



**Biennial Report
to the Nebraska
Legislature**
2022-2024

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Sixpence Success—Maddie and Jeter

Maddie Reiman learned in the summer before her freshman year in college that she was pregnant. She immediately connected with Fremont Sixpence and, within 3 weeks, met her coordinator, Lauren Stoklas. She calls Lauren her “biggest cheerleader, my go-to gal.” When Maddie was pregnant, Sixpence introduced her to a local therapist and facilitated difficult conversations with her child’s father about parenting.

When her son Jeter was born, he was diagnosed with an extremely rare genetic disorder called mandibulofacial dystosis with microcephaly (MFDM). Maddie says her coordinator continued to support her by learning all she could about the disorder. Maddie says, “I don’t think I would be the parent I am today if it weren’t for Lauren supporting me and giving me the Sixpence community.” It was hard to make “mom friends” in college, she explains. “I would see other Sixpence parents out in Fremont and that was comforting to me.”

Sixpence Vice President Stephanni Renn asked Maddie to write a book about Jeter for the new Nebraska Growing Readers program supported by Sixpence, which resulted in *Rare is Beautiful*. In June of 2024, Maddie and Jeter were able to attend an MFDM conference at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital and were provided with copies of the book to distribute there. She says the children were excited to see in the book someone who looked like them and that parents she met at the conference still send pictures of their children reading the book.

Looking at the book was the first time Maddie ever heard Jeter say his name. Because he struggles with speech as part of his disorder, book reading has been an important connection between mother and son. During their first reading of *Rare is Beautiful*, Jeter opened it, saw himself, and “pointed to the page, saying, ‘Jeter,’ Jeter.”

Sixpence’s work with Maddie then not only provided her with support as a teen mother and subsequently with Jeter’s disorder but helped her build a local and international community.

Board of Trustees

The 2006 enactment of the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Endowment Fund, better known as Sixpence, by Nebraska policymakers and the voting public recognized several, fundamental realities.

1. The overall well-being of our state is connected to cultivating new generations of healthy, capable, and thriving Nebraskans.
2. Children are most likely to follow that trajectory if families are positioned to guide their early development, especially throughout the prenatal period and first three years of life.
3. Nebraska’s public and private sectors have a common interest, and therefore complementary roles to play in empowering families to succeed.

Sixpence is a nationally recognized model for creative, bipartisan collaboration between legislators, state agencies and a broad array of stakeholders at the state and local levels.

The Sixpence Board of Trustees is comprised of six members, including the Commissioner of Education, the Director of Health and Human services, and four Governor-appointed representatives, two of whom are chosen from early childhood professionals (1 urban and 1 rural).

The Board thanks the Nebraska Legislature for its practicality, foresight and leadership that has made the ongoing success of this initiative possible and per requirements, presents the 2022-2024 Biennial report. We hope it will inform your work on behalf of our state’s communities, families, and youngest children.



Sixpence has reached 40 Nebraska counties/42 school district Grantees



Sixpence has assisted 1,254 children/1,082 Families



Sixpence Board allocates \$10,186,054 to 47 programs—15 Center-based and 32 Family Engagement

Why PN-3 Matters

The prenatal months to age 3 (PN-3) are a crucial period in which children are extremely vulnerable and receptive to both positive and negative experiences that can dramatically affect brain development, skill formation, emotional well-being, and physiological health.

Key interconnected supports that must be consistently present in children’s lives

Maternal wellness during the prenatal months

- Follow guidelines for good nutrition
- Adopt healthy behaviors and habits
- Monitor for signs of problems in their own wellbeing or their child’s prenatal development
- Be familiar with breastfeeding and nutritional needs
- Follow a set schedule for child wellness visits with doctor
- Stay current with vaccinations, among other practices

Safe and nurturing relationships

- Parents and caregivers should consistently hold, comfort, and talk to infants and toddlers
- Lays positive foundations for mental and emotional health
- Promotes positive social skills, such as self-confidence and behavioral regulation

Stimulating early learning experiences

- Children’s neural circuitry develops most rapidly during the first three years of life
- To support neural development parents and caregivers need to engage children in language-rich interactions
- Other serve-and-return interactions also build efficient, robust, and durable neural pathways to support ongoing learning

