



IDAHO  
**STARS**

**2022** Fiscal Year

# Annual Report



# We're Listening

**By hearing from our community, we improve our support and services in early care and education every day!**

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The data in this report represents early care and education professionals in the RISE database employed in Idaho during the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

# To Our Community

**IdahoSTARS Director, Melissa Crist, shares her vision for the future of the project and the lessons and growth that occurred during a challenging year for child care in Idaho and across the nation.**



This has been a year of change and growth for IdahoSTARS, fueled by the voice of the child care community. "We're Listening" is the title of this report because we listened through surveys, focus groups, and conversations this past year. Our project opened its ears and minds to innovative ideas and new ways of doing things to better meet the needs of each and every early care and education professional in Idaho.

In October of 2021, we sent out a survey to 5800 early care and education professionals. We heard back from 1344 people (23%) about topics ranging from customer support to training to social media. IdahoSTARS learned so much from this survey, including that early care and education professionals like to give feedback about how our work impacts their work with children and families.

Multiple teams at IdahoSTARS reached out in further surveys and focus groups to delve deeper into topics that mattered most to the child care community. We heard challenges and compliments, both useful in reviewing and updating our practices and programs. Respondents were appreciative for scholarships and recognitions, had ideas about training and professional development, and so much more.

As you read this report, you will read about new projects and initiatives that IdahoSTARS developed to better meet the needs of the child care community. You will see the results of their feedback as well as quotes from and about early care and education professionals as they have continued to advance their own professional development and the quality of their programs this past year.

We are grateful to serve them and listen to their voices.

With gratitude,

Melissa Crist

IdahoSTARS Director



# IDAHO STARS

## The leading expert for quality child care in Idaho.

We empower families and early care and education professionals to make safe, healthy, nurturing, and educational child care their top priority. Our mission is to ensure that Idaho's children, birth through age 12, have access to the highest quality inclusive care and education.

### We do this by:

- Supporting early care and education professionals with professional development opportunities to improve quality and business practices.
- Equipping families with the tools and resources that help them to find a nurturing and safe environment for their child.



IdahoSTARS is a joint project between the University of Idaho - Idaho Center on Disabilities and Human Development and the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children. We are funded by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and the Child Care Development Block Grant.



Idaho Association for the  
Education of Young Children

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# Quality Child Care Matters

We leverage our resources, experience and community partnerships to accomplish the following goals:



Increase qualifications of Idaho's early care and education professionals.



Increase quality practices in Idaho's early care and education programs.



Build knowledge of and investment in high-quality early care and education.



Increase the number of children in quality early childhood education programs.



# New Supports and Programs

Child care is a critical element that strengthens our economy and supports working families. The profession has been historically underfunded and overlooked, making it difficult to increase wages and afford professional development opportunities.

**This year IdahoSTARS has supported 1,575 Early Care and Education Programs across the state by leveraging COVID relief dollars and introducing innovative programs that improve the quality of child care, update business and safety practices, and offer financial supports to participants.**





## BUSINESS PRACTICE COHORTS

Early care and education programs are businesses. Directors and owners need to use best practices in business just like they do when caring for young children. To fulfill this need, IdahoSTARS created 12 Business Practice Cohorts across all 7 regions bringing child care program staff together with IdahoSTARS regional staff to learn about basic and advanced business practices.

Participants had the opportunity to earn grants for business expenses that might get ignored in the very tight budgets of child care programs. Computers, printers, business software, marketing materials, office furniture and more were purchased by business cohort grant awardees.

Cohorts met for four 2-hour training modules, October through March, and worked with IdahoSTARS coaches.

**\$693,360**

distributed via  
business practice  
grants

**180**

programs enrolled

**82%**

of participants  
completed all  
training modules

### Quotes from participants:

“This gave me the confidence to apply for a star rating and basically rock it.”

“I really hope that you continue to offer this course. I only wish that when I was starting out it had been offered. I would have taken it.”

