

# Child Care Programs and Services

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An overview of HHS-administered Child Care programs  
December 18, 2023

Interim Human Services Committee | Representative Matt Ruby, Chairman  
*Presented by: Jessica Thomasson, Executive Director, Human Services, NDHHS*



# HHS provides child care related services to



**Help families access early childhood services so they can go to school or participate in ND's workforce**

- Child care assistance
- Child care referrals
- Navigating early intervention and early childhood special needs



**Support early childhood experience providers in their day to day work with children**

- Training and Professional Development
- Coaching on health, safety, inclusion
- Quality Improvement



**Support children's optimal development and school readiness**

- Developmental screening and referrals
- Supporting teachers in assessment and planning for child outcomes

# Child Care Assistance Program

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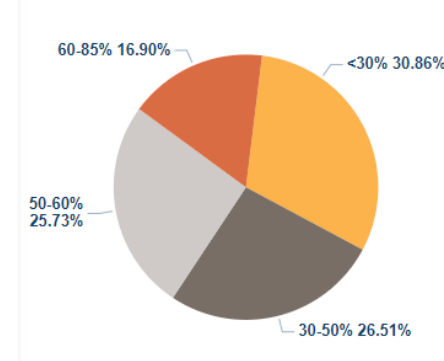
Affordability

The Child Care Assistance program (CCAP) helps pay a portion of the cost of child care for working families, or families in training or education programs. Families with modest incomes, who meet certain eligibility criteria, qualify for the program.

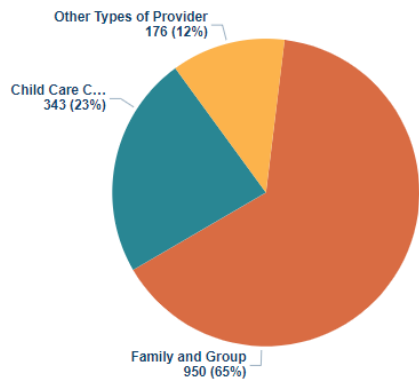
Source: Child Care Assistance Dashboard <https://www.hhs.nd.gov/human-services/data>

- # of children served: 4,911 children in 3,002 families (avg/mo)
- Provider involvement: 1,469 providers enrolled
- Costs and benefits: \$39.2 million (Dec 22-Nov 23); \$665/child (avg/mo)  
Infant/Toddler \$808k (Aug-Dec 23); Quality tier pmts \$57k (Dec 23)
- Measurable outcomes: 3,002 working families receiving assistance with child care costs
- Other data: 34% age 0-2, 40% age 3-5, 25% age 6-12 (based on 4,146 children participating in Nov 2023)

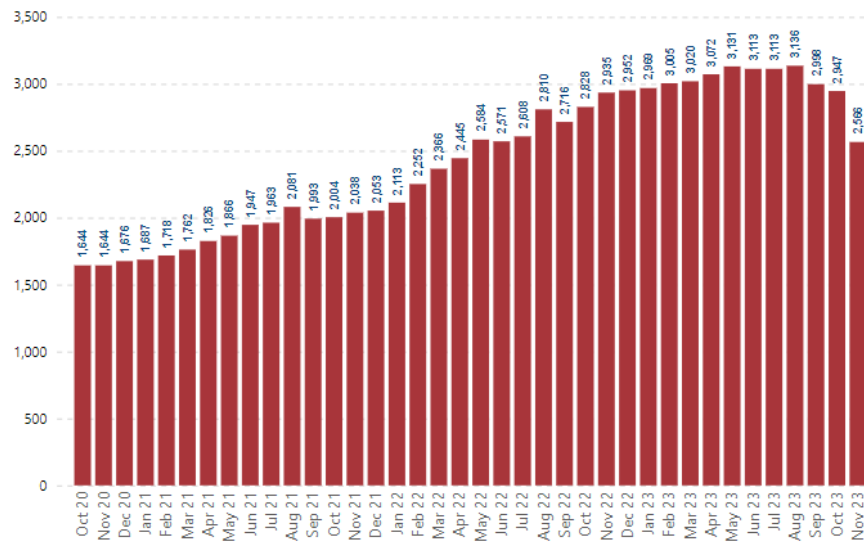
Household income (as %SMI) of working families receiving help with child care costs



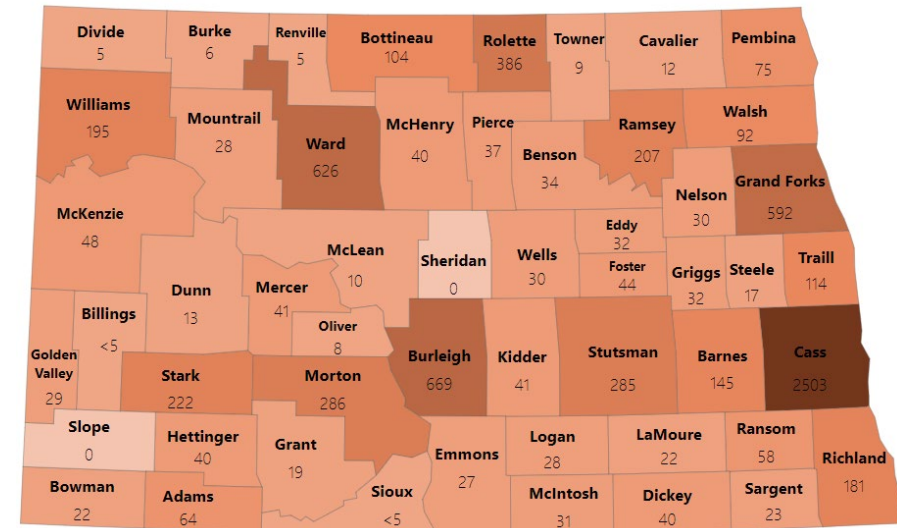
Child Care Programs enrolled in CCAP



Working Families receiving help with Child Care costs



Unduplicated count of families receiving child care assistance Dec 22-Nov 23



# Assistance with child care costs

Affordability

HHS offers child care assistance for families caring for a child via licensed foster care and kinship care

## Foster Care (snapshot Oct 23)

# of children served:

275 of 1,369 children in foster care received help with child care costs

Provider involvement:

Licensed child care providers

Costs and benefits:

\$186,014 (payments ranging from \$20-\$85/day)

Measurable outcomes:

Maintenance of foster home placement

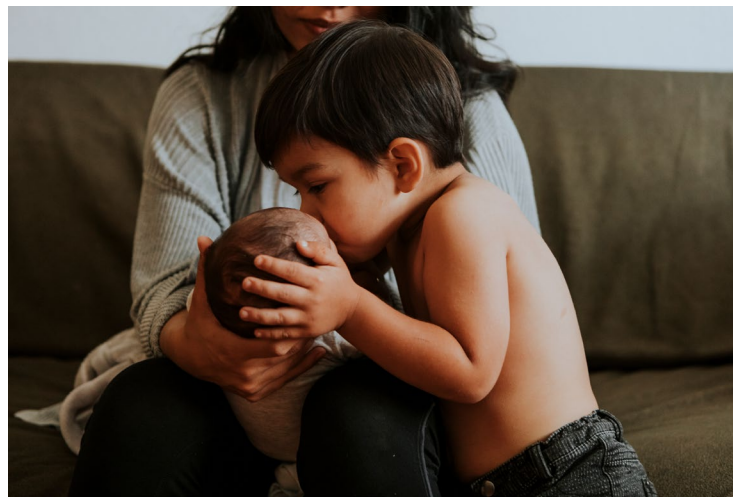
## Kin Care

Reimb available starting Dec 2023

Licensed child care providers

Up to \$600 per child per month (max of 6 months)

Maintenance of kin care placement



# Working Parent Child Care Relief

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Affordability

Employer-led child care benefit where employer contributions are eligible for a 1:1 state match. The program is an employee benefit designed to help offset child care costs. To be eligible, employees must have a child younger than age 3 who is attending licensed child care, and have a qualifying household income.

<u># of children served:</u>	176
<u>Provider involvement:</u>	31 participating employers
<u>Costs and benefits:</u>	Typically \$300 per enrolled employee per month (matched by equal amount from employer)
<u>Measurable outcomes:</u>	Employee retention

## Participating Employers

Capital Credit Union (Bismarck)	Schmidt and Sons Inc. (Kindred)
Milestones Therapy, LLC (Bismarck)	Maddock Memorial Home (Maddock)
State of North Dakota (Bismarck)	North Star Community Credit Union (Maddock)
Bowman County Development Corp (Bowman)	Church of Christ the King (Mandan)
Oliver County (Center)	Cloverdale Foods Company (Mandan)
St. Luke's Medical Center (Crosby)	Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation (Medora)
Adventure Academy LLC (Dickinson)	701 Healthcare Solutions (Minot)
Bright Futures Learning Center 1 and 2 (Fargo)	Project BEE (Minot)
Fargo Public Schools (Fargo)	Heart of America Medical Center (Rugby)
Lillestol Research LLC (Fargo)	Stansbery Veterinary Services (Sheldon)
Solace Counseling (Fargo)	Northland Health Centers (Turtle Lake)
Stock Growers Bank (Forman)	City County Health District (Valley City)
HOPE Evangelical Covenant Church (Grand Forks)	Souris Valley Care Center (Velva)
HOPEful Beginnings (Grand Forks)	Helping Hands Compassionate Care (Wahpeton)
Naastad Bros., Inc (Hatton)	COS LLC - Castle Oilfield Services (Williston)
	Double EE Service (Williston)

HARDWORKING  
BENEFITS FOR HARDWORKING  
PARENTS



## Reference Table

Help with child care costs can make a meaningful difference for working families with young children

Household Size	Families potentially eligible for CCAP						CCAP to WPCCR Jul 2025		WPCCR			
	30% SMI		60% SMI		75% SMI		85% SMI		100% SMI		150% SMI	
	Annual Income	Hourly Wage	Annual Income	Hourly Wage	Annual Income	Hourly Wage	Annual Income	Hourly Wage	Annual Income	Hourly Wage	Annual Income	Hourly Wage
2	\$ 23,359	\$11.23	\$ 46,717	\$22.46	\$ 58,397	\$28.08	\$ 66,183	\$ 31.82	\$ 77,862	\$37.43	\$ 116,793	\$ 56.15
3	\$ 28,855	\$13.87	\$ 57,710	\$27.74	\$ 72,137	\$34.68	\$ 81,755	\$ 39.31	\$ 96,183	\$46.24	\$ 144,274	\$ 69.36
4	\$ 34,351	\$16.51	\$ 68,702	\$33.03	\$ 85,877	\$41.29	\$ 97,328	\$ 46.79	\$ 114,503	\$55.05	\$ 171,755	\$ 82.57
5	\$ 39,847	\$19.16	\$ 79,694	\$38.31	\$ 99,618	\$47.89	\$ 112,900	\$ 54.28	\$ 132,823	\$63.86	\$ 199,235	\$ 95.79
6	\$ 45,343	\$21.80	\$ 90,686	\$43.60	\$ 113,358	\$54.50	\$ 128,472	\$ 61.77	\$ 151,144	\$72.67	\$ 226,716	\$ 109.00
7	\$ 46,374	\$22.30	\$ 92,747	\$44.59	\$ 115,934	\$55.74	\$ 131,392	\$ 63.17	\$ 154,579	\$74.32	\$ 231,869	\$ 111.48
8	\$ 47,404	\$22.79	\$ 94,808	\$45.58	\$ 118,511	\$56.98	\$ 134,312	\$ 64.57	\$ 158,014	\$75.97	\$ 237,021	\$ 113.95
9	\$ 48,435	\$23.29	\$ 96,870	\$46.57	\$ 121,087	\$58.21	\$ 137,232	\$ 65.98	\$ 161,449	\$77.62	\$ 242,174	\$ 116.43
10	\$ 49,465	\$23.78	\$ 98,931	\$47.56	\$ 123,663	\$59.45	\$ 140,152	\$ 67.38	\$ 164,884	\$79.27	\$ 247,326	\$ 118.91
Family Co-Pay	\$0		7% of HH inc		7% of HH inc		7% of HH inc		Costs >WPCCR stipend		Costs >WPCCR stipend	

2023-24 State Median Income (SMI); Hourly wage is calculated assuming 2,080 hours worked per year per annual income range noted

Multiple wage earners could combine earnings to attain the noted household (HH) income / hourly wage.