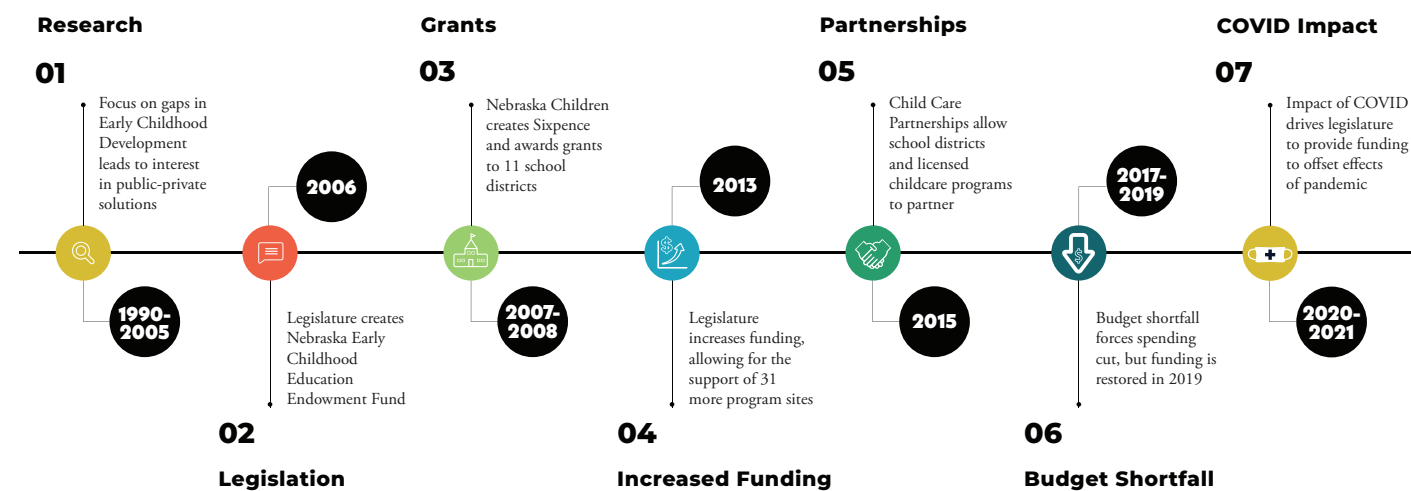


Sixpence: Guiding Principles

Sixpence focuses on services for prenatal mothers, infants, and toddlers who are most likely to encounter the physical, cognitive, and social development challenges that put them at risk for school. First Five Nebraska reports that quality child care is crucial to community job stability and local economies thus Sixpence promotes long-term improvement for communities.

- Empower parents and families to guide children's development**
Sixpence encourages parental skills and helps parents connect to local resources and support networks.
- Address developmental challenges early**
We seek to address cognitive, emotional and physiological challenges that can negatively affect educational, social, and even lifelong health outcomes.
- Enable communities to find their own early childhood solutions**
Sixpence recognizes the unique challenges faced by families in different areas of the state and partners with communities to organize their own assets and resources to address these specific needs.
- Unite public and private sector resources**
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.
- Invest in quality**
We ensure public and private resources are invested strategically in high-quality programs that show positive outcomes for the children, families, and the communities they serve. Quality child care is crucial to sustainable community development.