“Thank you for the opportunity! It’s been a while since I’ve engaged in any group training for the daycare, and it is always refreshing. The business practices cohort was particularly good timing in light of the challenges of the last two years. “

“There are many pages for programs to use online, but I like that this is a group of local programs. Even though we may have vastly different settings or values, our main objective of caring for children and their families is the same and there is so much value in that.”

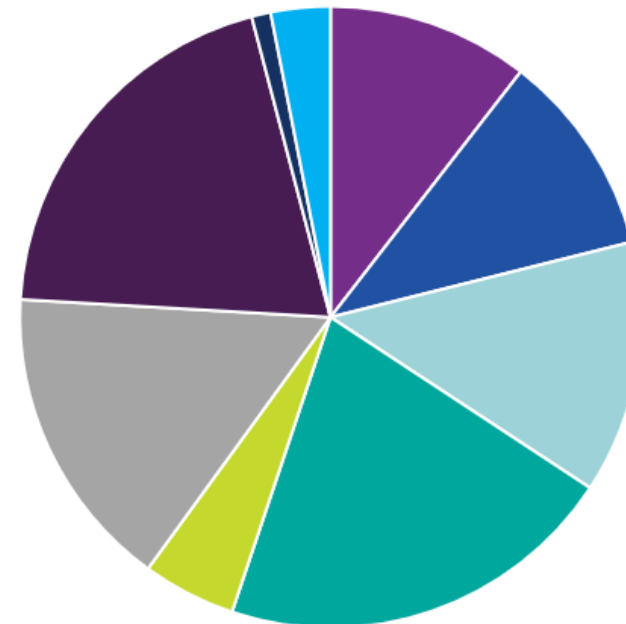
## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE) BADGE INITIATIVE

Post-secondary academic education is not always an option for early care and education professionals. Many gain expertise and knowledge of child development through certifications, live trainings, webinars, Targeted Technical Assistance (TTA), coaching cycles and first-hand experience caring for children.

IdahoSTARS developed the ECE Badge Initiative to recognize expertise in early childhood education. Each badge represents a different domain of child development or specialized area of accomplishment. Each badge is awarded by completing approved activities. Badges are recognized by certificates, entries on Professional Development Records (PDR) and a \$500 recognition.



Badges Awarded by Type



- Business Practices
- Child Development
- Curriculum & Instruction
- Inclusion & Diversity
- Environments
- ePyramid
- Health, Safety & Wellness
- Montessori
- Partnerships with Families



## **SAFE SLEEP GRANT**

IdahoSTARS helped facilitate grant distribution to early care and education programs that sought to improve their safe sleep practices. Programs worked with Child Care Health Consultants to write Quality Action and Improvement Plans related to safe sleep practices in childcare. Consultants helped providers use grant dollars to purchase safe sleep materials such as cribs, sheets, and sleep sacks. As a result of this support, many facilities are providing safer sleep for infants and children in their care greatly reducing the risk of SIDS.

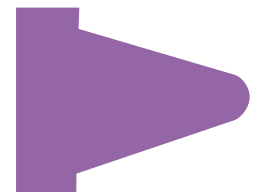


“This grant has helped us because the children in my center will no longer be sleeping on the floor, but will be sleeping on cots- a much preferred and healthier sleep practice!”

“I feel these items have helped a lot to provide safe sleep for our infants. With the old pack n plays we had, we were having some problems with the one-year-old's getting under the mats. ”

**255** Child Care Programs Approved

**\$559,680** Distributed



## EMERGING LEADERS

This was the first year of the Emerging Leaders program, a unique pathway through the Masters of Education in Early and Special Education at BSU focusing specifically on leadership in Idaho's Early Childhood Education system. It is a three-year part-time degree pathway which is fully funded for those selected into the program with an IdahoSTARS scholarship. It was designed to support new leaders across the state in Early Childhood Education as our existing leaders who have worked in the field for decades are beginning to retire.

