

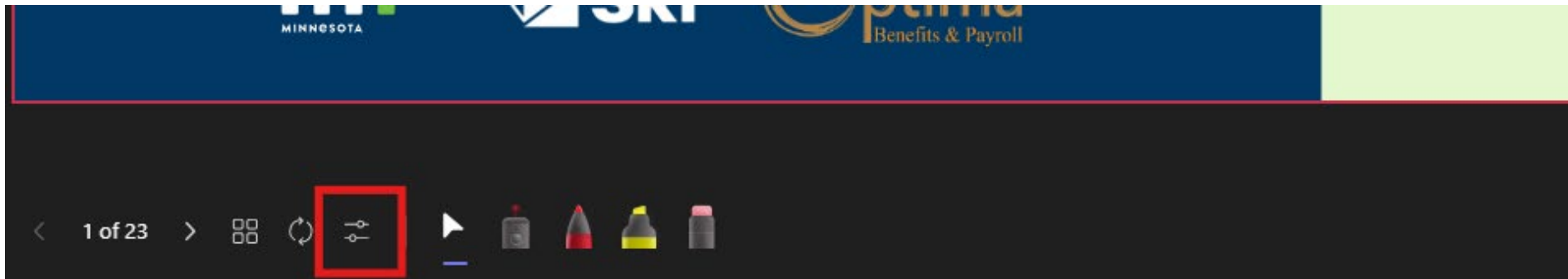
About the Minnesota Early Educator Benefits Program

June 30, 2026 and July 2, 2026



Webinar Settings

- This webinar is being recorded and transcribed.
- Use the Q&A feature to ask questions.
- Use the slider feature to explore options for captions and translation.



What We Will Cover

- Why Minnesota is offering this new benefits opportunity
- Who may be eligible
- What benefits are available
- How to apply
- What happens after you apply
- Where to get help if you have questions



Why Is Minnesota Offering This Program?

- Early educators play an essential role in supporting children and families.
- Many early educators do not have access to all the benefits they need.
- Benefits can be expensive or difficult to access, especially for those working in smaller programs.
- Minnesota is exploring new ways to help early educators access benefits that support their health, wellness, and financial security.

58% of former family child care providers said lack of benefits played a medium or high role in their decision to close their business.

*Former Family Child Care Provider Survey (2026),
Minnesota's Office on the Economic Status of Women and
Office of the Ombuds for Family Child Care Providers*

What Is This Program?

The Minnesota Early Educator Benefits Program can support approximately **800 to 1,000 eligible early educators across the state.**

Through the program, Minnesota is:

- Providing eligible early educators access to a menu of benefits
- Learning what types of benefits best meet the needs of early educators
- Understanding what it takes to offer benefits directly to early educators
- Using what is learned to help inform future decisions about workforce benefits and supports

What Could Participants Receive?

If selected, participants can:

- Receive up to \$55 per month toward eligible benefits
- Choose the benefits that best fit their needs and their families
- Enroll in benefits that are not tied to a specific employer
- Select from a menu benefits
 - Health and wellness (for example, telehealth, vision, dental)
 - Financial protection (for example, disability, accident)
 - Life-event supports (for example, legal)
- This benefits program is not comprehensive health insurance. It is intended to supplement existing coverage and support health and wellness.

Who Is Eligible to Apply?



Individual Eligibility Requirements

You may be eligible to apply if you:

- Are at least 18 years old
- Work in or operate a **qualifying Minnesota early care and education program in good standing**
- Work an average of 32 hours per week
- Work at least 8 months per year

Qualifying Programs

Licensed child care centers

Licensed family child care programs

Tribally licensed programs

Certified Head Start programs

Overview of Available Benefits



About Optima Benefits & Payroll

Optima is the organization that will:

- Provide the benefit options available through this program
- Help participants enroll in benefits
- Answer questions about available benefits
- Manage benefits administration during the program

Available Health and Wellness Benefits

Support your physical, mental, and preventative health needs.