History of Sixpence

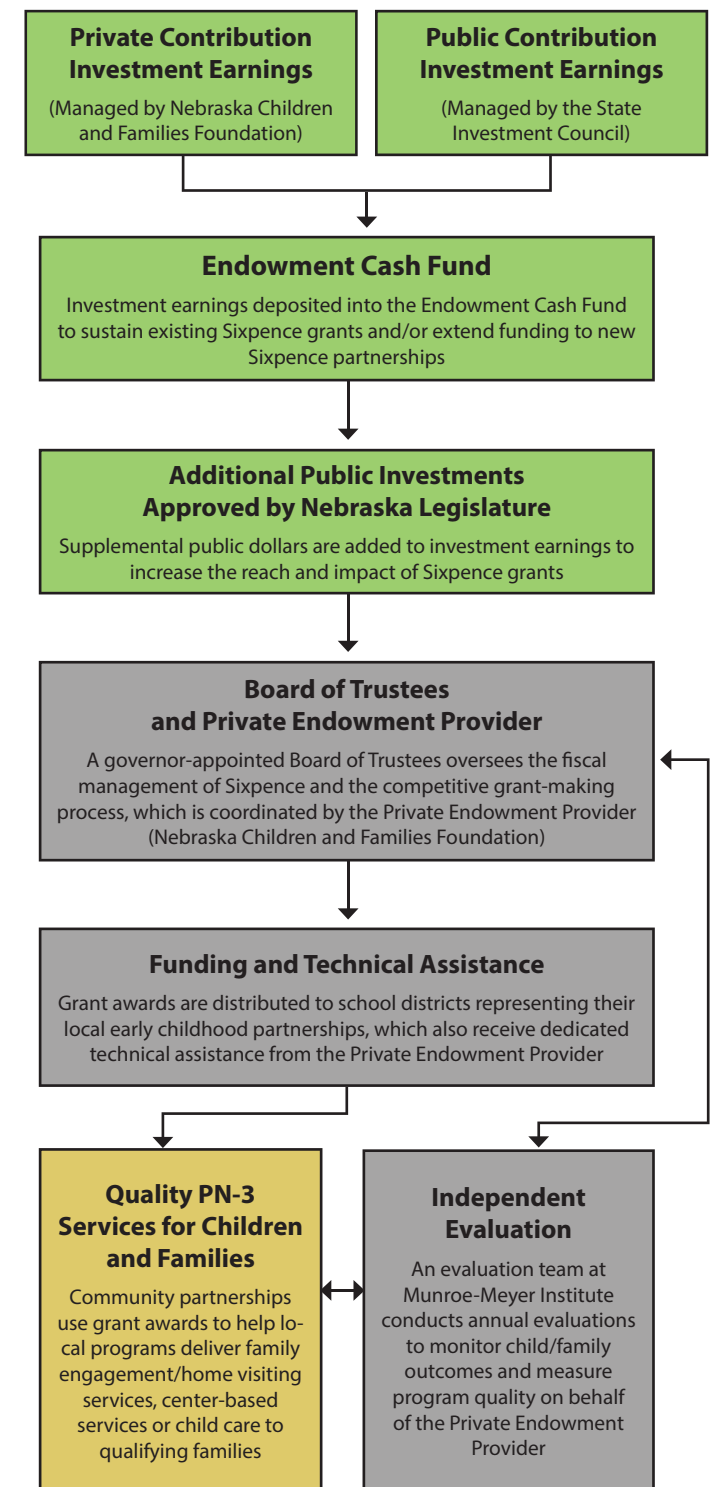


How Sixpence Works

Endowment Structure

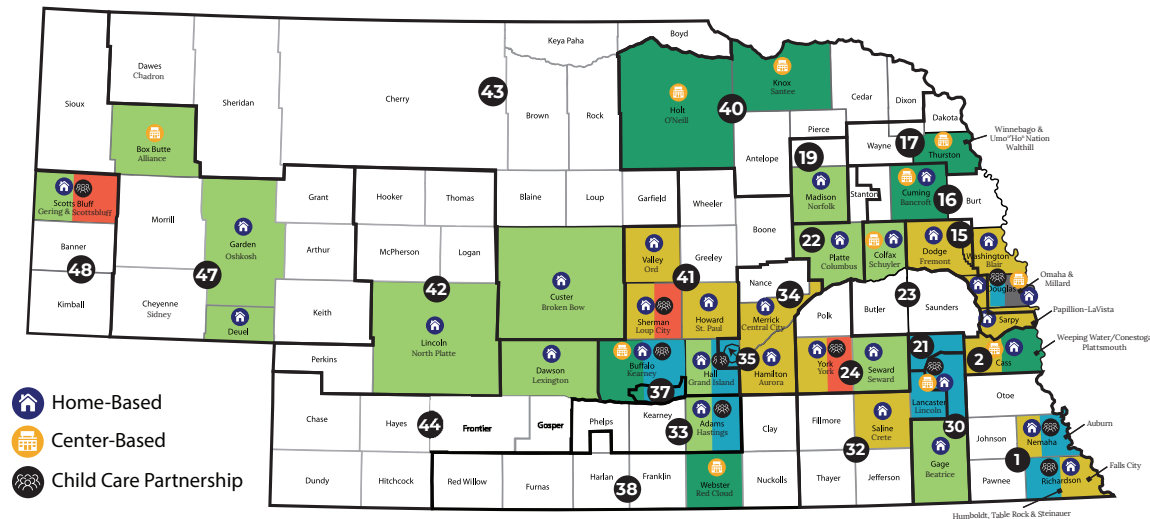
- 2006, the Endowment represented \$60 million in combined public and private contributions and commitments.
- Only interest drawn on the endowments can be spent toward Sixpence programs.
- A governor-appointed Board of Trustees oversees a competitive grant process which funds community partnerships 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.
- The public endowment has increased to approximately \$66 million due to the interpretation by the Nebraska Investment Council (NIC) of a 2007 Attorney Generals' opinion.
- The NIC believes realized capital gains must be added to the corpus, and consequently - not distributed
- In 2024, Sixpence has allocated \$10,186,054 to 47 Sixpence programs--15 center-based and 32 Family Engagement.
- LB1256 requires the Nebraska Department of Education 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.
- Nebraska Children and Families Foundation provides dedicated technical assistance to community partnerships and programs funded through Sixpence.
- Since 2008, 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.

Funding, Service Delivery and Evaluation Process

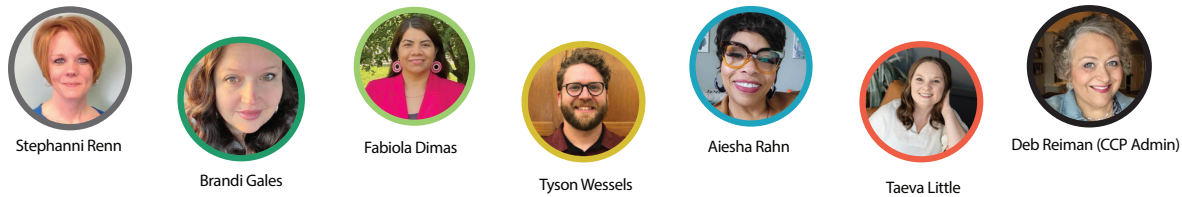


Sixpence Works for Nebraska

Sixpence works for the greatest outreach to all areas of the state and to the broadest range of Nebraska's diverse populations in order to provide assistance to children, families, and communities most in need of support. Sixpence seeks to support community sustainability based on providing quality child care as foundational to strong job pools and robust economies.



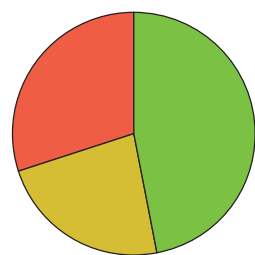
Sixpence Staff



The technical assistance provided to communities around the state is at the core of Sixpence's success and is a unique facet of the work done on behalf of families and children.