This first year, we started with a cohort of 4 individuals at BSU who will progress through the program together, other cohorts will be added beginning this fall. IdahoSTARS is also pleased to announce this fall will be the addition of an Emerging Leaders scholarship at University of Idaho, through their Masters of Family and Consumer Sciences program with a concentration in Child Development.

### What they have to say:

"No one can articulate the gratitude that we have for this opportunity better than the students receiving support from your organization...They spoke about their growth -- in both knowledge and confidence. They spoke about building community, about engaging in educational discourse, about feeling empowered to advocate for young children and families, and about gaining understanding of their own purpose in this work. They also spoke about the impact that their engagement in this program is having and will continue to have on the children and families that they serve."

**Dr. Deb Carter, Professor of Early and Special Education at Boise State University**

"I do not think any length of letter would fully express how grateful and indebted I am to IdahoSTARS for providing me this amazing opportunity. I am ending this year more passionate than I started. I think we can all agree it isn't the norm to end a school year less burned out than you began. Thank you for seeing the potential in me and giving me the chance to fall even more in love with what I do every day."

**Madison Anderson, Emerging Leader**

## FUTURE EDUCATORS

The Future Educator Scholarship covers 100% of a student's Freshman year tuition and is awarded to a graduating High School senior who chooses to pursue a degree in Early Childhood Education at an Idaho college or university.

### OUR FIRST FUTURE EDUCATOR SCHOLAR - Kate Harper, Mountain View High School, Meridian

In High School, Kate took coursework in Early Childhood Education and participated in FCCLA (Family, Career and Community Leaders of America) a national career and technical student organization for young men and women in Family and Consumer Sciences education. At their annual statewide event, Kate said "yes" to pursuing a degree in Family and Consumer Sciences (Early Childhood Education) at the College of Western Idaho beginning in the Fall of 2022. We were so happy to be there to award her with the first ever Future Educator Scholarship! Kate is beginning her degree this coming fall.



4 more

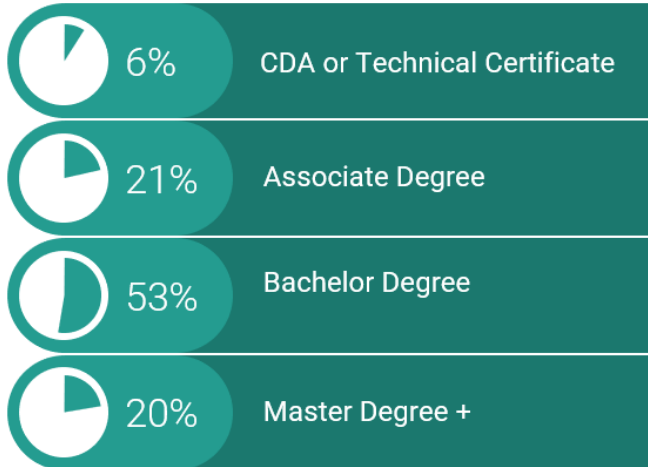
scholarships will be  
awarded next year.

# Increase the qualifications of Idaho early care and education professionals

IdahoSTARS accomplishes this by encouraging, providing, and supporting continued professional development through training opportunities and academic education.

## ACADEMIC EDUCATION

IdahoSTARS helped 438 students invest in their future in Early Childhood Education through 818 awards totaling over \$2 million. Awardees have earned an average 3.45 GPA, year to date. Recipients receiving grants and scholarships are pursuing a degree or coursework in Early Childhood Education at the college/university level.



