support programming to address school retention and juvenile justice programming. The type of additional resources would impact the type of programming we would be able to provide.

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# Appendixes



# Statement of Educational Philosophy

## UNCE Children Youth and Family Western Area

In developing, implementing and evaluating our educational programs, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) Children, Youth and Family (CYF) faculty and staff have adopted an educational philosophy upon which our efforts are based. Consistent with current research and best practice models of youth development and family life education (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Kirby & Cole, 1997; Little, 2004; Martin, S. & Evans, B., 2004; Wright & Bersamin, 2002), the Western Area CYF programming strives to:

- Promote active involvement of citizens and stakeholders in identifying and addressing the needs of children, youth, and families in their own communities.
- Take a community-based, holistic approach to developing educational programs that provide children, youth and parents with intensive, long-term educational experiences.
- Provide safe learning environments for children, youth and families.
- Provide research-based programs designed to meet the needs of diverse audiences.
- Bolster resiliency and facilitate asset development.
- Instill community collaboration to address the needs of children, youth and families.
- Solicit and value diversity.
- Address complex issues which place children and families at risk.

The adoption of these educational values has brought challenges for UNCE to engage in a mix of programs that can serve the CYF educational needs of many Nevadans while also intensively working with higher risk audiences to create meaningful long-term change. To address this, the CYF team has endorsed a balanced approach to offering programs designed for different audiences and their needs. These audiences can be labeled *General* (the general public), *Targeted* (focusing on those known to be at risk for specific issues), and *High-risk* (those who already exhibit problems). A balance of programming across these varied audiences helps assure that the CYF team meets its overall educational objectives within the constraints of staff and program resources. In addition, CYF programmatic activities also help to enhance the capacity of professionals or organizations to better serve the public (i.e., professional development).

Making an impact on this mix of audiences, however, can be difficult. Some audiences need more intense efforts over sustained periods of time (i.e., program dosage), while other audiences do not require such intense effort. In general, more program resources, greater participant dosage and staff training are required as we address the needs of higher risk audiences, and participant numbers are limited as a result. These programmatic constraints, along with current trends regarding population growth in Nevada and dwindling UNCE resource streams, will make it increasingly challenging for the Western Area CYF faculty and staff to provide a rich mix of programs serving the variety of audiences cited above.

An increased emphasis within UNCE on vulnerable, at-risk audiences over the past 20 years, coupled with the need to provide a broad range of educational and prevention programming to multiple audiences, has created the need to engage in a CYF planning process. These concerns make it vitally important for Western Area CYF faculty and staff to continue to work collaboratively, build on areas of programmatic strength and maturity, and create diverse types of innovative programs that can balance the educational needs of many with the intense, multiple needs of underserved, at-risk audiences.

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# Early Care and Education

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension  
Western Area







# Early Care and Education

## University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Western Area

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) staff focusing on children, youth, and family issues, completed a statewide program planning document in 2004 that has helped to define and shape programmatic activities. One of the priorities identified in the document was Early Care and Education (ECE). This report examines UNCE community programs in western Nevada related to early care and education. Before discussing these programs we first examine the current state of early care and education in the region.

### Situation

**Definition:** Early care and education, sometimes called child care, family day care, home care or preschool programs, refers to programs for young children, typically focusing on children, age newborn to five or six years of age. ECE programs may take place at a center or in a home, when parents are not available.

**Research Base:** ECE programs are of particular concern in this country because, over the course of their developmental years, the majority of American children will spend more time in child care, after-school care, and teen out-of-school settings than in formal education (Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, 2007). Additionally, the early years of a child's life greatly impact all areas of a child's development including physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development. Both nationally and in Nevada, Cooperative Extension actively works in this arena through a variety of mechanisms, including education for caregivers, consumer education for parents, provision of after-school programs and research-base for those developing public policy.

Research has demonstrated that quality out-of-home care settings lead to more positive outcomes for children than do poor or low quality care (Essa & Burnham, 2001). For example, a number of studies have documented the effect of child care quality on language development, social competence, positive behaviors, and academic performance in elementary school. Recent research has underscored the influence of the environment on brain development (Shore, 1997). Factors that contribute to quality include child/adult ratio, group size, staff education, staff stability rather than turnover, appropriate and nurturing interactions between adults and children, responsiveness of caregivers to children's needs, levels of verbal exchange between caregivers and children, and developmentally appropriate activities for children. Unfortunately, studies done nationally and in Nevada indicate that many child care programs are poor to mediocre (Essa, 2002). At the same time, public school teachers note that large numbers of children start kindergarten not ready to learn (Boyer, 1991). Although families and communities also influence children's well-being, the immediate and long-term effects of child care on well-being are of considerable concern.

A comparison study of Nevada Child Care Regulations and the National Health and Safety Standards for Child Care Programs was conducted by Martin and Swank (2004), as a project of Healthy Child Care Nevada. One category of standards is staffing which includes issues of qualifications, education and special training. Twenty-four of the 27 standards that were compared for this category were partially met in Nevada, three were not met, and none of the standards regarding staffing were fully met when compared to national standards. This is an

indication that Nevada’s standards relating to qualifications and training of caregivers need to be increased to meet the national standards. Another category, “Program Activities for Healthy Development” focuses on programming, activities, interactions between children and caregivers, discipline, curriculum, physical space and equipment and relationships with parents. Regarding this category 23 standards were compared. Three of the national standards were not met, 20 were partially met, and, again, none of the standards was fully met in Nevada.

**Statistics:** In 2001, 61percent of children from birth through age six (and not in kindergarten) spent time in non-parental child care in the United States. About half of children in kindergarten through third grade spend time in center based care or non-parental home-based care (Child Trends, 2001). The Nevada Child Care Work Force Study (Essa, 2002) estimated that there are 40,500 children younger than six years of age in licensed, paid child care in Nevada. An unknown number are in care by relatives and neighbors that is unlicensed and, in some cases, unpaid. Nearly 6,000 Nevada school age children are in licensed care. Because child care programs for school age and adolescent children are not required to be licensed, we can be fairly certain there are far more school age children receiving care than 6,000, but the exact number is unknown. There are about 5,400 caregivers providing ECE in licensed programs in Nevada.

Nevada Kids Count (2007) reports that from 2005 to 2010 the number of young children in Nevada, newborn to 4 years of age, is expected to increase by 25.6 percent. In addition, the number of children ages 5 to 14 is expected to increase 12.1 percent, and the number of adolescents will grow by 16.5 percent. In 2003 there were 643,516 children, age newborn to 19, in Nevada, making children 28 percent of our total state’s population.

**Early Childhood Education Needs in western Nevada:** Using statewide needs assessments collected over the past 18 years, the most preferred method of training indicated by those attending UNCE workshops has been “workshops” (informal education), with a “trainer at program site” being a distant second choice for method. Workshop participants also were asked to circle their top three choices of future training topics from a list of 10 potential topics and were also given the option of writing in a topic of interest (Table 1).

**Table 1. Most Frequently Requested Workshop Topics**

<b>Washoe County</b>	<b>Rural Nevada</b>	<b>Statewide</b>
Language & Literacy	Language & Literacy	Social/Emotional Development
Guidance & Discipline	Guidance & Discipline	Language & Literacy
Social/Emotional Development	Social/Emotional Development	Guidance & Discipline
Math	Music	Music

In 2005, the Nevada Association for the Education of Young Children (NevAEYC) and UNCE conducted a collaborative needs assessment. The first step involved collecting data at the annual NevAEYC state conference and during UNCE caregiver in-service workshops. Over 300 early childhood caregivers completed the survey. Data for participants who prefer informal education (such as UNCE offers) and who live in Reno and the rural counties provide information about the educational needs and preferences of caregivers, 120 responses were received from those in Washoe County and 72 from rural Nevada. The following findings reveal potential future directions for Western Area early childhood programs.

Ranking of Specific Type of training preferred:

	<b>Rankings for Washoe County</b>	<b>Rankings for Rural Nevada</b>
In-service workshops	1	1
Professional Development Day (1/2 or full day)	2	2
Internet or online training	3	4
Self-study (such as Caring 4 Kids)	4	8.5
College courses	5	3
Social/Networking Sessions (i.e. round table discussions, guest speakers, etc.)	6	5
Web-based courses	7	6.5
Other	8	9
Training focused on Apprenticeship requirements	9	9
Training focused on CDA competencies	10	9

Training used in the previous year, by rank:

	<b>Rankings for Washoe County</b>	<b>Rankings for Rural Nevada</b>
In-service workshops	1	3
Professional Development Day (1/2 or full day)	2	2
Trainer at child care site	3	4
College courses	4	5
Self-study (such as Caring 4 Kids)	5	9
Web-based courses	10	1

The second step in the collaborative needs assessment was to convene a meeting of UNCE faculty, representatives of child care licensing and ECE professionals from across the state. UNCE faculty and NevAEYC planned and facilitated the meeting held in May 2006. Taking into consideration information collected through the surveys and at the meeting, participants identified the following priorities for UNCE:

- continue to develop training curricula
- train others, including directors to teach the workshops
- train directors to coach staff

In addition, participants suggested that UNCE could:

- offer a variety of delivery methods for training
- work with the Nevada Registry to increase trainer communication
- develop self-study modules and/or materials focusing on the Pre-K standards

## UNCE Early Care and Education Programs in western Nevada

In Nevada, Cooperative Extension provides in-service education for caregivers through four mechanisms: 1) workshops presented across the state, 2) self-study modules available through libraries, 3) online materials and 4) train-the-trainer opportunities. These programs are designed to improve child care quality through helping caregivers better understand children's needs and behavior, improve interactions with children, increase developmentally appropriate practices, and provide healthy, safe and nurturing environments. Training child care providers increases the capacity of communities for providing quality child care that is developmentally appropriate.

**Child Care Nevada:** In the Western Area, UNCE staff and faculty have helped develop, implement, and evaluate a new curriculum each of the past 19 years. The curricula have been offered statewide each year. Topics have included: language and literacy; science; math; child development; guidance and discipline; recognizing, reporting, and preventing child abuse and neglect; music; reducing risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome in child care; temperament; and physical development.

### Documented Accomplishments:

- Western Area faculty has helped to develop the curricula as well as provide grant management, training the trainers, evaluation and completing reports.
- In-service education workshops are offered for caregivers in Carson City, Washoe, Storey, Douglas and Lyon counties (fliers are sent to caregivers in Lyon County to notify them of training in nearby Carson City and Douglas County). Training opportunities are posted on the Nevada Registry Web site and fliers are mailed to all licensed home-based and center-based facilities.
- Hiring a part-time instructor has allowed us to provide more workshops for caregivers in the Western Area. These workshops have become a mainstay for caregivers to complete their mandated 15 hours of in-service education each year.
- Workshops have been evaluated using participant completed pre-/post-tests which indicate significant increases in participant's knowledge and understanding of the topics presented at the workshops.
- Calls are received on a regular basis requesting more workshops in Washoe County, Carson City and Douglas County.
- We work with the University of Nevada Reno Child and Family Research Center and Campus Child Care Connections to provide quarterly educational newsletters, *Child Care Connections*, to all licensed home- and center-based caregivers of newborn to school age children.
- The number of workshops and participants has continually increased over the past seven years (Table 2).

**Table 2. Number of Workshops and Participants**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Workshops</b>	<b>Participants</b>
2001	20	344
2002	31	709
2003	36	836
2004	36	995
2005	48	1,252
2006	52	1,165
2007	69	1,950
Total	256	6,256

**Program Status and Direction:** Based on results of needs assessments, UNCE faculty and staff will continue to develop new child care provider education in-service workshops, and explore the cost and need for additional online education and self-study modules. Additionally, UNCE faculty and staff will explore train-the-trainer needs. We have begun training staff from other agencies in the use of UNCE developed curricula. We will continue exploring the concept of training others to provide workshops using our curricula, expanding the number of potential caregivers receiving training.

**Caring 4 Kids:** Self-study education is offered using the Caring 4 Kids training modules. The Western Area has made these training modules available for caregivers through each of our county offices and by promoting their use at monthly in-service education workshops. UNCE has worked with the Nevada Registry to incorporate the Caring 4 Kids training modules as one of the educational options for caregivers. UNCE workshops are approved by the Registry and many UNCE faculty are Registry certified trainers.

**Documented accomplishments:**

- Four modules have been created focusing on 1) cognitive development, 2) food safety, 3) recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect and 4) orientation to the new profession of early care and education.
- Child abuse and neglect recognition and reporting is required training for caregivers within the first 90 days of their employment. Using the Caring 4 Kids module is one method of meeting this requirement.
- The food safety and cognitive modules have been available since 2003. The food safety and the cognitive development modules have been checked out more than 50 times each from UNCE offices in the Western Area.
- The child abuse and new profession modules have been available since 2006 and have been checked out five times each from the Carson City and Washoe County offices.
- Seventy percent of the time the modules are checked out by a center-based staff person and are typically used by more than one person at the center.
- Modules are available and regularly accessed across the state from libraries and Extension offices.
- During 2004 the Food Safety module was checked out by 793 individuals and the Cognitive Development module was checked out by 182 individuals.
- In 2005 and 2006, Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect (113 copies) and Early Care and Education: Getting Started in Your New Profession (76 copies) were developed and distributed across the state.

- Evaluation of both new modules indicates significant increases in awareness of understanding of the impact of a child's early years and caregivers' impact on development of children's social and emotional skills. Module users self-reported a significant increase in knowledge related to 1) child abuse recognition and reporting policies, 2) responding to a disclosure and 3) confidence in recognizing child maltreatment (N=582, statewide).
- Modules have been purchased by some center-based programs increasing their availability for caregivers.
- Modules are available on the UNCE Web siteWeb site.

**Program Status and Direction:** Caring 4 Kids modules are available statewide and can also be purchased by child care centers to provide direct staff training. UNCE faculty will explore the need for development of more modules or redesigning existing three-hour workshops for this delivery method.

**Child Abuse Prevention/Intervention:** UNCE faculty have developed and continue to provide a variety of ways for caregivers to learn about recognition and reporting suspicions of child maltreatment in addition to the methods previously mentioned. These additional methods include Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting: A self-study guide for people working with children which is available online or as a workshop on an as-needed basis. The self-study guide has been approved by the Nevada Registry to meet the state requirement of mandatory training regarding child abuse recognition and reporting. Additionally, several staff of youth development agencies, such as Boys and Girls Club, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Centers, recreation departments and UNR student proctors have completed the training using a combined method of completing the self-study guide and then attending a one-hour training session provided by UNCE faculty.

**Documented accomplishments:**

- Two three-hour educational in-service workshops have been developed, implemented and evaluated.
- Fact sheets are available and widely used by caregivers as well as various agencies across the state including school district personnel and Girl Scouts, and the self-study guide is used by all staff and volunteers of UNCE as well as a variety of caregivers and teachers across the state.
- The Nevada Registry has approved the three-hour in-service workshop, the self-study guide and Caring 4 Kids modules for child care provider training.
- The online self-study guide has been accessed hundreds of times by people in 40 states and six countries and since 2005, 332 certificates of completion have been issued for child care providers and youth workers needing documentation of their study time.
- Those accessing the guide are staff and volunteers of youth serving agencies, child care centers and homes, social work agencies, and educational and medical institutions.
- Evaluation of the in-service workshops and self-study guide indicates that participants have a significant increase in knowledge regarding indicators of child maltreatment as well as knowledge regarding reporting concerns.

**Program status and direction:** We will continue to provide the in-service education workshops and availability of the self-study guide. We will explore the possibility of

developing online training and creating a CD version of *Kids Deserve a Safe Place to Grow*, our most recent three-hour in-service workshop. The online self-study guide will need to be updated in the near future to reflect changes in staffing, contact information, and current trends in Nevada.

**Choosing child care:** UNCE faculty have researched, developed and evaluated tools to help parents select a quality child care setting that meets their needs. Research included development of easy-to-use checklists that can help parents identify quality care for their children.

#### **Documented accomplishments:**

- Currently there are four fact sheets which are distributed from our offices when requests are received. Numbers of fact sheets distributed are not tracked.
- Fact sheets currently available are: Be Choosy About Child Care, Checklist for Child Care Centers, Checklist for Family Day Care Homes, and Looking for Care for Your Baby.

**Program status and direction:** We will continue to disseminate all fact sheets as requested from various agencies and individuals. We should consider updating the previously developed fact sheets. We will determine additional locations and/or agencies to market all of the fact sheets. Additionally, we may explore the potential of developing a fact sheet to help parents choose quality school-age care settings for their youth.

#### **Key Collaborations**

Collaborators in developing and presenting training for ECE staff include:

- University of Nevada Cooperative Extension's Statewide Early Childhood Education Team
- University of Nevada Reno's Child and Family Research Center
- Nevada Association for the Education of Young Children
- Truckee Meadows Community College
- Washoe County School District
- Nevada State Child Care Licensing Bureau
- Nevada State Office of Early Care and Education
- Children's Cabinet of Northern Nevada
- Reno Housing Authority

#### **Additional Early Childhood Education Efforts in western Nevada**

In Nevada (with the support of federal Child Care Development Block Grant Funds and Child Care Development Funds), the Nevada Department of Human Resources, Welfare Division and numerous ECE professionals have been working to improve both the quality and amount of quality child care. One focus has been on providing educational opportunities and support for the education of caregivers. Additionally, the Nevada Registry has been developed. The Registry provides a central database and clearing house of educational opportunities, certification for ECE professionals, and approval of training offered across the state.