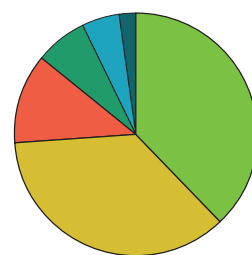
- Sixpence educates early childhood programs on the full range of state resources and ensures access to all available supports for early childhood education.
- Sixpence works closely to collect, organize, and submit necessary data that reflects their outcomes.
- By conducting CQI reviews and offering feedback to improve quality of services, we ensure programs are meeting Sixpence Quality Indicators.
- Regular check-ins, meetings, and site visits maintain open lines of communication so Sixpence can provide timely assistance or adjust resources as needed.

Program Distribution



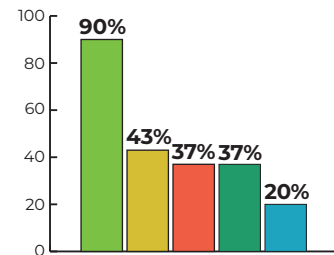
Rural—47%
Mid-Sized—23%
Urban—30%

Racial Makeup



Hispanic—38%
White—36%
Multiracial—12%
African American—7%
Native American—5%
Other—2%

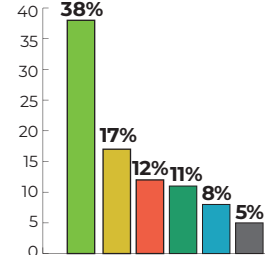
Family Risk Factors



Low-Income—90%
Single Parent—43%
No High School Diploma—37%
English Language Learner—37%
Teen—20%

(* Risk Factors distributions have remained consistent from 22-23 data to 23-24 data)

Other Common Traumas



Parent with Mental Health Issue—38%
Parental Substance Abuse—17%
Parent in Prison—12%
Parent Absent—11%
Child Witnessed Violence—8%
Child in Foster Care—5%



Sixpence Success—Gering ESU 13's Innovative Model

Denita Julius embodies the work being done with the Child Care Partnership (CCP) in the Panhandle of Nebraska. Deb Reiman, Associate Vice President of Early Childhood for Sixpence CCPs, describes visiting Julius shortly after she completed her degree and finding her diploma proudly displayed on the kitchen counter. Since then, Julius has become a CCP coach for the area while entrusting her childcare to two other women (spaces were too needed in the area to close) and has even mentored other providers on the Panhandle. All this has been made possible by the innovative ESU Partnership in the area.

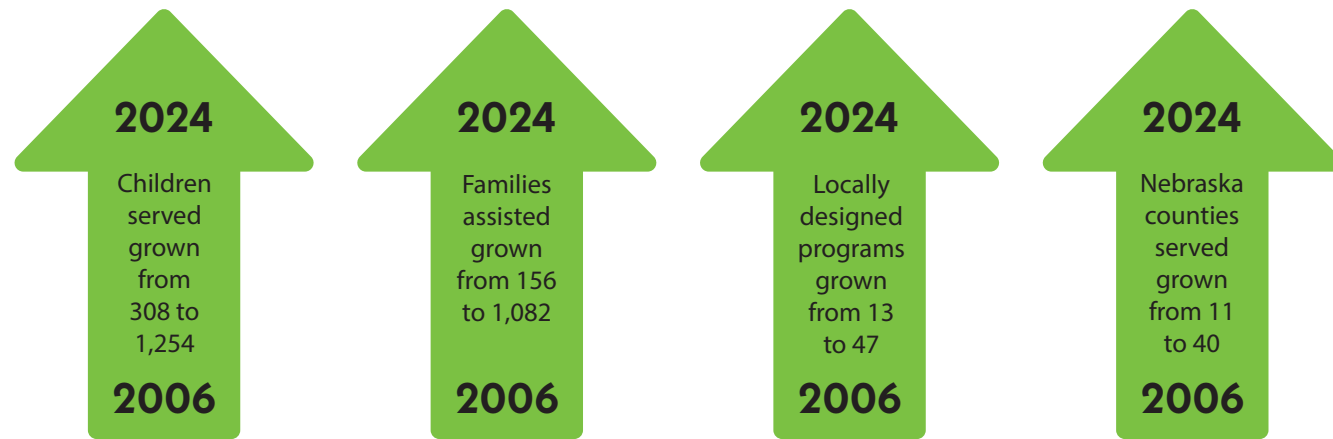
The Nebraska Panhandle, covering 11 counties, was the first CCP in the state and has been a model for the ESU approach to promoting community success in quality early childcare. Reiman, says that although the DHHS-funded CCP grants can go directly to school districts, in areas like the panhandle where there is need across a large area, the ESU approach allows wider distribution of funds.

Julius says of the CCP work in the Panhandle, "Sixpence ended up being so much more than what I signed up for. They supported us in education, materials, building our programs, and building our confidence." Not only has Julius been successful as a coach in her area, but she has also twice achieved a Step 5 rating for her program from Step Up to Quality.

