



Biennial Report to the Nebraska Legislature 2020-2022



Contents

Board of Trustees Introduction_____	3
Sixpence: A Legislative History_____	4
Guiding Principles of Sixpence_____	6
How Sixpence Works_____	7
Why PN-3 Matters_____	8
Qualifying Risk Factors_____	9
Grantee Locations_____	10
Who Sixpence Served (Demographics)_____	11
Program Models and Evaluation Outcomes_____	13
Child and Family Outcomes_____	16
Sixpence Success Stories_____	18

Board of Trustees Introduction

In 2006, Nebraska policymakers and the voting public chose to prioritize the care, education and healthy development of our state's youngest children by laying the legislative groundwork for the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Endowment Fund, better known as Sixpence.

This effort was informed by a growing recognition of several, fundamental realities. First, the overall well-being of our state is intrinsically connected to our ability to cultivate new generations of healthy, capable and thriving Nebraskans. Secondly, children are most likely to follow that trajectory if their parents and families are well positioned to guide their early development, especially throughout the prenatal period and first three years of life. Finally, Nebraska's public and private sectors have a common interest, and therefore complementary roles to play in empowering more parents and families to succeed in this important work.

Since its inception, Sixpence has become nationally recognized as a model for creative, bipartisan collaboration between legislators, state agencies and a broad array of stakeholders at the state and local levels. In that time, Sixpence has enabled 51 early childhood programs in 36 Nebraska counties to change the lives of thousands of children and families throughout Nebraska for the better. These are important advances for our state and its residents.

However, it is also true that the global health crisis and its fallout have put unprecedented pressures on the social, economic and even physiological wellbeing of Nebraska's families over the past two years. A growing body of evidence already points to the effects of these factors on multiple aspects of children's early development. It is more urgent than ever that Nebraska's Sixpence partnerships continue to help families give their youngest children the best possible start in life.

As always, the Sixpence Board of Trustees thanks the Nebraska Legislature for its practicality, foresight and leadership that has made the ongoing success of this initiative possible. Accordingly, we respectfully present the 2020-2022 Sixpence Biennial Report to the Nebraska Legislature with the hope that you will find it useful and informative in your work on behalf of our state's communities, families and youngest children.

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Sixpence: A Legislative History



State Senator Ron Raikes

1990s-2005: Growing Interest by Policymakers

Throughout the 1990s, information about the academic, social and economic benefits of early childhood education began to find its way more frequently into public policy conversations. In Nebraska, these conversations began to focus on gaps in support for early childhood development in the first three years of life. Because this issue exceeded the capacity of the public sector to address on its own, interest began to grow in discovering a public-private solution.

2006: Landmark Legislation and a Constitutional Amendment

Largely through the leadership of State Senator Ron Raikes, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB1256, creating the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Endowment Fund. This consisted of a \$20 million commitment from private investors, triggering a \$40 million match from public funds. The combined earnings of the endowment would be put into a common cash fund held by the Nebraska Department of Education, and granted out to locally controlled, high-quality early learning programs for infants and toddlers at risk.

The public match for the Endowment would be provided by Nebraska's Educational Lands and Funds. However a constitutional amendment was required to secure these resources, which had been earmarked solely for the state's K-12 public education system. In November of that year, the ballot initiative to amend the state constitution passed on a vote of 55% to 45%.

Governor Dave Heineman appointed a six-member Board of Trustees to oversee the grants, consisting of the Commissioner of Education (or representative), the CEO of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (or representative), as well as early childhood professionals representing rural and urban communities, and two additional private sector representatives.

2007-8: Branding and Initial Grants

In its role as the private Endowment Provider for the Nebraska Department of Education, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation created the Sixpence brand for fundraising and grant-making operations. In 2008, the first round of grants were awarded to 13 community early learning partnerships throughout the state. Per the founding legislation, grantees were required to match their awards through locally sourced funds or other resources. The initial grant awards amounted to \$1.7 million.

2013: Sixpence Extends Its Reach

Encouraged by Sixpence's effectiveness in improving children's outcomes, as well as its commitment to fiscal accountability, Nebraska lawmakers voted to increase the state's public investment. LB190 provides an additional \$11 million for grant awards over three years, enabling Sixpence to fund 31 program sites throughout the state.

2015: Child Care Partnerships Introduced

Despite growing public and private support for Sixpence, Nebraska communities still lacked the facilities, resources and professional staff to deliver PN-3 programs urgently needed throughout the state. Once again, Nebraska's policymakers responded by passing two innovative pieces of legislation.

LB489 enabled Sixpence to create Child Care Partnerships between school districts and independent child care providers, opening professional development and quality improvement resources to a wider array of programs. In effect, the bill was designed to better leverage existing child care resources across the state.

A companion bill, LB547, made it possible to implement the new partnerships in a cost-neutral way by capturing federal CCDBG (Child Care Development Block Grant) dollars earmarked for improving the quality of child care programs. The following year, the Sixpence Board of Trustees authorized the first Child Care Partnership grants to five Nebraska communities.

2017-19: Effects of Budgetary Shortfall

In 2017, a \$900 million budgetary shortfall prompted Governor Pete Ricketts to call for a 4% across-the-board cut to state spending. This resulted in a \$200,000 decrease in Sixpence funding during the budgetary biennium. In 2019, however, the Legislature voted to restore these dollars to Sixpence.

2020-21: Addressing the Effects of COVID

Although Nebraska in general suffered comparatively less fallout from COVID-19 than other states, the effects of the pandemic have been extraordinarily severe on families with young children. Growing social and financial stress on parents amplified the already considerable challenges of providing safe, supportive and nurturing family and home environments for young children's development. Similarly, a destabilized child care marketplace forced the temporary or permanent closure of many programs already operating under unsustainable financial conditions.

