

Minnesota's Early Childhood Workforce:

# Making a Difference in the Early Years

Career pathways,  
professional development,  
degree programs,  
funding resources,  
stories from the field,  
and more.



# Acknowledgements

This project was created in partnership between staff from Minnesota’s Departments of Education, Human Services, Health and the Governor’s Children’s Cabinet.

This project was led by:

**Kelly Kazeck**  
Early Childhood Workforce  
Collaboration Specialist,  
Department of Education

**Rachel Blair-Paladino**  
Communications Coordinator,  
Department of Human Services

**Isabella Rolland**  
Early Childhood  
Communications Coordinator,  
Department of Education

**Emma Kurth**  
Early Care and Education  
Business Supports Specialist,  
Governor’s Children’s Cabinet

Creative Contributors:

Design: LN Design Co.

Videography: MLatino Media



## Stories from the Field

- 7 A Tribal Provider and an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant
- 17 An Early Childhood Special Education Teacher and an Early Head Start Teacher
- 19 A Family Child Care Provider and Early Childhood Professional Development Educator
- 21 A Center-Based Child Care Teacher and a Parent Aware Coach

## Table of Contents

- 4 What is the Early Childhood Workforce?
- 6 Work to be Proud of
- 8 Career Pathways
  - Entry Level Roles ..... 10
  - Certification and Training ..... 11
  - Associate’s Degrees ..... 12
  - Bachelor’s Degrees ..... 13
  - Advanced Degrees ..... 14
- 16 Funding Your Career
- 18 Grant Opportunities
- 20 Additional Partners and Resources
- 22 Workforce Needs and Points of Action
- 24 Appendices
  - Appendix A: Certificates and Diplomas ..... 24
  - Appendix B: Associate Degree Programs ..... 25
  - Appendix C: Bachelor Degree Programs ..... 26
  - Appendix D: Advanced Degree Programs ..... 27

This product is made possible using federal funding, 93.434 -ESSA Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Child Care, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Learn more on the [Preschool Development Grant web page](#). March 2024

# What is the Early Childhood Workforce?

The early childhood workforce includes individuals from a variety of settings with many different backgrounds and education who serve children from birth to third grade.

The workforce includes early childhood special education, elementary school educators, home- and center-based child care, public health, government, community organizations, higher education, and much more. The field of early childhood is all-encompassing. A role in this profession can offer countless opportunities to support children, families, and their surrounding networks.



## Sample Jobs and Careers in the Early Childhood Workforce:

- Administrative Staff
- Behavioral Health Professional
- Center-based Child Care Teacher
- Child Care Aware Coach
- Community Leader
- Consultant
- County Worker
- Doula
- Early Childhood Advocate
- Early Childhood Communications Specialist
- Early Childhood Coordinator
- Early Childhood Special Education Teacher
- Early Head Start Teacher
- Elementary School Teacher / K-5 Educator
- Family Child Care Provider
- Family, Friend and Neighbor Provider
- Higher Education Faculty
- Home Visitor
- Head Start Teacher
- Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant
- Lactation Consultant
- Legal Nonlicensed Provider
- Nonprofit Program Staff
- Occupational Therapist
- Paraprofessional
- Physical Therapist
- Public Health Nurse
- Professional Development Specialist
- Program Manager
- Researcher
- School-based Pre-K Teacher
- Social Worker
- Speech and Language Pathologist
- State Worker
- Tribal Provider
- ... and many, many more.

For more career ideas and opportunities, view:



[T.E.A.C.H. National Directory of Careers in Early Childhood](#)

[Achieve — MN Center for Professional Development Virtual Career Guide](#)



## Stories from the Field

This document features several early childhood workers who share their career paths and experiences. Learn more and hear their stories on the pages listed below.



**Louisa Lussier**  
Director of Operations and Compliance  
Page 7



**Megan Eastman, MSW, LICSW**  
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant, Director of Pediatric Health  
Page 7



**Krisanne Forsman, MS**  
Birth-3 Early Intervention/ ECSE Teacher  
Page 17



**Katelyn Maday**  
Early Head Start Teacher  
Page 17



**Stacey Boysen**  
Family Child Care Provider/ Early Childhood Professional Development Educator  
Page 19



**Kelly Suzick**  
Assistant Program Director  
Page 21



**Nikki Lepowsky**  
Quality Improvement Coordinator  
Page 21

# Work to be Proud of

The early childhood workforce provides education and care that is vital to the current and future success of our state—not only to the youngest Minnesotans (our future workforce) and their families, but to the state’s broader workforce, businesses, and economy.

In the first few years of life, brain development is at its most rapid pace, with more than 1 million new brain connections forming every second. Exposure to rich language, experiences, and relationships are essential for maximizing brain growth and development at this stage. Access to high-quality early childhood programs is critical because they reinforce the brain development of children. The quality

of those programs begins with highly competent and skilled providers who can effectively support each child’s unique qualities including their abilities, and their cultural and linguistic identities.

Each member of the early childhood workforce has a different story to tell, a different path into this profession, yet one theme remains the same: the enormous impact that can be made in the life of a child and their family.