Nici Johnson, Director of Early Childhood for ESU 13, say that this is the aim of the CCP work for the Panhandle, "to amplify helping providers quality systems such as Step Up to Quality" so that they can promote a culture of quality and build thriving communities for their partners through events and onsite coaching.

As of 2024, the Panhandle CCP receives \$529,000 for 7 current early childhood centers and 1 in-home program (within their first 3 years) as well as 1 continuing center and 4 continuing in-home programs. Of these 13 early childhood programs, five have achieved a Step 1 rating, 3 a Step 2 rating, 4 a Step 4 rating, and 1 a Step 5 rating.

Growth for Sixpence Since Inception



Families



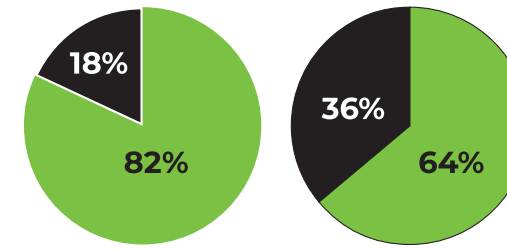
I have a better understanding about what my baby needs and know how to help her.

—A Sixpence parent

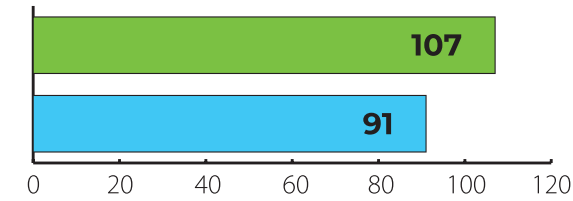
Family Engagement/Home Visiting Programs

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. The primary goal is to address the immediate developmental needs of infants and toddlers and help grow cohesive, resilient families.

- Match families with experienced professionals who are trained to help parents prepare for and guide the early development of their children (home visitors serve 12-15 children).
- Home visiting specialists model techniques for nurturing relationships with infants and toddlers (at least 3 visits/month for minimum of 18 months).
- Help parents become more effective at monitoring children's health and other developmental needs through written agreements with community organizations, a handbook, and assistance with child services applications.
- Enable parents to connect to an extended network of support services, such as monthly group opportunities.
- May even help parents plan for and pursue their personal goals so they can become more capable and confident providers for their households.

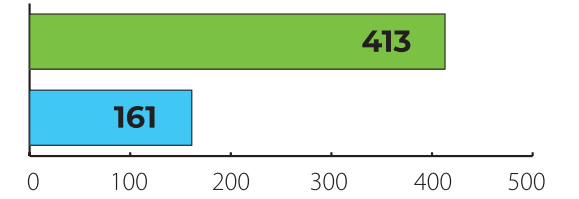


82% of parents with mental health issues and 64% with substance abuse issues have received treatment services.

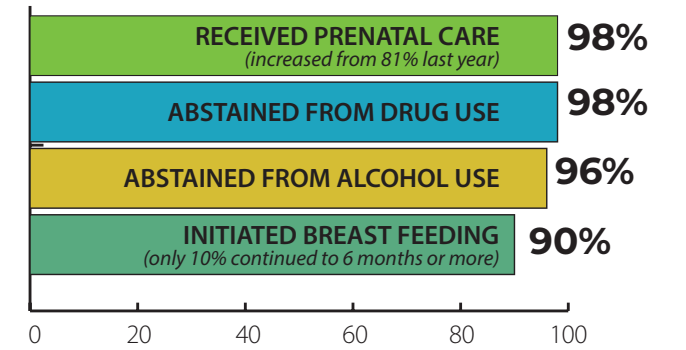


Over the program year, 107 babies were born to mothers participating in Sixpence. A total of 91 mothers completed the prenatal health survey.

The program goal is to have 90% of mothers meet the prenatal care benchmarks.



Of the 413 parents without HS graduation, 39% went on to earn GED or Diploma.