Under the leadership of Appropriations Committee Chair State Senator John Stinner, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB342 to help offset the impact of the pandemic on children's early development. The bill appropriates an additional \$2.5 million for two years to reinforce the work of Sixpence, leading to 11 new grants for family engagement and center-based programs throughout the state.



State Senator John Stinner



The more we understand about how early experiences affect brain development, long-term health and well-being, the clearer it becomes that investments in children in the prenatal to age 3 period are essential and financially sound.

NATIONAL GOVERNORS
ASSOCIATION



Sixpence: Guiding Principles

Sixpence is Nebraska's signature public-private framework to provide funds and technical guidance to high-quality early childhood programs that address the unique needs of children from the prenatal period to age 3 (PN-3). Sixpence focuses in particular on services for pre-born children, infants and toddlers who are most likely to encounter challenges to their healthy physical, cognitive and social development, putting them at risk of struggling in school and life.

Sixpence addresses these challenges by embracing the following principles:

- **Empower parents and families to guide children's development**
Parents play a pivotal and irreplaceable role in the development of their children, especially during the earliest months and years of life. Sixpence helps parents fulfill this important responsibility by encouraging their skills as effective caregivers and educators. Sixpence helps parents connect to local resources and support networks, and create stronger, more resilient and nurturing families.
- **Address developmental challenges early**
When very young children encounter developmental obstacles it can negatively affect their educational, social and even lifelong health outcomes. We are most effective at keeping children on track to thrive when we address cognitive, emotional and physiological challenges as early as possible—before they can become costlier and more difficult to mitigate further downstream.
- **Enable communities to find their own early childhood solutions**
Young children have similar developmental needs no matter where they are being raised. However, the challenges facing families with young children aren't necessarily the same in every part of the state. Community partnerships and collaborations are best positioned to organize their own assets and resources to address the specific needs of local families with children PN-3.
- **Unite public and private sector resources**
Nebraska's public and private sectors share a common interest in ensuring more children grow up to become healthy, capable and contributing members of their communities. Sixpence is built upon cross-sector collaboration at the state and local levels, which widens the pool of available resources and encourages flexibility and innovation in the design and delivery of PN-3 services.
- **Invest in quality**
Nebraskans should expect accountability for the public and private resources we commit to the development of young children. We can ensure those resources are being used responsibly by investing strategically in high-quality programs that show positive outcomes for the children, families and communities they serve.

* National Governors Association, 2018. "Integrating and Advancing State Prenatal to Age 3 Policies: Report of an Expert Roundtable Discussion." [nga.org/publications/nga-releases-expert-roundtable-report-on-integrating-and-advancing-prenatal-to-age-3-policies/](https://www.nga.org/publications/nga-releases-expert-roundtable-report-on-integrating-and-advancing-prenatal-to-age-3-policies/).

How Sixpence Works

Endowment Structure

Sixpence is the public identity for the Nebraska Early Childhood Educational Endowment Fund. At the time of its creation in 2006, the Endowment represented \$60 million in combined public and private contributions and commitments. The public portion of the original corpus was sourced from Nebraska Educational Lands and Funds, and made possible through an amendment to the Nebraska Constitution following passage of LB1256.

The public and private funds are invested separately and the combined earnings placed in a common cash fund held by the Nebraska Department of Education. A governor-appointed Board of Trustees oversees a competitive grant process which funds community partnerships focused on high-quality early care and learning programs for infants and toddlers at risk. The grants are awarded through local school districts, which act as the fiscal agents for their community partnerships. Each grantee is required to provide a 100% match to its award through local funds and resources.

Since creation of the Endowment, Nebraska lawmakers have approved legislation on three occasions to direct additional public funds to Sixpence, enabling the initiative to reach more infants and toddlers at risk throughout the state.