Other educational institutions, organizations and individuals offer training opportunities for child caregivers in the Western Area, including Western Nevada Community College, Truckee

Meadows Community College and the University of Nevada, all of which offer classes and degrees in ECE. All three institutions offer one-credit courses that a caregiver can take to obtain the required 15 hours of training per year. Directors of some child care centers, Children's Cabinet, Washoe County School District, Washoe County Health Department, Office of Early Care and Education and University of Nevada's Child and Family Resource Center also offer in-service educational opportunities for caregivers. Various individuals offer training and online training is available. Other than college level courses, all training must be approved by the Nevada Registry. The Nevada and Reno Associations for the Education of Young Children and the Northern Nevada Child Care Association (home care providers) offer workshops and annual conferences for professional development.

While it may seem that there is enough training available from various agencies and educational institutions, that is not the case. First, few training opportunities are available to caregivers in Carson City, Storey and Douglas counties. Second, turnover in child care is quite high, which increases the need for ongoing training. And finally, most of the non-UNCE training offered in the Western Area requires a fee. Caregivers generally make very low wages and cannot afford college credits or training that isn't free or low cost. Thus, there are numerous caregivers who do not get their training from educational institutions.

All training is approved by the Nevada Registry and all training that has been approved is posted on its Web site, making the information easily accessible to most caregivers. Caregivers in Washoe County have many opportunities for in-service education.

## **Implications**

### **General conclusions**

Several conclusions can be drawn from this review of ECE training needs in western Nevada.

- There is a continued need for on going training for child care providers. These needs have been identified through collaborative surveys and data collected by UNCE.
- There is a need for reliable, ongoing funding for regular training for caregivers in the Western Area. Stable funding would allow us to employ an instructor on a Letter of Appointment to provide regular training to improve the quality of child care provided in our area.
- Curricula need to be based on current research; thus we should continue to develop new training curricula for caregivers and/or revise existing curricula with updated research as appropriate.
- We should continue our work with the Nevada Registry, Office of Early Care and Education, and the Nevada Association for the Education of Young Children to improve the quality of care for children in western Nevada.
- We could put existing curricula in online formats for self-study. While this method is not currently identified as the most preferred, it is the third- (Washoe) or fourth- (rural Nevada) ranked method (out of 10 options) and was the most used method by rural respondents to the NevAEYC/UNCE collaborative needs assessment.



## **Unmet needs**

Despite the efforts of UNCE and other community agencies, several unmet needs remain.

- Caregivers living in Carson City, Douglas, Storey and Lyon counties have a difficult time finding training, as little is offered in their community.
- Unlicensed caregivers as well as licensed caregivers need training. Marketing to unlicensed caregivers is difficult as there is no database or source to easily find them. The Children's Cabinet reaches some unlicensed caregivers with its Kith and Kin (relatives who care for children) program, but there are undoubtedly numerous others not receiving any training or support.
- Another underserved audience is Spanish-speaking caregivers, home- and center-based. With additional resources, we could translate our curricula and provide train-the-trainer as well as workshops directly for Spanish-speaking caregivers. In an attempt to begin addressing this issue, University of Nevada faculty member, Dr. Eva Essa, is in the third year of a five-year federal grant titled Hispanic Head Start and Higher Education. She is working with eight Hispanic Head Start employees to complete a bachelor's degree with a focus on early childhood education.

## **Strengths and limitations of current UNCE early care and education programming in western Nevada**

Several strengths, limitations and future directions for UNCE early care and education programming in western Nevada can be identified by comparing the findings of the ECE needs assessments, current literature and current UNCE early care and education programming.

### **Strengths**

- long history of quality, targeted in-service education for caregivers
- statewide recognition of Extension in-service quality programming by caregivers
- 18 years of state support to development, implement and evaluate curricula
- strong research and evaluation base for programs
- work with the Nevada Registry to provide quality curricula for caregivers
- an average of 700 caregivers per year (1998-2006) and since 2002 1,100 caregivers each year received in-service education
- development and distribution of Caring 4 Kids self-study guides which have proven to be a very popular source for caregivers to receive training
- development of curricula which have been nationally peer-reviewed and are being purchased by Extension personnel across the country

### **Limitations**

- lack of stable funding to provide ongoing delivery of training for caregivers in western Nevada
- lack of resources to put curriculum in an online format to make training available for more caregivers area, state and nationwide
- insufficient funds to reach caregivers located in rural Nevada
- lack of curricula and staff to reach nonnative speaking caregivers
- insufficient resources to meet the need for educational opportunities for caregivers

## Current resources

The current staffing for early childhood education programs in the Western Area include:

- Two faculty, Jackie Reilly and Dan Weigel, who spend approximately 30 percent of their total time in ECE programs, and
- One part-time instructor, Karen Mack, who is funded with grant and program development funds. Karen provides educational in-service workshops throughout the area. Workshop fliers are sent to all licensed facilities and homes in Washoe, Carson, Douglas, Storey and Lyon counties.

## Program Directions

The following describes the general future direction of UNCE early childhood and education programming (Table 3).

Definitions of the terms used in Table 3 are as follows:

- Maintain – these programs will continue as programming is currently being presented and conducted
- Modify – there are plans to modify these programs in some manner. This might include adding a new audience which may require modifications to fit the program to the new audience. Or, in the case of Caring 4 Kids, UNCE has begun providing certificates for completion in place of the State of Nevada Office of Early Care and Education which had been providing the certificates.
- Spin off – these programs have been assumed by another agency or organization

**Table 3. General Direction of UNCE  
Early Care and Education Educational Programming.**

<b>Program Direction</b>	<b>Early Care and Education Programs</b>
<b>Maintain</b>	Child Care Connections
	Child Care Nevada
	Choosing Child Care/Infant Care
	Child Abuse Prevention
<b>Modify</b>	Caring 4 Kids
<b>Spin off</b>	Healthy Child Care Consultation

The responsibility for the statewide UNCE program Healthy Child Care Consultation was assumed by another agency.

## Potential additional directions

Given current staffing patterns and funding, on-going monthly training for area caregivers is in jeopardy. Additionally, expanded opportunities would be available with funding, such as:

- The response to Caring 4 Kids curricula tells us there is a market for training modules that directors of centers can purchase and use as new staff come on board. Putting existing curricula in CD format could help meet this need.

- Training for trainers using UNCE-developed curricula would increase the number of caregivers that could be reached with our training. Training trainers was a need identified in our statewide needs assessment process.
- The addition of the Nevada Registry has made finding training much easier as well as the addition of online training and a comprehensive listing of training available statewide.
- Training could be provided for rural caregivers by developing our current curriculum for use online in self-study formats.

### **Future resource needs**

- Grant and program development funds are limited. Funding would allow for additional training for unlicensed and kinship caregivers as well as time to develop additional curricula.
- Additional requests have been received to provide training for trainers from across the area.
- Stable funding for a .25 FTE instructor would allow us to continue to provide monthly training for caregivers as well as help with train-the-trainer programming.

### **Summary**

This review has documented a continuing need for ECE programs. As seen, UNCE provides a number of community programs in western Nevada which have statistically improved the knowledge and skills of child caregivers in western Nevada. The potential impact is on thousands of young children in licensed care throughout the area. We plan to continue providing in-service education for caregivers and perhaps increase the potential impact by training other trainers to use our curricula.

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# Parenting Education

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension  
Western Area





# Parenting Education

## University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Western Area

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) faculty and staff focusing on Children, Youth and Family issues, completed a statewide program planning document in 2004 that has helped to define and shape programmatic activities. One of the priorities identified in the document was Parenting Education. This report examines UNCE community programs in western Nevada related to Parenting Education. Before discussing these programs we first examine the current state of parenting and parent education in the region.

### Situation

**Definition:** Parent education typically involves helping individuals develop greater self-awareness as parents, learn new information about child development, learn effective guidance and discipline skills, improve communication with their children, and enjoy their family life more (Wolfe, 2002). Currently, many prefer the term “parenting education” (see, for example, Carter, 1996 and Palm, 1999) because it is considered to be more inclusive, not only referring to biological and legal parents but also those individuals who are neither but who carry the primary responsibility of raising a child. In 2005 Brown conducted a review of the literature on evidence-based parenting programs for Cooperative Extension nationwide. Drawing on the works of Small (1990) and Wandersman (1987), Brown used the following definition for parenting education:

The goal of *parenting education* is to enhance parent-child relationships by reinforcing supportive behaviors of parents and altering nonproductive or harmful behaviors. As a stand-alone entity or in conjunction with other programs, parent education helps parents develop and enhance parenting skills, understand human development, try alternate approaches to childrearing, and learn techniques to reduce stress that undermines parenting functioning.

Parent education is a term that may overlap with others, such as parent support and parent therapy. The Family Resource Coalition suggests that parent education is a component of family support. Utilizing an article by Ramey and Ramey (1993), Brown (2005) defined parenting support:

The goal of *parenting support* is to strengthen parents' capability to draw upon available resources for their own well-being and the well-being of their children and youth. Helping parents (a) develop long-term supportive relationships and (b) access other community resources are two aspects of parenting support. Helping parents strengthen the home-school link is another facet of parent support. Programs which target development in one domain such as health—and in the child only—do not recognize the complexity of human development or parenting.

**Research base:** Research has demonstrated that parenting practices affect child outcomes. Recent indicators of child functioning have contributed to concerns about parent-child relationships (Powell, 1993), particularly as viewed from an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). In addition, research on brain development indicates that the ability of parents to provide positive, responsive care-giving is central to the young child's healthy

development (Shore, 1997). Finally, research evidence indicates that educational programs for young children and their parents have lasting effects (Consortium for Longitudinal Studies, 1983).

Brown (2005) points out that “Because many of the risk and protective factors that influence child and adolescent development have antecedents in early childhood, a 'developmental epidemiology' approach to parent education is essential. Nonetheless, different parenting skills are needed at different stages of a child’s development, from the prenatal period to the preschool years and including younger school-age children, pre-adolescents and adolescents. For example, parents of infants need to provide an environment that results in secure attachments (Maccoby, 1984) and appropriate sensory experiences to nurture functional brain development (Perry et al., 1995). During middle childhood, parents need to help children develop academic and social skills. Most of the research indicates that this is best accomplished through authoritative parenting styles (Collins et al., 2002) in which parents display warmth but also enforce reasonable rules. Parental monitoring of child behavior, from the early years through adolescence, appears to diminish problem behaviors among older youth (Crouter & Head, 2002).

Although there is interest in providing education and support to parents, there is also periodic debate about the ethics of parent education. The concern is that parent education could be viewed as a way for the child-rearing values and practices of one population to be imposed on another (e.g., Laosa, 1983), or that parents representing ethnic minorities or low-income groups are deemed in greater need of expert help, centered around the values of the dominant culture and family type. There is continuing discussion of the degree to which parenting programs should be professional-focused or family-centered (Dunst et al., 2002). Thus, parent education and/or support needs to be approached with sensitivity, awareness, knowledge and skill.

Parenting needs to be understood and facilitated from an individual and environmental context (Powell, 1993). From an individual perspective, the psychological characteristics of the parent, sources of stress and support within the environment, and the parent’s resources are important determinants of parental functioning (Belsky, 1984). Further, parenting is an active, cognitive process (Powell, 1993), involving parental beliefs, messages from the parent’s social network, and the family value system. Thus, programming approaches, such as open-ended discussions and home visits, may be helpful in adjusting program content to achieve a better fit with parents’ hopes and dreams for their children as well as in providing opportunities for parents to think through new information and utilize it in their parenting practices (Powell, 1993). It is also recognized that effective parenting programs are responsive to parent and community characteristics; a cookie-cutter approach is not effective (Powell, 1993). Finally, the more intense parenting programs are, the greater their effectiveness. This includes number of contacts (Heinicke, Beckwith, & Thompson, 1988), as well as comprehensiveness or range of services (e.g., Ramey, Bryant, & Suzarex, 1985).

**Statistics:** According to the 2000 Census, there are approximately 107,000 children under 18 in the Western Area who live in a variety of types of households (Daneshvary et al., 2004). While teachers, social workers and other professionals indicate the need for parenting education, there are no Western Area surveys to pinpoint needs. There are several indicators that are useful, however. From 2000-02, Carson City had the highest teen birth rate in Nevada (34.3 percent) while Douglas County had the lowest rate at 30.4 percent. Both percentages are higher than the national average of 23.2 percent. Another indication of the need for parenting education is the statistics on child abuse and neglect. In 2002, there were 3,275 reports of suspected abuse and/or neglect in the Western Area. This represents a decrease from the



previous year (Danshevary et al., 2004). A different perspective is provided by looking at the number of incidents of child abuse and neglect that were confirmed in 2002; that number is 768. Not all child abuse and neglect is perpetrated by parents, in 15.5 percent of the cases across the state, social workers reported that “parents cannot cope.”

**Parenting education needs in western Nevada:** There has not been a formal needs assessment for parenting education in the Western Area in recent years. A statewide needs assessment, which may yield data for the Western Area, is being developed by the State Maternal and Child Health Bureau and may provide information on needs in western Nevada. A qualitative study of UNCE’s age-paced newsletters, *Little Lives: A Parent’s Guide to Development*, that was conducted in the Western Area, documented the fact that many parents need information about child development and parenting, feel isolated, are concerned that their child is behaving in unacceptable or inappropriate ways, and doubt their own abilities as parents. Such data indicate the ongoing need for parenting education and support for the general population of parents as well as for those at risk of harming their children.

### **UNCE parenting education programs in western Nevada**

UNCE in the Western Area provides a wide range of parenting programs and delivery systems, some of which stand alone while others are embedded in youth programs. Delivery methods include mailed information (e.g., *Little Lives*, *Nuevas Familias*), group meetings (e.g., *Fun to Play*), web-based information (e.g., *Just In Time Parenting*), brochures available at various agency and organization locations, and materials made available to the parents of youth participating in such programs as 4-H. Programs are aimed at increasing parental knowledge and skills, preventing child abuse and neglect, building family strengths, and increasing the positive effects of youth programs. They are designed for teen parents as well as adults, different cultural groups, and families with various educational and income levels.

***Fun to Play:*** *Fun to Play* is a series of weekly parent/child group sessions aimed at improving the parenting skills of adolescent and other young parents by increasing the amount of enriching learning activities and interaction they provide their young children. *Fun To Play* targets families in which children are at risk for developmental delays and later school difficulties due to the young age, inexperience or limited resources of parents. Since 1993, *Fun To Play* coordinator Marilyn Morton has reached more than 1,900 adolescent parents and other young, high-risk families at the Washoe County School District’s CYESIS program (alternative high school for pregnant and parenting adolescents), Reno Housing Authority, Family Resource Center, and Classroom On Wheels sites throughout western Nevada. To expand the capacity of local agencies and communities, several workshop leaders have been trained on the curriculum throughout Nevada.

#### **Documented accomplishments:**

- Young parents report that the program helps them provide more activities to help their child’s learning, feel more confident as a parent, play more games with their babies, better understand their child’s growth and development, and cope better with the stress of parenting. Ninety-five percent would recommend the program to other young mothers like themselves.
- Adolescent parents have completed weekly evaluation sheets regarding their use of the activities learned during the sessions. These weekly evaluations revealed that the parents used the developmental activities learned in class with their children at

home and rated the activities' success (child interest and ability) 4.36 on a scale of 5 (great) to 1 (terrible).

- Focus group comments about what teen mothers have gained from *Fun To Play* include: "I feel more ready to be a parent." "I think it's fun and new parents can learn from this." "Learned about my baby's growth." "It's a good program to help get ready for new babies." "I've learned how to be more involved with my baby." "I learned things that I haven't learned before. I understand things more clearly about parenting." "I learned to care for my baby; play with my baby." "I like how they teach you what to do when your baby is sick."
- Trained workshop leaders have reported the reactions of parents as positive or very positive. Trainers relayed comments about parents: "Parents say they didn't realize all their children were learning by playing with toys." "Parents participate with creative enthusiasm." "They enjoyed the positive interaction with their children." "They feel they really learned to play with their kids." One hundred percent of trainers rated the program as either very useful or extremely useful.
- The curriculum was presented at the National Cooperative Extension Child Care Initiative Conference.
- Twenty-nine English and 17 Spanish copies of the curriculum have been purchased by Cooperative Extension Services in other states.

**Program status and direction:** We will continue to offer the program at CYESIS and other sites throughout Washoe County. We will explore opportunities to train individuals in Carson, Douglas and Storey counties to expand the program in those counties.

**Little Lives/Just In Time Parenting:** *Little Lives: A Parent's Guide to Development* (Spanish version titled *Nuevas Familias*) is an age-paced newsletter series that provides practical parenting information for parents with children from birth to 36 months. The newsletters were developed by UNCE specialists and are designed to inform parents about what to expect from the time their baby is born up to 36 months of age. The newsletters are sent free of charge monthly during the first year and every other month for the next two years, so that the information provided is keyed to the age of the recipient's child. Parents are recruited through local health agencies, including hospitals, birthing classes, pre-natal clinics, and programs serving pregnant and recently delivered parents. Many of the participants in *Little Lives* are from at-risk populations (e.g. adolescent, single parent, isolated, low income).