Minnesota recognizes the need for an increase in compensation and employee benefits within the early childhood workforce. Efforts are being made across the state to support this initiative. Learn more on page 22.

“I consider it a privilege to be called one’s very first teacher. For me, I am 100% in my ‘sweet spot,’ spending time daily with my ‘littles.’ They inspire me with their energy, curiosity, and trusting nature. It encourages me to do my absolute best to teach them with excellence every day.”

—Leanne, Early Childhood Education Teacher, Taylors Falls



As of 2022, 74% of Minnesota families have a potential need for early care and education settings.<sup>1</sup>



## A Tribal Provider and an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant

Minneapolis, MN

Louisa Lussier  
Director of Operations and Compliance, Baby’s Space

Louisa’s career got started in the early childhood workforce after she received a stipend to volunteer. Learn how she uses support from her community to care for children and families.

Megan Eastman, MSW, LICSW  
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant, Director of Pediatric Health, Mino-Bimaadiziwin Wellness Clinic

Megan supports children and caregivers for the Red Lake Nation and beyond in the Twin Cities Metro Area. Watch her story to learn more about the pathways she took to reach her career goals within the field of mental health.

“I was a pretty young teen mom and I utilized community programming. I was offered a stipend to volunteer. My interest opened up so much in wanting to know what they were doing, why they were doing it.”

—Louisa Lussier



Hear their stories:

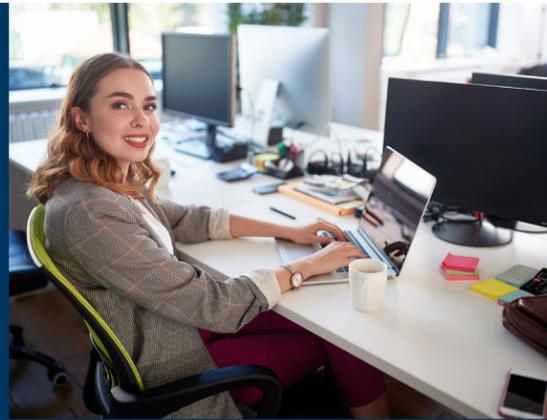
Click on or scan the QR code below to hear Louisa and Megan’s stories in English or Spanish.



# There are numerous ways to join and grow in an early childhood career.

Entry level roles in early childhood, certifications, professional development and higher education are all routes that can be explored to help you reach the positions you want. In addition to experience in fields like education and child development, many people join the early childhood workforce following non-traditional paths, with backgrounds in areas such as geography, anthropology, mathematics, public health and more.

It's up to each person to decide if, when, and how they want to move through the field.



"I was a Geography major and then graduated with a Master's degree in Public Policy. I am interested in many social issues and truly believe where I can make the biggest difference is in early childhood. I started with the Department of Education working in early childhood as an intern and have been here ever since."

Amanda, Preschool Development Grant Manager, Minneapolis/Statewide

✓ With each entry point, there are opportunities for professional development that can lead to increased levels of knowledge and competencies.

## A sample career path:

There are many different entry points into the early childhood workforce. The pathway shown here begins with an entry level position, but the steps that follow can be starting points as well.

**Entry Level Roles**  
— See page 10 —

- Helper in a Family Child Care Home
- Classroom Aide in a Child Care Center or Head Start
- Classroom Aide in a School-based Early Learning Program



**Certification and Training**  
— See page 11 —

- Child Care Assistant
- Education Assistant
- Doula



**Associate's Degrees**  
— See page 12 —

- Infant/Toddler Teacher in a Center or Head Start
- Preschool Teacher in a Center or Head Start
- Paraprofessional in School-based Programs



**Advanced Degrees**  
— See page 14 —

- School Administrator
- Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist
- Children's Librarian
- School Counselor



**Bachelor's Degrees**  
— See page 13 —

- Lead Classroom Teacher
- Professional Development Trainer
- Home Visitor

✓ Each type of educator plays an important role in the support of children and families.

"I love educating families so they are able to advocate for themselves in the birth or clinic rooms. I am passionate about helping families have the best perinatal period possible."

—Rhonda, Birth Doula and Childbirth Educator, Twin Cities



## Entry Level Roles

Many early childhood workers begin in entry level positions and work their way up into higher level positions by adding credentials, degrees and professional development. Many people also find their passion for early childhood work through firsthand experience.

There are many pathways into the early childhood workforce. You can start at any age or experience level.

### Sample Entry Level Positions:

- Babysitter/Nanny
- Camp Counselor
- Classroom Aide in Child Care Center or Head Start
- Classroom Aide in School Based Early Learning Program
- Helper in a Family Child Care Home
- Paraprofessional
- Recreation Leader/Director
- Youth Worker



Explore more entry level roles and early childhood career options through [Achieve MN's Virtual Career Guide](#).



Interested in a career in child care or early childhood education? Check out the [Empower to Educate](#) program:



“Working with children since a young age I knew I wanted to be able to better teach, and help young children. Babysitting at a young age led me to develop such a love for children.”

—Brooklyn, Preschool Teacher, Plainview



## Certification and Training

After entry level positions in early childhood, many workers interested in moving on to the next step in their career look to certificates and other credentials. Though higher education is not always required, early childhood credentials can open the doorway to additional positions.