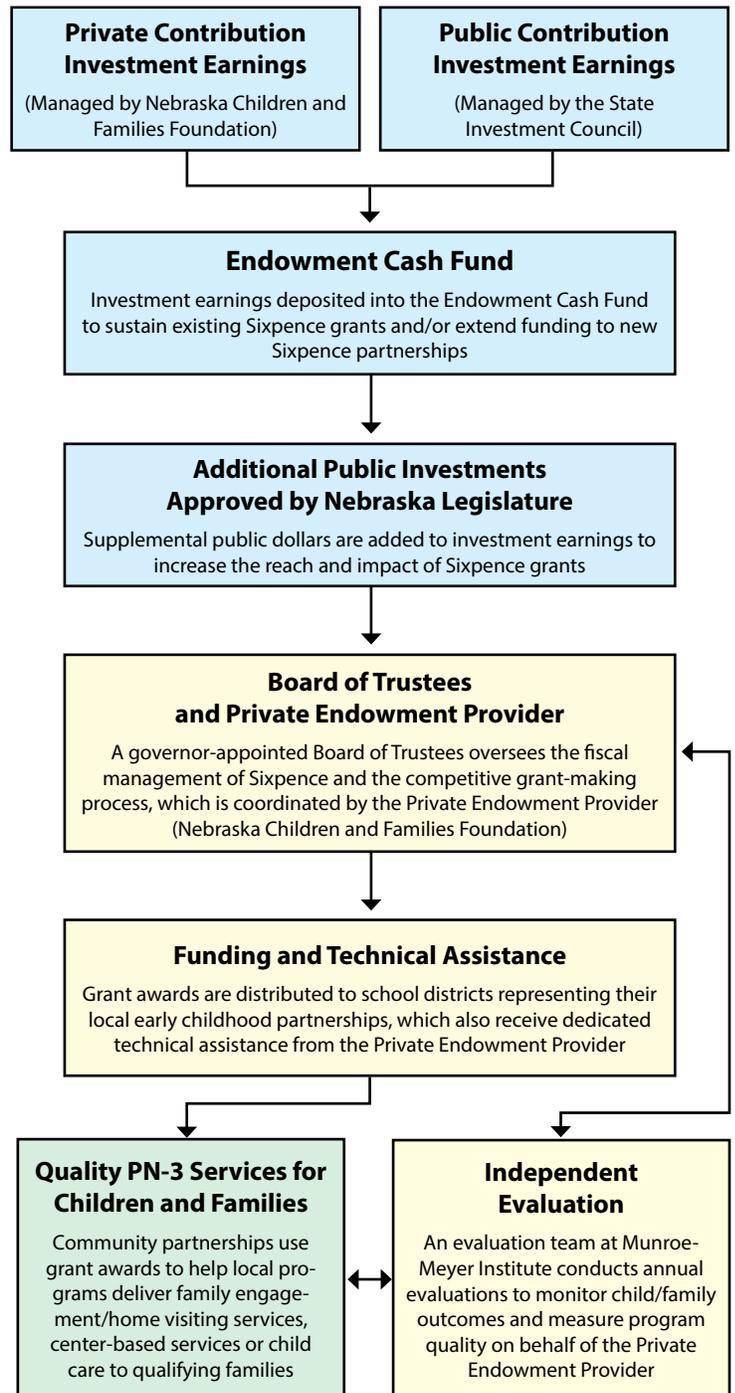
Oversight, Guidance and Evaluation

Pursuant to LB1256, the Nebraska Department of Education is required to designate an Endowment Provider to administer Sixpence grants under the authority of the public-private Board of Trustees. This role has been carried out by Nebraska Children and Families Foundation since creation of the Endowment.

In addition to its grant administration responsibilities, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation provides dedicated technical assistance to community partnerships and programs funded through Sixpence. This is delivered by a team of experienced professionals who work with grantees to help them achieve and maintain high quality standards in teaching practice, program design and management.

All programs funded through Sixpence are required to participate in a rigorous annual evaluation conducted by an independent research team. Since 2008, these evaluations have been conducted by the Munroe-Meyer Institute at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. The annual evaluations measure children’s developmental gains, improvements in parenting practice and family outcomes, as well as overall program quality.

Figure 1: Funding, Service Delivery and Evaluation Process



Why PN-3 Matters

Every stage in the development of young people, from the first days of life through early adulthood, has a direct bearing on their potential to become healthy, capable and contributing members of their communities. Even so, the prenatal months to age 3 (PN-3) are a unique and crucially important period in their lifelong trajectory. During this phase, children are both extremely vulnerable and receptive to the many different kinds of experiences that can dramatically affect—for good or ill—the foundations of brain development, skill formation, emotional well-being and physiological health.

While every child is unique in the way their specific development progresses, there is a key set of interconnected supports that must be *consistently* present in their lives to ensure they are on the best possible path forward.

Protective Factors

- **Healthy beginnings**

The basis for children’s physical health begins with maternal wellness during the prenatal months. It is important that expectant mothers follow guidelines for good nutrition, adopt healthy behaviors and habits and monitor for signs of problems in their own well-being or their child’s prenatal development. Parents should be familiar with breastfeeding and nutritional needs, follow a set schedule for child wellness visits with their doctor and stay current with vaccinations, among other practices.

- **Safe and nurturing relationships**

Strong, supportive relationships with parents and caregivers during the first three years are central to children’s sense of security, self-confidence, behavioral regulation and ability to build positive connections with others. Parents and caregivers who consistently hold, comfort and talk to their infants and toddlers lay the foundations for mental and emotional health, as well as positive social skills as they grow toward adolescence and early adulthood.

- **Stimulating early learning experiences**

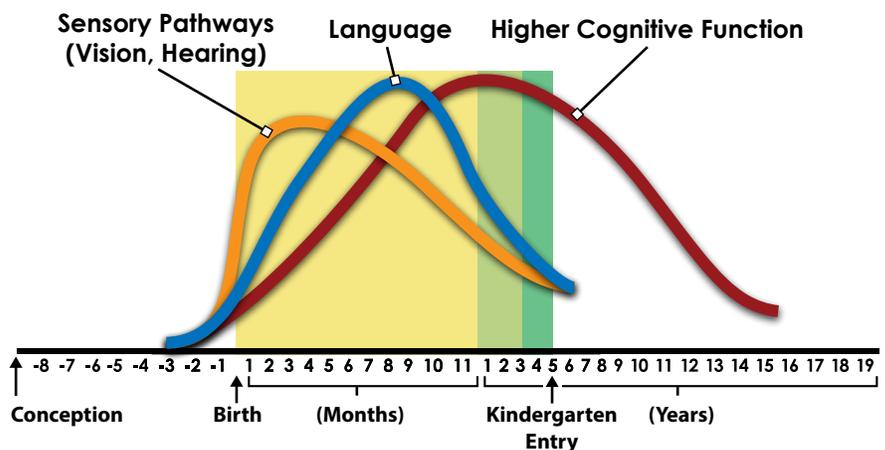
Children’s neural circuitry develops more rapidly during the first three years than at any other period in our lifespan—more than 1 million new synaptic connections per second. During this period, it is particularly important that parents and caregivers engage children in language-rich interactions such as reading and sharing picture books, as well as other serve-and-return interactions that build efficient, robust and durable neural pathways to support ongoing learning in kindergarten and beyond.



The earliest months and years of life are the optimal time to help children build the foundations of neural architecture they will need for academic success and the formation of life skills.

As children transition into kindergarten and beyond, new synaptic pathways form more slowly and neural circuitry grows less flexible. Thereafter, it becomes progressively more difficult to address deficiencies in early learning through remedial interventions later.

Figure 2: Human Brain Development*
Synapse Formation Dependent on Early Experiences



Adapted from: Nelson, C.A., in *Neurons to Neighborhoods* (200). Shonkoff, J., and Phillips, D. (eds.)

* Detailed information about how early experiences influence the formation of brain architecture, behavioral skills and health can be found at the Harvard Center for the Developing Child at developingchild.harvard.edu/guide/what-is-early-childhood-development-a-guide-to-the-science/.