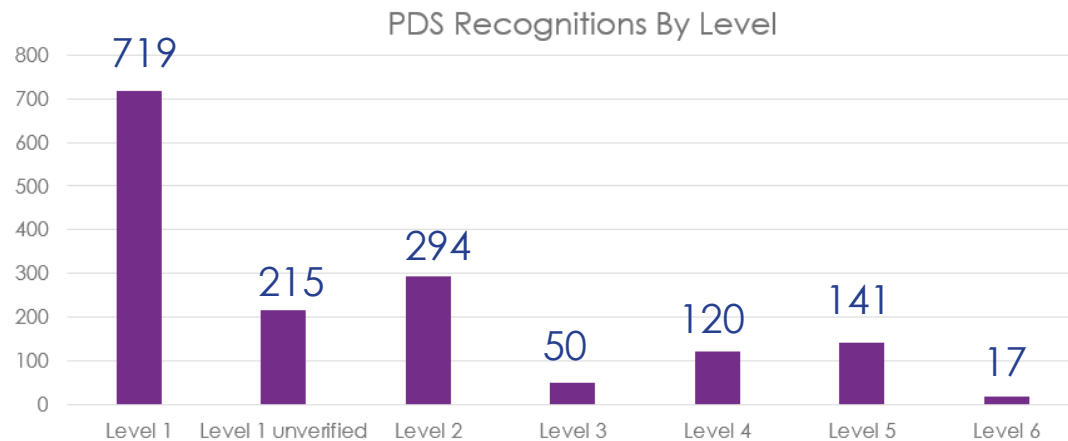
### What students are saying:

“Without these grants, getting my degree wouldn't be an option. It's completely changed the trajectory for my life.”

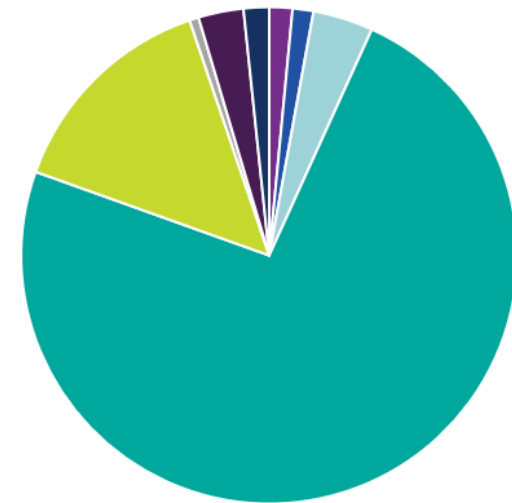
“It's nice to see this program give money to people that are working the front lines every day. The child care workforce is responsible for raising our children. Thank you for making funding available to supplement working students.”

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM (PDS)

The IdahoSTARS Professional Development System (PDS) is a voluntary, statewide professional development system for early care and education professionals. Eligible participants can receive financial recognition when completing 20 or more hours of training per year. The amount of recognition is based on the education level of the participant.



Race/Ethnicity of Participating Providers



- Native American
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Other
- Asian
- Caucasian/White
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Blank

High School Diploma ————— PHD in Early Education

The survey on the Professional Development System (PDS) was the most successful of all the departmental surveys. Over 135 early care and education professionals gave IdahoSTARS feedback and ideas about how PDS could work better for them. Takeaways included recognizing longevity in the field, recognizing director's credentials, updating the education pathway and offering alternative incentive structures. These ideas will be implemented in the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

## TRAINING

IdahoSTARS offers many opportunities to expand the knowledge of the child care community and improve quality child care practices. Our training catalog offers multiple ways to take trainings: webinars, live trainings, online trainings, and outside companies that offer training events.

Online training offers a great way for early care and education professionals to learn more about subjects that interest them at a time that works for their schedule. Our training catalog currently offers 70 trainings in English and 56 trainings in Spanish.

For people who enjoy the give and take of training in a communal setting, we offered 250 live webinars and in-person trainings. There were 852 professionals who took part in these trainings, completing 860 hours of education. Everyone can request an interpreter for any IdahoSTARS approved training. Requests are accommodated whenever able at no cost to registrants.