**Documented accomplishments:**

- An extensive, 18-month longitudinal evaluation of the newsletter in western Nevada was completed in 1993 and indicated that none of the 407 parents in the pretest sample had substantiated cases of abuse and neglect two years later. The evaluation also found that as a result of reading *Little Lives*, parents use more appropriate guidance techniques, achieve greater parent-child interaction, talk more with their babies, feel greater parental confidence, and provide more sensory experiences. Parents also gain knowledge about child development and discipline and report improved parenting. In addition, most parents believe that the newsletters have helped in their parenting experiences and that the newsletters are useful to them as parents.
- A 2005 evaluation aimed at gaining more in-depth information on how the newsletter series impact parents personally. The results indicate that parents feel reassured about their parenting after reading the newsletters, gain knowledge, use information

from the newsletters to improve their parenting, and share the newsletters with spouses, extended family, and friends. Respondents indicate that the newsletters are more accessible, timely, engaging, and of higher quality than many other types of printed parenting resources.

- Nine national presentations about *Little Lives* have been given at professional conferences, including National Council on Family Relations and the International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect, and two journal articles have been published in the *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences Education* and *The Forum for Family & Consumer Issues*.

**Program status and direction:** It is expected that *Little Lives* will be replaced with an up-dated newsletter, *Just In Time Parenting*. Nevada is participating in a nationwide initiative to develop the national *Just In Time Parenting* age-paced newsletter. The newsletter is available online, and print versions will be available soon.

**In Support of parents:** Over two dozen parenting brochures and pamphlets have been developed and are distributed to parents through a variety of collaborating agencies and organizations. Many of the brochures are available in Spanish. These brochures cover topics such as growth and development, learning activities, self-esteem, parent-child communication, and parenting stress. Most are written at a lower reading level, contain plenty of interesting pictures and graphics, and are printed on bright, colorful stock.

The above existing UNCE programs can be grouped by the type of target audience (general, selected, and targeted high risk).

#### **Key collaborations:**

The key collaborators on these UNCE parent education efforts have been:

- Washoe County School District
- Reno Housing Authority
- Children's Cabinet

A number of other agencies and individuals have helped with the delivery and refinement of the various programs, including Washoe County Health Department, WIC, local hospitals and health providers, family resource centers, and Washoe Pregnancy Center.

#### **Additional parent education efforts in western Nevada**

Although there is no central listing of parent education programs in Nevada, a variety of parent education programs are being delivered in western Nevada. In addition to UNCE parenting programs, some programs are provided through the State, such as those available through Family to Family Connections and Family Resource Centers. Nonprofit organizations, notably the Children's Cabinet and Family Support Council, also offer parent education programs. Schools, child care centers, and Head Start/Even Start provide varying levels and types of education and support to parents. In addition, pediatricians, family doctors, public health nurses, practitioners who work with the families of children with special needs and social workers often provide information and support to parents.

## Implications

### General conclusions

Several general conclusions can be drawn from this review of parenting education in western Nevada.

- Creative approaches are needed to reach parents and help them develop the skills that will help them be confident and successful parents. In addition to educational efforts, programs which provide support for the parenting role also are needed.
- The results of this review also highlight the need for continued and increased collaboration among agencies and programs. Clearly, the scope of the issue of parenting education requires broad-based, communitywide efforts.
- A broad view is needed to address parenting education. Although the desire is to help parents, community programs should be designed to strengthen the entire context in which parents live. Thus, efforts should not only be directed at parents themselves, but also should include the parenting educators who teach them, as well as the neighborhoods, agencies and organizations that touch parents' lives.
- There are several educational programs aimed at parents with infants and preschoolers, fewer for parents with school-agers and hardly any for parents with teenagers. The developmental aspects of parenting education need to be considered. There is a need for a broader spectrum of programs which target parents and children at a variety of developmental stages.
- Finally, the majority of existing parenting education programs typically are designed for middle class, educated parents. Parenting education efforts are needed that target many subpopulations and non-traditional audiences (e.g., minorities, grandparents raising grandchildren, parenting as a noncustodial parent, etc.).

### Unmet needs

Despite the efforts of UNCE and other community agencies, several unmet needs remain.

- There are still a large number of families that could benefit from parenting education programs but have not been reached.
- In addition to educational efforts, programs which provide support to the parenting role also are needed.
- With the expanding number of families in western Nevada with English as a second language, there is a need to target programs specifically to these populations.
- The majority of parenting programs are aimed at parents with infants, preschoolers or young school-agers, and there is a need for a broader spectrum of programs which target parents and children at a variety of developmental stages.
- Parenting education efforts are needed that target many subpopulations and nontraditional audiences (e.g., minorities, grandparents raising grandchildren, parenting as a noncustodial parent, etc.).
- There is a need for increased public awareness concerning the importance of parenting education.

- Increased workplace involvement is needed in such ways as offering workshops for families, offering family friendly policies, and providing monetary support for parenting education.

Although collaboration among agencies is occurring, even greater efforts are needed to meet the parenting education needs of families in western Nevada.

### **Strengths and limitations of current UNCE parenting education programming in western Nevada**

Several strengths, limitations and future directions for UNCE parenting education programming in western Nevada can be identified by comparing the needs and current UNCE parenting education programming.

#### **Strengths**

- quality curriculum materials
- reaching at-risk families
- strong research and evaluation base

#### **Limitations**

- limited promotion and agency collaboration
- limited number of children and families compared to potential number
- ongoing funding issues
- uneven distribution areawide (although some UNCE parenting education programs other than *Little Lives* have been conducted in Carson City, Douglas, and Storey counties, the bulk of the effort has been directed at Washoe County).

#### **Current resources**

Current staffing for youth development programs in the Western Area include:

- One faculty, Dan Weigel, who devotes approximately 15 percent of his teaching time to parenting education programming.
- One part-time, hard-funded staff, Marilyn Morton, is devoted to teaching parenting education programs in Washoe County.

#### **Program directions**

Table 1 describes the general direction of UNCE family and intergenerational literacy educational programming.

Definitions of the terms used in Table 2 are as follows:

- Maintain – these programs will continue as programming is currently being presented and conducted
- Spin off – these programs have been assumed by another agency or organization
- Phase out – these programs are no longer being offered
- Available but not in use – these programs have curricula developed and tested, but no staff or funding to provide the program at this time.

**Table 1. The general direction of UNCE parenting education programming.**

<b>Program Direction</b>	<b>Parenting Education Programs</b>
<b>Maintain</b>	<i>Fun To Play Just In Time Parenting In Support of Parents</i>
<b>Spin off</b>	<i>Parenting at Ridge</i>
<b>Phase Out</b>	<i>Little Lives/Nuevas Familias Parenting From Prison</i>
<b>Available but not in use</b>	<i>Money on the Bookshelf</i>

**Potential additional directions**

Given current staffing patterns and budget constraints, it remains difficult to expand efforts in Parenting Education. However, if these constraints can be rectified, we would like to explore the following possibilities:

- 1) Expand
  - efforts in Carson City, Douglas and Storey counties
  - efforts to reach parents of youth in existing programs (e.g., Afterschool Club, 4-H, etc.)
  - parenting education programs to meet a wider range of children’s ages (i.e., 0-18)
  - collaborations with agencies providing education and services to vulnerable families
  - monetary resources
  
- 2) Begin exploring
  - low- and medium-intensity programming efforts to reach a broader range and greater number of families
  - strengthening collaborations with other agencies
  - the possibility of shifting focus to training of existing parenting educators rather than direct delivery of programs
  - the possibility of conducting a focused parenting education needs assessment in the Western Area

**Future resource needs**

Presently only a small number of families in Western Nevada that could benefit from parenting education programs are being reached. To reach more families, we need:

- additional faculty time available to focus on parenting education as a priority teaching program,
- additional hours for the present 21-hour-per-week position in Washoe County, and
- additional part time positions to better support Carson City, Douglas and Storey counties.

## Summary

This review has documented a continuing need for parenting education programs. As seen, UNCE provides several community programs in Western Nevada which have improved the parenting knowledge, confidence and skills of adolescent and other young parents. We plan on continuing to reach vulnerable families through programs such as the *Fun To Play* and *Just In Time Parenting*. We also hope to expand and develop additional efforts to reach an even larger number of families in Western Nevada.

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# Family and Intergenerational Literacy

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension  
Western Area





# Family and Intergenerational Literacy

## University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Western Area

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) staff focusing on Children, Youth and Family issues completed a statewide program planning document in 2004 that has helped to define and shape programmatic activities. One of the priorities identified in the document was Family and Intergenerational Literacy. This report examines UNCE community programs in Western Nevada related to Family and Intergenerational Literacy. Before discussing these programs we first examine the current state of family literacy in the region.

### Situation

**Definition:** Family Literacy programs are designed to improve the language and literacy skills of both parents and children. The majority are designed for parents with preschool or early school-age children and aimed at improving children's school readiness and success, while simultaneously supporting the language/literacy development of parents. Most federal programs, such as Even Start, have adopted a specific definition for family literacy that addresses four program components. These include Early Childhood Education programs for children that are age-appropriate and help prepare children for success in school and life. A second component is Adult Education -- specifically parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency. A third component is Parenting Education training that helps parents become teachers of their children and full partners in educational systems. The fourth component is Parent and Child Together (PACT), which involves the interaction of parents and their children around language and literacy. In 2001, the Nevada Statewide Family Literacy Initiative, which involved several Extension faculty, helped develop a set of quality indicators of program delivery (process evaluation) and a set of outcome indicators following the federal definition of family literacy to evaluate programs in our state (Nevada Statewide Family Literacy Initiative, 2001).

**Research base:** A number of studies have found that children who start kindergarten without basic language and literacy skills have difficulty learning to read, and they continue to experience reading problems throughout school (Snow et al., 1998). For all children, differences in home environments have been linked to variations in early reading achievement and later school success (Heath, 1983; Wells, 1985).

Research on brain development helps explain why early home and child care experiences are critical to language development (Shore, 1997). From ages 0 to 3, there is tremendous brain development - experiences that are repeated over and over in the baby's life are being wired into the brain. The brain is forging thousands of new connections each day - keying in on the repeated sounds of speech it hears as well as the tone of a person's voice. By the time babies are a year and a half old, the bottom 10 percent will understand around 90 different words while the top 10 percent will understand more than 300 words. Parents who understand their baby's development, play with the baby, and are responsive to their baby, naming objects and activities and emotions, looking at simple picture books with their baby, asking if the baby has the object being named in the book (do we have a red ball?), and talking with their baby are facilitating brain development - essentially preparing that baby to learn to read. Parental influence continues in the preschool years, when the child is from 2 to 5 years old. Research indicates that children, who have books and other reading materials at home, as well as writing materials,

do better than children who have none. Children who see their parents reading and writing do better than children who do not see such role models. Perhaps the single most important activity cited in the literature for building these early literacy skills and understanding in preschool age children is reading aloud to children (Bus & van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Wells, 1985) when children feel emotionally secure (Bus et al., 1995; Bus et al., 1997), and are active participants in reading (Whitehurst et al., 1994). When parents and caregivers engage in scaffolding - for example, asking children to predict what will happen next, naming and talking about the pictures, rereading the story many times, helping children link what is in the book with what is in their own lives - children gain critical language and literacy skills. Research has demonstrated that working with English-speaking parents to enrich home environments through family or intergenerational literacy programs increases the chance that preschoolers will succeed once they reach school (Bennett, Weigel, & Martin, 2002; Bus et al., 1995; Edwards, 1995; Edwards, Pleasants, & Franklin, 1999; Jordan, Snow, & Porche, 2000; Neuman, 1996; Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2005, 2006; Whitehurst et al., 1988).

Children for whom English (ESL) is a second language are of particular concern in this country, because they often have difficulty in school (Rossi & Stringfield, 1995). This may be true for several reasons. They frequently start school with no or limited English; their parents may lack the resources and knowledge to help prepare them for schools in this country. For example, many immigrant parents have limited education and literacy skills in their first language. For those who attended school, accepted behaviors for children and teachers may be different from what their children are likely to experience in the United States (Perez, 1998). They may not be able to afford children's books or realize the importance of shared book reading. Given that the percentage of Spanish-speaking immigrants is expected to increase in Nevada over the next 25 years (Campbell, 1996), it is likely that ever-larger numbers of ESL children, at risk for low achievement, will enter schools in our state. Despite the growing need, the literature on appropriate programming for limited English speakers is considerably less clear than it is for native English speakers. Much is yet to be learned about the types of intergenerational literacy programs that will be most helpful to both parents and preschool children for whom English is a second language (Bialystok & Herman, 1999).

**Statistics:** Literacy is a concern in Nevada. One quarter of Nevadans—nearly 300,000 youth and adults—are illiterate; they cannot read or write well enough to do simple tasks, such as filling out a job application or reading the newspaper (Nevada Literacy 2000, 1992). Further, teachers in Nevada report that they have children entering school who have never held a book in their hands. These children are struggling uphill from the first day they set foot in school. According to the 1991 Carnegie Foundation report, *Ready to Learn: A mandate for the nation*, teachers reported that 35 percent of kindergarten children were not ready for school. The area in which children were reported to be most lacking was in literacy and language skills (Boyer, 1991). The school systems in Nevada also are concerned with children's readiness to learn to read and their acquisition of such skills in the early years of school. Early intervention programs such as Head Start and Even Start often focus on enhancing children's early language and literacy skills. However, in 2002 only 23 percent of the children who were economically eligible for Head Start in Nevada received services (Daneshvary et al., 2004). Early literacy difficulties can follow children into their school experiences. In 2003, the National Assessment of Educational Progress reported that 48 percent of fourth-grade students in Nevada scored below the basic reading level, compared to 37 percent nationwide. Further, 63 percent of African American, 64 percent of Latino, 66 percent of Native American, 41 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander, and 37 percent of White fourth graders scored below the basic reading level.

**Early Literacy and school readiness needs in western Nevada:** An areawide needs assessment was conducted in 2004-5 using a modification of the Delphi Method to gain a better sense of the early literacy and school readiness issues in Western Nevada. Data gathering took place in four phases. In Phase 1 a panel of 30 experts, including early literacy specialists, teachers, child care educators and children’s librarians, generated a list of child, family and community needs around early literacy and school readiness concerns. In Phase 2 participants prioritized the list of issues generated in Phase 1. Top-rated needs were:

- reading books with children
- increasing exposure to literacy activities
- enhancing children’s overall development
- having basic needs of families met
- increasing parents’ awareness of the importance of conversations with children.

In Phase 3 participants (a) listed educational efforts and programs that they were aware of in the community that currently address the top issues, and (b) identified additional educational efforts that could address those issues. In Phase 4 participants reviewed the list of current and needed efforts generated in Phase 3 and added any additional ideas. A wide variety of existing and needed educational efforts was identified in Phases 3 and 4. Community experts listed a number of additional educational efforts that could address the top priorities. Although some were specific to a particular priority, many could be grouped into broader categories. Figure 1 provides a summary of those categories.

**Figure 1. Summary of Needed Educational Efforts.**

- Increased innovative educational programs to reach families
- Increased early education programs for vulnerable children (e.g., homeless, limited resource, second language, special needs)
- Greater access to quality, affordable child care programs
- Greater interagency collaboration
- Increased funding
- Greater media involvement
- Greater workplace involvement
- Increased health and social services
- Increased services and programs in underserved neighborhoods

With regard to existing educational programs addressing the priority issues, the community experts listed over 40 such efforts. These included a broad range of programs, some of which might be expected, such as Head Start, Even Start, school districts, Cooperative Extension, PBS, the Children’s Cabinet, pre-kindergarten education, the Classroom On Wheels bus, Family to Family, libraries, and Family Resource Centers. Other programs listed may be less obvious, such as Kindermusik, sports organizations, Washoe County School District’s Turn Off the TV program, free park activities, and the library labjet programs. The range of programs and community groups that were identified could be grouped into broad categories. Figure 2 summarizes these categories.

**Figure 2. Groups and Agencies Needed to Address Early Literacy and School Readiness Issues.**

- Community agencies focusing specifically on literacy and school readiness, such as libraries, school districts, ESL programs, and Cooperative Extension
- Early childhood education programs
- Directed family service programs such as family resource centers and Children’s Cabinet
- Comprehensive programs for families, such as Head Start, Even Start, etc.
- Community events, such as literacy fairs and “read with me” programs
- Network of social and health services, including social services, health departments, and health care providers
- Business and media collaborations
- University and community colleges

#### **UNCE family and intergenerational literacy programs in western Nevada**

UNCE in the Western Area provides a number of programs for both English-speaking and English as a Second Language families and is engaged in research activities to further the development of family literacy efforts. The programs have been developed collaboratively with public television stations in Reno, the Children’s Cabinet, children’s librarians, the Washoe County School District, the Northern Nevada Literacy Council, and the Nevada State Literacy Coalition.

**The *Family Storyteller*:** The primary family literacy program offered is the *Family Storyteller* for low-literacy parents and their 2- to 7-year-old children. The *Family Storyteller* is aimed at increasing the amount and quality of time parents and young children spend together in literacy activities. The project targets those families that may have limited language skills and few children’s books at home. To date, nearly 7,000 families have participated in the program. To broaden the reach and expand the capacity of local agencies and communities, 335 volunteer workshop leaders have been trained. Nearly 250 copies of curricula have been purchased and used in 29 other states. Several versions of the *Family Storyteller* have been developed, each with a different target audience. Below we present each of these versions.

**A. English version of the *Family Storyteller*:** The English version of the *Family Storyteller* was the original program, which began in 1997 and has reached more than 3,500 families. With this program we have targeted families through libraries, Head Start, Even Start, family resource centers, and elementary schools. In addition to UNCE delivering the programs, as a way of building community capacity, approximately 300 volunteer leaders have been trained across the state and country to offer this program. In 2003, we began new collaborations with the Children’s Cabinet and the Washoe County School District’s Pre-Kindergarten Program to combine efforts to reach at-risk families and provide family literacy programming throughout Washoe County. This version of *Family Storyteller* also has been used in 29 states. The materials are available in English and Spanish.