Qualifying Risk Factors

Sixpence-funded programs are designed to help offset stressors that can undermine the supportive relationships, environments and experiences children need in their first three years. These factors often relate directly to challenges parents experience in effectively guiding the healthy development of their youngest children. Left unaddressed during this critical developmental period, these risk factors increase the likelihood that children will struggle academically, become involved in the criminal justice system, experience mental and emotional health issues and even develop chronic and costly health problems such as hypertension and diabetes later in life. Typically, low family income (185% or less of the current Federal Poverty Level) is a commonly recognized indicator of potential risks to child development. To qualify for Sixpence services, families must be subject to at least one of five risk factors. Table A below shows how these risk factors were represented in center-based and family engagement programs during the current reporting period. Sixpence evaluators track similar risk factors among participants in Child Care Partnership programs.

Table A: Percentage of Participating Families with Qualifying Risk Factors, 2020-2022
[Center-Based and Family Engagement/Home Visiting Programs]

Risk Factors	2020-21	2021-22
	Children Served: 1,016	Children Served: 1,132
Low household income [\leq 185% Federal Poverty Level]	96%	98%
Parents with limited educational attainment [lack of HS diploma or equivalent]	40%	38%
English Language Learner [ELL] households	34%	35%
Teen parent	25%	24%
Premature birth or low birthweight	12%	14%
Children who experienced 3 or more qualifying risk factors	65%	64%

Other Developmental Obstacles

While qualifying risk factors describe a significant set of potential obstacles, children who are served through Sixpence tend to be subject to an even broader array of traumatic stressors that can severely affect early development without protective factors in place. These include specific events, chronic situations or circumstances, or complex sequences of traumatic experiences.

Table B: Percentage of Sixpence Participants with Additional Traumatic Stressors
[Center-Based and Family Engagement/Home Visiting Programs]

Traumatic Factors	2020-21	2021-22
	Children Served: 1,016	Children Served: 1,132
Parent mental health issues	41%	42%
Parent substance abuse	15%	19%
Parent in prison	9%	11%
Parent absent	10%	12%
Child witnessed violence	8%	9%
Children who experienced at least one incidence of trauma	49%	20%
Children who experienced multiple sources of trauma	21%	24%

Grantee Locations

Figure 3: Location of Sixpence Grantees by Type as of 2022

Overlay: Distribution of Children Under Age 6 in Households ≤ 185% FPL by Legislative District*

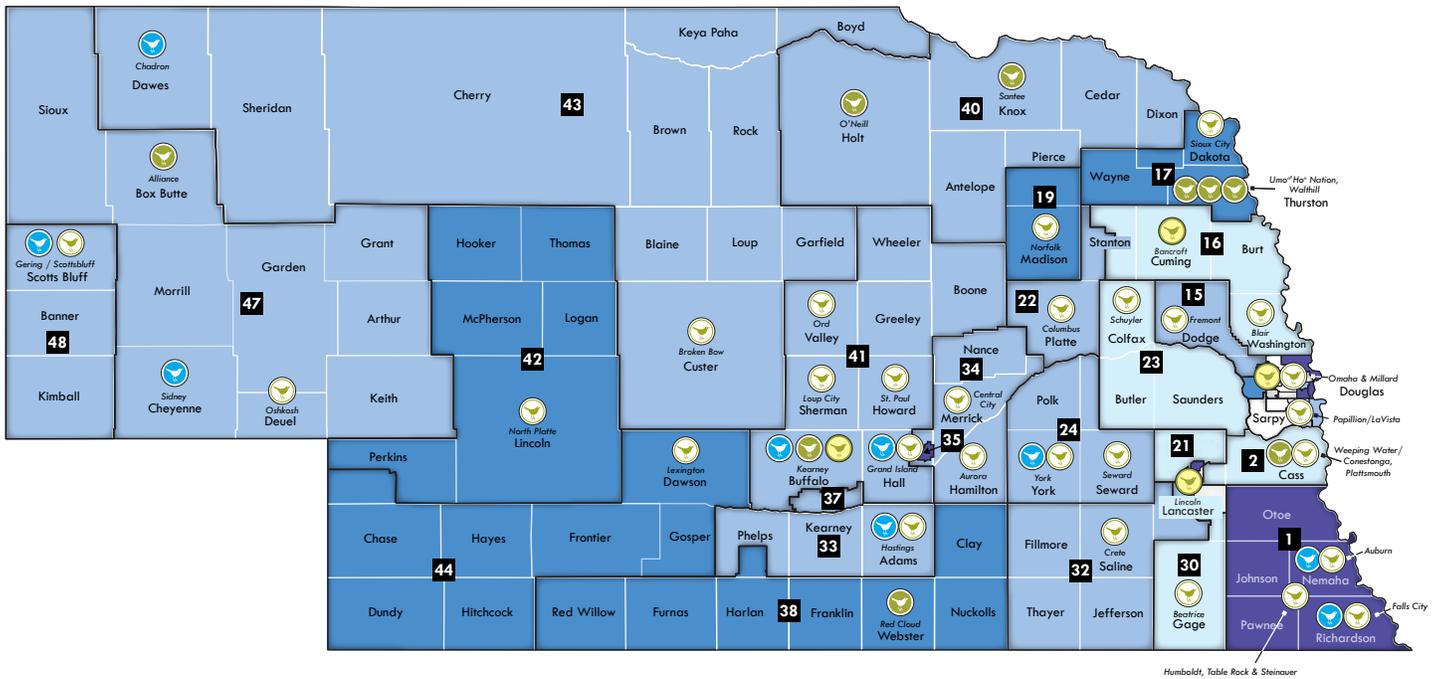


Table C: Sixpence Grantees by Type 2020-22

Grant Type	2020-21	2021-22	New Grantees 2021-22 (Made possible by LB342)
Center-Based <i>All grantees except one offer full-day, year-round services</i>	4	9	Kearney (additional classroom), O'Neill, Red Cloud, Walthill, Weeping Water, Conestoga
Family Engagement/Home Visiting <i>Help parents improve their skills in guiding children's development and providing for their needs</i>	24	28	Beatrice, Blair, North Platte, South Sioux City
Mixed Center-Based/Family Engagement	3	5	Bancroft-Rosalie
Child Care Partnership <i>Collaborations between school districts and local child care programs serving infants and toddlers at risk</i>	9	9	—

* **Data Source (185% FPL):** U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 American Communities Survey 5-year estimates. Analysis by Center for Public Affairs Research, University of Nebraska Omaha at the request of First Five Nebraska. For detailed information about the distribution of children under age 6 at or below 185% FPL in Omaha and Lincoln legislative districts, visit firstfive-nebraska.org/why-early-childhood-matters/legislative-district/.