**50,331** Trainings hours completed

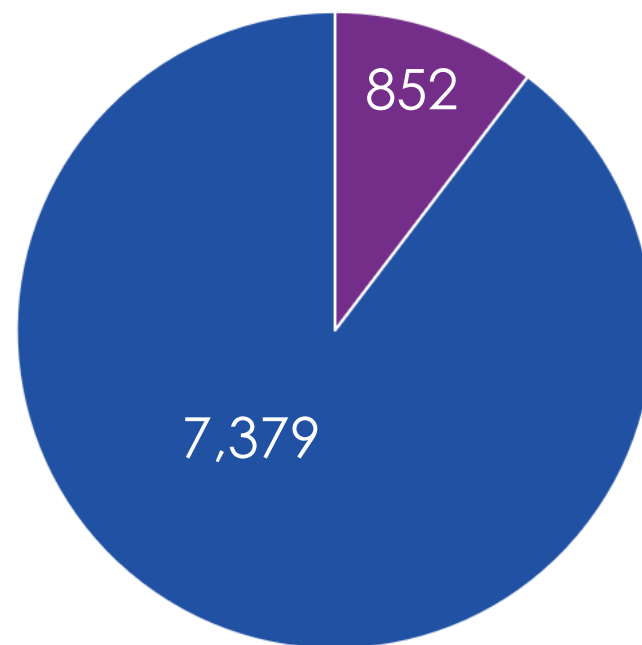
**8,231** Professionals trained

### What they are saying:

“I feel so fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in IdahoSTARS trainings, they have helped me improve my teaching. All the trainings are amazing and helpful.”

“Please keep providing online training and webinars!”

2022 TRAINING PARTICIPATION



■ Webinars & Live Trainings ■ Online Training Participants

## CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE (CDA) COHORTS

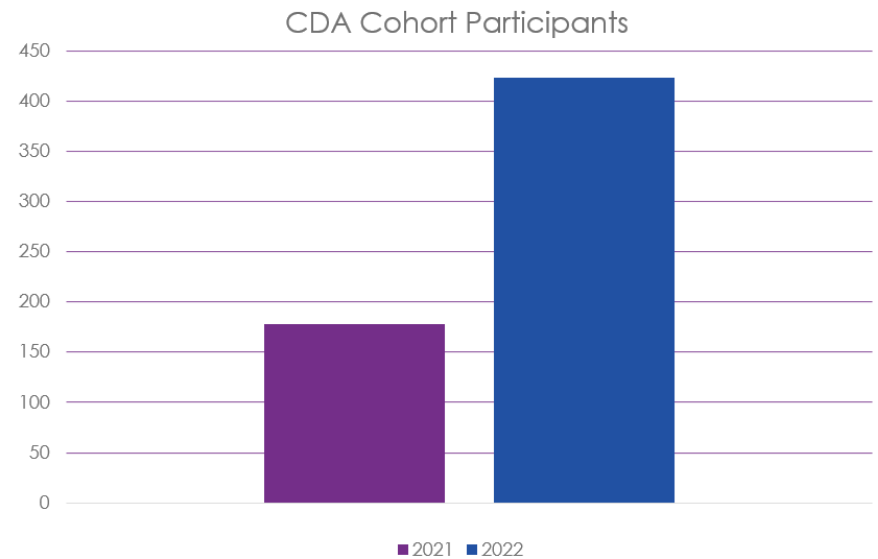
IdahoSTARS has offered CDA cohorts since 2018. This year, we expanded to have participants from all 7 regions. We were able to increase participants from 178 to 424 by hiring three part-time CDA specialists to conduct cohorts. We gave 1,980 coaching sessions with 144 early care and education professionals going through verification visits to receive their CDA Certificate.

**1,980**  
Coaching  
sessions

Each participant who completed their CDA prep work was eligible for a \$500 incentive award.

**144**  
completed  
a CDA  
verification

Anyone who completed or renewed their CDA credential was also eligible for a \$500 incentive award.



# Increase Quality Practices

## STEPS TO QUALITY

Steps to Quality (STQ) is Idaho's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for child care programs. STQ blends quality improvement and quality rating for early care and education programs. It is a voluntary program for child care centers and home-based programs. Programs participating in STQ work with regional IdahoSTARS consultants to assess, improve, and communicate quality practices.