## **Documented accomplishments:**

- To assess the overall impact of the *Family Storyteller*, we developed seven new evaluation techniques, most of which require few reading and writing skills to complete. Parents consistently rate the major components of the workshops as either a 4 or 5 on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being extremely satisfied. Pre-post assessments have revealed statistically significant increases in the: number of times parents and children read together, number of days parents and children read books together, number of days children ask to be read to, number of days children look at books or magazines on their own, and how much parents enjoy reading with children. Parents also have increased their use of 14 different parent reading techniques. Children have made significant gains in their enjoyment of reading with parents and their understanding of print concepts.
- A mailed survey was conducted to see how the program has been used by other state Extension systems. Respondents estimated that they have conducted a total of 233 series reaching 1,188 families and 76 percent had partnered with other agencies to deliver the programs. On a scale of 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive), respondents rated the reaction of parents to the program as 4.55. West Virginia featured the program as a centerpiece of their Governor's Initiative on school readiness.
- Presentations about the program have been given at the annual conferences of the: National Council on Family Relations, National Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, National Cooperative Extension Child Care Initiative Conference, National Children, Youth and Families At Risk Conference, and National PBS Ready To Learn Conference. Also, we presented two invited national internet-based training sessions on the program by USDA Children, Youth & Families Education and Research Network.
- The *Family Storyteller* has been designated as a national Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service Program of Excellence and was chosen as one of only three programs to promote nationally by the Cooperative Extension National Early Childhood Extension Taskforce. The program received the received the Western Extension Directors' Award of Excellence in 2007.
- A journal article on the program was published in the *Journal of Extension*.

**Program Status and Direction:** Direct delivery of this version of the program in Washoe County has primarily been spun off to the Children's Cabinet and the Washoe County School District. Also, the core team continues to train new facilitators throughout the area, state, and country.

**B. *Family Storyteller for English Language Learners:*** The *Family Storyteller* has been adapted for parents enrolled in English as a Second Language programs and other parents who are specifically interested in gaining English skills as well as helping enrich their young children's development and school readiness. The *Family Storyteller for English Language Learners* has reached nearly 2,000 families, and facilitators have been trained to deliver the program throughout the state. The high-risk nature of these families can be seen in the fact that before starting the program, nearly 60 percent of the parents had less than high school educations, with the median education level being elementary school; 77 percent reported that their own parents had not read to them, played games (51 percent), or told stories (45 percent) to them; 90 percent started the program knowing nothing about the importance of reading to their children.

**Accomplishments:** Impact evaluation has included standardized interviews with parents, pre-post assessments of parent's gains in English literacy and book reading skills, pre-post standardized assessments of children's language proficiency and print awareness, observation of joint book reading, and in-depth case studies. Impacts have included:

- Parents have increased their English vocabulary, print knowledge, and ESL scores, and have gained in their use of 12 skills for sharing books with children. Children have increased their English vocabulary and print knowledge. Parents' and children's enjoyment of reading books together has increased over the course of the program. Each week families take home four extender activities. The average reported use across all activities is around 75 percent, meaning that parents report using three out of every four (19 out of 24 total) extender activity sent home. There has been a significant increase in the number of books for children in the home.
- Parents have reported being excited about the opportunity to at least try to learn to read the English books and have felt more comfortable trying to read the books by the end of the sessions; have appreciated time spent on pronunciation, grammar, and spelling; have learned positive guidance and shared reading techniques; and some have noticed that their children learned new words in English.
- Trained observers have noted improvements in parents' shared book reading skills over the course of the programs.
- A paper on the project was presented at the National Council on Family Relations annual conference.

**Program Status and Direction:** We will continue offering workshops (given staffing levels) and new facilitators throughout the area, state, and country, on as needed basis. We also will continue collaborating with local agencies in the delivery of the program.

**C. *Cuentos En Familia*:** Due to strong demand, a Spanish version of the *Family Storyteller* called *Cuentos En Familia* is currently under development. The version will follow the same format as the original *Family Storyteller*, with the books, videos and materials for families all in Spanish.

**Accomplishments:** Since this program is under development there are no accomplishments to report at this time.

**Program Status and Direction:** Upon completion the new materials will be pilot tested, evaluated, and revised before broader distribution.

**D. *Behind Bars*:** The Nevada Literacy Coalition received a grant to utilize the *Family Storyteller* with parents who are in prison. The UNCE Southern Area joined with the *Family Storyteller* team to adapt the program for this new audience, which included parents, children and their community caregivers (relatives, foster parents, etc.). The program was delivered at the Jean facility outside Las Vegas in 2003.

**Accomplishments:** Evaluation procedures included pre-post surveys, observational data, and facilitator logs.



- Both parents and caregivers had significant pre-post increases in their knowledge of 12 shared book reading skills. All participants said the program was helpful and most inmates felt "a great deal" (44 percent) or "a lot" (38 percent) closer to their children than before the program. Also, inmates reported that the program had helped them prepare to care for their children full time when they left prison "a great deal" (69 percent), "a lot" (25 percent), or "about average" (6 percent). Participant comments about the program included statements such as: "Teaching me the importance of reading together", "My daughter just loved the things that were given to her. She loves to read and she loved the picture. It made her cry", and "I've become closer to my children."
- Trained observers viewed inmates and children reading together and all observations were rated as either good or excellent. Observational logs included statements such as "They [parents and children] read together enthusiastically and enjoyed all of the activities" and "Excellent interaction!...They enjoyed reading and doing projects together."
- An invited presentation was given at the Nevada Association of Family and Consumer Sciences conference.

**Program Status and Direction:** *Behind Bars* is currently not being offered. If the opportunity should arise in the future, we would alter the focus to parents in transitional programs rather than prison/camp based programs.

**E. Native American Family Storyteller Project:** In the Western Area, faculty are collaborating with public television and the Children's Cabinet to adapt and provide the program to Native American families. A 10-week pilot project using the original *Family Storyteller* was completed in 2004 and reached 36 families at three sites—Pyramid, Elko, and Walker River reservations. Based on requests from parents who participated in the pilot, an entirely new, six-week series specifically for Native American families is being developed. The new series includes six new books written specifically about and by Native Americans, new literacy lessons, new cultural awareness lessons, and 24 new do-at-home parent-child literacy and cultural awareness activities. The new version is currently being pilot tested.

**Accomplishments:** Evaluation of the pilot program is currently underway.

**Program Status and Direction:** We will continue piloting, evaluating and revising the curriculum before it is published and made more widely available.

**F. The Family Storyteller for Infants and Toddlers:** A new thrust of the *Family Storyteller* is to begin developing a version for parents and their infants and toddlers (12-36 month old children). The purpose of the *Family Storyteller for Infants and Toddlers* program is to increase the amount and quality of literacy activities parents and child care teachers provide infants and toddlers. In 2004, a three-year Agricultural Experiment Station grant was obtained to support program development and evaluation along two lines. First is the identification of those key aspects of the home and child care environments that should be the targets of the educational intervention. Our previous research and teaching efforts with families, teachers, and preschool-aged children have identified adult-child literacy activities and adult reading beliefs as the key components to target. We hope to confirm this in the new infant-toddler project. Second are the identification and/or development of methods to measure changes in formative infant and toddler literacy skills.

**Accomplishments:** The project team has identified standardized assessment measures of children's language and print knowledge, and has developed five new strategies to assess children's knowledge of symbols, book handling skills, and awareness of print in everyday life were developed. Data collectors have been trained and testing of the assessment strategies has begun.

**Program Status and Direction:** We will continue the initial research project. A curriculum will be developed and tested based on the research results.

**G. The Family Storyteller for Special Needs Children:** In addition, the Nevada State Department of Education consultant who provides leadership for programs for children with special needs has presented the *Family Storyteller* at professional meetings because he views this work as helpful to families of such children. He would like to work with UNCE on further refining and adapting the curriculum for children with special needs, which provides opportunities for work with another vulnerable audience.

**Accomplishments:** Since this program has yet to be developed there are no accomplishments to report at this time.

**Program Status and Direction:** We will consider developing such a curriculum in the future.

**Money On The Bookshelf:** This related program has dual goals of increasing shared book reading while also teaching the basics of decision-making, goal setting, and other beginning financial skills to parents and children. UNCE in the Western Area trained volunteers and directly provided *Money on the Bookshelf* for 3 to 8 year old children and their families. Programs have been offered to both English and Spanish-language audiences.

**Accomplishments:**

- Evaluation of the program has revealed that parents increase how often they talk with their children about things that relate to money and how often they include their children in talks about how family money is used. Moreover, those parents with lower annual incomes, those who were ethnic minorities, and those with less education show the greatest gains.
- The program was presented at the national conference of the National Association of Family and Consumer Sciences.
- A journal article on the program was published in the *Journal of Extension*.

**Program Status and Direction:** The program is currently not being offered due to the retirement of the primary faculty member who oversaw the program. It is possible that the program could be offered in the future given funding and staffing opportunities.

**Key Collaborations:**

The key collaborators on these UNCE family literacy efforts have been:

- KNPB-TV
- Children's Cabinet
- Washoe County Library
- Washoe County School District

A number of other agencies and individuals have helped with the delivery and refinement of the various programs, including Head Start/Even Start, family resource centers, Nevada State Literacy Coalition, children's librarians, early childhood teachers, school staff and personnel, ESL and Adult Education programs, and Cooperative Extension professionals.

### **Additional Family and Intergenerational Literacy Efforts in Western Nevada**

In addition to UNCE family and intergenerational literacy programs, literacy education is provided in Western Nevada through educational, government, and non-profit agencies, although few have an intergenerational focus. School districts offer early childhood and school-based literacy development programs for children. Early childhood programs such as Head Start and Even Start emphasize literacy development in their curriculum, as do a number of private child care programs. Area libraries offer children's story hours for children and house special collections of children's books. KNPB Channel 5 offers their Ready To Learn Service which matches their children's TV programming with enriching literacy materials. The Children's Cabinet provides literacy information for families and child care providers and tutoring for school-aged children. Many of these agencies rely on the Family Storyteller curriculum in their literacy work with families. In addition, pediatricians, family doctors, public health nurses, and practitioners and social workers who work with families with young children, often provide information and support to families. Community colleges and literacy coalitions offer literacy and ESL programs for adults.

## **Implications**

### **General Conclusions**

Several general conclusions can be drawn from this review of family and intergenerational literacy needs in Western Nevada.

- The matter of family/intergenerational literacy is vital to the future well-being of families in Western Nevada. The issue touches areas of education, government, business, and media.
- The results of this review also highlight the need for continued and increased collaboration among agencies and programs. Clearly, the scope of the issue related to family and intergenerational literacy requires broad-based, communitywide efforts.
- A number of children continue to enter school without the literacy and language skills to help them succeed in school. To truly make an impact in our communities, there is a need for even greater creative community programming designed to help children and families develop the skills that will help them be successful.
- Finally, a broad view is needed to address the issue of family/intergenerational literacy. Although the desire is to help children enter school ready to learn, community programs should be designed to strengthen the entire context in which young children live. Thus, efforts should not only be directed at children, but also include the adults who care for them, as well as the neighborhoods, agencies, and organizations that touch children's lives.

## **Unmet Needs**

Despite the efforts of UNCE and other community agencies, several unmet needs still remain.

- There are still a large number of families that could benefit from family literacy and intergenerational programs but have not been reached.
- With the expanding numbers of families in Western Nevada with English as a second language, there is a need to target programs specifically for these populations.
- There are several educational programs aimed at younger children (preschool and school age) and adults (ESL/Adult Basic Education). Fewer programs are aimed at teen and pre-teens who are struggling with literacy.
- There is a need for increased public awareness around the issue and importance of family literacy (e.g., social marketing of issues).
- Increased workplace involvement is needed in such ways as offering workshops for families, offering family friendly policies, and providing monetary support for family literacy programs.
- Although collaboration among agencies is occurring, even greater efforts are needed to meet the family and intergenerational needs of families in Western Nevada.

## **Strengths and Limitations of current UNCE family and intergenerational literacy programming in Western Nevada**

While efforts are underway to address literacy issues in a number of areas, UNCE currently is primarily addressing intergenerational literacy. Several strengths, limitations and future directions for UNCE family literacy programming in Western Nevada can be identified by comparing the findings of the Western Area early literacy needs assessment and current UNCE family literacy programming.

### **Strengths**

- multifaceted
- multiple collaborations
- reaching at-risk families
- strong research and evaluation base

### **Limitations**

- limited scope of audiences (not currently addressing families with infant/toddlers, school-age, etc.)
- limited number of children and families compared to potential number
- programs are time and labor intensive and there are no general programs in place to reach a broader range and number of families
- ongoing funding issues
- uneven distribution areawide (although some UNCE family literacy programs have been conducted in Carson City, Douglas, and Storey counties, the bulk of the effort has been directed at Washoe County).

## **Current Resources**

Current staffing for youth development programs in the Western Area include:

- One faculty, Dan Weigel, who devotes approximately 70 percent of teaching time to family and intergenerational programming

- One 15 hour per week community based instructor, Yovanna Estep, is devoted to teaching literacy programs in the community.

**Program Directions**

Table 1 describes the general direction of UNCE family and intergenerational literacy educational programming.

Definitions of the terms used in Table 1 are as follows:

- **Maintain** – these programs will continue as programming is currently being presented and conducted
- **Modify** – there are plans to modify these programs in some manner. This might include adding a new audience which may require modifications to fit the program to the new audience. Or, in the case of Caring 4 Kids, UNCE has begun providing certificates for completion in place of the State of Nevada Office of Early Care and Education which had been providing the certificates.
- **Develop** – this describes our plans to develop a new program. Programs listed here are not currently being developed.
- **Spin off** – these programs have been assumed by another agency or organization
- **Available but not in use** – these programs have curricula developed and tested, but no staff or funding to provide the program at this time.

**Table 1. The General Direction of UNCE Family and Intergenerational Literacy Educational Programming.**

<b>Program Direction</b>	<b>Family and Intergenerational Literacy Programs</b>
<b>Maintain</b>	<i>Family Storyteller (English) Family Storyteller for English Language Learners</i>
<b>Modify</b>	<i>Cuentos en Familia Native American Storyteller Project</i>
<b>Develop</b>	<i>Family Storyteller for Infants &amp; Toddlers Family Storyteller for Special Needs Children</i>
<b>Spin Off</b>	<i>Behind Bars</i>
<b>Available but not in use</b>	<i>Money On The Bookshelf</i>

**Potential Additional Directions**

Given time and monetary resources, we would like to consider the following possible efforts:

- 1) Expand
  - efforts in Carson City, Douglas, and Storey Counties
  - efforts to reach early childhood professionals
  - monetary resources
  - collaborations with agencies providing education and services to vulnerable families
- 2) Begin exploring
  - additional, less time and labor intense programming efforts to reach a broader range and greater number of families

- workplace family and intergenerational literacy efforts

### **Future Resource Needs**

Presently only a small number of families in Western Nevada that could benefit from family and intergenerational programs are being reached. To reach more families, we need:

- additional hours for the present 15 hour per week position, and
- additional part time positions to better service Carson City, Douglas and Storey Counties.

### **Summary**

This review has documented a continuing need for family and intergenerational literacy programs. As seen, UNCE provides a number of community programs in Western Nevada which have improved the literacy skills of parents and young children, as well as increased the amount of literacy and learning activities provided for those children. We plan on continuing to reach vulnerable families through programs such as the *Family Storyteller*. We also plan to expand and develop additional efforts to reach an even larger number of families in Western Nevada.

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# Youth Development

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension  
Western Area





# Youth Development

## University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Western Area

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) staff focusing on Children, Youth, and Family issues, completed a statewide program planning document in 2004 that has helped to define and shape programmatic activities. One of the priorities identified in the document was Youth Development. This report examines UNCE community programs in Western Nevada related to Youth Development. Before discussing these programs we first examine the current state of youth development in the region.

### Situation

**Definition:** Youth development is a process that promotes positive outcomes for young people through supports and opportunities (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Youth development prepares youth to meet the challenges of adolescence through a coordinated, progressive series of experiences that help them to become socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent. Youth development is designed to focus on the positive outcomes desirable for youth, not just the negative outcomes targeted by prevention activities.

Programs like 4-H epitomize this concept, drawing from most UNCE content areas (e.g. agriculture, natural resources, horticulture, health, community development), but first and foremost focusing on enhancing the life skills, competence, and confidence of youth. 4-H youth development programs focus on eight essential elements (Kress, 2004): 1) a positive relationship with a caring adult, 2) a safe environment, 3) an inclusive environment, 4) engagement in learning, 5) opportunity for mastery, 6) opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future, 7) opportunity for self-determination, and 8) opportunity to value and practice service for others.

**Research Base:** Lerner, et al (2005) report on a current understanding of positive youth development which indicates there are five constructs of positive youth development: competence, confidence, connection, character and caring. Developmental growth in these behaviors or skills seems to indicate an increase in the likelihood of youth contributions to their community and decreased likelihood of risk/problem behaviors. The Director of Youth Development for the National 4-H Headquarters, Cathann Kress, has distilled the essential elements of 4-H youth development programming into four concepts which parallel the five constructs identified by Lerner, et al (2005). The four concepts are belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. As this new theory of youth and human development emerges, 4-H and other youth programs will want to evaluate their program design, implementation and evaluation to increase the likelihood that youth are experiencing quality positive youth development and basing programs on this developing research base.