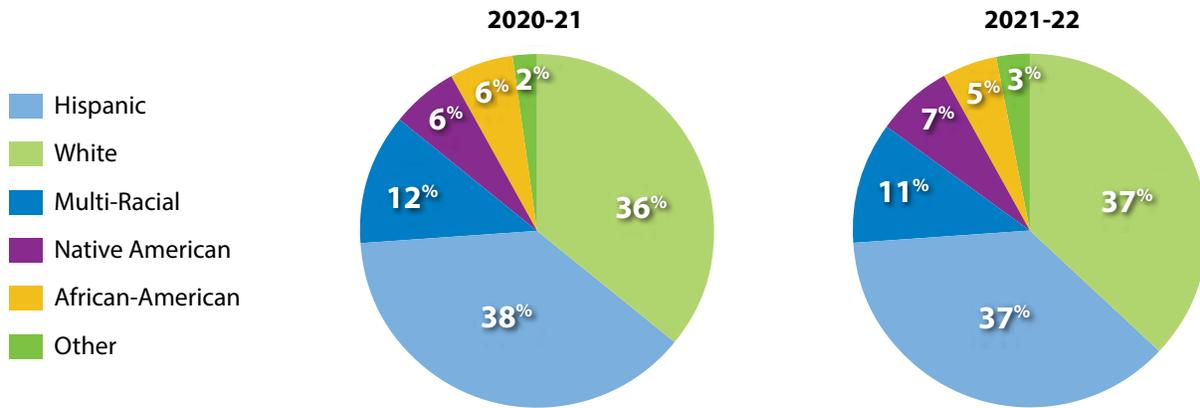
Who Sixpence Served

Family Engagement/Home Visiting and Center-Based Programs

Table D: Participant Demographics
[Center-Based and Family Engagement/Home Visiting Programs]

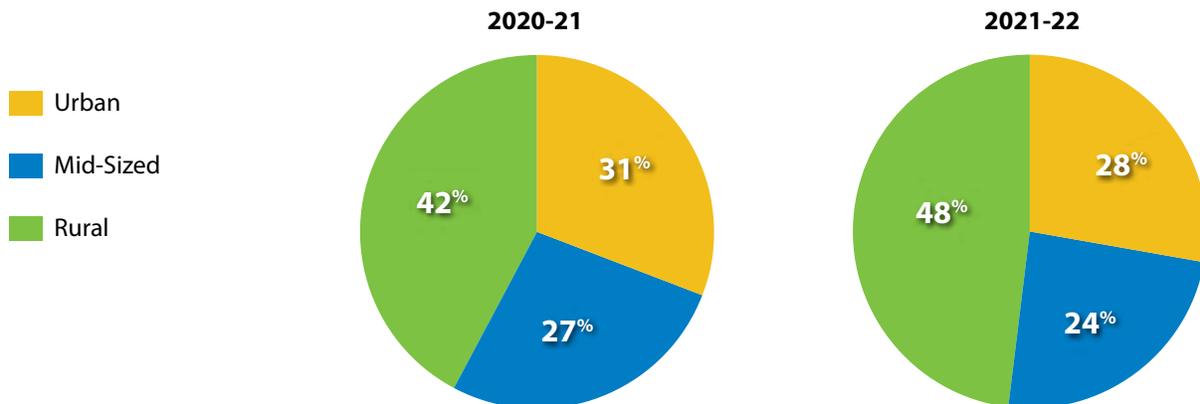
Demographics	2020-21	2021-22
Children served	1,016	1,132
Families served	864	979
Expectant mothers receiving prenatal services	75	78

Figure 2: Ethnic/Racial Distribution of Participating Families
[Center-Based and Family Engagement/Home Visiting Programs]



By way of context, the U.S. Census statewide demographics for Nebraska break down as follows: White Alone 87.7% | Black or African American Alone: 5.3% | American Indian and Alaskan Native Alone: 1.6% | Asian Alone: 2.8% | Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Alone: 0.1% | Two or more Races: 2.4% | Hispanic or Latino: 12.0%*

Figure 3: Distribution of Participating Families by Community Type
[Center-Based and Family Engagement/Home Visiting Programs]



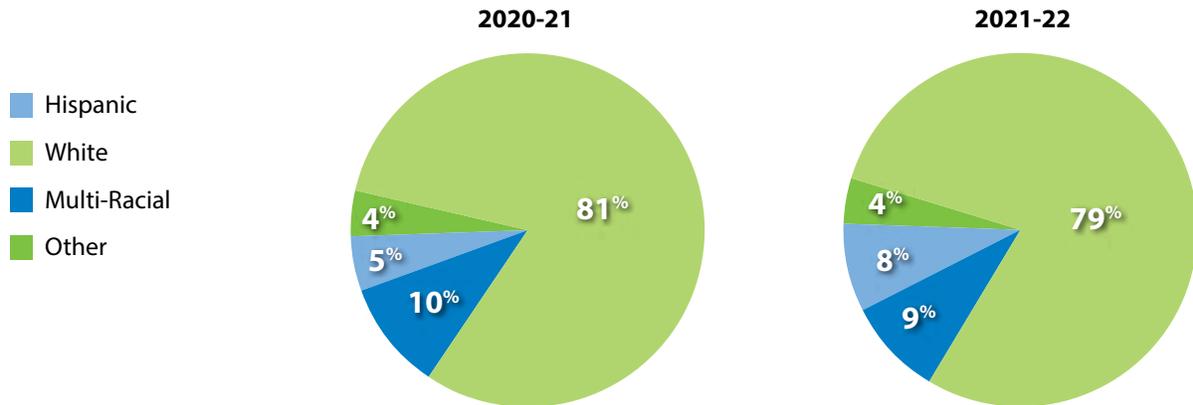
* Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Population Estimates, July 1, 2021. [census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NE/PST045221](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NE/PST045221).