# Start-up and Expansion Grants

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Availability

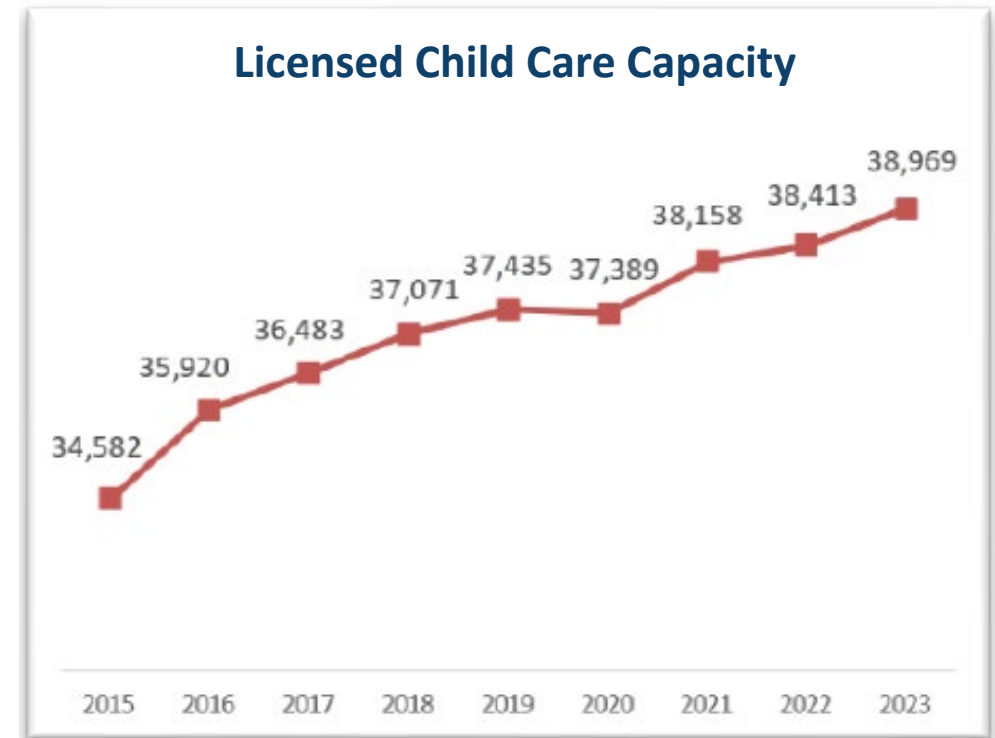
Grants to new and existing licensed child care programs to add capacity. Funds can support purchase of supplies and equipment, and operating costs related to start-up or expansion.

## Jan 2022 – April 2023 Start-up and Expansion Grants

<u># of children served:</u>	2,452 newly available child care spots
<u>Provider involvement:</u>	109 grants (90 new programs, 19 expansions)
<u>Costs and benefits:</u>	\$650,000
<u>Measurable outcomes:</u>	20% of new spaces were created in 24 programs located in underserved areas (“child care deserts”)

## October 2023 - \$1M available for Start-up and Expansion Grants

- ✓ Grants from \$20,000 - \$100,000
- ✓ Applicant must work with Child Care Aware® business consultant
- ✓ Eligible: New programs in under-served counties (Benson, Dunn, Kidder, McKenzie, McLean, Morton, Mountrail, Oliver, Renville, Rolette, Sioux, Stark, Towner, Williams, Walsh)
- ✓ Eligible: New infant/toddler spaces in new or expanding programs (any location)



*Note: Annual capacity snapshot taken in June each year; 2023 capacity is through October*

# Shared Services Alliance

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Availability

Support services designed to support child care entrepreneurs' business success and sustainability

# of children served:

Provider involvement:  
(Cohort 1: Sept-Dec 23)

44 programs – Women's Business Center Coaching  
72 programs – Procure child care management solution  
90 programs – Learning Beyond/Lakeshore

Costs and benefits:

\$1.5 million to support delivery of shared services

Measurable outcomes:

Program launched Sept 2023

1

Business Training and Coaching by the ND Women's Business Center

2

Access to the Procure Child Care Management technology platform to enable contactless check-in/out, automated invoicing, fee collection and payment processing, family connection tools, and document management

3

Access to curriculum and environment materials to support service delivery by Learning Beyond and Lakeshore



**Free Business Consultants to help with Child Care Start-ups and Expansions**

Business consultants from Child Care Aware® of North Dakota offer guidance and assistance to new and existing child care entrepreneurs.

Their expertise is in the business of child care. They can offer help:

- Identifying demand (i.e., community need),
- Understanding licensing requirements,
- Space planning to optimize the environment for young children,
- Developing strategies for staff recruitment and training,
- Thinking through curriculum considerations, and
- Business planning (including start-up and operational budgets).



# Quality Recognition

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Quality

Bright & Early ND is ND's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). A QRIS is a systematic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early childhood programs. Bright & Early ND was developed to help early childhood programs offer high-quality care that supports each child's learning and development. ND's quality efforts are supported with a variety of grants, incentives and supports.

# of children served: 7,711 spaces in programs that have achieved Step 2, 3 or 4

Provider involvement: 975 providers enrolled in QRIS

Costs and benefits: 82 quality grant awards (\$191,875) in CY2023  
\$2.7 million for QRIS coaching supports (FY2023-25)

