

**Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5)
HHS-2018-ACF-OCC-TP-1379**

Project Title: Empowering Utah Families Through a Coordinated Early Childhood B-5 System

Applicant Name: Utah Department of Workforce Services

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Project Summary/Abstract

Utah is recognized as having the highest birth rate in the country, the youngest median age and the youngest average age for marriage. As a result, children under 6 years old comprise nearly one-third of Utah's child population but comprise 40 percent of the children experiencing poverty. These statistics emphasize the importance of establishing a coordinated and aligned B-5 Early Childhood System. Although Utah values government efficiency and restraint, it prioritizes family and recognizes its strength depends on cohesive and healthy families. It is through these unique values, strengths and attributes that the Utah Department of Workforce Services, Office of Child Care (OCC) proposes the first phase in establishing a coordinated B-5 Early Childhood System that empowers Utah families with young children to make informed decisions to support their young children's healthy development through the "Empowering Utah Families Through a Coordinated B-5 Early Childhood System (Empowering Utah Families)" project.

Currently, Utah's B-5 Early Childhood System (B-5 System) is administered through six offices within four state agencies and several community-based organizations. As a result of the system's current complexities, families face challenges navigating the system and connecting to resources. This is cause for concern in Utah, where the Governor's Education Excellence Commission developed an ambitious education roadmap that includes the goal of ensuring all Utah children are ready for kindergarten. Utah's ability to ensure all young children are ready for kindergarten depends on families' ability to make the choices necessary to support their young child's healthy development, beginning at birth.

During the grant year, OCC will primarily focus on Activities One, Two, and Three while laying the foundation for Activities Four and Five. Through the "Empowering Utah Families" grant, the organizations and partners that comprise Utah's B-5 System will establish a framework for a coordinated and aligned system. The grant will be used to identify the needs of Utah families throughout its metropolitan statistical areas, rural counties and frontier counties recognizing that both the needs of families and resources available vary greatly in the diverse communities of Utah. Although a coordinated system must be implemented for all Utah families, the needs assessment will focus on populations at risk, including children experiencing poverty, intergenerational poverty, English language learners and children with special health needs. The analysis contained in the needs assessment will be utilized to develop a strategic plan for establishing a coordinated system to ensure all Utah children are ready for kindergarten. The grant will also be used to design a universal website that will allow Utah families to navigate the various resources available to address the needs of young children. Through these activities, Utah will be well positioned to implement a coordinated B-5 System that promotes parental choice.