Child Care Partnerships

Table E: Participant Demographics/Characteristics
[Child Care Partnerships (CCP)]

CCP Demographics	2020-21	2021-22
Children served	672	1,161
Infants / Toddlers	596	951
Males	52%	55%
Females	48%	45%
Children eligible for the Child Care Subsidy	24%	23%
Children receiving special education services through the Early Development Network	34	42
Children referred for special education evaluation	42	48

Figure 2: Ethnic/Racial Distribution of Participating Families
[Child Care Partnerships]



Program Models and Selected Evaluation Outcomes*

Center-Based Programs

Center-based Sixpence programs operate in close partnership with their local school systems, follow curricula proven to advance early learning, emphasize parent involvement and adhere to the professional standards for staff required by the Nebraska Department of Education. They offer part- and full-day care throughout the academic year and participate in *Step Up to Quality* to ensure continuous improvement in the caliber of services they deliver.

Center-based Sixpence programs are situated in facilities that act as service hubs for their communities. Four of these locations represent local partnerships with Nebraska’s four **Educare schools** (Lincoln, Omaha-Kellom, Omaha-Indian Hills and Winnebago). These locations are part of a national network of high-quality child development centers designed to model and advance best practices in early care and learning.

During the current reporting period, Sixpence awarded five new grants for center-based services made possible through additional public funding.

Selected Evaluation Results

Center-based Sixpence programs are evaluated annually on different aspects of early learning experience they provide. This includes assessing the quality of engagement and emotional support in teacher-child relationships, balance and structure of classroom activities, supports for language development and other factors.



100% All center-based classrooms met the overall quality benchmark

100% All classrooms met quality targets for responsive caregiving and emotional/behavioral supports

86% Most classrooms met or exceeded quality targets for space and furnishings



Sixpence evaluators measure indicators of quality in center-based programs through live observations and video recordings of classroom environments, activities, interactions and resources.

* Selected outcomes from the Sixpence Early Learning Fund 2021-22 Evaluation Report produced by Munroe-Meyer Institute at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Full report available at singasonofsixpence.org/resources/resource-library.html.



High-quality home visiting programs can improve outcomes for children and families, particularly those who face added challenges such as teen or single parenthood, maternal depression and lack of social and financial supports.

Cost-benefit analyses show that high-quality home visiting programs offer returns on investment ranging from \$1.75 to \$5.70 for every dollar spent due to reduced costs of child protection, K-12 special education and grade retention, and criminal justice expenses.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF STATE LEGISLATURES*

Family Engagement/Home Visiting Programs

Family engagement/home visiting programs match families with experienced professionals who are trained to help parents prepare for, and guide the early development of their children. Home visiting specialists model techniques for nurturing relationships with infants and toddlers, and help parents become more effective at monitoring children's health and other developmental needs. These professionals often enable parents to connect to an extended network of support services and may even help them plan for and pursue their personal goals so they can become more capable and confident providers for their households.

Sixpence-funded programs prioritize responsiveness to the strengths, values and culture of the families they serve. Family engagement/home visiting services can be delivered in a wide variety of settings such as community centers, schools or other venues. Participation is entirely voluntary.

Selected Evaluation Results

Family engagement/home visiting programs are evaluated on the degree of active engagement by families, the nature of interactions between parents/caregivers and children, and the professional practices demonstrated by family engagement personnel.

94%

Nearly all participating families met or exceeded high-quality targets for the degree of engagement during home visits

75%

The majority of family engagement specialists met the target standards set for high-quality professional practice



* National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019. "Strong Beginnings, Successful Lives: A Prenatal-to-Three Policy Guidebook for Legislators." ncls.org/research/human-services/prenatal-to-three-policy-guidebook-for-legislators.aspx

Child Care Partnerships

Sixpence Child Care Partnerships (CCPs) are a significant and innovative response to the growing need and demand for high-quality child care options throughout the state. CCPs are collaborations between school districts and local child care providers to improve the quality of early childhood programs serving children up to age 3 and their families. These grants emphasize quality improvement supports for programs whose enrollment consist of at least 50% infants and toddlers who are subject to the risk factor qualifications for participation in Sixpence. Participating providers may be either family home or center-based programs.

Child care partnership grants enable providers to benefit from professional training opportunities, on-site coaching, peer learning opportunities and guidance for participating in *Step Up to Quality*, the statewide child care quality improvement system administered by the Nebraska Department of Education. Nominally, providers are expected to attain a Step 3 rating or higher by the end of their third year of participation in their local CCP. This requirement has been extended by one year due to the pandemic.

Selected Evaluation Results

CCP programs are evaluated similarly to Sixpence center-based programs on the basis of program structure, staff-child interactions, language development practices and space and furnishings, among other factors. Evaluators found that the length of providers' participation in CCPS particularly corresponded to strengths in language development practices and quality interactions.

75%

Most providers achieved a Step 3 rating or higher in Step Up to Quality by the end of their third year as participants in their local CCP

90%

The large majority of providers who responded to the evaluation survey strongly agreed that CCP activities and resources improved the quality of their programs



CCP is a workforce development initiative. With every coaching session, observation and rating, the child care workforce is getting more and more qualified to impact a community's youngest citizens for the better. Providers' skills are in high demand and they can use that to increase wages, move to another job, enroll in classes in higher education and get experiential credit.