There are many credentialing options in the state of Minnesota. The following online and in-person opportunities offer an idea of the qualifications you can get to boost your resume. Additionally, many technical and community colleges offer 1-year courses in Early Childhood and Child Development.

“I was not in education at all until my early 30’s, after my first child was born. I took a wonderful natural childbirth class and, after having an amazing and empowering birth process, I trained to teach similar courses.”

—Jennifer, ECFE Parent Educator, Rochester and Lake City

### Sample Certification and Training Opportunities

For a larger list of degrees and certificates, see Appendix A on page 24.

#### 1 Child Development Associate® (CDA)

The Child Development Associate® (CDA) credential can be a key step in early childhood career pathways. This credential provides individuals with foundational child development knowledge. Participants must complete 120 hours of education with 480 hours of work-based experience, develop a portfolio, and participate in a formal observation and exam.

Visit the [Council for Professional Recognition](#) for more information on signing up and available funding. Note: Several MN state colleges will accept the CDA for credit for prior learning.

With the CDA, individuals can qualify for positions such as:

- Child Care Assistant
- Education Assistant
- Classroom Assistant

#### 2 Voluntary Paraprofessional Credential

The Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) offers Minnesota paraprofessionals a [Voluntary Paraprofessional Credential](#) that recognizes additional training and preparation in working with students.

#### 3 Montessori Training

Montessori is a method of education that is based on self-directed activity, hands-on learning and collaborative play. In a Montessori classroom, children make creative choices in their learning, while the classroom and the highly trained teacher offer age-appropriate activities to guide the process. Children work in groups and individually to discover and explore knowledge of the world.

Visit the [Montessori Center of Minnesota](#) and [American Montessori Society](#) to learn more about training and teacher education programs.

#### 4 Doula Certification

A doula’s goal is to support a birthing person, their child(ren), and family throughout the birth process. There are several different types of doulas, including birth doulas and postpartum doulas. Certification programs can range from a few months to 2+ years, but are often flexible as participants work to meet requirements. The Minnesota Department of Health has a list of [doula certifying organizations](#) that can be viewed to learn more and to sign up for a program.

#### 5 Child Care Dual-Training Pipeline

Minnesota’s Department of Labor and Industry is adding child care as a new dual-training pipeline industry as of 2023. Dual training is an earn-while-you-learn approach where the employer invests in their employee by providing training in competency-based work skills and related instruction. For an employee to qualify for a dual-training program, they must:

1. Be employed by the participating dual-training employer and,
2. Be accepted into the employer’s dual-training program that meets industry competency standards for a specific occupation.

The Child Care Industry dual-training pipeline program is currently being developed. Learn more about the [Dual-Training Pipeline Program](#).

Explore More!



Check out the [Develop](#) website for more professional development resources and trainings for family care professionals, child care providers and early educators.

## Associate's Degrees

More education beyond certificates can help people interested in the early childhood workforce reach the next level of jobs. Associate's degrees are two-year degrees that can offer a pathway into the workforce that might be faster and less expensive than other degree programs. Sometimes, people earn their degree at their own pace.

Many Minnesota State Colleges offer a two-year degree focused on child development/early childhood. Some programs offer the [MN Transfer Pathway](#) so students can complete an associate's degree and transfer with junior-year status to a Minnesota State University without losing credits or taking extra courses.

### An Associates Degree can help you get a position as a:

- Infant/Toddler Teacher in a center or Head Start
- Home Visitor
- Preschool Teacher in a center or Head Start
- Food Program Monitor
- Paraprofessional in a school-based program
- And more



Explore more early childhood opportunities available with an Associate's degree on the [Achieve website](#) or [Minnesota State's CAREERwise website](#).

★ **Degree Programs**  
View [MN Child Care Aware's list of approved colleges and universities](#) to see a list of institutions that are offering Associate's degrees, or view Appendix B on page 25.

★ **Funding Your Career**  
For more information on funding your education, visit page 16.

"I took 10 years to get my associates in early childhood. I love working with the kids... My advice would be that it is a lot of work. But the reward of watching the growth is worth it all."

Angie, Teacher, Chisago City



## Bachelor's Degrees

Bachelor's degrees are undergraduate degrees offered by colleges and universities. Programs typically last 4 years, though they can range anywhere from 3-6 years. A bachelor's degree focused on early childhood studies provides individuals the flexibility to work in a variety of early childhood settings.

Students may also pursue a program that includes teacher licensure in Early Childhood Special Education, and/or Early Childhood Education (Birth-Grade 3).



### A Bachelors Degree can help you get a position as a:

- K-6 Teacher
  - Special Education Teacher
  - Child Support Officer
  - Professional Development Trainer
  - Child/Family Counselor
  - Registered Nurse or Nutritionist
  - Lead Teacher in a center or Head Start
  - And more
- Note: Some positions require additional credentials.



Explore more early childhood opportunities available with an Bachelor's degree on the [Achieve website](#) or [Minnesota State's CAREERwise website](#).