At each step, we help programs grow quality in the following areas:

- Business Practices
- Health, Safety and Wellness
- Child Development
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Environments
- Inclusion and Diversity
- Partnering with Families and Communities



### What they are saying:

"I loved having [our quality consultant] help us, push us, and motivate us to take the next step and improve with each other."

"Coaching for our teachers has been fantabulous! Giving our staff goals to work for."

122 Programs Rated Step 3+

176 Verified Programs



## GRANTS TO PROMOTE QUALITY

Accreditation grants:

3 unique facilities received \$1,850

Successful Start grants:

39 unique facilities received \$39,769

Quality Improvement grants:

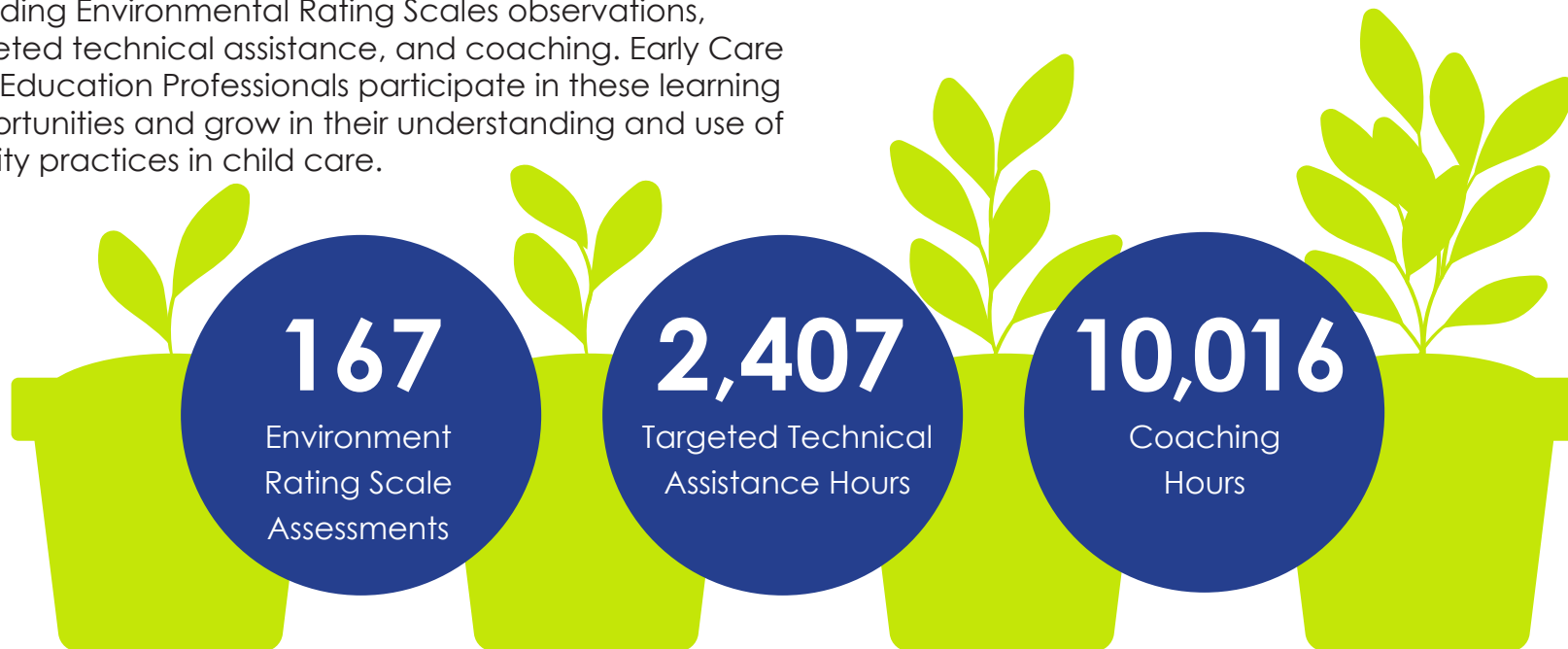
57 unique facilities received \$101,748

## CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Continuous quality improvement is a cycle of setting goals, observing, and reflecting upon ones practices. IdahoSTARS uses many tools to guide continuous quality improvement including Environmental Rating Scales observations, targeted technical assistance, and coaching. Early Care and Education Professionals participate in these learning opportunities and grow in their understanding and use of quality practices in child care.