Additional understanding can be obtained by reviewing features of positive development settings as outlined by Eccles and Gootman (2002) which include: physical and psychological safety, appropriate structure, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, positive social norms, support for efficacy and mattering, opportunities for skill building and integration of family, school and community efforts. Again, many of these features are integral to the structure of 4-H youth development programs.

Positive youth development is rooted in the concept of resiliency, which represents a paradigm shift away from identifying risk factors that lead to psychosocial problems to the recognition and discovery of strengths that foster positive development and self-actualization (Bensen, 1997; Bernard, 1997; Garmezy & Masten, 1991; Rutter, 2001; Werner & Smith, 1982). Resiliency research addresses the question of why some individuals exposed to various risk factors are able to avoid negative outcomes while others are more vulnerable to the risks and are not able to avoid the negative outcomes (Zimmerman & Arunkamar, 1994; Jackson, Born, & Jacob, 1997). Zimmerman and Arunkamar (1994) define resiliency as "...those factors and processes that interrupt the trajectory from risk to problem behaviors or psychopathology and thereby result in adaptive outcomes even in the presence of adversity" (p. 4).

Resiliency research can be used to determine which factors place children and adolescents at risk for developing a negative outcome and which factors, called compensatory or protective factors, allow them to avoid or reduce a negative outcome (Rutter, 1987). Rutter (2001) cautions against conceptualizing resiliency as a stable, individual trait that protects an individual from a variety of negative outcomes. Rather, resiliency is relative to the particular risk and depends on the context and particular circumstances in which the individual is involved. An individual may experience resiliency in one aspect of their lives, while having difficulties in other aspects (Luthar & Zigler, 1991). The identification and encouragement of developmentally appropriate protective factors, assets, or competencies is the conceptual foundation of positive youth development.

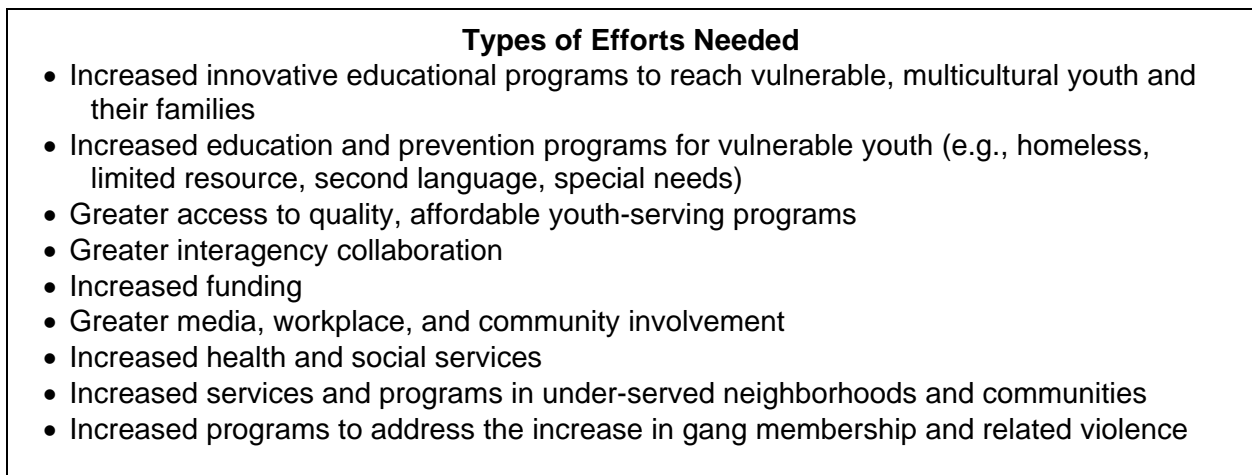
**Statistics:** Youth and families in Nevada face many serious challenges that make youth development programming more needed than ever before. High statewide teen birth rates, school dropout rates, youth adjudication rates, and youth suicide rates place Nevada at or near the bottom of all states indicating major concerns for youth and families of Nevada (Kids Count 2006 Data Book Online, 2006; Evans, Marte, Betts, & Silliman, 2001). In addition, the majority of Nevada youth (58 percent) have less than half of the 40 developmental assets deemed critical to success by the Search Institute (Center for Business and Economic Research, 2001). The developmental assets identified by the Search Institute include internal assets such as commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity and external assets, such as support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations and constructive use of time. Search Institute Developmental Assets can be considered building blocks for healthy communities and healthy youth. These issues are exacerbated by the dynamic, rapidly changing nature of western Nevada communities. Area population continues to grow at an unprecedented rate (over 35 percent in the past decade), putting pressure on and stretching thin the region's youth services, school capacities, transportation services, and public funding for youth related services.

Kids Count, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, provides national and state-by-state data tracking the status of children in the United States. Categories of data include health conditions and health care, economic well-being, education and achievement, child and youth safety/welfare, and juvenile justice. Data from the 2007 Kids Count Data Book ranks Nevada as 33<sup>rd</sup> in the country regarding ten indicators of child well-being including 1) percent low-birth weight babies, 2) infant mortality rate, 3) child death rate, 4) teen death rate, 5) teen birth rate, 6) percent of teens who are high school dropouts, 7) percent of teens not attending school and not working, 8) percent of children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment, 9) percent of children in poverty and 10) percent of children in single-parent households. Of particular concern are rates of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, school dropout, teen deaths, children living in poverty, persons residing in juvenile detention and

correctional facilities, teens not attending school and not working and persons age 18-24 not attending school, not working, and not obtaining a degree beyond high school.

**Youth Development Needs in Western Nevada:** The UNCE Western Area largely mirrors these statewide trends, with recent needs assessments in Washoe County, Douglas County and Carson City confirming substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school failure/drop-out, and school violence all as youth issues of concern to Western Area communities<sup>1</sup>. Figure 1 integrates the findings of 2004 surveys completed in Carson City, Douglas County and Washoe County.

**Figure 1. Summary of needed educational efforts**



In 2003 Marilyn Smith, Central/Northeast Area Faculty, and Loretta Singletary, Extension Educator, conducted a statewide needs assessment, asking 4-H parents and leaders questions about their experiences. They asked about how well UNCE 4-H was doing at reaching goals, teaching youth specific skills and providing learning opportunities for youth and adults. They also asked adults about their perceived skills regarding working with youth. The results of the surveys indicate that responding parents and leaders feel that 4-H is providing positive experiences and many learning opportunities for themselves and youth.

According to the parents and volunteer leaders who answered the survey, the highest rated impacts of the 4-H youth development program across the state and in the Western Area were that youth learned project knowledge, acquired greater self-esteem, and improved their relationship building and communication skills.

The lowest rated impacts across the state and in the Western Area indicate that parents, youth, and volunteer leaders might benefit from increased education to help youth learn life skills such as healthy lifestyles, goal setting, communication, decision making, conflict management, and relationship skills. Additionally, the results indicate volunteer leaders may benefit from more education and support to help them in learning skills to lead projects, attract diverse cultural and ethnic groups, and help youth learn about future career choices.

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<sup>1</sup> 2004 Carson City Community Council on Youth Risk Factors Data; 2004 Douglas County's Community Prevention Plan; and the 2004 Join Together Northern Nevada Comprehensive Community Prevention Plan.

## UNCE Youth Development Programs in Western Nevada

The Western Area has a long and productive history with positive youth development programming. 4-H club programs, 4-H military, and 4-H Afterschool Club are examples of the breadth of current UNCE youth development programming. Indeed, the philosophy of positive youth development programming (i.e., providing high quality, developmentally appropriate, sustained engagement with youth as partners and resources) guides all Western Area youth work. Such programming often can only be done in collaborative partnerships that include the organizations and institutions that are central to the lives of many youth (e.g., local schools, military bases, Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA/YWCA, non-profit youth service agencies, juvenile justice departments, state/local government initiatives and efforts). Additionally, we recognize that the most effective programs involve the family, school, and peer systems directly related to youth (Eccles & Gootman, 2002) and therefore should be included as we review and develop UNCE programming.

Positive youth development programs also work to increase the capacity of participating youth to gain and practice life skills that may be used to impact their lives as well as their communities. Youth Development programs in western Nevada can be categorized in one of four program areas: 1) Professional Development for Youth Workers, 2) 4-H Afterschool, 3) 4-H Clubs and Groups or 4) Special Interest. The focus of youth programming is based on the federal initiatives of 1) science, engineering and technology, 2) healthy living, and 3) citizenship.

**Professional Development for Youth Workers:** 4-H Youth Development staff and faculty work with other youth-serving agencies to develop, provide and evaluate training for youth workers as well as develop a youth worker network within Nevada, with a goal of increasing the quality and quantity of out-of-school time (OST) programs for youth ages 6 to 19 years. By providing professional development and helping to form a professional organization for youth workers, we are building the capacity of our area to provide quality OST programs for youth. Through both of these efforts, training and facilitation of a statewide network, we are working to increase the capacity of local agencies to provide quality programs and services for youth and their families.

**A. Youth Development training for Youth Workers:** The quality of youth development programming is dependent in great part on the skills, education and training of the youth workers involved in the program. Training for youth workers in the Western Area is provided by various organizations and agencies including UNCE. Training provided by Extension professionals includes youth development, health, nutrition, program management, group management, working with volunteers, guidance, experiential learning model, and recognizing, reporting, responding to disclosures of child abuse. Audiences for youth worker training include staff of UNCE, students of UNR enrolled in Education 204 & 214 classes, Boys and Girls Club, school districts, parks and recreation, and YMCA.

Requests for training of youth workers have increased in recent years from the Washoe County School District (WCSD) 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) as well as both county and city parks and recreation departments. Training has focused on principles of positive youth development, guidance, developmental ages and stages, working with diverse audiences, personality types, communication, cooperative games, and child abuse recognition and reporting.

### **Documented Accomplishments:**

- Since 2004, we have provided training for 111 UNR students who have each volunteered (as a requirement of their class) 30 or more hours for an estimated value of \$66,000 (111 students x 30 hours x \$20/hour).
- The training has been well received by supervisors and staff with high ratings for both the content and presentation. Participants indicate they have learned tools and information that they can use in their programs and work with youth.
- Additional support for the training is indicated by the repeat requests and that we are now able to collect a fee to cover the cost of materials.
- Statistical analyses of the training results should be completed in 2008.
- Since 2000, training has been provided for over 460 staff from UNCE, Reno, Sparks, and Carson City Parks and Recreation Departments, WCSD 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC, YMCA, Sierra Army Depot and Boys Girls Club, Reno Housing Authority and UNR students.

**Program Status and Direction:** Parks and Recreation Departments of Reno, Sparks, Carson City, and Douglas County as well as other youth serving agencies have hundreds of staff who could benefit from professional development. In Washoe County, training is currently being provided. With feedback from collaborating agencies, we are refining the training and plan to provide further training and continue to develop curricula for these youth workers. Marketing to other agencies and communities will follow as the curriculum is completed. Additionally, a group of faculty, led by Jackie Reilly, have developed and pilot-tested a 15-hour training for entry-level, front-line youth workers. The curriculum, *Tools of the Trade*, was presented at the 2007 National AfterSchool Association annual conference. Following peer-review, the curriculum, *Tools of the Trade*, will be marketed nationwide.

**B. Nevada AfterSchool Network (NAN):** A group of professionals from various agencies including UNCE are working to build a network of youth workers across the state. The primary goals are to provide professional development opportunities, provide networking abilities, and enhance the expertise of youth development professionals in Nevada. An increased interest in training for and quality of afterschool programs has led to our participation in helping to organize a professional association for youth workers, called Nevada AfterSchool Network(NAN). The initial meeting was very well received with participants traveling from southern and northern Nevada to attend a two-hour organizational meeting in Reno. A broad representation of community members attended the meeting, including staff of government agencies, educational organizations, private non-profit and for-profit school age care agencies, and city and county Parks and Recreation Departments. Following the initial meeting, monthly meetings and a full-day retreat have been held to continue development of the statewide network.

### **Documented Accomplishments:**

- Individuals from communities across the state have met monthly since the organizational meeting that was held in August 2006 to develop NAN and a statewide organization.
- In 2007, a day-long retreat was held with over 30 participants who worked to develop the groups' mission and vision.

- A private, non-profit organization was contracted with to provide support while NAN becomes a non-profit and to provide organizational support while initial grant and business funding is obtained.
- A facilitator has been hired with State of Nevada Department of Education funding to further develop the organizations' goals, objectives and structure.

**Program Status and Direction:** Following the work of the Steering Committee, Nevada AfterSchool Network members will start work to find an agency or organization willing to act as a fiscal agent and provide support for this new statewide organization as well as begin implementation of the goals set by the group.

**4-H AfterSchool:** 4-H AfterSchool is a national effort within the 4-H YD Program to raise the public and internal awareness of the contributions and potential contributions of 4-H YD in out-of-school-time, as well as to provide training and educational opportunities for youth and staff in non-Extension operated afterschool programs. Training for youth workers is provided primarily with UNCE developed curriculum. As with other 4-H YD programming experiential learning is the primary method for teaching. New curricula being developed on the national and local level include links to national education standards. Work related to the afterschool population is done in various venues and using various methods.

**A. 4-H AfterSchool Club (4-H ASC):** We have been involved in 4-H Afterschool programming since 1990, providing afterschool programming for youth ages 6 to 14 years teaching leadership, science, and healthy living. 4-H ASC is offered at Reno Housing Authority (RHA) sites and provides a nutritious snack. Trained staffs provide a nurturing, supportive educational environment. Staffs also provide a weekly teen club opportunity with teen selected service and leadership as the focus. The 4-H ASC program provides a quality, school-age care program as well as a teen club for youth of low-income families.

**Documented Accomplishments:**

- Over the past 10 years an average of 262 youth have participated in 4-H ASC each year.
- Initial evaluation indicated an increase in positive social skills and higher reading scores for young participants.
- From 1995 through 2005, over 1,945 two-hour program days were offered with an average attendance of 27 youth for a total of 103,772 contact hours.

**Program Status and Direction:** As funding is available, 4-H ASC will continue to be offered at Reno Housing Authority sites. Reno Housing Authority has provided partial funding for 4-H ASC programs at their sites. 4-H ASC will continue to focus on science, leadership and healthy living.

**B. 4-H Afterschool Enrichment (4-H ASE):** 4-H Afterschool Enrichment (4-H ASE) uses research based curricula to provide educational opportunities for children and youth in collaboration with various OST programs. 4-H ASE programming in the Western Area focuses on science, nutrition, leadership and physical activity. The primary curricula currently utilized for 4-H ASE includes Small Steps 4 Big Changes, Health Rocks!, various 4-H and USDA curricula and Project NEED Renewable Energy curriculum.



Health Rocks! is a curriculum developed by faculty from Mississippi State University Extension Service focused on teaching substance abuse prevention and decision-making skills. Staff from the Washoe County office have attended training in the use of the curriculum and have received several small grants to pay for travel and training of youth from Washoe County. Following training, youth and adult partners have provided training for a variety of groups.

Renewable energy sources are the topic of some of our 4-H ASE science lessons. Department of Energy (DOE) training has been provided for staff to teach and evaluate 30 lessons on sources of energy. The lessons are designed for 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade youth. There are 10 lessons each for energy sources – light, heat and wind. This project was funded and supported by DOE, National Association of State University and Land Grant Colleges and 4-H.

4-H ASE programs that focus on science, leadership and healthy life styles are provided at WCSD 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC, 4-H Camp, Carson City and Douglas County Schools and various other educational venues. Educational programming has been provided for elementary and middle school students.

#### **Documented Accomplishments:**

- Unexpected funding in 2006/2007 allowed us to provide science and healthy life skills education for school age youth in various afterschool settings on an areawide basis. For some communities this was a new opportunity with such enrichment lessons at afterschool programs not being offered before. The programs were well received and staff would like to continue to provide these educational opportunities for community youth. In Carson City, 12 one-hour lessons were provided for 337 youth for a total of 4,144 contact hours. In Douglas County, 76 one-hour lessons were provided for 582 youth for a total of 44,132 contact hours. In Washoe County 160 sixty-minute and ninety-minute lessons were provided for 1,726 youth for a total of 108,071 contact hours.
- 4-H ASE programs have been offered on a contractual basis for WCSD 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs using various 4-H curricula based on youth and staff identified need and interest. Educational activities focusing on science, nutrition, life skills, and leadership were provided for 224 youth were enrolled in programming at Heights, Echo Loder and Warner Elementary schools and Traner Middle School. The average daily attendance was 23 youth for the 196 lessons making a total of 2,334 contact hours.
- The average number of annual participants in all areawide school enrichment programs for the past seven years is 5,726 youth (3,316 in Washoe County, 2,200 in Carson City/Storey County, 210 in Douglas County).
- Qualitative data includes responses from children about their enjoyment of 4-H ASE. Comments included: "I wish we had 4-H everyday!"; "I want to be a scientist."; "I love 4-H AfterSchool Science Club." and "Thank you 4 teaching us about health."

**Program Status and Direction:** Our Health Rocks! program has received four grants for staff and youth to attend training and for program materials. Each grant has paid for two youth to attend the training for a total of eight youth currently trained. All trained youth have presented workshops to groups of children and youth. Health Rocks! is an example of a youth/adult partnership program that allows for youth to learn and practice planning and organizing competencies as well as presentation skills. Youth and their staff advisor will continue to seek locations and groups of youth who want to learn the

skills presented in *Health Rocks!*. Participating youth and adult partners provide program evaluation feedback to Mississippi State University faculty.

Pending funding, these collaborations with agencies and organizations providing 4-H ASE programs will be continued. Based on the success and reception of 4-H ASE programming in Douglas County, staff has requested that we seek additional funding to continue 4-H ASE programming in their communities.