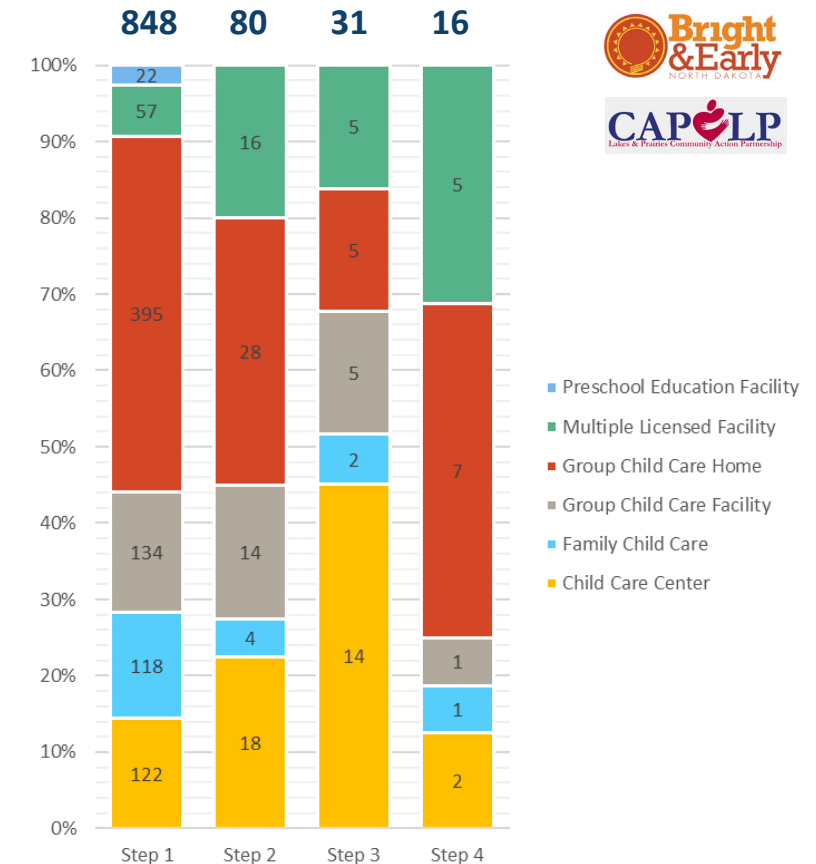
Measurable outcomes: 74 programs are actively pursuing the next quality step (2023 cohorts)

- 56 are moving from Step 1 to 2
- 16 from Step 2 to 3
- 2 from Step 3 to 4

These programs were supported by 980 "coaching" hours in CY2023

Other data: 60 programs have applied to join the Jan 2024 cohort

- 52 are moving from Step 1 to 2
- 8 from Step 2 to 3



# Child Care Coaching, Resource and Referral

Availability

Provide in-the-field training and technical assistance to child care providers, including TA related to licensing violations. Operate a resource and referral service to help parents find and evaluate child care options.

# of children served:

All children in licensed child care

Provider involvement:

487 face-to-face courses; 5,445 online self-paced courses; 79 health safety TA events to 22 programs (FY23)

Costs and benefits:

\$3.1 million contract for resource and referral (2023-25)

Other data:

69,688 online and specialist performed referrals (FY23)



## Did you know?

ND child care licensing specialists process an average of 21 new licenses and 61 license renewals every month

The screenshot shows the ChildCare Aware website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for HOME, PARENTS & FAMILIES, START CHILD CARE, TRAINING, and CHILD CARE RESOURCES. A prominent yellow banner reads: "IF YOU'RE A LICENSED CHILD CARE PROVIDER IN NORTH DAKOTA, CHECK YOUR INBOX: WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! PROVIDER SURVEYS". Below this, text encourages providers to take a minute to answer a Market Rate Survey. A navigation menu on the right lists: HOME, PARENTS & FAMILIES, START CHILD CARE, TRAINING, and CHILD CARE RESOURCES. In the foreground, there is a "CHILD CARE DATA BY COUNTY" map showing various counties in North Dakota with red dots indicating specific data points. A "PARENTS & FAMILIES" card is also visible, offering resources for parents. At the bottom right, there is a "LEARN MORE ABOUT IT" section with a "FIND RESOURCES" button and social media icons for Pinterest, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram.

# Best in Class

Best in Class is a targeted state investment in programs committed to delivering the highest quality experiences to children and their families in the year before kindergarten. It includes focused efforts to serve children who might be least likely to have the opportunity to access high quality experiences like those offered in Best in Class settings.

# of children served: 881 (2023-24)

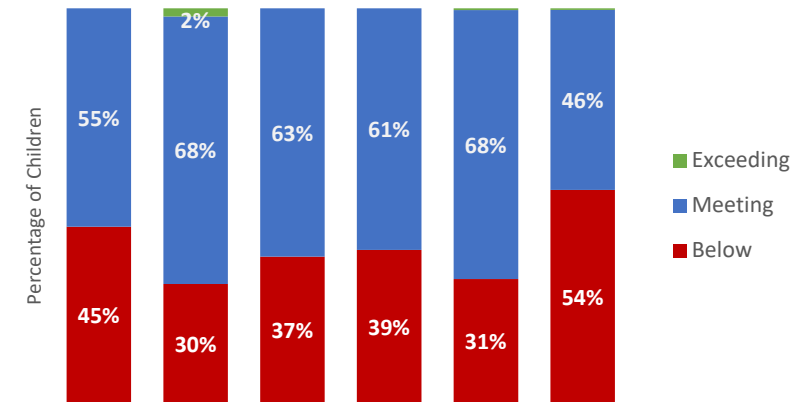
Provider involvement: 45 provider awards – 15 small groups, 50 large groups

Costs and benefits: \$4.84M (2023-24)

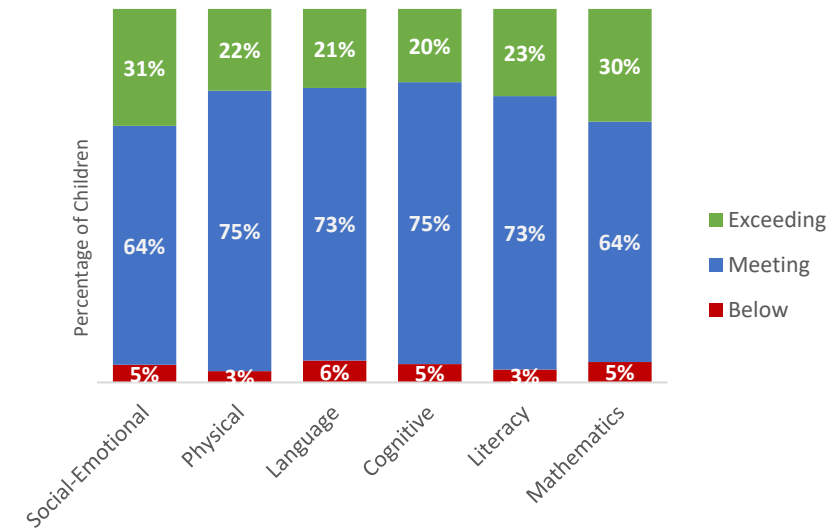
Measurable outcomes: Fall/Winter/Spring progress checks

