We will leverage our resources, experience and community partnerships to:

1. Build knowledge of and investment in high-quality early care and education
2. Increase the number of children participating in the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP) who are enrolled in high-quality early care and education programs
3. Increase quality practices in Idaho’s early care and education programs
4. Increase qualifications of Idaho’s early care and education professionals

Who We Are

Our mission is to ensure that Idaho’s children, infancy through age 12, have access to the highest-quality inclusive early care and education. We accomplish this by:

- Supporting child care providers with professional development opportunities to improve their practice and develop their businesses.
- Equipping families with tools and resources that empower them to find a nurturing and safe environment for their child.

The University of Idaho Center on Disabilities and Human Development (CDHD), Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (Idaho AEYC), Panhandle Health District and Department of Health and Welfare proudly partner on the IdahoSTARS project. IdahoSTARS is funded by the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to improve the quality of child care available to families.
Increased Qualifications

IdahoSTARS offers a range of professional development and scholarship opportunities for child care professionals to help improve skills, increase knowledge of child development and improve wages within the early childhood workforce. The scholarships cover a variety of professional development options, from conference registration fees to early childhood master’s degree courses. Professional Development System (PDS) participants also receive recognition awards for their career development.

Challenge: 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 for the workforce to increase wages and afford professional development opportunities.

Early childhood educators need access to free or low-cost professional development in increase their skills and stay up to date on leading child development practices.

Academic Scholars

- 15 bachelor degrees
- 22 associate degrees
- 3 CDA & technical certificates
- 80% of scholars work in child care programs serving low-income families
- 100% of scholars work in a child care program while attending school
- 82% scholarship retention rate

Trainings

- 8,639 professional development training sessions delivered by IdahoSTARS
- 29 in-person trainings across 16 different languages
- 1,295 early childhood professionals received recognition for continuing professional development

IdahoSTARS has seven local Child Care Resource Centers across the state. Our team of consultants help early childhood professionals increase the quality of their programs. They provide individualized, in-person technical assistance, focusing on seven quality domains that create developmentally appropriate, inclusive and diverse classrooms where children will learn and grow.

Coaching & Technical Assistance

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After several years volunteering in preschool and elementary classrooms, Kristi Keeler realized she had found her career path. She loved the eagerness and enthusiasm of children, and she wanted to make a difference in their lives.

Kristi has now spent nearly two decades at The Kids Klub in Grangeville, serving as program director the past 15 years. She joined the Professional Development System Registry in 2010 and received her first academic scholarship through IdahoSTARS not long after. Over seven years fitting college courses around her full-time work and raising her family, Kristi earned her associate degree in early childhood education and then her bachelor’s degree in early childhood development.

"I did not attend college right out of high school and always wished that I had," she says. "This scholarship gave me the means to do so. I am a first generation, cum laude graduate. This was important for me to set an example to my children and the children that I care for that it is never too late to pursue your dreams."

She says the education has made her a more intentional, confident teacher. Knowing about the stages of child development has guided her work to help children reach those milestones. And her program aims to continually evolve, seeking input from parents and staying up to date on new research through training.

"A lot goes into providing quality child care," Kristi says. "The program where I work is so much more than child care or babysitting. We are committed to providing enriching opportunities that expand children’s learning and development."

*Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Farsi, French, Karen, Khmer, Lao, Spanish, Swahili, Ukrainian, Somali, Filipino, Yoruba, Portuguese, Tigrinya, Russian, Tagalog, Kinyarwanda, and other languages available through in-person trainings.

- 5,170 total hours providing onsite support for child care providers and teachers
- 374 providers took trainings delivered by IdahoSTARS
- 1201 total hours training were delivered in 14 different languages
Help for Families

It can be difficult for families to navigate options and locate quality care. IdahoSTARS provides free child care referrals for families, suggesting programs based on the type of care needed, desired days and hours for child care, and location. Enhanced referrals are available to families who require additional assistance with finding care that meets their specialized needs, such as developmental delays, non-English speaking, or nontraditional child care hours.

Chad Child Care Assistance

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare’s Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP) helps families access child care. Child care programs that choose to participate in ICCP must meet health, safety and training requirements. IdahoSTARS supports programs with enrolling and maintaining eligibility in ICCP.

Improving Quality

Steps to Quality: Idaho’s Quality Rating & Improvement System

Step 1 is a basic tier for child care programs. Step 2 introduces higher standards, such as developmental delays, non-English speaking, with finding care that meets their specialized needs, such as developmental delays, non-English speaking, or nontraditional child care hours.

Step 3, it is considered STAR-Rated.

Enhanced referrals are available to families who require additional assistance with finding care that meets their specialized needs, such as developmental delays, non-English speaking, or nontraditional child care hours.

Steps to Quality is a voluntary program for child care centers and home-based programs that want to improve their practices. Participants work directly with IdahoSTARS consultants to move through six steps aimed at enhancing the quality of a program. When a program is verified at Step 3, it is considered STAR-Rated.

While searching for child care, parents can use Steps to Quality to identify programs committed to offering quality early learning.

When her first grandchild needed child care, Marcia Davis decided to start her own program. She had nearly a decade of experience as a public-school teacher, and she hoped to provide an early learning environment that was positive for children, families and teachers. In 2012, she opened Kootenai Kids in Boise.

Child care providers are a part of your family,” Bre says. “They are with your child all day. If it is not someone you can trust, you’re going to have a hard time.”

But the problems started right away and she began to worry about Charlotte’s safety. It affected Bre state of mind as she tried to focus on her new job. “I was anxious going to work every day,” she says.

While searching for resources to help a child overcome challenging behavior, Marcia and her staff were relieved to come upon the free, local mentorship available through IdahoSTARS.

After meeting with an IdahoSTARS consultant and taking advantage of training and other professional development opportunities, Marcia and her team decided to participate in Steps to Quality.

Marcia and her team decided to participate in Steps to Quality.

Since the goal at Kootenai Kids had always been purposeful, quality child care, it made sense to work with IdahoSTARS as their program evolved. Kootenai Kids is now close to reaching Step 4 in the six-step process.

While searching for resources to help a child overcome challenging behavior, Marcia and her staff were relieved to come upon the free, local mentorship available through IdahoSTARS.

“Children are little sponges who soak up what they are exposed to,” Marcia says. “They all participate at their own levels of interest, but they are listening and watching. Suddenly a child who appeared to be playing in his own little world will talk about a book that was read aloud or a song that they never sang before.”

Visit idahostars.org for additional stories about the impact IdahoSTARS is making across our state.