



North Dakota Children's Cabinet Early Childhood Subcommittee

September 22, 2025



Health & Human Services

Presentation by: Jessica Thomasson, Executive Director, Human Services and Kay Larson, Early Childhood Director

What do we mean when we say “Child Care”?

State-regulated settings (HHS-licensed)

- Early Childhood Program
- Self-Declared

Non-state regulated settings

- License-exempt care (Head Start, School-based, Day Camps, Family/Friend/Neighbor, Bus10, Church-based)
- Tribally-regulated settings (tribal license)
- Federally-regulated settings (DoD)

Any early child-serving program can access state resources

- Training
- Incentives and Child Care Assistance



Infants
0 – 17 months



Toddlers
18 – 35 months



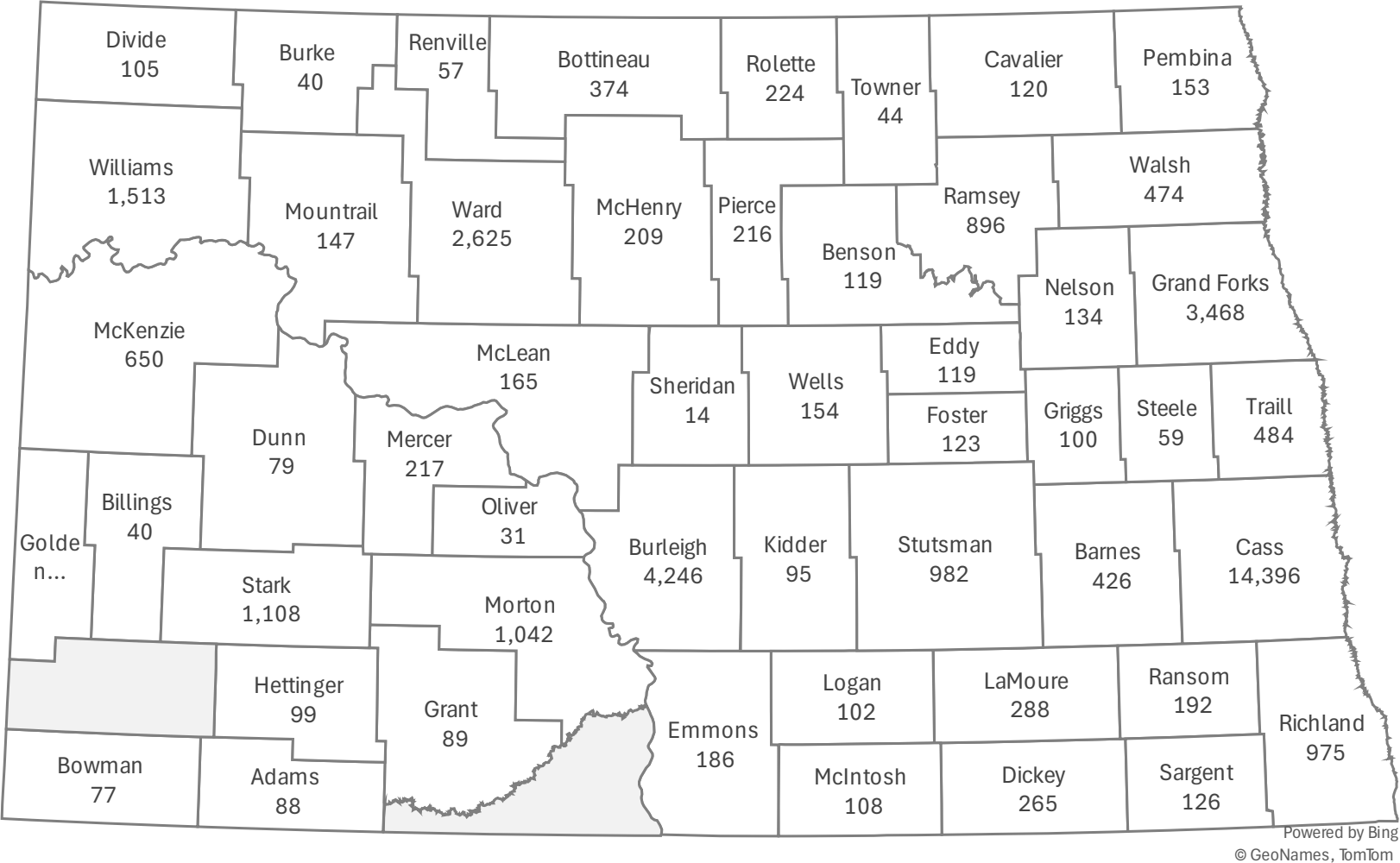
Preschoolers
36 months to Kindergarten



School Agers
Kindergarten through
11 years old

Child Care in North Dakota | Licensed

Licensed Child Care capacity by county



1,146
licensed providers are approved to
provide child care for

38,182
children ages 0-12
Last updated: Aug 2025

- 68% Center (CEKM)
- 21% Family/Home (FG)
- 11% Group (H)
- <1% Self Declared (S)

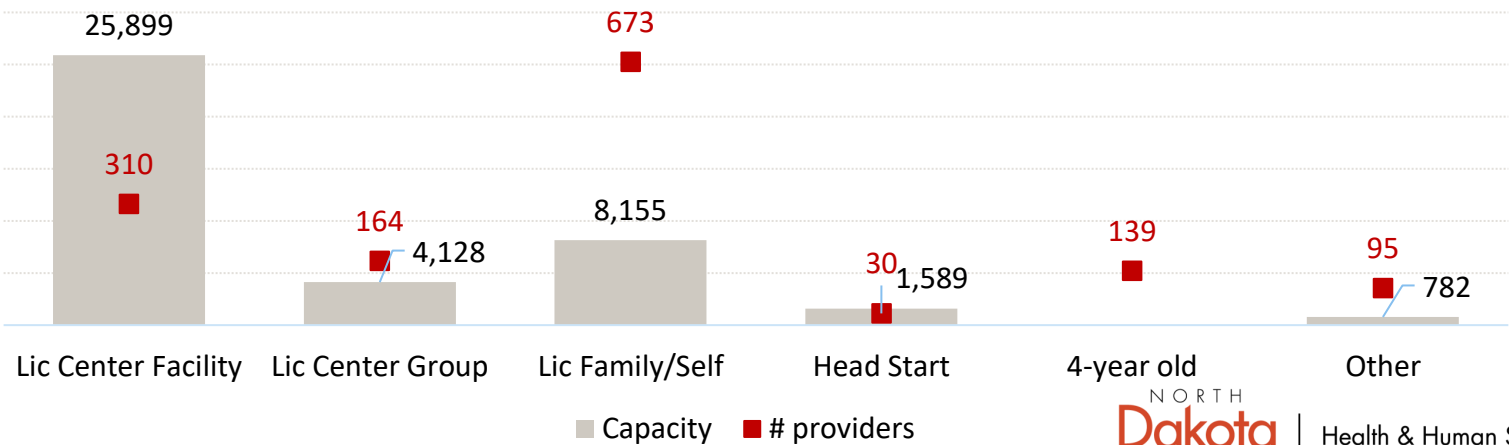
**Source: HHS Child Care Licensing; excludes Tribally licensed providers, Head Start programs (not state licensed), School-based Pre-K programs | August 2025*