2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25 (est)
23 programs *18 small groups *11 large groups	33 programs *29 small groups *15 large groups	45 programs *15 small groups *50 large groups	55 programs *20 small groups *75 large groups
371 kids \$2.2M grants*	546 kids \$2.7M grants*	881 kids \$4.8M grants*	1,230 kids \$7.0M grants*
* Programs also receive coaching resources and various program supports in addition to grants			

2022-23 Fall Benchmark | Widely Held Expectations



2022-23 Spring Benchmark | Widely Held Expectations



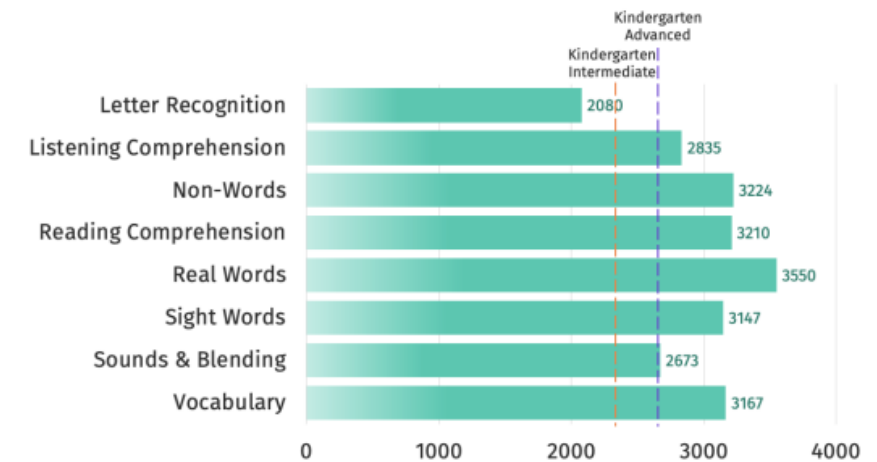
# Waterford Upstart

Quality

A family-based kindergarten readiness program that helps children in the year before kindergarten develop the cognitive and mindset skills they need for school success. Waterford Upstart is delivered fully in the home, leveraging adaptive software and providing tailored coaching to support families as their child's first teacher.

- # of children served: 1,177
- Provider involvement: 1,177 families living in 198 communities
- Costs and benefits: \$1.2M (2022-23)
- Measurable outcomes: Fall/Spring progress checks; 92% scored at "Kindergarten Beginning" level or above (spring)
- Other data: 96% of children lived in rural communities; 22% live in households with income <200% of federal poverty level

Average Final Reading Score by Assessed Skill



The program helped prepare my child for kindergarten.



■ Agree ■ Disagree

I feel confident that I can help my child transition from PreK to Kindergarten.



■ Agree ■ Disagree

The program was engaging to my child.

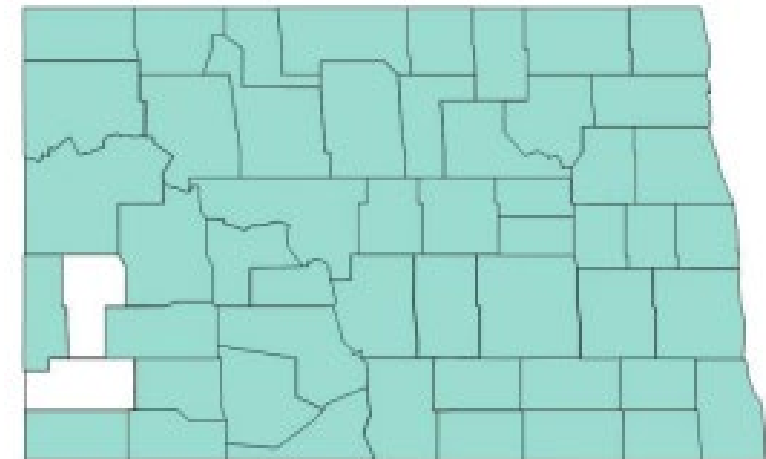


■ Agree ■ Disagree

In general, did your child enjoy the Reading program?



■ Yes ■ No



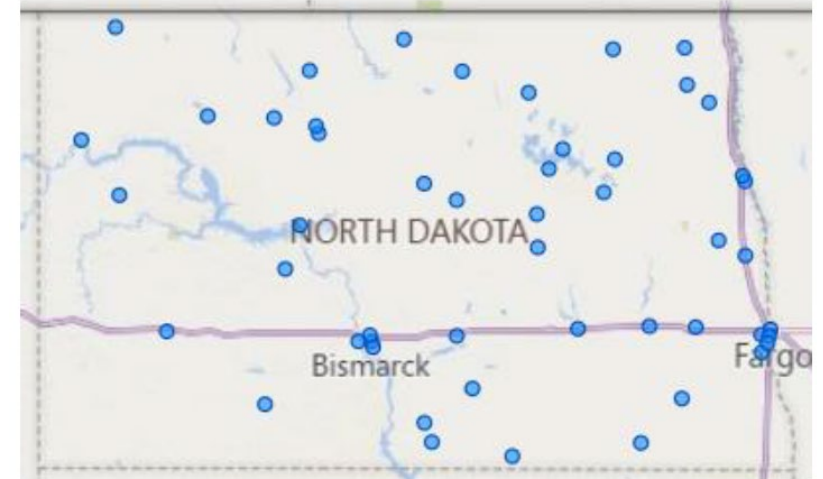
# Child Care Inclusion

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Availability

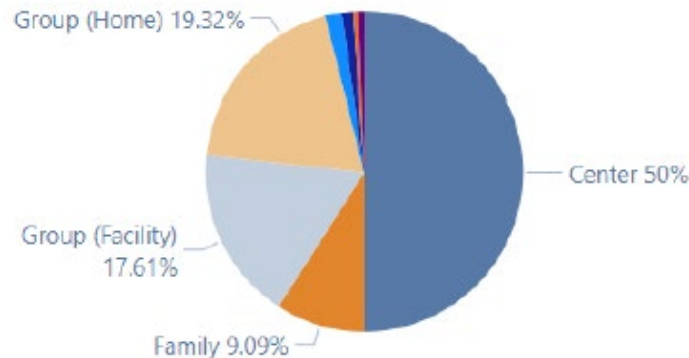
Support, information, resources and coaching for child care providers who are caring for children with unique needs. Child Care inclusion coaches also serve as a facilitator of ND Child Care Inclusion grants