"I attended Concordia College-Moorhead, graduated with a K-6 and Birth-Grade 3 license. I love being a part of all the learning students do throughout the year—they gain so many life skills at this age."

—Early Childhood Coordinator and Teacher, Ogilvie



"I graduated with my BA in Psychology and Early Childhood Family Development. I have worked in Head Start, Preschool and ECFE for the past 37 years and still LOVE my ROLE with families!"

—ECFE Teacher/Ready for K Teacher/Pre-K Teacher, Chisago Lakes

★ **Degree Programs**  
View [MN Child Care Aware's list of approved colleges and universities](#) to see a list of institutions that are offering Bachelor's degrees, or view Appendix C on page 26.

Learn more about teacher licensure through the [Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board](#).

### Funding Your Career

★ For more information on funding your education, visit page 16.



# Advanced Degrees

Advanced Degrees in early childhood studies, educational leadership, and licensure help the early childhood workforce continue to grow and develop. Such programs offer opportunities for not only careers in early care and education but also higher education, leadership, advocacy and more.

Master's degrees are postgraduate degrees that show you gained advanced knowledge and skills. Programs typically last 2 years. Doctorate degrees are postgraduate degrees that are typically granted after multiple years of graduate school, with the time to the degree varying depending on the program.

A Masters Degree can help you get a position as a:

- Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist
- Children's Librarian
- Early Childhood Special Education Teacher
- Educational Researcher
- Family Therapist
- Child Development Specialist
- School Counselor
- Occupational Therapist
- Physical Therapist
- Speech and Language Pathologist
- Principal/Administrator, and more

A Doctorate Degree can help you get a position as a:

- Child Psychologist
- Early Childhood Professor (College or University)
- Early Childhood Education Researcher
- Policy Analyst
- And more



Explore more early childhood opportunities available with an Advanced degree on the [Achieve website](#).



- ★ **Degree Programs**  
View a list of advanced degrees programs in Appendix D on page 27.
- ★ **Funding Your Career**  
For more information on funding your education, visit page 16.



"After about 10 years of teaching childbirth education, I decided to transition to working with parents after the birth of their child(ren), so I went back to get an M.Ed in parent and family education."

—Jennifer, ECFE Parent Educator, Rochester and Lake City

# There are countless career pathways in the early childhood workforce.

The pathways illustrated below represent just a few of the many options for people in the early childhood workforce. Wherever you start or end your journey, seek out opportunities that align best with your own goals and interests.

✓ You can join and continue in the early childhood workforce with many different background experiences.



✓ There is no hard end to developing a career in early childhood. No matter what path you choose, there are support options available.

"I have an AAS in Early Childhood, an AA in General Education, my BS in Sports Rec and Management, my Community Ed Directors License, a Masters in Educational Leadership, and my Parent Education License... I love that every day is different."  
- Roxy, Assistant Director of Community Education/Early Learning, Procter and Hermantown

# Funding Your Career

Various financial support options are available for people interested in all types of early childhood careers.



Note: This is not a comprehensive list of financial support available—in addition to the opportunities listed below, check directly with representatives from your program, license or certificate of interest to learn more about financial aid.

- **T.E.A.C.H Scholarships**

[T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood<sup>®</sup> Minnesota](#) is a scholarship program that helps early childhood and school-age educators increase their levels of education, compensation, and commitment to the field by earning college credits and degrees. There are two types of scholarships available:

- Early Childhood or School-Age Care Educator Scholarship  
Family child care providers, center-based staff, or school-age care staff can receive funding to take classes to earn college credit or an associate or bachelor's degree in Child Development or Early Childhood Education at an accredited Minnesota college or university. T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships cover 85% of the cost of tuition and books for up to 18 credits per year. Recipients also receive a travel stipend and release time.
- Early Childhood Trainer or Coach Scholarship  
Coaches, Achieve Approved Trainers, and participants in the Trainer Academy can receive financial assistance to help them increase their Career Lattice Step while they support the early childhood field through quality training or coaching. Recipients receive a tuition stipend and a \$50 bonus for each course completed. After the scholarship end date, recipients commit to instructing at least three Achieve-approved trainings within one year or remain in their coaching position for at least 2 years.

- **Empower to Educate (stipends and funding)**

With funding from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, [Empower to Educate](#) helps current and aspiring early childhood educators advance and sustain their career goals in child care. The workforce development program offers financial support, free training options, job skills training, job placement support, and mentorship opportunities. Participants also receive ongoing support from a local Workforce Advisor.

- **North Star Promise Scholarship Program**

Beginning in fall 2024, the North Star Promise (NSP) Scholarship program will create a tuition and fee-free pathway to higher education for eligible Minnesota residents at eligible institutions as a “last-dollar” program by covering the balance of tuition and fees remaining after other scholarships, grants, stipends and tuition waivers have been applied.

Download the [North Star Promise Program Fact Sheet](#) for more information on program eligibility and the application process.