RENEE MILLER
PANHANDLE CCP PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Selected Child and Family Outcomes*

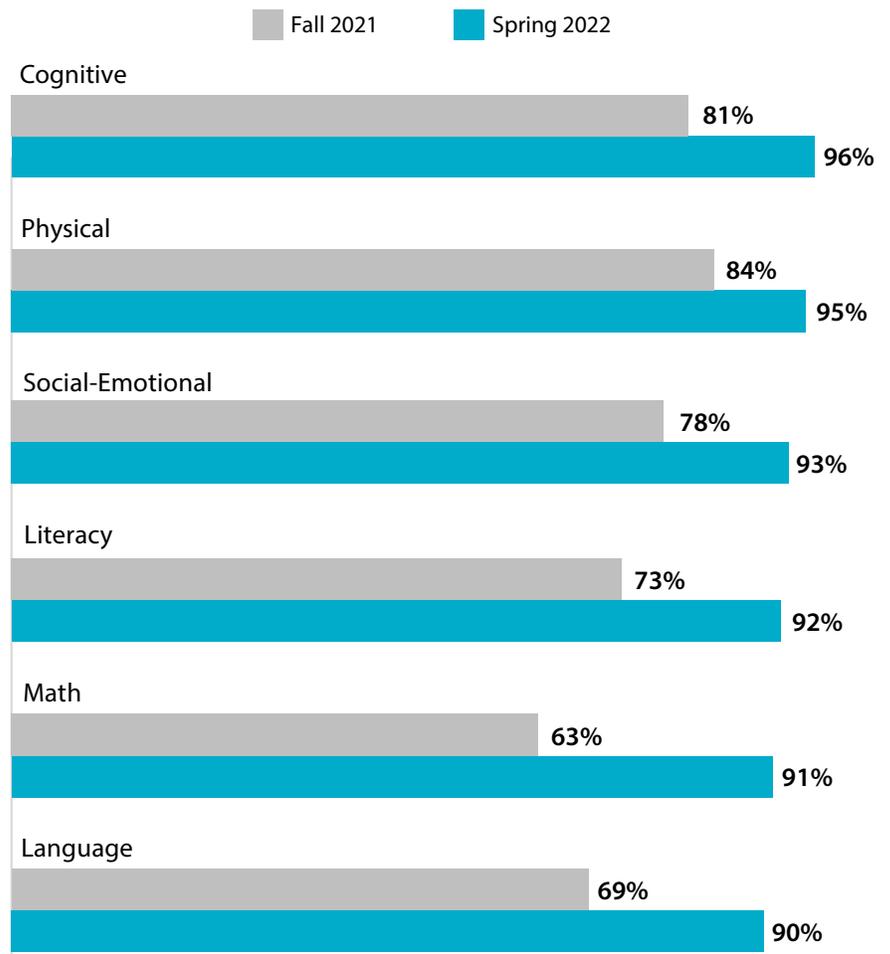


Sixpence-funded services help offset the obstacles that could prevent children at risk from keeping up with the developmental progress of their more advantaged peers.

Developmental Assessment Across Multiple Domains

Every year, an independent evaluation team at Munroe-Meyer Institute (UNMC) conducts assessments of Sixpence children across multiple developmental domains. While the research team uses a variety of assessment tools, Teaching Strategies (TS) Gold is one of the most widely used methods for evaluating cognitive, physical, social-emotional and other aspects of children’s development. TS Gold evaluations are conducted in the fall and spring of each academic year and measure the percentage of children in a sample group who meet or exceed widely held expectations for their age group. Almost invariably, the number of children who meet these benchmarks increases between the fall and spring checkpoints.

Percentage of Sixpence Children Meeting or Exceeding Widely Held Developmental Expectations (n=305)



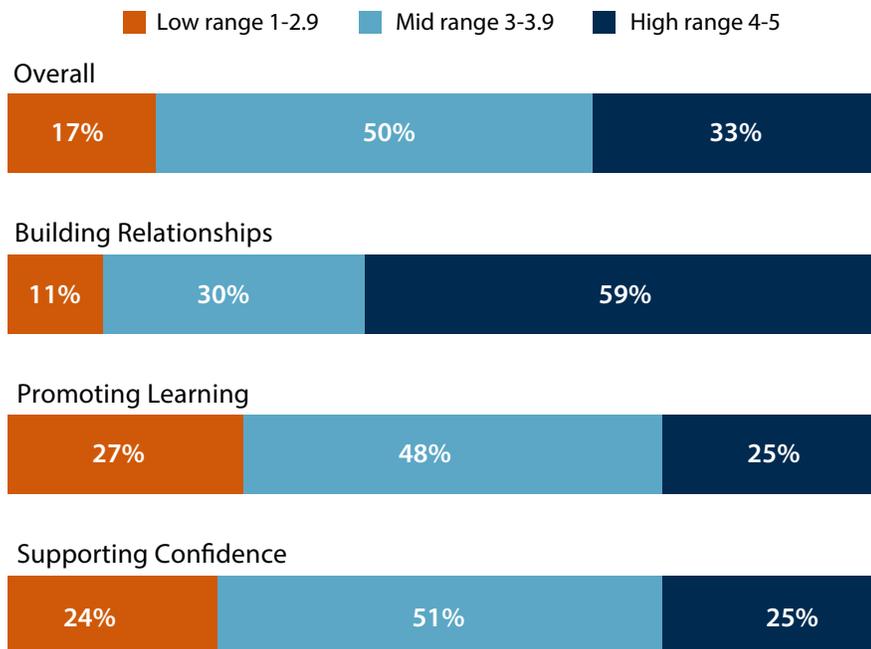
* Selected outcomes from the Sixpence Early Learning Fund 2021-22 Evaluation Report produced by Munroe-Meyer Institute at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Outcomes reflect data from family engagement/home visiting and center-based programs. Full report available at singasonofsixpence.org/resources/resource-library.html.