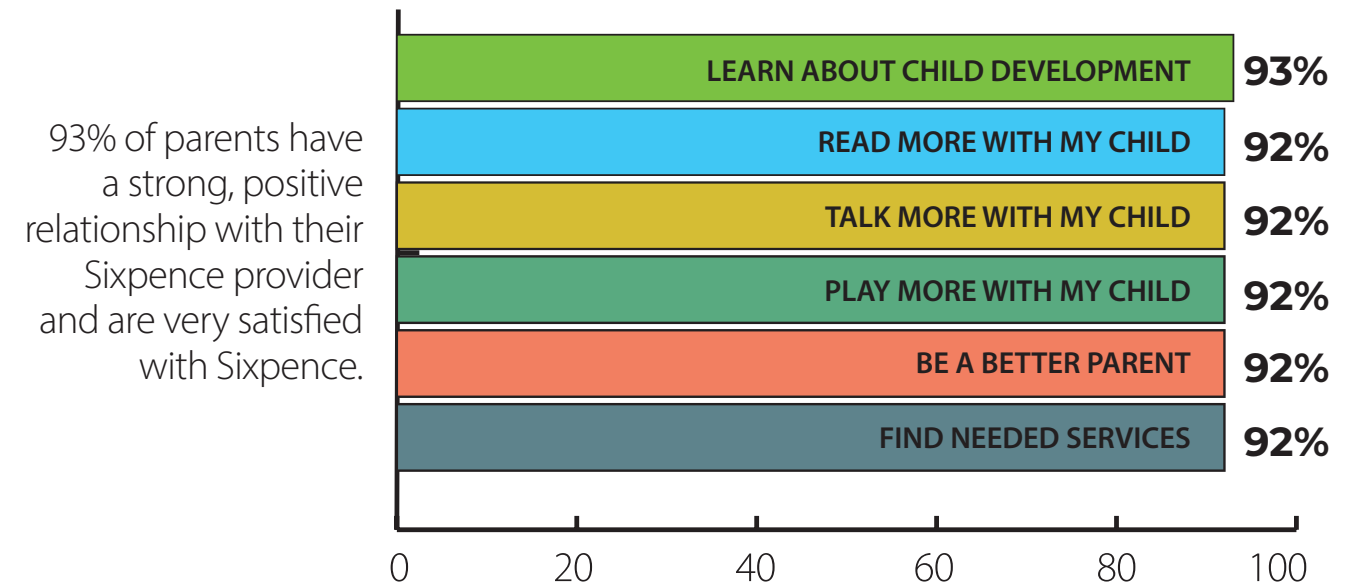


The majority of mothers met the program goals in all areas.

Family Responses

In the spring, 715 parents completed a satisfaction survey about their experience in Sixpence and responded to two open-ended questions about the program's strengths and suggestions to improve it. The survey is collected anonymously.

My Sixpence provider helped me...

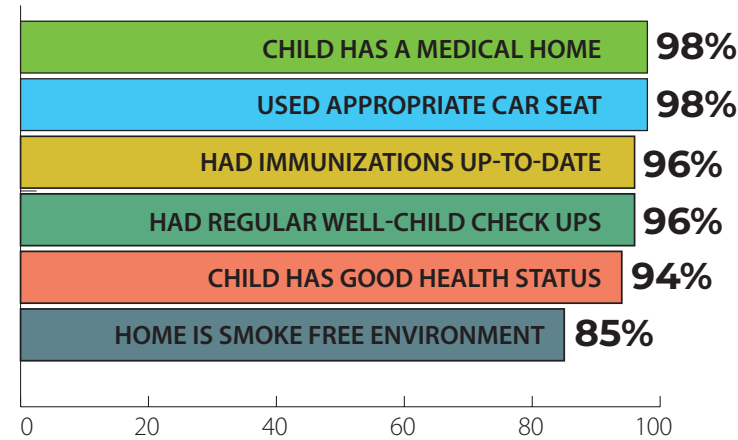


93% of parents have a strong, positive relationship with their Sixpence provider and are very satisfied with Sixpence.

Children

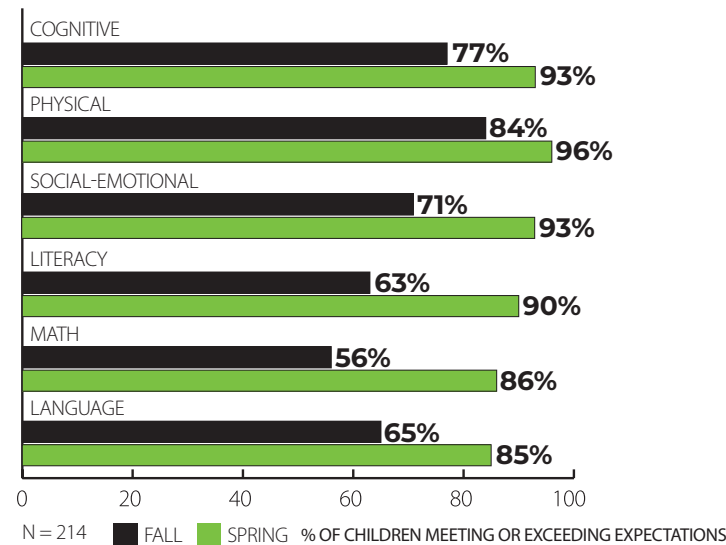
Sixpence partners with communities, families, and early childhood educators to promote healthy developmental and social-emotional outcomes for Nebraska's children from birth to age 3.

In 5 of 6 categories, Sixpence families overwhelmingly made healthy choices.



Developmental Outcomes

By spring, high percentages of children were meeting or exceeding widely held expectations across all developmental areas.



Sixpence families demonstrated the strongest skills in Building Relationships with their children, with the majority (50%) scoring in the high range.

Social Emotional Competencies—Based on the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment, Sixpence sets a program goal of 100 for all competencies.

- 68% of Sixpence children scored 100+ in Total Protective Factors
- Sixpence children outperformed national social emotional norms with more than a third scoring above average on all scales. This is an increase from last year when one quarter accomplished the same.
- Children who were 3 years old were tested on behavior with 80% showing no behavioral concerns.