**4-H Clubs and Groups:** 4-H Youth Development programs occur in a variety of settings using a variety of methods. Youth can participate in clubs, camps (both day camps and residential camps), in partnership with adults, as leaders or trainers, or in community service projects. Youth from a variety of settings are targeted for participation in 4-H youth development programs, including youth from military families, low-income youth, and underserved audiences, as well as the general public.

**A. 4-H Clubs** are available to youth with a focus of teaching life and leadership skills to youth ages nine to 19. 4-H clubs use project-based activities to teach skills and are asset development focused programs. Volunteer leaders are screened and trained to provide positive club programs for participating youth to learn life skills. Various special interest educational programs occur across the area for 4-H members and youth in the general population. Special interest educational programs include such activities as 4-H camp, a residential week-long camp with a variety of science, art, and leadership skill-building activities for campers and chaperones.

#### **Documented Accomplishments:**

- Since 1998, an average of 1,595 Western Area youth participated in 4-H YD clubs each year (831 in Washoe County, 385 in Carson City/Storey County, 379 in Douglas County).
- 4-H clubs focused on a variety of content areas with the primary goal of all clubs to teach youth life skills of communication, decision making, cooperation, and leadership. Special interest education programs included implementation of the “*Health Rocks! Life Rocks!*” curricula, science camps using curricula from the Department of Energy, leadership and citizenship events – such as *Capital Days* and *Discover Your Future* (formerly called *Careers to College*).

**Program Status and Direction:** 4-H Clubs programs have a long history as an integral part of Cooperative Extension’s Youth Development programming. New methods and venues for educating youth are being explored both here in Nevada and across the nation, while keeping the rich history of 4-H programming alive.

**B. 4-H Military** youth who have parents in the military are vulnerable to the challenges presented by sudden changes in their family. 4-H, USDA and military organizations, including the Army, Guard and Reserve, have been working together for the past few years to provide 1) youth development professional training for staff and 2) consistency for youth of military personnel. One of the methods used has been to provide grant funding to support consistent 4-H clubs at all military locations. The Army has mandated that all Army facilities will offer at least 4 types of 4-H programs: computers, photography, citizenship, and arts and crafts. This is to provide consistency for youth across Army bases so that youth can access the same programs if they move. Nevada received a grant for this type of programming to be offered at Sierra Army Depot (SIAD) in Herlong, California and at Nellis Airforce base in southern Nevada. The

Washoe County Cooperative Extension office has provided programming for SIAD-connected youth as well as youth of guard and reserve families.

**Documented Accomplishments:**

- We have trained ten Sierra Army Depot staff about positive youth development and 4-H programming.
- Three-thousand, one-hundred and seventy-four youth of military families have participated in 4-H youth development programs since 2004 when outreach to military families began.

**Program Status and Direction:** In Washoe County the focus of programming is being shifted to address the needs of Western Area youth of families with parents who have been deployed. Club and special interest education programs will be provided with direct marketing to reach target populations. Needs of youth and families will be assessed to determine if educational programs might address identified needs.

**C. Leadership Education:** Various volunteers and youth work with 4-H youth development programs. In order to provide quality programming for youth these leaders need to have training and support. On going training is provided after volunteers are screened and oriented. Training focuses on policies of Cooperative Extension as well as youth development professional training to help volunteers understand development, guidance, group management and life skill development. In addition to leadership training for adult volunteers leadership training is provided for youth.

**Documented Accomplishments:**

- Since 1998, 68 volunteer leaders have been screened and trained in Washoe County.
- An average of 45 youth ambassadors and 22 youth camp leaders have been trained each year.
- Since 1998, 198 teens have been trained in leadership skills.
- Monthly leader meetings provide support. An educational newsletter, *Clover Clips*, is written and distributed to leaders, parents, schools, elected officials and UNCE offices. The focus of the newsletter is to provide leadership and life skills educational articles as well as providing information about upcoming events and opportunities. Monthly distribution is approximately 1,100.
- Special interest programs in leadership are held with adults and youth together; with youth providing input and implementing programs for other youth and younger children. These youth-adult partnerships and youth-in-governance opportunities are tremendous learning opportunities for youth and adults alike.

**Program Status and Direction:** In addition to monthly meetings and *Clover Clips*, leaders, youth and parents are referred to online resources for additional training. However, further support and training beyond referrals and current training could be provided. Based on the results of the needs assessment conducted by Singletary and Smith (2004), the CYF team plans a review of current training provided to determine need to refine and enhance training. Specific training needs identified in the study, such as helping youth learn life and social skills, need to be incorporated into training for volunteer leaders and parents. Methods to strengthen the youth-adult partnership and

youth-in-governance opportunities will be explored as well as methods to evaluate leadership training.

**Special Interest:** Some 4-H Youth Development programming is developed for specific audiences or for specific topics. The following section provides a summary of those programs.

**A. 4-H Camp and other educational special interest experiences:** The Western Area has offered a 4-H camp for many years. The week-long residential camp provides an opportunity for youth, 4-H members and non-members, to experience group living with trained chaperones while participating in a wide variety of educational activities. As with other 4-H youth development programs the main purpose of the camping and other special interest experiences is for youth to learn and practice the four concepts of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. Educational lessons content focus includes nutrition, science, environment and technology. 4-H camp also provides a hands-on learning experience for older youth who apply and interview for a position as a junior leader. These youth meet with the camp director often during the week as well as working with the guidance of the trained chaperones. Adults and youth alike have the opportunity to practice and improve their skills in cooperation, conflict resolution, communication and leadership. Other special interest educational experiences have included *4-H Dances in the Schools* and *Drum Chiks, Speaking with Confidence* and *4-H Teen Institute*. Teens in the *Speaking with Confidence* and *4-H Teen Institute* participate in leadership, civic and speaking activities. Teens develop volunteer training and activities for younger youth as well as participating with other community groups on various civic projects.

**Documented Accomplishments:**

- An average of 185 youth per year (66 from Washoe County, 83 from Carson City/Storey County, 36 from Douglas County) participated in the Western Area 4-H camp each year and another 7,587 youth per year (6,247 from Washoe County, 1,282 from Carson City/Storey County, 58 from Douglas County) participated in special interest experiences.
- Surveys are completed at the end of each camp by both youth and adult participants. Survey responses are used to make programmatic changes.
- An impressive number of adults and teen leaders (85 percent in 2007; 81 percent in 2008) return year after year to volunteer as chaperones and provide a positive learning environment for youth.
- *Dance in the Schools* received grant funding from the Nevada Arts Council for 425 elementary school children to participate in a fine arts education program. Prior to the program 95 percent of the youth had not considered dancers to be serious athletes. After the program 75 percent of the participating youth had changed their ideas and now consider dancers to be athletes just like football, baseball and soccer players. The physical education teachers were complimentary of the program and very pleased with the youth's responses and participation.

**Program Status and Direction:** 4-H Camp continues to provide a very positive experience for youth, young adults and adults involved. As a testament to its success and enjoyment, each year the camp has a waiting list and camp is at full capacity. We plan to continue to provide this program with a long history of success.

**B. Leadership Laboratory:** *Leadership Laboratory*, which was offered for the first time in 2007, is an example of a program that has been developed based on a participant-identified

gap. Youth and their parents wanted a leadership opportunity for 13 and 14 year old youth who are too old to be campers at 4-H camp and too young to be a teen leader. Parents and youth felt they would benefit from a leadership experience. They also could continue to build on skills learned when they were younger and being able to apply those skills in other youth and 4-H activities, such as Ambassadors, *Health Rocks!*, 4-H Conference, 4-H Congress, etc. In 2007, the first *Leadership Laboratory* was offered to youth from the Western Area. The program was provided in collaboration with 4-H Military partners.

#### **Documented Accomplishments:**

- Thirteen youth ages 13 and 14 participated in the weekend. Evaluation of the educational weekend was positive with an average rating of 4.23 on a 5 point scale with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent.
- Participants liked the challenge and cooperative activities the best; they wanted the experience to be longer; 12 of 13 said they would like to attend again (one thought it was a one-time event).
- Participants rated various skills learned on a 3-point scale, with 1 being “same as before”, 2 being “more than before camp” and 3 being “lots more than before camp.”
- The items with the highest rating were 1) be a good citizen by showing pride in my country and helping others (2.23), 2) treat people who are different from me with respect (2.15), 3) listen carefully to what others say (2.15), 4) think about what might happen because of my decisions (2.08), and 5) do what is right for myself when with a group (2.0).

**Program Status and Direction:** Responses from youth involved and parents indicate continued development of this learning opportunity.

**C. Nutrition in the Garden: Grow Yourself Healthy:** *Nutrition in the Garden: Grow Yourself Healthy* is a collaborative program incorporating nutrition, urban horticulture, community development and youth development disciplines. It was piloted in 2006 and 2007 with the support of a state grant at a charter school, Mariposa Academy. Mariposa is a small elementary school with high rates of students meeting low-income guidelines for free and/or reduced meals and English Language Learners (ELL). Based on research regarding similar programs, 43 fourth and fifth grade students were identified to target educational lessons about nutrition and subsequent healthy behaviors. The educational program offers 40 lessons (20 on nutrition and 20 on urban horticulture), as well as teamwork, public presentation and gardening opportunities throughout the 40 weeks of lessons. An additional benefit has been the inclusion of community stakeholders, Boys and Girls Club (care and harvesting of the garden during the summer when school was out of session), Rotary Club (provided manual labor and donations). *Nutrition in the Garden: Grow Yourself Healthy* is truly a community project, with ownership behaviors, such as care and pride, becoming very evident.

#### **Documented Accomplishments:**

- Development and planning meetings were held with teachers, project faculty, staff and fourth and fifth grade students, stakeholder meetings have been held to inform the community about the project.
- Students helped to design the garden and selected the plants to be grown.
- Forty lessons were developed, presented and evaluated.

- Educational celebrations included a Cinco de Mayo/Earth Day garden event, Great Zucchini Races, garden opening and plant give-aways.
- Crops were planted (included some that were started as seeds in the classrooms), maintained, and harvested.
- Pedometers were provided and students learned how to use them.
- All youth tasted new foods.
- Students learned about dietary recall and recorded their food intake using computer programs provided by the grant.
- Some students used the garden project as the focus of their annual science fair project.
- Twenty summer participants in the Boys and Girls Club *Dragonfly Quest* (a youth leadership program) provided maintenance and harvesting of the garden.
- Forty-three Mariposa students and their families as well as 15 Neil Road Boys and Girls Club members have participated in the first year of this educational, collaborative, community project.
- Preliminary data indicate that 1) youth modestly increased the number of steps taken on days of garden work, 2) there was an increase in students' ability to correctly identify fruits and vegetables that are good sources of vitamin C and vitamin A, 3) 95 percent of students sampled 15 varieties of vegetables and fruits, and 4) Over 1,700 contact hours were provided for Mariposa students and over 100 contact hours were completed with Boys and Girls Club members.

**Program Status and Direction:** Funding has been approved to finish development of the curriculum as well as expand and continue the program for the Mariposa community. Following refinement of the curriculum and depending on evaluation data and funding, the program will be modified and may be offered to other schools in the area and shared with colleagues in community development, nutrition education, youth development and youth horticulture education.

**D. Small Steps 4 Big Changes:** The problem of childhood obesity is a recognized public health issue. A pilot program, *Small Steps 4 Big Changes*, was started in 2006. It uses a family night format focusing on nutrition and physical fitness and was held at three Reno Housing Authority (RHA) sites. Kerry Seymour, Area Nutrition Specialist, and Jackie Reilly, Youth Development Specialist, worked with 4-H ASC staff to develop, implement, and evaluate this new program for residents of RHA. The program includes educational lessons, tasting, recipes, and physical activities for youth and their families.

**Documented Accomplishments:**

- This curriculum has been pilot tested, however, ongoing funds and staff for this project are not currently available. The lessons are used in 4-H ASC and 4-H ASE programs.
- While the pilot program had a small number of participants (N=12) completing pre- and post-test surveys, all respondents indicated satisfaction with the program and interest in participating in the program when it was offered again.

**Program Status and Direction:** Funding will be sought to continue offering and expand the *Small Steps 4 Big Changes* program.

**E. Policy Education and Civic Engagement (PEACE):** *Policy Education and Civic Engagement* (PEACE) is a social studies curriculum created by Marlene Rebori, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Community Development Specialist, for middle school students. Through five interactive and participatory lessons, PEACE incorporates diverse subject areas such as public policy education, political philosophy, history, current Nevada issues, civic knowledge, civic skills, citizenship and community action. The overall goal of PEACE is to increase students' knowledge and impart basic civic skills that will enable our young citizens to meet their responsibility for active participation and governance. Other key objectives of PEACE are to encourage critical thinking, broaden student's perspectives, and increase political tolerance by supporting a diversity of opinions. The curriculum is designed to be a democratic, collaborative learning approach where each lesson begins with an active learning exercise, followed up with a facilitated dialogue session. The intent of PEACE is that it be used during school hours. The curriculum standards met for each lesson, citing Washoe County School District Standards, Nevada Social Studies Standards, and standards developed by the National Council for Social Studies.

**Documented accomplishments:**

- A draft curriculum was written in 2007 initially consisting of eight lessons and piloted at Vaughn Middle School in Reno. Twenty-eight students participated.
- A shortened curriculum of three lessons was also piloted at Vaughn Middle School during the late spring semester with 23 students.
- A third revision resulted in the current five lessons, with one supplemental lesson.
- The current version of PEACE (five lessons plus one supplemental lesson) was peer-reviewed in fall 2007 and is being edited to reflect reviewers' comments.
- An evaluation was conducted with the initial pilot curriculum through 28 pre/post tests.
- Two components were found to be significant through paired t-tests: student's sense of self-efficacy and their impact in working with others for community change. Paired t-tests of pre/post evaluations also indicated a trend in students' increasing their understanding of rights, duties, and responsibilities of citizenship and an increasing trend toward their sense of political tolerance. Although these trends were not statistically significant, evaluation results did indicate a mean increase in knowledge gain in these two topic areas.
- The final revised PEACE curriculum was completed in December 2007.

**Program status and direction:** Three train-the-teacher workshops are planned. In collaboration with Washoe County School District, two workshops are planned for Washoe County School District teachers. In collaboration with College of Education one workshop is planned for pre-service teachers.

**Key collaborations:**

Youth development work in general and 4-H YD efforts in the Western Area has a long history of collaborative approaches. Collaborative efforts have been initiated by both UNCE and by other agencies and frequently have been a result of discussions and cooperative efforts to meet a specific need. Although joint funding efforts have become more common in recent years as youth serving agencies have increased their collaborative programming efforts, most collaborators have participated on a county level rather than an areawide level.

**Table 1. Key Collaborators in each County and Areawide**

<b>Washoe</b>	<b>Carson &amp; Storey</b>	<b>Douglas</b>	<b>Areawide</b>
Washoe County School District	Carson City School District	Douglas County School District	Girl Scouts of Sierra Nevada
21 <sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers	21 <sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers	Douglas County Parks and Recreation Department	Nevada Guard
Parks and Recreation Department, Cities of Sparks & Reno	Boys and Girls Club of Carson City		United States Reserve
Boys and Girls Club of the Truckee Meadows	Community Council on Youth		Join Together Northern Nevada
College of Education, University of Nevada Reno	Community Chest		Northern Nevada Food Bank
Pyramid Tribal Council			
Indian Nations Conservation Alliance			
Pyramid Tribal Parks and Recreation			
Pyramid Tribal High and Middle School			
Natchez and Pyramid Lake Tribal Council			
City of Reno Housing Authority			

**Additional Youth Development Efforts in Western Nevada**

Several other agencies provide programming for youth. Some direct programming at vulnerable populations such as Big Brothers Big Sisters and Reno Housing Authority. Others provide programming for all youth who wish to participate. Regardless of the method and content focus or methods utilized by these programs, all have an overarching goal of positive youth development. Some of the organizations providing positive youth development programs in the Western Area include: Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Jr. Achievement, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, Parks and Recreation, Community Council on Youth, Community Chest, School Districts, Pyramid Tribal Council, Future Farmers of America, and Future Homemakers of America.



## **Implications**

### **General conclusion**

Several conclusions can be drawn from this review of youth development needs and programs in Western Nevada.

- Positive youth development is about creating supportive communities for youth and empowering them to engage in their own development while contributing to the well-being of the larger community.
- Positive youth development is relevant to the needs of all youth, not only those in high-risk situations.
- Positive youth development is a conceptual shift from a focus on youth with problems to one that asks how communities can help youth develop the confidence, competence, connections, character, and caring/compassion to contribute in meaningful ways to their families, peers and communities.
- Youth development is among our most important societal tasks. The development and well-being of youth touches areas of education, government, business, and media.
- The results of this program review also highlight the need for continued and increased collaboration among agencies and programs. Clearly, the scope of issues related to youth development requires broad-based, communitywide efforts.
- A number of youth continue to face challenges in terms of their own skill development, the obstacles their families must overcome, and the risks they encounter in their environments. To truly make an impact in our communities, there is a need for even greater creative community programming designed to help youth and families develop the skills that will help them be successful.
- Finally, a broad view is needed to address the range of issues affecting youth development. Programming efforts directed at youth need to be supplemented by efforts directed at parents, schools, communities, and the policies that shape our support for youth.

### **Unmet needs**

Despite the efforts of UNCE and other community agencies, several unmet needs still remain.