Stronger, Healthier Family Environments

The family environments in which children learn and grow are critically important to their lifelong developmental trajectories. Sixpence program staff provide guidance on healthy behaviors, caregiving practices and personal goals so parents can better provide the kinds of social, emotional and physical supports children need during the first three years of life.

The nature and quality of parent-child interactions is a key factor in measuring whether Sixpence interventions are helping families adopt and apply the skills necessary to create supportive and nurturing relationships with infants and toddlers. Assessments of these interactions are held at least six months apart during the evaluation period. During the 2021-22 program year, the majority of families (59%) demonstrated strong skills in building relationships with their children through play.

Relationship Building Skills Demonstrated by Sixpence Parents' Interactions with Children (n=309)



During the 2021-22 evaluation year, nearly all children served through Sixpence met goals for healthy beginnings. (Goal=90%)

98%

Had a medical home

94%

Had a good health status

94%

Had regular well-child check-ups

94%

Were up to date on immunizations

86%

Live in a smoke-free home

Sixpence Success Stories



I applied to a wonderful program called Sixpence, the program that one day would help me allocate resources and pursue a degree—that motivated me to continue my education.

*Daisy Ortiz
Sixpence Family Engagement
Program Participant*

Sixpence Empowers Parents to Reach Their Goals

For far too many young parents in Nebraska, a teen pregnancy can amount to an impassible barrier separating them from their educational and career goals, as well as their potential to provide a strong and nurturing family environment for their babies.

When Daisy Ortiz (Crete) discovered she was pregnant at age 16, she faced an onslaught of anxieties—that she would end up a single parent without a career, cut off from sources of meaningful support. Fortunately, Daisy had a support network in her own parents and the father of her child, which motivated her to make the most of these advantages to complete her high school education and then pursue a postsecondary degree in psychology.

Even so, Daisy and her young daughter faced significant challenges. Evening classes and heavy amounts of coursework at UNL meant that she needed additional supports to meet her educational and career goals. She became a participant in a Sixpence family engagement program and was paired with a home visiting specialist who knew from direct experience the challenges Daisy was up against. Sixpence provided Daisy and her husband with parenting guidance and connected her to child care, making it possible for her to begin planning for the next phase in her path as a successful parent and provider for her young family. Daisy became an employee of a Sixpence-funded program, using her insight and experience to help motivate other young mothers to reach their potential. In time, however, she was ready to move forward and begin her education to become a registered nurse.

Sixpence helped Daisy grow as a capable parent and encouraged her in her career path to become a better provider and caregiver for her daughter, and an example for what parenting supports and personal motivation can do.



At the beginning of the 2021-22 evaluation year, 423 Sixpence mothers entered Sixpence without a high school diploma. By spring of 2022:

46% Had earned their high school diploma or GED

20% Were still enrolled in high school or working toward their GED

Helping Families Prepare Children to Thrive

Almost no parent takes on the responsibility of nurturing infants and toddlers with a comprehensive understanding of the many aspects of early development that will affect children's trajectories as they grow toward school age and beyond. When parents themselves face serious challenges, it is even more urgent that they receive the supports they need so they can better guide and provide for their youngest children.

Andrea Monroy began receiving prenatal services through Schuyler's Sixpence program while she was expecting triplets. After her children were born, Andrea began to see the full range of physical, cognitive and social benefits her participation in Sixpence could bring. Working with program staff helped Andrea encourage her children's motor skills, balance and coordination, as well as their ability to communicate and sense of self-esteem in activities both inside and outside the home.

All too often, the challenge of raising young children can leave parents feeling isolated from broader networks of support in their communities. One of the biggest impacts on Andrea's life was how Sixpence enabled her to discover local resources and opportunities for her children to learn different skills and develop their strengths, while enabling her family to connect socially with others. Even so, Andrea values the fact that Sixpence-funded programs like the one she participated in still acknowledge and respect her family's autonomy and security. Ultimately, home visiting and other services funded by Sixpence exist to reinforce the values and priorities families have for their youngest children—by keeping parents front-and-center in their role as educators and caregivers.



Sixpence Child Care Partnerships Strengthen Providers, Families and Communities

Communities with a robust network of quality child care providers have a distinct social, educational and economic advantage. When quality child care programs thrive, they create a stronger support system for local families, enhance the early learning experiences of young children and create employment opportunity for early childhood professionals and others throughout the community.

In spring 2020, Kyla Habrock and her husband were already well on their way to setting up a new and much-needed child care in Hastings. Their plan was to provide the facility, while a local nonprofit and early childhood provider would design and deliver child care services to meet the needs of local families. But when COVID-19 struck, it sent shock waves through Hastings and other Nebraska communities that were already struggling to hold on to child care programs. Kyla's partners pulled out of the project, leaving her family with a choice to operate the child care program themselves rather than end the project entirely.

The Habrocks chose to move forward by connecting their child care program to the local Sixpence Child Care Partnership (CCP), a collaboration between Hastings Public Schools and other partners to help child care providers build the quality and resiliency of their programs. At a time when the pandemic was putting unprecedented pressures on child care professionals, Kyla said that the Sixpence CCP helped her new center put its best foot forward. Through the CCP's professional coaching, goal setting and other supports, the new program was able to negotiate the purchase of furniture, acquire developmentally appropriate materials for infants and toddlers, build a skilled staff and meet many other objectives necessary to operate a successful program. Guidance and resources from the CCP also helped her program partner more closely with families in promoting the early education of their kids.

For Kyla and her husband, quality child care is about more than just providing a needed service for local families—it's a way to demonstrate the role quality programs play in successful communities. "We didn't have an open house," she said. "We had a community tour. It wasn't just to see the room, bright paint and new windows. There was some of that, but it was really for us to educate a larger part of the community about early childhood education, and not just our center."



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