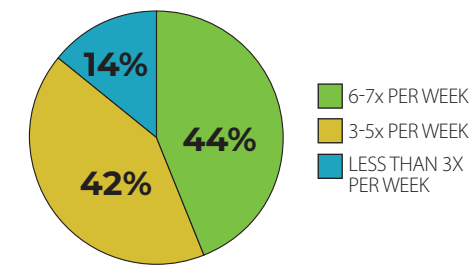
Nebraska Growing Readers

In October of 2023, Sixpence became the lead for Nebraska Children and Family Foundation's partnership with Unite for Literacy, and the Nebraska Department of Education, to form Nebraska Growing Readers (NGR), an innovative program to bring books into the home.

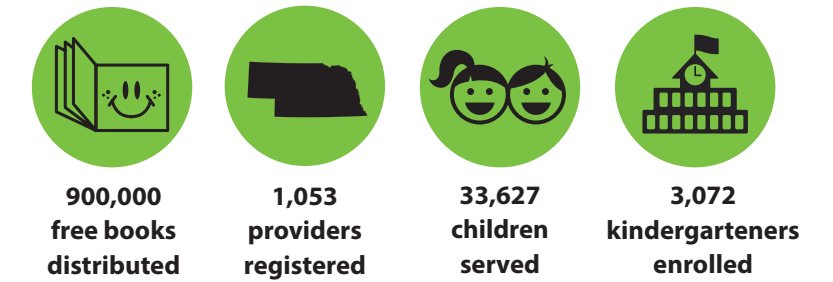
- NGR distributes books to licensed providers where families can use free books to build home libraries.
- Mails up to 100 free books to registered incoming kindergarteners.
- Promotes Nebraska-related content written by Nebraska authors for our state's diverse populations.
- Support the adoption of shared book reading in home, early care, and educational settings.

Home Literacy

Most families read books with their children several times per week



Other statewide reading statistics



Center-Based Programs

Center-based Sixpence programs are located within a school or Educare, and lead teachers meet Rule 11 guidelines. Center-based Programs:

- Operate in close partnership with their local school systems utilizing all available public funding sources.
- Follow curricula proven to advance early learning.
- Emphasize parent involvement through parent caregiver conferences, home visits, and daily communication.
- Adhere to part- and full-day care throughout the academic year.
- Participate in Step Up to Quality to ensure continuous improvement.
- Are situated in facilities that act as service hubs for their communities.

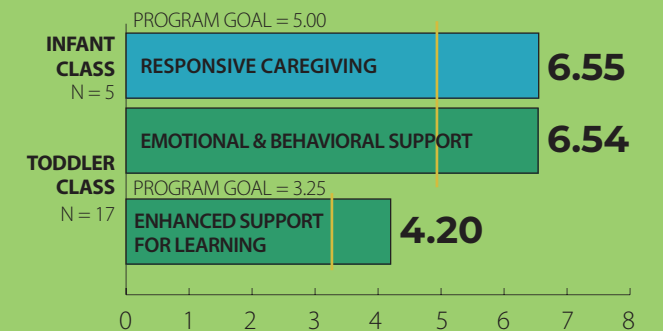
Four of these locations represent partnerships with Nebraska's four Educare schools and are part of a national network of high-quality child development centers designed to model and advance best practices in early care and learning.

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



Sixpence Center-Based Teachers Consistently Created Emotionally Supportive and Caring Environments in Their Classrooms

All classrooms met the program goal in Emotional Support



The ITERS-3 assessment is based on a three-hour, in-person observation, and is scored on a 7-point scale, with 7 indicating highest quality. The following graph shows ITERS-3 subscale and overall averages for seven classrooms. The program goal is a score of 5 overall.

Observations found strengths in interacting with children, supporting language development, and program structure.



Child Care Partnerships

Sixpence Child Care Partnerships (CCPs) support childcare providers (either family or center-based) to promote high quality care, development, and support for vulnerable infants and toddlers. CCPs are:

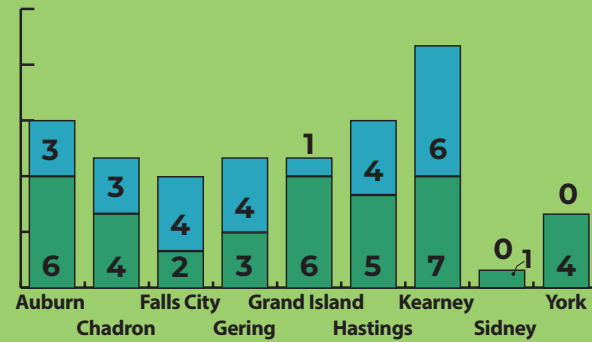
- A significant and innovative response to the growing need and demand for high-quality child care options throughout the state.
- Collaborations between school districts and local childcare providers to improve the quality of early childhood programs serving children up to age 3 and their families.
- Sixpence Childcare Partnerships (CCP) are 100% federally funded through a subaward from Nebraska Department and Health and Human Services to Nebraska Children and Families Foundation using Child Care Development Funds that are allocated to school districts. Awards emphasize programs with at least 50% enrollment of infants and toddlers who are subject to risk factor qualification.
- Enable providers to benefit from professional training opportunities, on-site coaching, peer learning opportunities, and guidance for participating in Step Up to Quality.