## Home-Provider Listening Sessions & Survey

In order to reach a better understanding of what programs need, STQ reached out to 18 home-based providers. They conducted 12 one-on-one interviews, 11 in English and one in Spanish. With feedback from the interviews, the STQ team sent out a survey to 259 interested early care and education professionals. There were 50 respondents to that survey. Three of the original home-based programs worked with the STQ team to review the survey results and plan next steps. The feedback received will be integrated into the future plans of STQ work.



## AGES AND STAGES QUESTIONNAIRE (ASQ)

The ASQ is an early developmental screening tool designed to help identify delays in a child's basic development and help families engage in the services necessary to address these delays. IdahoSTARS and the Infant Toddler Program have partnered on a pilot program allowing Steps to Quality programs to utilize an electronic management system to administer this tool with their families

Participating programs that received training and coaching on the use of the ASQ screener, receive a financial incentive intended to help them purchase additional support materials associated with the ASQ. Through this partnership we strive to bolster child care programs and families with children in need of additional support by connecting them with community support structures. Providers interested in offering the ASQ in their program are encouraged to contact their regional IdahoSTARS office or dial 211.

## INFANT TODDLER MENTAL HEALTH

The Infant and Toddler Mental Health Endorsement is a professional development plan that focuses on knowledge, best practices, and reflective work experience to support children birth through age three in their healthy social and emotional development. IdahoSTARS is facilitating our first cohort.

Six IdahoSTARS team members completed their Infant and Toddler Mental Health Endorsement in preparation and we have targeted 5 providers and three more IdahoSTARS team members that will receive endorsement support, training, and reflective consultation to increase awareness and best practices for infant and toddler mental health. Participants will receive a financial incentive upon completion of a Family Associates Endorsement. Our goal is to offer additional cohorts to providers interested in receiving a Family Associates Endorsement in subsequent years.



## IDAHO PYRAMID COLLABORATIVE

The Pyramid Model is a comprehensive, multi-tiered framework that uses systems-thinking and implementation science to promote evidence-based practices. This model supports the social, emotional, and behavioral development of young children, promoting positive behavior and preventing challenging behavior.

As we complete our second year with the collaborative, we are engaging with four Steps to Quality programs that applied to be in our initial cohort of the Idaho Pyramid Model Collaborative. In addition to training and coaching, participants receive materials and financial incentives for completion of training and assessment.

The Pyramid Model collaborative is an on-going project that unites The Idaho State Department of Education, Division of Special Education, Idaho SESTA (Special Education Support & Technical Assistance), Head Start Collaboration Office, Center on Disabilities and Human Development (CDHD/University of Idaho), IdahoSTARS, and Boise State University.



# Build knowledge of and investment in quality care

*Outreach is especially important as the child care community faces challenges with staffing shortages, Covid, and the pressures of not being able to accommodate families seeking child care. News about grants, professional development scholarships and health and safety are vital to the success of child care programs.*

## “WE’RE LISTENING” SURVEY

In October 2021, IdahoSTARS surveyed over 5,800 early care and education professionals asking them about their experiences with IdahoSTARS staff, our programs, RISE (IdahoSTARS provider information system), communication preferences, and their willingness to participate in further focus groups and surveys. We had a response rate of 23%.

To more fully hear the diversity of voices in the early care and education community we also gave our survey in Spanish, and hosted focus groups in Spanish, Swahili, and Somali.

You’ve read in other sections of this report about surveys around specific topics. The participants of those surveys and focus groups were from 67% of respondents who told us they wanted to participate in further feedback with IdahoSTARS.