- # of children served: 555 inclusion support instances (FY23)
- Provider involvement: 176 child care facilities received inclusion support  
51 providers trained in developmental screening ASQ
- Costs and benefits: \$1,000,000 inclusion awards to 79 programs (2022-23)  
\$880,000 inclusion coaching and supports (2023-25)
- Measurable outcomes: Care maintained in 96% of cases (4% of cases resulted in expulsion)
- Other data: 3-4 years olds represent 52% of requested support for specific children

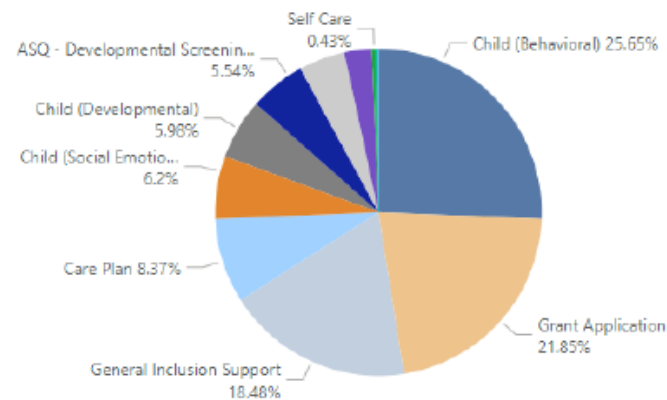


USpireND  
INCLUSION SUPPORT

Type of Facility Supported FY23



Topic of Support FY23



Topic of Support

- Child (Behavioral)
- Grant Application
- General Inclusion Support
- Care Plan
- Child (Social Emotional)
- Child (Developmental)
- ASQ - Developmental Screenings
- Classroom Management
- Environmental Modifications
- Self Care
- Compliance Plan

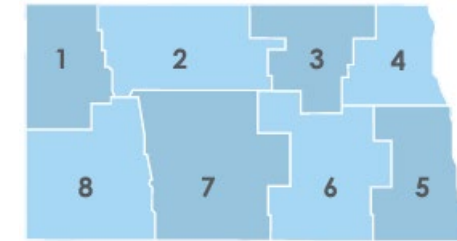
# Training and Professional Development

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Quality

North Dakota's Child Care Workforce Registry (Growing Futures) works to promote the growth of a qualified early childhood workforce with a range of services and resources, including career pathways, an early childhood training gallery.

- # of children served: All children in licensed child care
- Provider involvement: 8,336 Growing Futures members  
787 training stipends paid (2022-23)
- Costs and benefits: \$320k (2022-23)