The Fact Sheet is also available in different languages:

- [Spanish](#)
- [Hmong](#)
- [Somali](#)

## ★ Other Financial Support Options

- [Federal Pell Grants](#) are usually awarded to undergraduate students who display financial need and have not yet earned a bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree.
- [State Grants](#) help students from low- and moderate-income families pay for educational expenses at eligible Minnesota colleges or universities.
- [REETAIN Bonuses](#) help support income for early childhood educators as they work to establish a career in the field. Offered through Child Care Aware.
- [MN Reconnect](#) awards up to \$1,000 per semester to eligible adult learners, intended to help pay for books, tuition, or assist with childcare or transportation costs.
- [Workforce Development Scholarships](#) are available to new students entering an associate degree, diploma or certificate program. Award amounts at \$2,500 or higher. Contact the admissions or financial aid office at a [Minnesota State College](#) to learn more.



## An Early Childhood Special Education Teacher and an Early Head Start Teacher

★ St. Cloud, MN

Krisanne Forsman, MS  
Birth-3 Early Intervention/ECSE  
Teacher, Sherburne N. Wright  
Special Education Co-op

Krisanne does home visits with children and their families to help them monitor and support developmental needs. Learn how she combines an education focus with a special education lens within her career.

Katelyn Maday  
Early Head Start Teacher,  
Reach Up Head Start

Katelyn got started in the early childhood workforce by volunteering at a child care center, which hired her when she was a senior in high school. Hear more about her passion for supporting infants and toddlers in this video.

“To know that I’m making an impact on their life, it’s just everything that I hoped and dreamed of and that’s why I love coming to work every day.”

—Katelyn Maday



### Hear their stories:

Click on or scan the QR code below to watch Krisanne and Katelyn’s stories in English or Spanish.



# Grant Opportunities

There is funding available to award grants to organizations for building an early childhood workforce that more closely reflects the state’s increasingly diverse student population and ensures all students have equitable access to high-quality early educators.



- **Grow Your Own Pathway for Adults**

The Minnesota Department of Education has a grant program under Minnesota Statutes 122A.73 for [Grow Your Own \(GYO\) programs](#) to support local activities that will increase and diversify the teacher workforce in the state of Minnesota. The program:

- Focuses on recruiting educators of color
- Must lead to a Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB)-approved teaching license (for early childhood this could be: an Early Childhood Special Education License or Birth–Grade 3 license)

- **Grow Your Own Early Childhood Educator (GYO ECE)—Minnesota Department of Education**

The Minnesota Department of Education has funding available to award grants for [Grow Your Own Early Childhood and Family Educator programs](#) in order to develop an early childhood education workforce that more closely reflects the state’s increasingly diverse student population and ensures all students have equitable access to high-quality early educators.

- The purpose of this program is to host, build or expand an early childhood preparation program and fund student stipends, tuition scholarships or student teaching/field placement.
- This opportunity is open to licensed child care, school districts and charter schools, Head Start, higher education institutions and other non-governmental organizations.

- **Special Education Teacher Pipeline State Fiscal Year 2024—Minnesota Department of Education**

The Minnesota Department of Education has funding available under Minnesota Statutes section 122A.731, for grants under the [Special Education Teacher Pipeline Program](#) to develop a pipeline of trained, licensed Tier 3 or Tier 4 special education teachers.

- **Early Childhood and Family Education Teacher Shortage—Office of Higher Education**

Coming Soon

The Office of Higher Education has funding available to support the development of educators working in early childhood family education programs including early childhood teachers and parent educators. More information will be coming soon.



## A Family Child Care Provider and Early Childhood Professional Development Educator

★ Rochester, MN

**Stacy Boysen**  
Family Child Care Provider/Early Childhood Professional Development Educator, Early Discoveries Family Child Care

Stacy didn’t always plan on becoming a child care provider, but couldn’t imagine herself being anywhere else. In her story, she talks about becoming licensed, using scholarships to earn degrees, and supporting children while owning a business.



Hear their story:  
Click on or scan the QR code below to hear Stacy’s story in English or Spanish.



“The impact that I think we have is huge. It goes so far beyond the walls of our home.”

—Stacy Boysen

# Additional Partners and Resources

Explore programs that partner with the state and focus on supporting the early childhood workforce.

## Achieve

[Achieve, Minnesota's Center for Professional Development](#), helps early childhood workers advance their skills and reach their career goals.

- Set up individual and organizational accounts
- Connect with career planning
- Find training opportunities and more

[View Achieve](#)

## Child Care Aware of MN

[Child Care Aware of Minnesota](#) supports the professional growth of early childhood educators and connects families to quality child care.<sup>2</sup>

- Find information on professional development
- Discover resources for child care programs, and more
- Access grants and scholarships

[View Child Care Aware](#)

## Child Care Wayfinder

[Child Care Wayfinder](#) is your one-stop navigation network for starting and growing child care programs in Minnesota. Wayfinder offers personalized support and resources to help child care programs succeed.

[View Wayfinder](#)

## Develop

[Develop, Minnesota's Quality Improvement and Registry](#), offers professional development and quality improvement to support early learning and school-age care.

- Create professional development plans
- Find training opportunities
- Search for coaches and mentors, and more.

[View Develop](#)

## Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework (KCF)

What do early childhood care and education professionals need to know and be able to do? [Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework](#) for Early Childhood Professionals outlines what an early childhood educator needs to know about research and theory, alongside the skills and abilities needed to work effectively in the field.