- There are more than 75,000 children and youth living in the Western Area. Western Area 4-H Youth Development programs reach an average of 15,466 (10,722 in Washoe County, 4,060 in Carson City/Storey County, 684 in Douglas County) each year. More youth in the area could benefit from participation in 4-H Youth Development programs.
- Educational programming to change behaviors requires numerous contacts over a period of time with youth and their families to have the desired impact of changing behavior and increasing quality of life through education.
- Major issues related to youth that are not currently addressed include teen suicide, school retention, job readiness and juvenile justice.

### **Strengths and limitations of current UNCE youth development programming in Western Nevada**

While efforts are under way to address youth development in a number of areas by a number of agencies, UNCE is uniquely addressing youth development by providing research-based educational opportunities to build life skills, primarily those focused on science, engineering,

technology, healthy living and civic engagement. Several strengths, limitations and future directions for UNCE in Western Nevada can be identified by comparing the findings of youth development needs assessment and current UNCE youth development programming.

### **Strengths**

- Multifaceted program
- Link with University including faculty, research base, university students, etc.
- Program focus on providing opportunities for youth to learn and practice life skills, including confidence, competence, connections, character and caring/compassion
- Involvement in numerous collaborations, to broaden and strengthen programming
- Ability to reach an ethnically, geographically and socio-economically diverse group of youth
- Evaluation of programming efforts in recent years can demonstrate impact and accountability as well as provide information for program direction
- Volunteers provide some of the programs
- Long history and commitment to 4-H positive youth development programs

### **Limitations**

- Programming for a limited number of children and families compared to the potential number of youth who could be involved in our programs;
- Volunteer management is time-consuming
- Recruiting and keeping volunteers for extended periods of time is difficult
- Quality positive youth development programming includes long term contact with highly trained volunteers, which is harder to accomplish as the pool of volunteers diminishes
- New methods of providing programming for youth can alienate lifelong volunteers who see the change as a loss of resources for the traditional audience and methods

### **Current Resources**

Current staffing for youth development programs in the Western Area include:

- One faculty, Jackie Reilly, who spends 60 percent of her time on youth development program related teaching, research, and program administration
- Six full-time, hard funded staff – Jim Barcellos, Sarah Chvilicek, Shannon Montana, Maureen O'Brien, Cindy Smullen and Sandy Wallin;
- One part-time, hard-funded staff person, Adrienne Sawyer
- Varying number of grant-funded staff

### **Program Direction**

The following table describes the general direction of UNCE youth development programming.

Definitions of the terms used in Table 2 are as follows:

- Maintain – these programs will continue as programming is currently being presented and conducted
- Modify – there are plans to modify these programs in some manner. This might include adding a new audience which may require modifications to fit the program to the new audience. Or, in the case of Caring 4 Kids, UNCE has begun providing certificates for

completion in place of the State of Nevada Office of Early Care and Education which had been providing the certificates.

- Develop – this describes our plans to develop a new program. Programs listed here are not currently being developed.

**Table 2. The General Direction of UNCE Youth Development Educational Programming.**

<b>Program Direction</b>	<b>Youth Development Program</b>
<b>Maintain</b>	4-H Afterschool Club*
	4-H Clubs
	4-H Camp
	4-H Afterschool Enrichment*
	Leadership Laboratory
	Training for Youth Workers
<b>Modify</b>	PEACE
	4-H Afterschool Enrichment*
	Leadership Education
	4-H Military*
	Nutrition in the Garden: Grow Yourself Healthy*
	Small Steps 4 Big Changes*
	Nevada AfterSchool Network
<b>Develop</b>	Training for Youth Workers

\* dependent on funding availability

### Potential additional directions

Given current staffing patterns and budget constraints, it remains difficult to expand efforts in Youth Development. However, if these constraints can be rectified, we would like to explore the following possibilities:

#### 1) Expand:

- 4-H Afterschool Enrichment to reach more youth at various out-of-school time programs offered by other agencies in Washoe, Carson City, Douglas and Storey counties.
- Provide increased leadership education opportunities for youth in all area counties.
- Provide increased training for youth workers in all area counties.
- Science, life skills, and leadership educational opportunities for Carson City, Douglas and Storey counties.

#### 2) Develop:

- Nevada AfterSchool Network as a professional, nonprofit organization with statewide support
- *Small Steps 4 Big Changes* for additional sites
- additional lessons for *Small Steps 4 Big Changes*
- *Nutrition in the Garden: Grow Yourself Healthy* curriculum
- *Leadership Laboratory* to provide additional opportunities for youth

### Future resource needs

While permanent funding is available in all counties to meet some of the youth development programming needs, additional resources would be helpful to reach more youth and their families, such as:

- Funding for part-time 4-H AfterSchool Enrichment programs would allow us to meet requests received from community out-of-school time programs.
- Funding for part-time positions to better service Carson City, Douglas and Storey counties.

### Summary

This review has documented a continuing need for positive youth development educational programs. As seen, UNCE provides a number of community programs in Western Nevada which have impacted youth and their families in Western Nevada. Finding new venues, such as afterschool programs can increase the impact. Additionally, training youth workers has the potential to impact positive youth development by helping to create quality out-of-school-time programs across the area.

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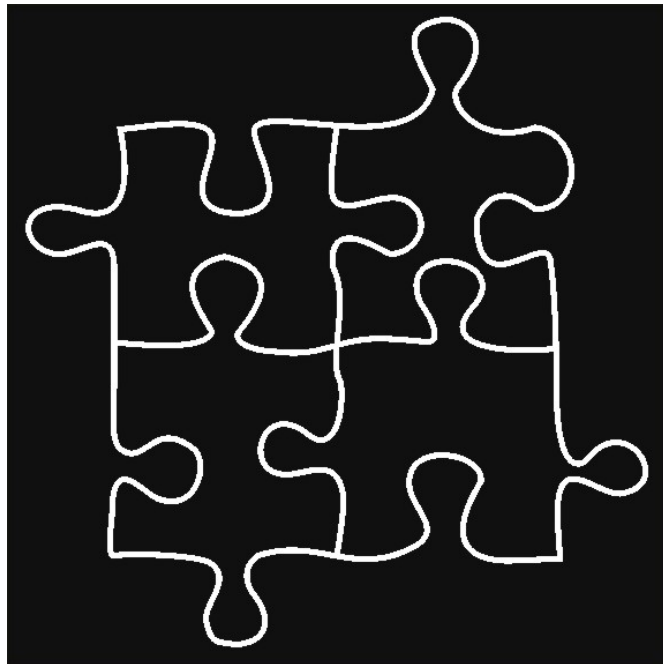
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# Capacity Building

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension  
Western Area







# Capacity Building

## University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Western Area

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) faculty focusing on Children, Youth and Family issues completed a statewide program planning document in 2004 that has helped to define and shape programmatic activities. One of the priorities identified in the document was Capacity Building. This report examines UNCE community programs in Western Nevada related to Capacity Building. Before discussing these programs we first examine the current state of capacity building in the region.

### Situation

**Definition:** A growing body of research supports using a community change approach in program development that builds the capacity of community, organizations and agencies. UNCE CYF faculty typically engage in three broad levels of capacity building with organizations and communities: 1) Providing technical assistance; 2) providing training for others who conduct direct programmatic service; and 3) supporting broad-based activities that cut across specific content areas, for example large-scale needs assessments. Within these levels, CYF activities foster capacity building in a variety of ways, including: 1) providing technical assistance with needs assessments, grant writing, curricula development, current best practices and research-based program development, and program evaluation; 2) coalition and collaboration building; 3) linking communities and agencies to our unique (in many cases) expertise, as well as providing a link to the University; 4) informing communities about underserved populations and critical issues affecting citizens; and 5) staff development and training.

**Research Base:** Several theoretical frameworks for community development can provide guidance for our efforts in this area. These Bronfenbrenner's Model of the Ecology of Human Development (Bronfenbrenner, 1998), Risk and Resiliency frameworks (Garmezy & Matsen, 1991; Rutter, 1979; Werner, 1990), and Asset-Based Prevention Models (Bensen, et al, 2006; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993), and include Dryfoos' Framework for Developing Strategies for Prevention of high-risk behavior (1990).

**Statistics:** Nevada continues to be one of the fastest-growing states in the country. Communities around the state are at times stressed to meet the needs of new residents.

In 2001, 61 percent of children from birth through age 6 (and not in kindergarten) spent time in nonparental child care in the United States. About half of children in kindergarten through third grade spend time in center-based care or nonparental home-based care (Child Trends, 2001). The Nevada Child Care Work Force Study (Essa, 2002) estimated that there are 40,500 children younger than 6 years of age in licensed, paid child care in Nevada. An unknown number (but probably equally large) are in care by relatives and neighbors that is unlicensed and, in some cases, unpaid. Nearly 6,000 Nevada school age children are in licensed care. Because child care programs for school-age and adolescent children are not required to be licensed, we can be fairly certain there are far more school-age children receiving care than 6,000, but the exact number is unknown. There are about 5,400 caregivers providing ECE in licensed programs in Nevada.

**Capacity building needs in western Nevada:** There has not been a formal needs assessment for capacity building in the Western Area. A statewide needs assessment may yield data for the Western Area, however we currently have no faculty focused on this priority theme area. Information gathered in a statewide or areawideneeds assessment could provide direction for capacity building programs and/or identify gaps that would be appropriate for UNCE to address with educational programs.

There is an ongoing need for professional development both in content areas and capacity building skills such as technical skills, grant writing and program evaluation for Extension and other professionals. Continued need to provide accountability to funding agencies supports the need for capacity building in the area of program evaluation as well as implementing best management practices.

### **UNCE capacity building programs in western Nevada.**

UNCE CYF programming seeks to make communities safer and healthier places to live. One strategy to accomplish this objective is to increase the capacity of community groups and agencies to positively impact the lives of children, youth and families in a community. Many educational programs seek to impact the community without increasing the functioning of the existing community groups on which the programs rely, which often leads to ineffective community-based programs. In response to this, CYF faculty members engage in capacity building in a variety of ways to improve organizational and community functioning. In addition, UNCE faculty help establish and build community coalitions, sit on various professional and advocacy committees/boards, and engage in a variety of collaborative community-based programming. By building the capacity of communities and groups to more effectively develop, deliver and evaluate programs, stronger and more efficient community-based programming can be facilitated. Currently, capacity building programming is occurring in program specific priority areas such as early care and education, family and intergenerational literacy, parent education and youth development. More detailed information can be found in program priority documents of this report.

### **Key collaborations**

Strong collaborations between various CYF agencies and organizations could be established by area faculty focusing on capacity building areawide.

## **Implications**

### **General conclusions**

While faculty and staff provide capacity-building education and support as a part of programs in existing priorities, we do not have faculty to provide capacity building on a community level in such areas as evaluation and needs assessment. There may be a need for this type of capacity building in communities in Western Nevada.

### **Unmet needs**

Examination of ongoing community trends in Western Nevada indicates several potential unmet needs.

- Educational programs could be developed to build the capacity of community organizations focusing on such things as 1) technical assistance, 2) training on how to

conduct direct programmatic service, and 3) broad-based activities that cut across specific content areas, for example large-scale needs assessments. With the addition of faculty with these types of expertise programs focusing on capacity-building skills could be offered to our growing communities,.

- Capacity building could be offered to help local agencies and organizations with grant writing, needs assessments, program evaluation, implementation of current best practices, curricula development, research-based program development, coalition building, collaboration, linking with community resources including the university and informing communities about underserved populations and critical issues affecting citizens.
- Increased involvement from the business community could occur by providing such diverse support as work-time educational sessions on parent involvement in school or good nutrition and physical activity to promote good health. Such programs could be in addition to staff training on program evaluation, needs assessments, research-based program development, best practices, etc.
- Although collaboration among agencies is occurring, even greater efforts are needed to meet community needs in western Nevada. Capacity-building education could help in meeting this need.

### **Strengths and limitations of current UNCE capacity building education programming in western Nevada**

Strengths, limitations and future directions for UNCE capacity-building programming in western Nevada cannot be identified without conducting a formal needs assessment and then by comparing the needs and current UNCE capacity-building programming. This type of needs assessment and gap identification could be conducted by a faculty member focusing on community capacity building.

#### **Strengths**

- Currently UNCE Western Area faculty provide capacity building educational programming within priority areas, specific to a given audience. For example, UNCE provides training for child care providers to increase the capacity of communities to provide quality care for children and the *Family Storyteller* program helps parents prepare their children to enter school ready to learn.

#### **Limitations**

- Other than the capacity-building efforts mentioned within other priority areas, there are no faculty currently working in the Western Area to focus on programs to build the capacity of community agencies and organizations.
- Further educational programming could be provided by a faculty member focused on capacity building, possibly including expertise and training in needs assessment, program evaluation and coalition building.

#### **Current resources**

Currently no faculty or staff positions in the Western Area are devoted specifically to capacity building.

#### **Program directions**

There are currently no program directions for this priority.

### **Potential additional directions**

A Western Area capacity-building specialist would allow for a focus on capacity building for UNCE as well as community agencies and organizations. Given current staffing patterns and budget constraints, it remains difficult to develop or expand efforts in capacity building.

### **Future resource needs**

A Western Area capacity building specialist could provide educational programming for many children, youth and family as well as other types of programs and agencies across the area.

### **Summary**

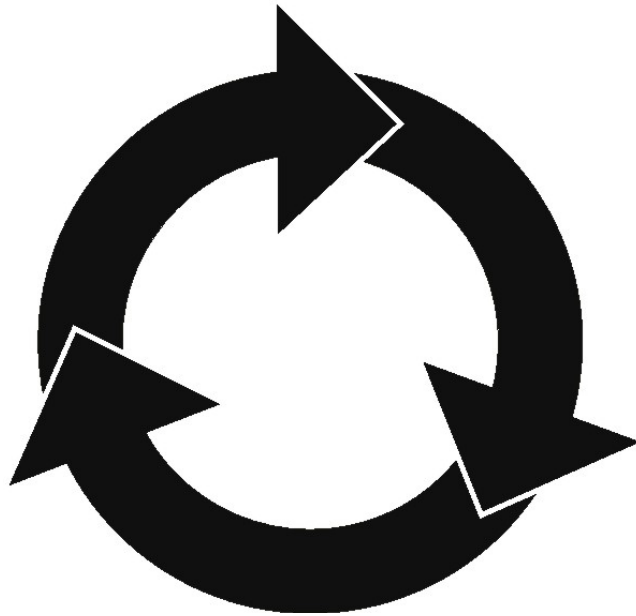
This review has documented a continuing need for capacity-building programming. Unfortunately, UNCE has not had the capacity to initiate community programs in western Nevada to directly address this need. We would like to develop community programs, as well as collaborate with other ongoing programs, should the resources arise.

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# **Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Issues**

**University of Nevada Cooperative Extension  
Western Area**





# Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Issues

## University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Western Area

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) faculty focusing on Children, Youth and Family issues completed a statewide program planning document in 2004 that has helped to define and shape programmatic activities. One of the priorities identified in the document was Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Issues. This report examines UNCE community programs in Nevada related to Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Issues. Before discussing these programs we first examine the current state of juvenile justice and delinquency in the region.

### Situation

Juvenile justice and delinquency is a statewide program priority theme. There is no funding for juvenile justice and delinquency-focused programs in the Western Area.

**Definition:** Juvenile justice and delinquency refers to times when youth interact with the criminal justice system. The majority of youth are not involved with the criminal justice system, but the impact and potential outcomes of delinquent behavior are troublesome and concerning for all youth, families and communities.

**Research Base:** A review of the literature suggests several important considerations for prevention programming of these issues. First, early prevention of delinquent behavior is more effective than interventions with identified delinquent adolescents (Zigler, Taussing, & Black, 1992), although several asset-based, multi-level models have shown success with at-risk adolescents and delinquents. Second, family interaction styles have been found to predict nondelinquent behavior more powerfully than family structure. Third, parental monitoring, even at age 5, has been found to be predictive of lower levels of delinquent behavior among teenagers (Henry et al., 1993). Fourth, since it is now accepted that many high-risk youth behaviors are interrelated and have a large number of common risk and protective factors associated with them (Silverman & Felner, 1995; Felner & Felner, 1989), integrated, developmentally appropriate prevention strategies that foster protective assets common to violence, crime and drug use reduction offer the best pathway to reduce the prevalence of each phenomena while requiring fewer prevention resources.

The Casey Foundation (2007) notes, "One of the groups of adolescents at greatest risk of failing to make successful transitions to adulthood are delinquent youth who end up in the 'deep end' of juvenile justice system, in its detention centers and other locked institutions. These youth come disproportionately from impoverished single-parent homes located in disinvested neighborhoods and have high rates of learning disabilities, mental health and substance abuse problems."

**Statistics:** Although adolescence is not a time of crisis for most youth (Dorfman & Schiraldi, 2001; Huizinga, Loeber, Thornberry, & Cothorn, 2000; Steinberg, 2001), the majority are directly or indirectly exposed to five major risks during teen years: injury and disease, school failure, unintended pregnancy, delinquency and violence (Lerner, 1995). Although some juvenile problems, such as female delinquency and urban youth violence, have increased (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2001), many other risk indicators have declined nationally in the past decade (Centers for Disease Control, 2000; Children's Defense Fund,

1999). Even with these promising overall trends, approximately one in five arrests made by law enforcement agencies involve a juvenile, which equates to approximately 2.8 million juvenile arrests annually (OJJDP, 2001). In addition, adolescents under 18 years of age, who currently make up 19 percent of the total US population, account for 37 percent of all burglary arrests, 30 percent of robbery arrests, 24 percent of weapon arrests, 14 percent of murder arrests, and 14 percent of drug arrests.