## IDAHOSTARS.ORG

We've updated our website to be more informative and easier to navigate for our customers, early care and education professionals and families.

Our home page highlights the latest information for professionals and families. Through our blog, you can learn about grant opportunities, health and safety information, and more.

Specific information designated for families is available through our Family Portal tab, and information aimed towards early care and education professionals is provided on our Child Care Provider and Professional Development tabs. Want to know more about IdahoSTARS? Go to About Us.



## SOCIAL MEDIA & NEWSLETTER OUTREACH



**1,761** IdahoSTARS Facebook followers

**51** IdahoSTARS En Espanol Facebook followers

**44%** Email Open Rate

# Increase children enrolled in high-quality early care and education programs

## IDAHO CHILD CARE PROGRAM (ICCP)

The Idaho Child Care program (ICCP) helps low-income families pay child care with tuition assistance from the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. Child care programs receive regular payments while providing quality child care for children in the greatest need. ICCP allows families to have stabilized, quality child care while working or attending school.

Because ICCP is so important to families, successful certification and recertification of ICCP for child care programs is the top objective for The Customer Support Team and Resource Specialists.

We support ICCP providers through in-person and online appointments, phone calls, emails and mailed renewal notices. This year 81% of ICCP providers renewed successfully on time. Child care programs who participate in ICCP speak ten different languages, with 11% of participants speak languages other than English. To fully support more ICCP providers, the Customer Support team and two Child Care Resource Centers have team members who speak Spanish and Swahili.

### Participants say:

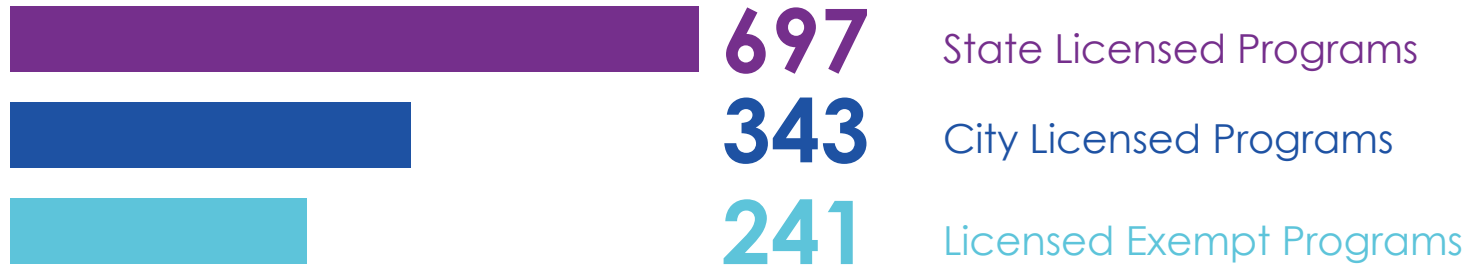
“My emails are always taken right away, and I usually have a response within the hour! Great customer service specialist.”

“Every time I have had a question about ICCP or licensing all staff have been very helpful and have had wonderful customer service skills. Always resolves the issue.”



## LICENSING

There are 679 state licensed child care programs in Idaho, and 343 city licensed programs and 241 license exempt programs have that entered their businesses in the RISE database.



## CHILD CARE REFERRALS

We've provided 701 child care referrals to families in Idaho this year.

171 (32%) of those referrals were either customized or enhanced meaning Resource Specialists adapts a referral based on a family's specific needs. These referrals can be done in multiple languages using the language line.

## BOOKS FOR FAMILIES

Books for Families has been a year-long initiative to support families who contact IdahoSTARS for a child care referral by sending each family a children's book aligned with the child's age. Our objective is for families to read stories and look at pictures together which stimulates a joy for reading, embeds pre-reading skills, increases vocabulary, and provides an opportunity for families to actively engage with each other. This year we've sent books to over 700 families.



**701** child care referrals  
**171** customized referrals



IDAHO  
**STARS**

Quality Child Care Matters

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