[View KCF](#)

## Minnesota State Colleges and Universities: CAREERwise

[CAREERwise](#) provides online tools for Minnesotans in areas of career planning and education.<sup>3</sup> Early childhood careers and programs are listed in various sections of the site.

[View CAREERwise](#)

## Parent Aware

The mission of [Parent Aware](#) is to help families find the quality care and education their children need to succeed in school and life. Child care and early education professionals play a critical role in helping complete this mission.

- Participate in Parent Aware to:
- Go beyond basic health and safety requirements
  - Get support in using best practices
  - Be eligible for additional benefits

There's no cost to join Parent Aware. [Learn more about Star Ratings.](#)<sup>4</sup>

[View Parent Aware](#)

## Transforming Minnesota's Early Childhood Workforce

The mission of [Transforming Minnesota's Early Childhood Workforce](#) is to develop and promote strategies to advance a high quality, equitably compensated early childhood workforce.<sup>5</sup>

- Find information on resources to advance early care and education credentials, and much more.

[View the Workforce Site](#)

## T.E.A.C.H.

The [T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center](#) offers [a directory of careers in early childhood](#). [T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships](#) are also available through Child Care Aware.

[View T.E.A.C.H.](#)



## A Center-Based Child Care Teacher and a Parent Aware Coach

★ Minneapolis, MN

### Kelly Suzick

Assistant Program Director,  
Four Directions Family Center

In Kelly's role, she oversees programs, greets families, helps out in the classroom, and more. See why she thinks quality early childhood education is so beneficial to all children and families.

### Nikki Lepowsky

Quality Improvement Coordinator,  
Child Care Aware of Minnesota

Nikki supports child care programs that are looking to get a Parent Aware rating, connecting individual people and businesses with state systems. Learn how she went from babysitting to a degree in Child Psychology and beyond.

"Giving children the opportunity to become the people they want to become, the people that we need them to become, will only happen if we continue to provide supports and people that support them."

—Nikki Lepowsky



### Hear their stories:

Click on or scan the QR code below to hear Kelly and Nikki's stories in English or Spanish.



# Workforce Needs and Points of Action

Though there are a number of statewide initiatives in place to support the early childhood workforce, Minnesota must continue to invest in the field by focusing on recruitment and retention, career advancement and ensuring systems sustain the workforce.



The early childhood workforce is as crucial to the state economy and business sector as it is to children and families.

- **A Critical Need: The Importance of the Early Care and Education Workforce**

The brief document [A Critical Need: The Importance of the Early Care and Education Workforce](#) outlines many of the important steps the state must take to ensure the workforce is supported and families have access to high-quality early care and education.<sup>6</sup>

- **Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force**

The [Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force](#) was created to establish a plan and implementation timeline to address challenges in today's early care and education system.

The Task Force outlined several [key recommendations](#) that call attention to compensation issues and workforce shortages within early childhood. Included in this is the need to pay the early care and education workforce a living wage, highlighting that:

- Poor compensation and lack of support and acknowledgement leads

to persistent workforce shortages and the inability to recruit new employees.

- The state should implement a compensation framework that increases early care and education wages aligned with experience and education, and benefits, including paid time off and health insurance. A development of this framework is in progress and a report will be due in January 2025.<sup>7</sup>

The [Great Start Compensation Support Payment program](#) was signed into law in May 2023, providing Minnesota with a permanent program designed to support the child care industry and child care workers.

“The Early Childhood field is one of the most important areas of development in the lives of young children, essentially the future of our world. Making the [early childhood] workforce and what we do a priority is extremely important.”

Carmen, Family Services and Education Director, Chisago Lakes



Join. Grow. Support.  
Together, we can make a profound difference in the lives of children, families, and their surrounding networks.



# Appendix A: Certificates and Diplomas



Note: This is not a comprehensive list of early childhood programs in Minnesota and it is subject to change.

## Alexandria Technical & Community College

- [Early Childhood Education Certificate](#)
- [Early Childhood Education Diploma](#)
- [Speech-Language Pathology Assistant Certificate](#)

## Central Lakes College

- [Early Childhood Education Certificate](#)
- [Early Childhood Education Diploma](#)

## Concordia St. Paul

- [Early Childhood Education Certification](#) (online)

## Dakota County Technical College

- [Early Childhood & Youth Development Certificate](#) (online)
- [Early Childhood & Youth Development Diploma](#) (online)

## Fond du Lac College

- [Early Childhood Development Certificate](#)
- [Child Development Diploma](#)

## Hennepin Technical College

- [Child Development Diploma](#)

## Institute for the Advancement of Family Support Professionals

- [Free online modules offered to Family Support Professionals](#) to learn new skills and grow their careers.

