



Utah Childcare Solutions and Workplace Productivity Plan

Child Behavior Overview

In Brief.

Among child care provider focus groups, challenging child behavior was a top issue, particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic. Discussions with Head Start and the School Readiness Initiative staff confirmed “child behaviors” were a concern across their programs as well. Integrated strategies across programs serving young children to better support the early care workforce and parents can help address the needs of children (both “typically developing” and those with special needs).

High-Level Findings

- Child behavior challenges, along with workforce recruitment and retention, were the top two issues for child care provider focus groups.
- The intensity, breadth, and depth of child behaviors has changed drastically since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Young children frequently hit, kick, throw chairs, and melt down on the floor. They often don't know how to get along with peers, listen, or follow directions.
- Focus groups felt that the use of social media in a phone-based generation could be impacting child development. Stressed parents may give a child a phone or tablet to entertain them; parents may be distracted by phones instead of interacting with children.

This brief provides a summary of the recommendations contained in the **Child Behavior** section of the 2024 [Utah Child Care Solutions and Workplace Productivity Report](#).

Recommendations for consideration have been grouped by no cost/low cost, modest cost, or significant investment.

No Cost/Low Cost Recommendations

- **Parent Campaign.** While social media/technology is not the sole cause of the increase in challenging child behavior, it does play a contributing role. A public campaign to raise visibility among parents about the importance of a child's earliest years for brain development; importance of parent-child interactions; and how phone and tablet use can impact a child's development could make a difference.

Recommendation. The state could consider partnering with [5B45](#) to wage a public awareness campaign related to the impact of phones and tablets on a child's early development.

Modest Cost Recommendations

- **Utah Pyramid Model.** The Pyramid Model is an evidence-based approach to address challenging child behavior used in early childhood programs across 43 states. In Utah, the Institute for Disability Research, Policy & Practice at Utah State University currently implements the Pyramid Model in 44 programs across 26 counties.

Recommendation. The state could consider investing in an expansion of the Utah State University pyramid model to provide additional child care programs with support to address classroom quality and challenging child behaviors.

- **Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) Professional Development Pilots.** CLASS® is both an evidence-based scored observation of effective interactions and the quality of early learning settings

and a professional development system based on initial observations. CLASS® is used in 27 state quality rating systems as well as by Head Start and the U.S. Army child development programs.

Recommendation. The state could consider integrated early childhood program pilots (across child care, Head Start, and the School Readiness Initiative) to use CLASS® as a professional development system to support effective interactions in addressing the needs of children and promoting quality settings for all children to thrive.

- **Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential infused with CLASS®.** A CDA is an early childhood certification that covers 13 core competencies related to working with children and families. With the need to build effective interactions among staff, the CDA infused with CLASS® ensures that individuals who earn the credential have a solid foundation in interactions that are most effective along with early childhood competencies.

Recommendation. The state could consider a scholarship model for individuals to earn a CDA infused with CLASS®.

- **The Children’s Center Utah.** The Department of Workforce Services, Office of Child Care currently contracts with the [Children’s Center Utah](#) for Early Childhood Coaching and Consultation. Statewide onsite and virtual services are offered to support child care providers to better meet the needs of children.

Recommendation. The state could consider expanding coaching services through the [Early Childhood Coaching and Consultation program](#).

- **The Sammy Center.** [The Sammy Center](#) offers a strengths-based program to meet the needs of each child. The children served in the program have been expelled from other child care programs, soft-suspended (asked to reduce the hours the children attend), or were not able to flourish in the regular child care setting.

Recommendation. The state could consider offering a contract to reduce the costs for parents to make the program more affordable and to supplement teacher wages so that staff do not need to work two jobs.

- **Child Care Provider Support to Serve Children with Special Needs.** Care About Childcare (CAC) staff at Utah State University currently work with child care providers to obtain a special needs endorsement – [All Means All](#), which requires 40 hours of training related to working with children with special needs.

Recommendation. The state could consider expanding staff for the All Means All program to support more providers statewide to obtain the special needs endorsement.

- **Utah State University Healthy Relationships.** The Department of Workforce Services partners with Utah State University Cooperative Extension to offer [Healthy Relationships Utah](#) – parenting classes, relationship building classes, and ways to de-stress to support stronger relationships and families.

Recommendation. The state could consider expanding the Healthy Relationships program to offer a new class related to parent-child interactions about the impact of a phone or tablet-based era on early childhood development competencies of young children. The state could also consider a marriage license discount for couples who take a course related to the impact of social media on the next generation (children birth to five).

Significant Investment Recommendations

- **Training & Compensation.** Training alone is likely an insufficient strategy because the turnover in child care programs is so high. Training initiatives paired with strategies to increase child care worker compensation are likely to be more effective since those who receive training would be less likely to cycle frequently out of their job.

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