Studies have indicated that juvenile delinquents are more likely than nondelinquents to experience problems such as unemployment and alcoholism in adulthood (Kazden, 1992). Intensive study of the causes and consequences of juvenile delinquency (Loeber & Hay, 1995) and violence (Herrenkohl et al., 2001) have identified a pattern of multiple and sequential risk behaviors (Hawkins, et al., 2000) whose effects can be buffered by the presence of personal, family and community assets (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Richman & Fraser, 2001). Reducing risks and nurturing protective capacities and conditions provides the theory and practice methodology for most juvenile justice as well as Extension programs with youth.

The Casey Foundation (2007) reports that in 2004-05, Nevada received an overall ranking of 33 in the US (No. 1 being best to 50 being worst) when considering 119 factors reflecting child and youth well-being. In the same report the Casey Foundation notes that in 2003 the rate of persons (ages 10 to 17) residing in juvenile detention and correctional facilities in Nevada was 362 per 100,000 while the rate for the U.S. for the same year was 307 per 100,000.

As can be seen in Table 1, the juvenile violent crime rate has decreased in recent years, however the rate decreased more dramatically in Clark County and thus for Nevada, than in Washoe County. Incidence reports for rural counties (including Carson City, Douglas and Storey counties) are too small to be statistically meaningful, so they are not cited in the reports.

**Table 1. Average juvenile (ages 10 to 17) violent crime arrest rate (per 100,000)**

	<b>Nevada</b>	<b>Washoe County</b>	<b>Clark</b>
2002-2004	230.9	298.7	228
2003-2005	216.5	293.5	203.6

Kids Count Data Book (2007; 2006)

**Juvenile justice and delinquency needs in western Nevada:** While a needs assessment was conducted by UNCE in 1990 for Nevada, no area needs assessment has been completed for the Western Area in recent years. The statewide needs assessment and data from such sources as the Casey Foundation (2007) and Kids Count Data Book (2006; 2007) lead us to believe that concern for juvenile justice and related issues is warranted. The concern is impacted by expanding demands on community agencies, increasing population in Nevada and shrinking resources. Some of the needs related to juvenile justice and delinquency for our area are:

- Diverse, relevant, and prevention- and intervention-focused programming to support healthy youth and family development
- Focus on methods to address the rising gang involvement and resulting violence in communities
- Curricula for high-risk audiences



- Budgets and human resources to provide prevention and intervention programs for youth and their families
- Organizational capacity to address needs

### **UNCE juvenile justice and delinquency programs in western Nevada**

UNCE juvenile justice and delinquency prevention and intervention programs could potentially increase the capacity of participating youth to develop and practice life skills to impact their lives as well as their communities. Statewide needs assessments by UNCE in the early '90s identified juvenile justice issues as a priority for Nevada when few alternatives other than detention were found to be available for Elko youth — helping drive the large recidivism rate in that county (Evans, Leone, & Neese, 1994). A formal needs assessment conducted in the Western Area may find similar needs to the statewide needs assessment.

**Project MAGIC:** Based on the need identified for Elko to provide juvenile justice and delinquency prevention educational programming, Project MAGIC was developed as a collaborative effort with juvenile probation departments and local schools to offer an adolescent life skills program with parenting and community service learning components as an alternative to juvenile detention. The program assists identified youth (first-time offenders) in learning skills and behaviors to help them become productive, contributing members of their community. Youth also participate in community service activities that give them an opportunity to use the skills learned in the program. Program components include facilitated youth life-skills groups, parent education classes, and community service learning activities, with formal evaluation of project implementation, both qualitative and quantitative, continuing on a regular basis. Following pilot-testing and evaluation of the initial program, Project MAGIC was expanded and offered in other communities in the state, including in Carson City. Program oversight was provided by Central/Northeast Area Faculty Marilyn Smith and State Specialist Bill Evans.

#### **Documented accomplishments:**

- Statewide to date, over 3,000 adolescents and their families have graduated from the program. In Carson City 63 youth and their family members have graduated from the program.
- Longitudinal tracking of program graduates has indicated that most program participants are able to change their behavioral trajectories and live productive, contributing lives without reoffending. Estimates of the resulting savings in incarceration costs are in the millions of dollars <sup>2</sup>[1].
- Results from matched pre/post paired youth survey data reveal significant gains in school engagement, involvement in their communities, strategies to avoid further involvement in the justice system, goal-setting and decision-making, and reduction in substance use among program graduates.
- In addition to a report of their children's behavior, parents also complete a pre- and post-program survey to report observed changes in their child's behavior. Illustrative parent rating results include significant gains on reported school attendance, school engagement, decision-making, conflict resolution, and reduced substance use.

**Program status and direction:** Lack of funding and staff resources to provide the program resulted in discontinuation of the program in Carson City in 2006.

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<sup>2</sup>[1] Based on Nevada incarceration costs, MAGIC program costs, and comparisons of MAGIC graduates who remain out of trouble with the law at one year after graduation with Nevada juvenile recidivism rates.

## **Key collaborations**

Project MAGIC worked with the UNR Criminal Justice department to develop the program and local juvenile justice agencies to identify first-time offenders as potential participants. An additional collaborator for juvenile justice and delinquency programming could be the Youth Network.

## **Additional juvenile justice and delinquency program efforts in western Nevada**

Numerous community agencies provide programming for youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Most work with youth who have exhibited a troubling behavior such as truancy or involvement with the criminal justice system. Agencies providing programming in Washoe County include Big Brothers Big Sisters, Jan Evans Juvenile Justice Center, Wittenberg Hall, Washoe County School District, McGee Center, Children's Cabinet, China Springs, Gang Task Force, Job Opportunities In Nevada, Join Together Northern Nevada, and Washoe County Family Court. Programs are typically cognitive behavior evidence-based. The Youth Network meets monthly to provide a networking opportunity for program representatives in Washoe County.

## **Implications**

### **General conclusions**

A few general conclusions can be drawn from this limited look at juvenile justice and delinquency related issues.

- For UNCE Western Area, it would be helpful to collaborate with various agencies and programs on long-term, coordinated programming that builds resilience in young children and provides appropriate support and education as they grow up. The scope of issues related to juvenile justice and delinquency may require broad-based, communitywide efforts, including prevention-focused programming.
- A number of youth continue to face challenges in terms of their own skill development, the obstacles their families must overcome, and the risks they encounter in their environments. To truly make an impact in our communities, there is a need for even greater creative community programming designed to help youth and families develop the skills that will help them be successful.
- A broad view is needed to address the range of issues affecting youth development. Programming efforts directed at youth need to be supplemented by efforts directed at parents, schools, communities and the policies that shape our support for youth and perhaps prevent their involvement with criminal systems.

### **Unmet needs**

It is difficult to discover specific needs without a formal needs assessment, however, some unmet needs can be identified.

- Effective juvenile-justice and delinquency-prevention programs require numerous contacts with youth and their families to have the desired impact of changing behavior and increasing quality of life through education. Intensive contact requires well-trained, paid staff. This type of programming requires strong, consistent funding.

- The rates for juvenile criminal behavior and number of youth in detention facilities, especially in Washoe County, are extremely high and warrant careful study to determine effective methods to decrease and lower these rates.
- UNCE is not currently addressing vulnerable youth on many of the possible issues related to juvenile justice and delinquency in the Western Area.
- Available funding and human resources may make it even more difficult for rural counties to address juvenile justice and delinquency prevention than Washoe County.

**Strengths and limitations of current UNCE juvenile justice and delinquency programming in western Nevada**

While there are currently no staff or faculty to address this area of need for UNCE in Western Nevada, some of our programs work with youth to provide positive youth development and are designed to prevent problems that lead to delinquency. Such programs may help participating youth be resilient and prevent their participation in the juvenile justice system and/or delinquent behaviors. For example, Family Storyteller and early childhood education programs help preschoolers enter school ready to learn, and 4-H AfterSchool programs provide ongoing positive youth development opportunities for vulnerable youth.

**Current resources**

Currently no faculty or staff positions in the Western Area are devoted to this priority.

**Program direction**

The following table describes the general direction of UNCE juvenile justice and delinquency educational programming.

Definition of the term used in Table 2 are as follows:

- Available but not in use – these programs have curricula developed and tested, but no staff or funding to provide the program at this time.

Some programs may be listed as having more than one program direction. The reason for this is that various components of a given program may have different program directions. For example, the Child Care Nevada program will maintain the current method of teaching in-service training as well as begin training for other trainers to present the in-service training

**Table 2. The general direction of UNCE juvenile justice educational programming.**

<b>Program Direction</b>	<b>Juvenile Justice &amp; Delinquency Program</b>
<b>Available but not in use</b>	Project MAGIC

**Potential additional directions**

Hiring a Western Area faculty member to focus on juvenile justice as well as school retention and job readiness would be very beneficial. Such a faculty member could work with various community agencies as well as other faculty on campus, such as the Criminal Justice and Social Work departments, to research needs and potential programs to change the current juvenile and delinquency statistics in Western Nevada. Opportunities for grant funding may be available if there was an adolescent specialist to focus programming on juvenile justice and delinquency prevention and intervention.

## Future resource needs

As mentioned above, a faculty member to focus on juvenile justice as well as school retention and job readiness would greatly benefit the Western Area.

## Summary

This review has documented a continuing need for juvenile justice and delinquency programs. Unfortunately, UNCE has not had the capacity to initiate community programs in Western Nevada to directly address this need. We would like to develop community programs, as well as collaborate with other ongoing programs, should the resources arise.

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# **School Retention and Job Readiness**

**University of Nevada Cooperative Extension  
Western Area**







# School Retention and Job Readiness

## University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Western Area

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) staff focusing on Children, Youth and Family issues completed a statewide program planning document in 2004 that has helped to define and shape programmatic activities. One of the priorities identified in the document was School Retention/Job Readiness. This report examines UNCE community programs in Western Nevada related to this issue. Before discussing these programs we first examine the current state of school retention and job readiness issues in the region.

### Situation

**Definition:** Education is viewed by society as a way for youth to gain self-sufficiency and acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to ensure a successful transition into adulthood. Youth who do not acquire sufficient academic skills may find themselves severely restrained in an increasingly competitive job market, and may have access only to those jobs that are lower in status, part-time, and that offer low pay and little opportunity for advancement. To overcome this, school environments must be conducive to learning and take into account the diversity of the students to ensure that each child has access to the best education possible (Evans & Polk, 2000). School retention refers to regular attendance in school over time (Kennedy et al., 2007). A primary challenge for communities and youth development professionals is how to encourage initial and ongoing school attendance and retention. Job readiness refers to the skills students acquire that prepare them for the workforce (Robinson, 2001). Both school retention and job readiness are important components of the preparation students need to become successful, contributing members of society.

**Research base:** Educational and social psychological research has approached academic success or failure from the perspective of individual deficiency as the leading factor for academic failure. However, structural factors, the social environment, the school environment and cultural influences all play an important role in academic success or failure (Woods, 2001). According to the National Dropout Prevention Center, students usually dropout between the ages of 15 and 17 at critical transition points (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2002). Studies have shown that early identification, family involvement, clear instructional objectives and monitoring of student progress are effective in dropout prevention (Woods, 2001). Also, students are less likely to dropout of high school if they participate in programs that help them transition from middle school, are culturally sensitive, provide a nonthreatening environment and combine academic and work-based learning (Legters & Kerr, 2001; Mizelle, 1999; Woods, 2001). In order to ensure that each adolescent has access to the best education possible, members of the community, parents and school personnel need to work together to develop an educational system that is positive and supportive of the students, and that ultimately leads to a more promising future for all youth (Evans & Polk, 2000).

The National Dropout Prevention Center (2008) has identified 15 strategies that have had positive effects on the dropout rate and job readiness (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Strategies that have had Positive Effects on the Dropout Rate and Job Readiness.**

• Professional development	• Family involvement
• Early childhood education	• Reading and writing programs
• Alternative schooling	• Individualized instruction
• Instructional technologies	• Mentoring/tutoring
• Career education/workforce readiness	• Learning style/multiple intelligences strategies
• Service learning	• Systemic renewal
• Out-of-school experiences	• Conflict resolution
• Community collaboration	

**Statistics:** In 1999, 11.2 percent of the 34.1 million 16- through 24-year olds in the United States were not enrolled in a high school program and had not completed high school (USDE, 2008). Nationwide statistics on dropout rates indicate that 5 percent who were enrolled in high school in 1998 were no longer in school and had not successfully completed a high school program in 1999. A regional comparison of dropout rates in 1999 shows that students in the West are more likely than those living in the Northeast and Midwest to become dropouts. State level comparison statistics for 2005-2006 show that Nevada has a dropout rate of 5.7 percent (Daneshvary, Schwer, Cope, Klein, & Potts, 2006). Dropout rates were higher for Hispanic (7.8 percent), Black (7.3 percent) and Native American (7.3 percent) students than for White (4.5 percent) and Asian (3.8 percent). Some studies indicate that one of the strongest indicators of dropout risk is poor academic performance (OESE, 2002). A comparison of state and national test scores for fourth- and eighth-grade students in 2000 show that Nevada students rank below the national average in reading, math and science (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005).

Another way to examine school retention is to look at graduation rates. Graduation rates for the Western Area reveal rates of 86.2 percent for Carson City, 85.4 percent for Douglas County, 55.3 percent for Storey County, and 73.9 percent for Washoe County (Daneshvary et al., 2006).

Nevada's traditionally rapidly growing economy with high-paying entry jobs and historical lack of value placed on education have been offered as reasons for our poor graduation rates (Martin & Evans, 2004). According to Muha and Cole (1991), however, while many students drop out to seek work, the job market is not lucrative for them. Only 8 percent of employed dropouts are in skilled positions compared to 20 percent for their graduated peers. The situation for minority dropouts is even worse. Estimates of high school dropouts that are unemployed range as high as 65 percent (Ingersoll & LeBoeuf, 1997).

**School retention and job readiness needs in western Nevada:** We are not aware of a formal needs assessment for school retention and job readiness in the Western Area in recent years. Although the dropout rates for the counties in the Western Area are below the state average of 5.7 percent, a number of students do not complete high school, with a greater percentage of those being minority students. Furthermore, the four counties in the Western Area tend to have a higher percentage of high school students credit deficient as compared to the state average (Nevada Department of Education, 2007). Such data indicate the ongoing need for school retention and job readiness prevention and support for those adolescents most at risk of school dropout, unemployment and underemployment.

### **UNCE school retention and job readiness programs in western Nevada**

Nearly 23,000 high school students reside in western Nevada. Some CYF programming efforts in the Western Area, such as early care and education, youth development and intergenerational literacy programming, address this need with younger children. But no UNCE programs in the Western Area focus on school-retention and job-readiness issues directly with older youth.

### **Additional school retention and job readiness efforts in western Nevada**

School districts, the State Department of Education, and nonprofit organizations such as the Children's Cabinet are engaged in various strategies to enhance student school engagement, job readiness, and enrollment in higher education. The Millennium Scholarship program has rapidly increased enrollment in higher education among Nevada's campuses. School-based efforts and for-profit businesses provide tutoring services for youth, while organizations such as Job Corps and Job Opportunities In Nevada (JOIN) provide job preparation and training programs for at-risk youth.

## **Implications**

### **General conclusions**

The statistics indicate a clear need for expanded efforts focused on school retention and job readiness issues. Some programs and agencies in the Western Area are addressing the need, primarily through school-based or for-profit efforts. Currently, however, UNCE has no direct programming efforts related to this state priority issue. It is hoped, however, that many of our programs for younger children, such as improved quality child care, enhanced literacy development and school readiness, parenting education and positive youth development, will have long-term impacts on youths' abilities to succeed in school, graduate and obtain productive employment.

### **Unmet needs**

Examination of ongoing efforts to address school-retention and job-readiness issues in Western Nevada indicates several unmet needs.

- There are still a large number of youth that could benefit from school-retention and job-readiness programs that have not been reached through typical school-based programs, such as youth that have already dropped out of school.

- In addition to educational efforts aimed at youth, programs which enlist the involvement and support of families are needed.
- With the ever-expanding numbers of families in western Nevada with English as a second language, there is a need to target programs specifically to these populations. Other ethnic groups (Native American and Black) also have high dropout rates and prevention programs tailored for these groups could be beneficial.
- Efforts to support families in poverty could help reduce the need for adolescents to earn money to help support the family.
- There is a need for increased public awareness concerning the importance of school retention/job readiness.
- School retention/job readiness efforts that move beyond the educational system to engage the entire community are needed.
- Increased involvement from the business community is needed in such ways as encouraging adolescent workers to stay in school, offering workshops for families, and offering family-friendly policies for parent involvement in school.
- Although collaboration among agencies is occurring, even greater efforts are needed to meet the school retention/job readiness needs in western Nevada.

### **Current resources**

Currently, no faculty or staff positions in the Western Area are devoted directly to this priority.

### **Future resource needs**

Given current staffing patterns, it remains difficult to address the school retention/job readiness need in western Nevada. To better meet this priority we would need:

- a new faculty position to address school readiness/job retention issues as a full-time teaching priority (the position might also address the juvenile justice priority),
- part-time positions to support programming in Carson City, Douglas, Storey and Washoe counties.

## **Summary**

This review has documented a continuing need for school retention and job readiness programs. Unfortunately, UNCE has not had the capacity to initiate community programs in western Nevada to directly address this need. We would like to develop community programs, as well as collaborate with other ongoing programs, should the resources arise.

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