## Minneapolis Community & Technical College

- [Early Childhood Education – Certificate](#)
- [Early Childhood Education – Diploma](#)

## Minnesota North College

- [Child Development – Certificate](#)

## Minnesota State College Southeast

- [Child Care Assistant – Certificate](#) (online)
- [Early Childhood Development – Diploma](#) (online)

## Minnesota West Community & Technical College

- [Early Childhood – Certificate](#)
- [Early Childhood – Diploma](#)

## Northland College

- [Early Childhood & Paraprofessional – Certificate](#) (online)

## Northwest Technical College

- [Early Childhood Education Careers – Certificate](#)

## Pine Technical & Community College

- [Accelerated Early Childhood Certificate](#) (online)
- [Early Childhood Development - Diploma](#)

## Rasmussen University

- [Early Childhood Education – Certificate](#) (online)
- [Early Childhood Education – Diploma](#) (online)

## Ridgewater College

- [Early Childhood Education – Certificate](#) (online)
- [Early Childhood Special Education – Certificate](#) (online)

## Rochester Community & Technical College

- [Child Development Certificate](#)

## Saint Cloud Technical and Community College

- [Early Childhood Education – Certificate](#)
- [Early Childhood Education – Diploma](#)

## Saint Paul College

- [Child Development Careers – Certificate](#)
- [Child Development Careers – Diploma](#)

## South Central College

- [Early Childhood Education – Certificate](#)
- [Early Childhood Education – Diploma](#)

## Walden University

- [Early Childhood Education Specialist Degree](#) (online)

# Appendix B: Associate Degree Programs



Note: This is not a comprehensive list of early childhood programs in Minnesota and it is subject to change.

## Alexandria Technical & Community College

- [Early Childhood Education Transfer Pathway – Associate of Science](#)
- [Early Childhood Education – Associate of Applied Science](#) (online)
- [Speech-Language Pathology Assistant – Associate of Applied Science](#)

## Anoka Technical College

- [Occupational Therapy Assistant – Associate of Applied Science](#)

## Central Lakes College

- [Early Childhood Education Transfer Pathway – Associate of Science](#)

## Concordia St. Paul

- [Early Childhood Education – Associate of Arts](#) (online)

## Dakota County Technical College

- [Child & Family Studies – Associate of Science](#) (online)
- [Early Childhood Education Transfer Pathway – Associate of Science](#)
- [Early Childhood & Youth Development – Associate of Applied Science](#) (online)

## Fond du Lac College

- [Early Child Development Associate of Science](#)
- [Early Child Development Associate of Applied Science](#)

## Hennepin Technical College

- [Child Development Associate in Applied Science](#)
- [Early Childhood Education Transfer Pathway – Associate of Science](#)

## Inver Hills Community College

- [Education Foundations – Associate of Science](#)

## Leech Lake Tribal College

- [Early Childhood Development – Associate of Arts](#)

## Minneapolis Community & Technical College

- [Early Childhood Education Transfer Pathway – Associate of Science](#)
- [Early Childhood Education – Associate of Applied Science](#)

## Minnesota North College

- [Early Childhood Education Transfer Pathway – Associate of Science](#)
- [Early Childhood & Early Childhood Special Education – Associate of Applied Science](#) (online)

## Minnesota State College Southeast

- [Early Childhood Education Transfer Pathway – Associate of Science](#) (online)
- [Early Childhood Education – Associate of Applied Science](#) (online)
- [Early Childhood & Early Elementary Support/Tutor – Associate of Applied Science](#) (online)

## Minnesota West Community & Technical College

- [Early Childhood Education Transfer Pathway – Associate of Science](#)

## Northland College

- [Early Childhood & Paraprofessional – Associate of Applied Science](#)

## Northwest Technical College

- [Early Childhood Education Transfer Pathway – Associate of Science](#)
- [Early Childhood Education Careers – Associate of Applied Science](#)

## Pine Technical & Community College

- [Early Childhood Development – Associate of Science](#)
- [Early Childhood Development – Associate of Applied Science](#)

## Rasmussen University

- [Early Childhood Education – Associate of Science](#) (online)
- [Physical Therapist Assistant \(PTA\) Associate Degree](#)

## Ridgewater College

- [Early Childhood Special Education Transfer Pathway – Associate of Science](#)

## Rochester Community & Technical College

- [Early Childhood Education Transfer Pathway – Associate of Science](#)

## Saint Cloud Technical and Community College

- [Early Childhood Education – Associate of Applied Science](#)

## Saint Paul College

- [Child Development Careers – Associate of Applied Science](#)
- [Early Childhood Education Transfer Pathway – Associate of Science](#)

## South Central College

- [Early Childhood Education – Associate of Applied Science](#)
- [Early Childhood Education Transfer Pathway – Associate of Science](#)

# Appendix C: Bachelor Degree Programs



Note: This is not a comprehensive list of early childhood programs in Minnesota and it is subject to change.

