



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Early childhood policy initiative educates, trains Nebraska community leaders

Civic leaders representing 17 Nebraska communities came together in Nebraska City October 8-9 to kick off the second class of the Nebraska Early Childhood Policy Leadership Academy. A non-partisan initiative of First Five Nebraska, the Academy's goal is to prepare participants to engage policymakers and stakeholders in strengthening Nebraska's local and statewide early childhood infrastructure.

"High-quality early care and learning is emerging as a key element of a community's infrastructure that helps attract and retain families with all parents in the workforce," said Becky Veak, director of First Five Nebraska. "It promotes young children's healthy development, and also is an important economic development tool for our state.

During the six-month program, participants will assess their community's early childhood resources and needs, learn about the policy-making process and build skills to shape the conversation about early childhood's impact on community vitality and growth.

"Citizens who live and work in our communities are best positioned to communicate with their local decision makers about these issues. Academy members will help advance the conversation in their communities and across the state," said Veak.

The current Policy Leadership class of 35 participants represents urban and rural communities statewide including Auburn, Gothenburg, Grand Island, Lexington, Lincoln, McCook, Nebraska City, North Platte, Omaha, Oshkosh, Peru, Stromsburg, Stuart, Table Rock, Tecumseh, Wayne and York.



Eleven of those communities also are participating in Communities for Kids, an initiative of the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, created in response to requests for assistance with shortages of high-quality early care and learning programs. These communities are Gothenburg, Grand Island, Lexington, McCook, Nebraska City, North Platte, Oshkosh, Stuart, Table Rock, Tecumseh and York.

First Five Nebraska is a team of public policy, data analysis and communications professionals focused on advancing high-quality early care and learning opportunities for Nebraska's youngest children. The organization promotes farsighted, fiscally responsible policies, the efficient use of public and private resources and high standards of accountability for Nebraska's investment in children's early learning and development.

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