During the 2023-2024 program year, 63 childcare programs participated in CCP. Of these, 29 were childcare centers, and 34 were family childcare home providers. CCP successfully retained sites in the program; no sites exited CCP early.

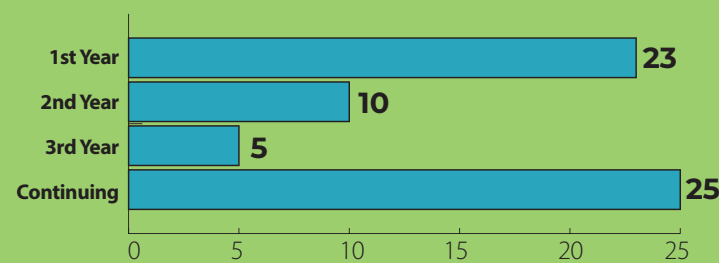
CCP childcare programs reported the demographics for a total of 1,081 children across 53 sites. Of these, 765 were infants or toddlers. A goal of CCP is to partner with childcare providers that serve the most vulnerable children to prepare them for success in school and life.

During the 2023-2024 program year, 63 childcare programs participated in CCP. Of these, 29 were childcare centers, and 34 were family childcare home providers. No sites exited CCP early.

Number of sites by community



Number of sites by year in CCP



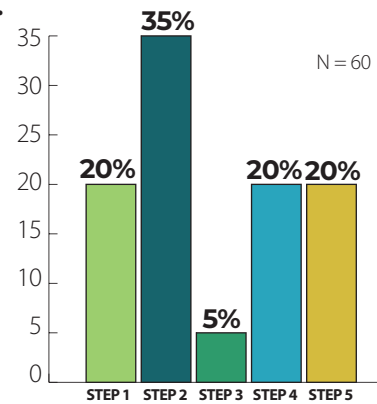
Of the 53 directors and home childcare providers with post-high school education, the majority (69%) had a degree in education, child development, psychology, or sociology.

Education information was collected for 75 lead teachers who worked in center-based programs.

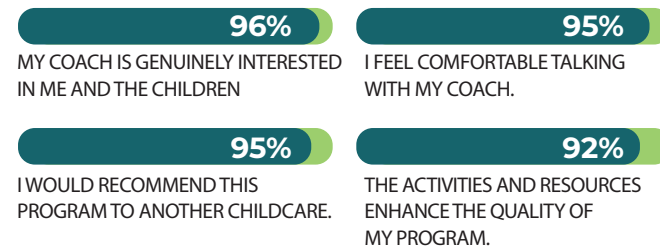
T.E.A.C.H. scholarships help early care and education professionals work toward a degree in early childhood education. In the 23-24 year:

- 7** CCP CHILDCARE PROVIDERS PARTICIPATED IN THE T.E.A.C.H. SCHOLARSHIP
- 3** CHILDCARE PROVIDERS EARNED THEIR CDA
- 1** CHILDCARE PROVIDER EARNED AN ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE
- 1** CHILDCARE PROVIDER EARNED THEIR BACHELOR'S DEGREE

45% of the CCP childcare programs were at STEP 3 or higher.



Providers strongly agree that CCP Coaches enhanced the quality of their program.



Sixpence Success—Perla and Henry Jr.

Perla Jaimes crossed from Campache, Mexico to the U.S. with her mother, and sister when she was nine years old. She spent a brief time in Iowa before moving to Crete, Nebraska, and remembers acting as interpreter for her mother at a job interview at the Smithfield Foods processing plant. It was here that she grew up.

In the summer before her senior year of high school, Perla learned she was pregnant. Because she wasn't yet an American citizen, this bright young woman could not avail herself of many of the supports offered to citizens in her situation.

Perla's high-school counselor introduced her to a new program called Sixpence. While Perla put together a plan to graduate in December of her senior year, Sixpence prepared her for her role as a mother. Perla emphasized that "everything that became available to me through Sixpence, I took advantage of." She added that Sixpence provided "lots of sessions where they talked to us about age-appropriate activities for children."

Sixpence helped find childcare for her newborn, Henry Jr., in Crete so Perla could attend college classes. But Sixpence didn't just help Henry Jr. or the family, it helped Perla maintain her dream. When Perla became a citizen and applied to Doane University, Sixpence helped her with the FAFSA and guided her toward an Education Quest Scholarship.

She went on to earn her B.A. and a master's degree in Education. She worked with ESL students for 7 years. But now she proudly announces, "I am the principal of Crete Middle School."

She recalls of the organization that helped her achieve her dreams, "even after I had my other two boys, all those skills and things I learned from Sixpence, I reused again with my younger boys."

Sixpence then doesn't just have momentary impact. Sixpence echoes in the lives it touches, impacting generations and communities, and assisting those who most need it in accessing resources that support their families and bind them locally.





Stephanni Renn

Sixpence Administrator and Vice President of Early Childhood Programs

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NebraskaChildren.org | SingaSongofSixpence.org

Report prepared by Nebraska Children and Families Foundation.