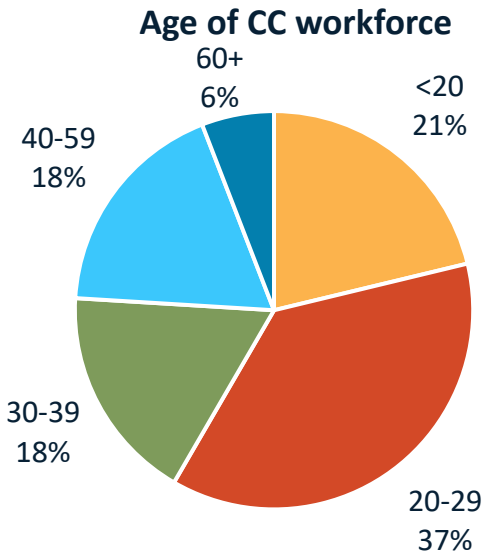


North Dakota's eight Social Services Regions



**6194**  
Employment Positions

- Measurable outcomes: % of workforce completing career pathway levels



Q3 2023

**872.0**

Clock Hours

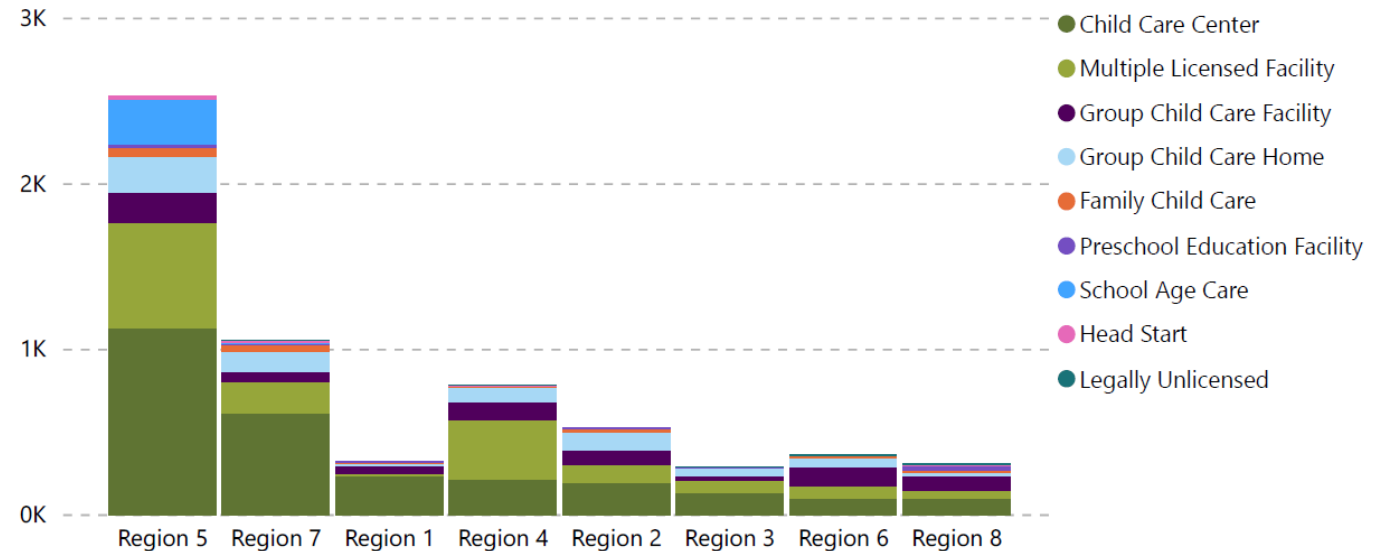
**202**

Training Events

**26**

Training Sponsors

## Employees by Program License Type per Employer Region

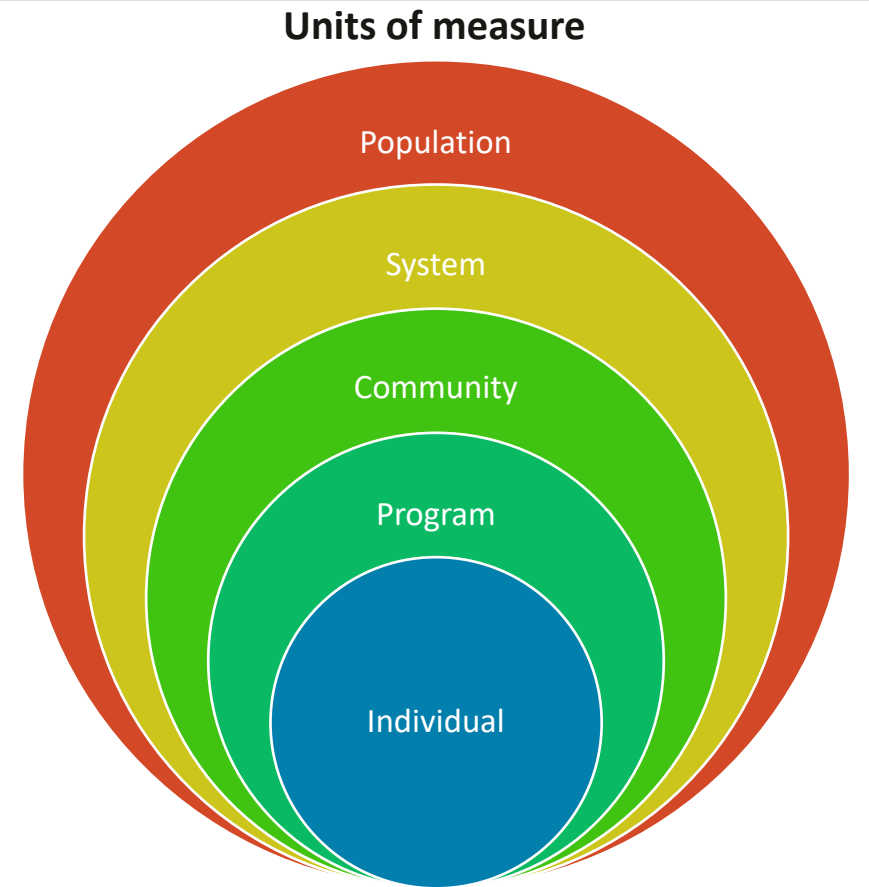


Health & Human Services

# Measuring Progress



Programmatic level outcomes are an important part of the story but are ideally viewed in the context of broader goals



# What indicators characterize a “healthy” child care sector?

- Broad availability of quality licensed care for infants and toddlers
- Mix of provider types who are licensed
- % of licensed programs operating to full capacity
- Very few/no child care deserts (i.e., areas with critical shortages)
- Equitable distribution of child care assistance statewide
- Inclusion supports that create access for children with special needs
- Growth in capacity is greater than loss of capacity
- Active quality efforts in increasing % of licensed child care slots
- Child care rates cover the cost of delivering quality care
- Increasing % of child care workforce credentialed for promotion
- Parents have options to consider when and where they need them
- Working families w/young children pay no more than 7% of income for quality care



# What does “progress” look like?

- Statewide child care payment model that rewards quality
- Increased # of infant and preschool slots in highest quality settings
- Reduced rates of staff turnover in licensed child care programs
- Increased % of children who are achieving widely held developmental milestones
- Widespread adoption of kindergarten assessment tool by public and private kindergarten programs
- Sector-wide identification and understanding of child care health/safety compliance
- Families have the information they need to feel like they “know what to look for” when seeking quality early childhood experiences for their kids
- Increase in kindergarten readiness on day 1 of kindergarten
- Fewer people who report “child care” as a barrier to work
- Average wage for front line child care workers equal to the average wage for direct care paraprofessionals in other fields (ex. DSP, CNA, QSP)

# “Stability” in the child care sector

*Example:*

**Better alignment of supply & demand**

Increases in licensed child care capacity are greater than decreases in capacity

**(Start-ups + Expansions) > Closures**

**↑ Net Capacity**

*Licensing | Career Pathways | Grants |  
Shared Svc | CCAP rates*



# “Quality” child care?

*Example:*

**Age-appropriate experiences that support literacy**

Increase in number of programs with literacy-building experiences for children of all ages

↑ Ages 0-5 meeting or exceeding WHE

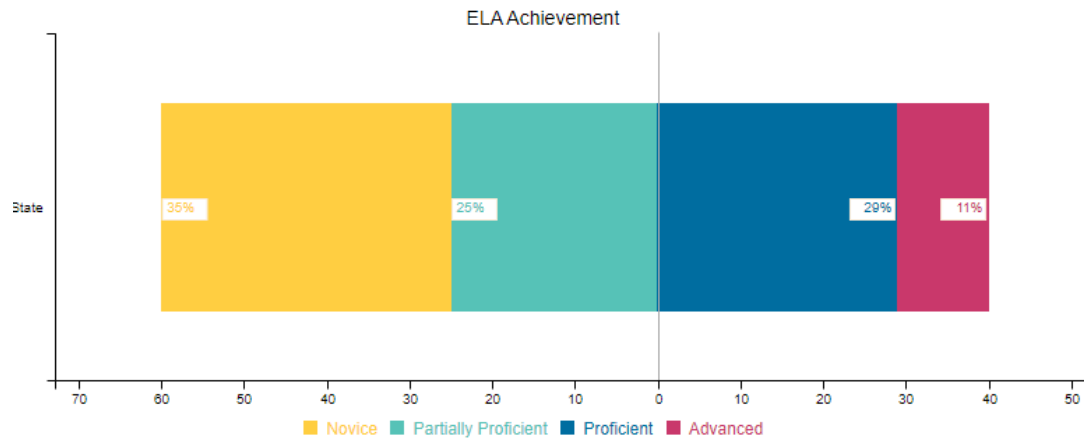
↑ Age 4-5 kindergarten readiness

*QRIS 2, 3, 4 | TSG | Waterford | BIC  
| Professional Dev*



# North Dakota has established 6 Goals to support its Vision that “All Students will graduate choice ready with the knowledge, skills and disposition to be successful”