## Bemidji State University

- [Early Childhood Studies Minor](#)
- [Elementary Education – Bachelor of Arts with Pre-Primary Endorsement](#)

## Concordia St. Paul

- [Child Development – Bachelor of Arts](#) (online)
- [Early Childhood Education – Bachelor of Arts](#)

## Martin Luther College

- [Early Childhood Education – Bachelor of Arts](#)

## Metro State University

- [Early Childhood Studies – Bachelor of Applied Science](#)
- [Urban Early Childhood Education – Bachelor of Science](#) (online)

## Minnesota State University Moorhead

- [Early Childhood Education non-licensure track – Bachelor of Arts](#) (online)
- [Early Childhood Education – Bachelor of Science](#)
- [Accelerated Pathway: Early Childhood Education Bachelor of Science to Master of Science in Special Education](#) (MS level courses fully online)

## Minnesota State University Mankato

- [Special Education Academic and Behavioral Strategist – Bachelor of Science](#)

## Rasmussen University

- [Early Childhood Education – Bachelor’s Degree](#) (online)

## St. Cloud State University

- [Early Childhood Education – Bachelor of Science](#)

## St. Catherine University

- [Early Childhood Education – Bachelor of Science](#) (online)

## Southwest Minnesota State University

- [Early Childhood Education – Bachelor of Science](#) (online)
- [Early Childhood Special Education – Bachelor of Science](#) (online)
- [Educational Studies: Early Childhood - Bachelor of Science](#) (online)

## University of Minnesota Crookston

- [Early Childhood Education – Bachelor of Science](#)

## University of Minnesota Duluth

- [Childhood Nature Studies – Bachelor of Applied Science](#)
- [Early Childhood Studies Minor](#)

## University of Minnesota Morris

- [Elementary Education – Bachelor of Arts with Pre-Primary Endorsement](#)

## University of Minnesota Twin Cities

- [Early Childhood – Bachelor of Science](#)
- [Early Childhood and Elementary Education Bachelor of Science to Master of Education Five Year Program](#)
- [Early Childhood Foundations Bachelor of Science to Master of Education in Early Childhood Five Year Program](#)

## University of Northwestern – St. Paul

- [Early Childhood Education – Bachelor of Science](#)
- [Elementary Education – Bachelor of Science with Pre-Primary Endorsement](#)

## Walden University

- [Early Childhood Studies – Bachelor of Science](#) (online)

## Winona State University

- [Early Childhood Education – Bachelor of Science](#) (online)
- [Early Childhood Elementary Education – Bachelor of Science](#)

# Appendix D: Advanced Degree Programs



Note: This is not a comprehensive list of early childhood programs in Minnesota and it is subject to change.

## Capella University

- [Early Childhood Education – Master of Science in Education](#) (online)
- [Early Childhood Education Studies – Master of Science in Education](#) (online)

## Concordia St. Paul

- [Early Childhood Education – Master of Arts in Education](#) (online)

## Hamline University

- [Nature-Based Early Learning – Graduate Certificate](#) (online)

## Martin Luther College

- [Early Childhood Director Emphasis - Master’s Program](#) (online)

## Minnesota State University Mankato

- [Special Education: Early Childhood Special Education Graduate Certificate](#) (online)
- [Special Education: Autism Spectrum Disorders Graduate Certificate](#)
- [Special Education - Master of Science](#) (online)

## St. Catherine University

- [Montessori Education and Leadership – Master of Arts](#) (online)

## St. Cloud State University

- [Early Childhood Special Education – Graduate Certificate](#)
- [Early Childhood Special Education – Master of Science](#)
- [Educational Administration and Leadership \(PK-12\) – Master of Science](#) (online)

## University of Minnesota Twin Cities

- [Early Care and Education – Master of Education non-licensure track](#)
- [Early Childhood Education – Master of Education teacher licensure track](#)
- [Early Childhood Policy – Graduate Certificate](#)
- [Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health – Graduate Certificate](#) (online)
- [Maternal and Child Health – Master of Public Health](#) (online)
- [Special Education - MEd and licensures](#)

## University of St. Thomas

- [Early Childhood Special Education - Master of Arts](#)

## Walden University

- [Early Childhood Administration, Management, and Leadership – Master of Science](#) (online)
- [Early Childhood Education – Master of Science](#) (online)
- [Early Childhood Administration, Management, and Leadership – Graduate Certificate](#) (online)
- [Teaching and Diversity in Early Childhood Education – Graduate Certificate](#) (online)

## REFERENCES

- 1 United States Census Bureau. "DPO3-Selected Economic Characteristics. American Community Survey. 2023. <https://data.census.gov/table?q=DP03&g=040XX00US27>.
- 2 Child Care Aware of Minnesota. 2023. <https://www.childcareawaremn.org/>.
- 3 Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. 2023. CAREERwise. <https://careerwise.minnstate.edu/>.
- 4 Parent Aware. 2023. <https://www.parentaware.org/>.
- 5 Transforming Minnesota's Early Childhood Workforce. 2023. <https://ecworkforcemn.org/>.
- 6 State of Minnesota. A Critical Need: The Importance of the Early Care and Education Workforce. 2023. [https://education.mn.gov/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET\\_FILE&dDocName=PROD081393&RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary](https://education.mn.gov/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=PROD081393&RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary).
- 7 Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force. Key Task Force Recommendations. State of Minnesota. February 2023. [https://mn.gov/mmb/assets/Key%20Task%20Force%20Recommendations%20Adapted%20from%20the%20Executive%20Summary\\_tcm1059-562540.pdf](https://mn.gov/mmb/assets/Key%20Task%20Force%20Recommendations%20Adapted%20from%20the%20Executive%20Summary_tcm1059-562540.pdf).