Virtual Care	Telemedicine	Virtual access to a doctor for common illnesses and health concerns.
	Teletherapy	Virtual counseling and mental health support.
	Virtual Primary Care*	Ongoing support for preventative care and chronic health conditions.
	Dermatology*	Virtual evaluation and treatment for common skin conditions.
Preventative Care	Vision	Coverage for eye exams, glasses, and vision care services.
	Dental	Coverage for preventative care and other dental services.

**Available as a self-pay add-on option*

Available Financial Protection Benefits

Help protect your finances when unexpected events occur.

Life Insurance

Financial support for loved ones after your death.

Short-Term and Long-Term Disability

Income replacement if you can't work because of a short-term or long-term illness or injury.

Accident Insurance

Cash benefits for covered accidental injuries and related care.

Hospital Indemnity

Cash payments related to covered hospital stays.

Critical Illness

Provides a cash benefit if you are diagnosed with covered critical illnesses.

Available Additional Support for Life Events

Support for important personal, family, and financial matters.

Legal Services

Access to legal advice and support for wills and estate planning, family matters, housing and tenant issues, debt and financial concerns, and other everyday legal needs.

How to Apply



Apply Early as Spots Are Limited

- Application window starts on July 6 at 8 a.m. Central Time
- Application takes about 5 to 10 minutes to complete
- **Be prepared to provide:**
 - Contact information
 - Information about your employer or qualifying program
 - Your work schedule
 - At least two recent pay stubs (does not apply to family child care owners)
- Look out for emails from Christen Park at SRI related to your application, including checking your spam/junk folder
- If we are at capacity, we will place you on a waiting list in case spots or new funds become available

Key Dates



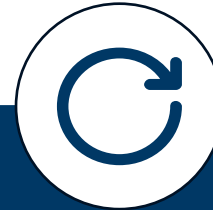
Application Period

- Opens July 6, 8 a.m. Central Time
- Closes September 11, 5 p.m. Central Time



Enroll in Benefits After Notification

You have **2 weeks** after receiving your eligibility notification from Christen Park at SRI to enroll in benefits



Receipt of Benefits

- Benefits begin the first day of the month after you make your selections via Optima's portal
- Benefits continue through **September 2027**

What Happens After You Apply?



Apply

Submit application and required documents.

Review

SRI reviews your application and verifies eligibility.

Notification

SRI notifies you whether you are:

- Eligible
- Waitlisted
- Not eligible

Survey & Enroll

Complete the required survey and enroll in benefits.

Benefits Begin

Begin receiving benefits.

What Happens After You Receive Your Notification?

Eligible	Waitlisted	Not Eligible
Complete survey and enroll in benefits within 2 weeks. Begin receiving benefits on the first of the month.	Be contacted if a slot becomes available.	Review notification and contact SRI if you have any questions.

How Might You Hear About the Benefits Program?

Information about the benefits program may be shared by DCYF, partners, and communication channels across Minnesota.

Communication Channel	Examples
State and regional partners	Develop registry, Minnesota licensing list, R&R, MDAL, First Children's Finance, Child Care Aware, MN CC Associates, Help Me Connect, MnAEYC, Wayfinder, E2E, MIFs, Parent Aware, CCA of MN training sponsor organizations
Child care centers	Head Start Association, Minnesota Head Start Collaboration Office, Brightwheel or other CCMs
Certified Head Start centers	Head Start Association, Minnesota Head Start Collaboration Office
Family child care providers	Shared Service Alliance, FCC Association
Tribally licensed programs	Minnesota Tribal Resources for Early Childhood Care (MNTRECC), Head Start Association, Minnesota Head Start Collaboration Office

Where Can You Get Help?

Who can you contact about:

- If you have questions about
 - The benefits program
 - Program eligibility, application, surveys
 - Benefits and enrollment

Email:

EarlyEducatorBenefits.DCYF@state.mn.us

Stay Informed

- DCYF website:
<https://dcyf.mn.gov/programs-directory/early-educator-benefits-program>
 - Application announcements
 - Webinar recordings
 - FAQs
 - Program updates
- Optima website:
<https://optimabenefitsgroup.com/minnesota-ece-workforce>
 - Benefits information
 - Informational videos about benefits



Questions and Answers

THANK YOU!



EarlyEducatorBenefits.DCYF@state.mn.us



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