**INSIGHTS.ND.gov**  
Provided by SLDS



## Reading Proficiency

3<sup>rd</sup> grade

**38%**

All grades

**44%**

Goal 1: Increase students who enter kindergarten prepared to learn and increase the number of kindergarten classrooms that meet the needs of every learner

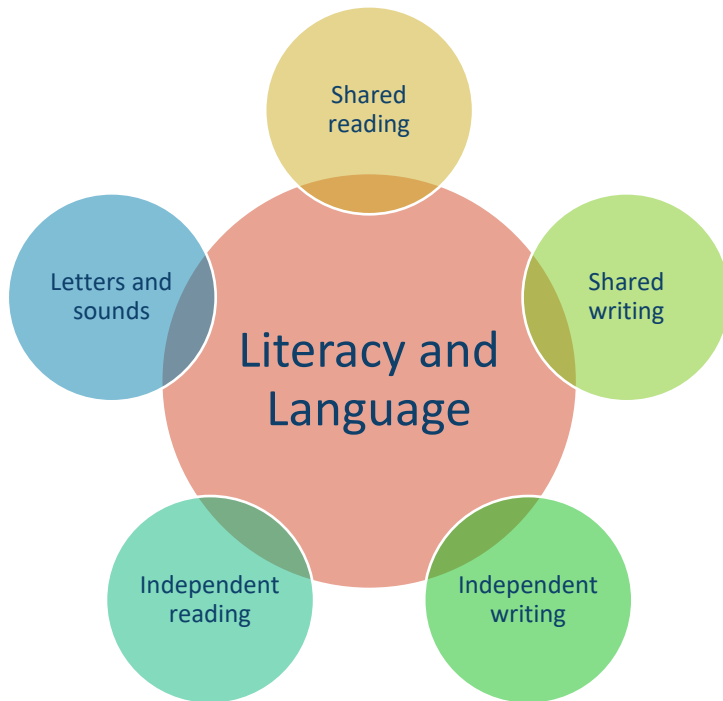
Goal 2: Increase students who demonstrate reading proficiency in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

Source: <https://www.nd.gov/dpi/nd-pk-12-education-strategic-vision-framework>

Source: <https://insights.nd.gov/Education/State/Dashboards>

# How can early childhood experiences support Emergent Literacy Skills

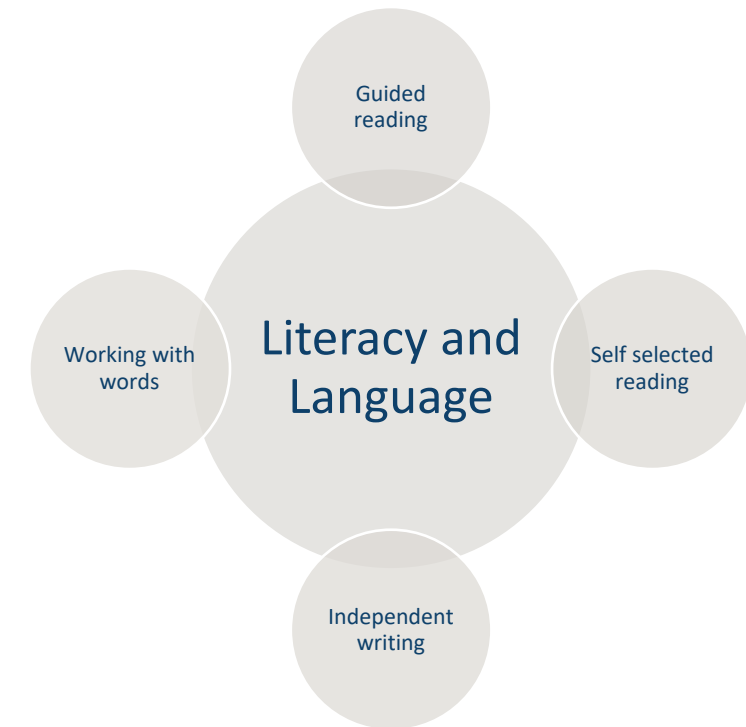
## Emergent Readers and Writers



## Essential components of Emerging Literacy

- An interest in and enjoyment of print (handling books and relating them to their stories or information)
- Print awareness (how to handle a book, reading from left to right, recognition of pictures symbols, signs, or words)
- An interest in telling and listening to stories (pay attention to stories, repeat, use some rhymes, phrases, or refrains from stories or songs)
- Make marks and use them to represent objects or actions (an understanding that words are made up of letters, recognizing letters when they see them)
- Comprehend meaning from pictures and stories

## Conventional Readers and Writers



# How can early childhood experiences support Emergent Literacy Skills?

- Literacy Rich **Environments**

- Colorful cozy spaces where children can read and for small group read alouds
- Books designed to encourage interaction (tactile, pictures, topics)
- Sticky notes and pencils in reading area so kids can identify their favorite books
- Books located where children can easily reach them
- Interest areas

- **Interactions** that support Literacy

- Foundations: Scribbling, singing, rhyming, labeling all items in the room to encourage reading/object learning, playing games
- Read aloud techniques (ex. see, show, say)
- Talking with children and responding to their communication
- Encouraging children to communicate by staff initiating conversations and asking appropriate questions
- Staff use of books with children and encouraging children's use of books through positive interactions





## For more information

<https://www.hhs.nd.gov/childcare>

<https://www.hhs.nd.gov/applyforhelp/ccap>

<https://www.hhs.nd.gov/wpccr>

<https://ndchildcare.org>

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