

# Understanding Your Experiences with Early Childhood Services (Ages birth-5)

Utah has over 3 million people, and about 300,000 are children between birth and age five.



What is your experience with early childhood services?



Do you feel you have received all the services you need to ensure your children enter kindergarten ready to learn?



There are a wide range of services that children and families may need between the ages of birth and five years old. Each service provides support in various areas to ensure children are safe, healthy, and ready for kindergarten. Here are examples of these services, categorized by support area.

### Family Support and Safety

Child Protective Services – to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. Example: Foster care.

Parenting services – Provide resources for specific circumstances such as having a child with special needs, pregnancy, or services for low-income families. Example: Home Visiting.

### Health and Development

Mental health services – Provide mental health services to pregnant moms and children ages birth-five. Examples: The Children’s Center in Salt Lake and the Maternal Mental Health Collaborative.

Disability services – Assessment and intervention for children birth-three who have developmental delays or disabilities. Example: Utah Baby Watch Early Intervention Program (BWEIP).

WIC – Food vouchers, nutrition counseling, breastfeeding support, and health care referrals for pregnant women and children up to age five.

Health care services – Primary care providers who offer preventative screenings for health, mental health, dental health and developmental milestones.

### Early Learning

Reading and literacy programs – Promote reading and awareness of the importance of word exposure. Example: Ready to Read.

Early Head Start and Head Start – Promote early learning, conduct development assessments, and provide resources related to health and other services.

### Economic Stability

TANF – Provides financial assistance and promotes job preparation, work and marriage.

SNAP – Federally funded program to provide food to families with low incomes.

Child care services – Access to safe, affordable high-quality child care. Examples: Head Start, Early Head Start, and financial subsidies for high-quality child care.

## ? Information

Parents get information on childhood services in a variety of ways. Many programs provide information on a website but also require an in person visit in order to receive benefits. Some provide contact information on flyers in places such as doctors’ offices.

- How - and where - have you gotten information about early childhood services?
- What would be the easiest way for you to get information on early childhood services?
- Are there other places information could be displayed or distributed that would be convenient for you and people you know?

## 🔑 Access

Organizations offering early childhood services include Utah Department of Health, Utah Department of Human Services, Utah Department of Workforce Services, libraries, health clinics, schools, child care providers, and more.

- Have you experienced barriers to getting childhood services? Has transportation always been available? Were business hours convenient? Did you have difficulty accessing information or applications on the internet? Was there a cost associated with getting services?
- Have you always used the resources or services recommended to you? If not, why? Have you always gotten the screenings recommended? If not why?
- Background: Utah is working on a plan to coordinate and align early childhood services. One idea is creating a one-time application to direct families to the services they are eligible to receive. The plan would reduce the number of times a parent provides similar information and documentation to different organizations. This would likely require a personal ID number to best coordinate services. Do you think it is a good idea to have services coordinated or is there a downside to that? Are there privacy or other concerns?

## + Improving Quality through Useful, Respectful, and Timely Information and Convenient Services

Part of the goal for coordinating and aligning early childhood services is to improve parents’ experiences.

- Have you ever thought of getting services but then decided not to? Why did you decide not to get the services?
- Was there information you wished you had received earlier?
- Has an early childhood service ever referred you to another? If so, did they provide you with adequate information? Did they personally contact the other service for you? Did anyone follow up to see if you received the other service?
- Did you ever have difficulty coordinating requirements for multiple early childhood services?
- Do you feel there are adequate services available to ensure that kids 0-5 enter kindergarten ready-to-learn?
- If you could change one thing, what would it be?
- Are certain problems especially difficult depending upon whether you live in a city or in a rural area?