Child Care capacity by type of provider

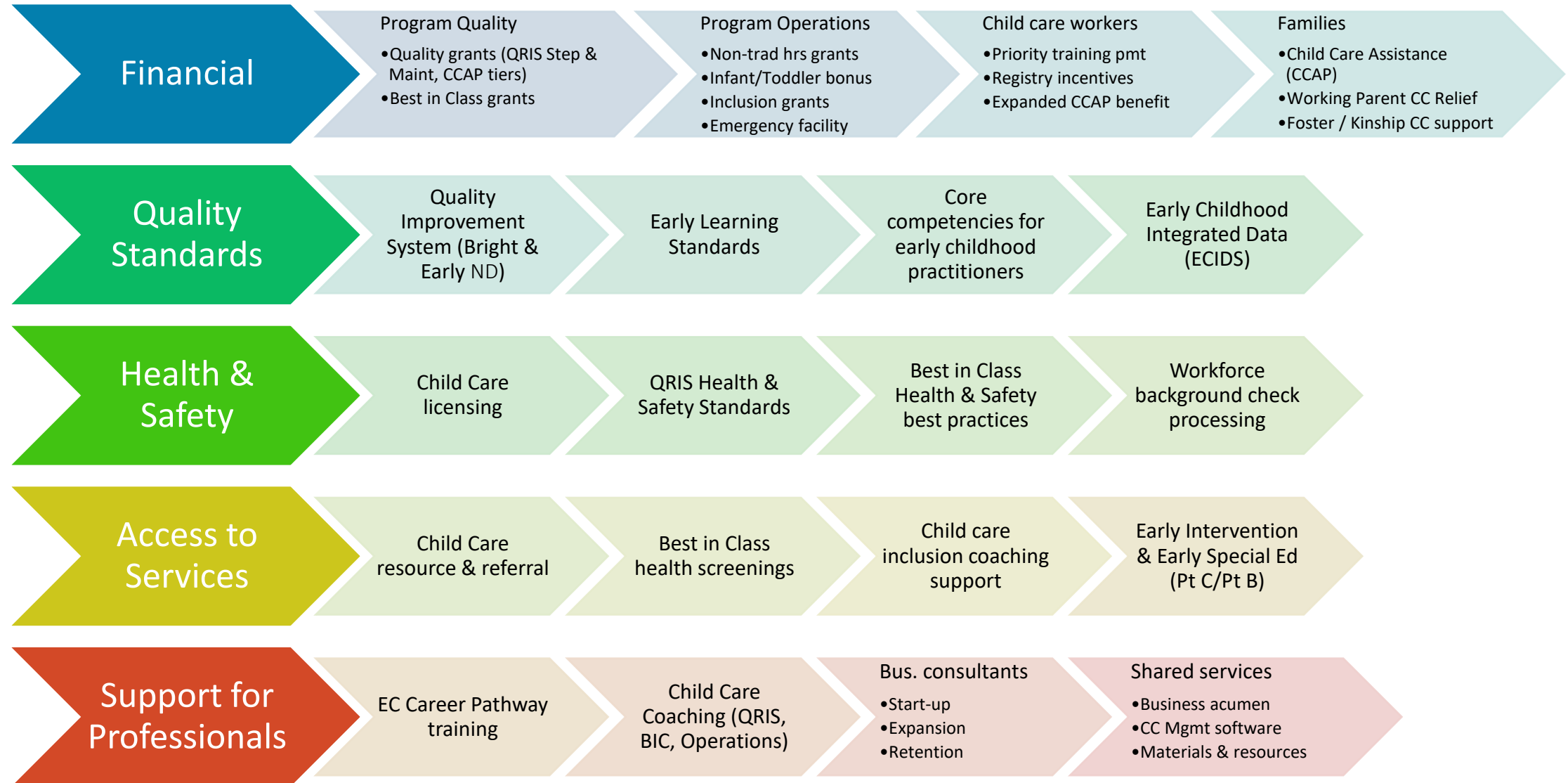
1,411
providers are
approved to
provide child care
for
40,553+
children ages 0-12

Source: HHS/Resource &
Referral Database, August 2025

	# providers	Capacity
Licensed CC – Center Facility (CEKM)	310	25,899
Licensed CC –Group Facility (H)	164	4,128
Licensed CC – Family / Home / Self Dec (FGS)	673	8,155
Head Start	30	1,589
4-year old program	139	
Other (ex. non-lic after school, tribally regis)	95	782



HHS Core work related to Child Care Services



Child care is a workforce solution that can make a difference for ND employers and working families



Affordability

Connect more working families to child care assistance to keep the cost of child care within 7% of household income



Availability

Make it easier for working families to find child care when and where they need it



Quality

Help kids realize their potential by supporting quality early childhood experiences

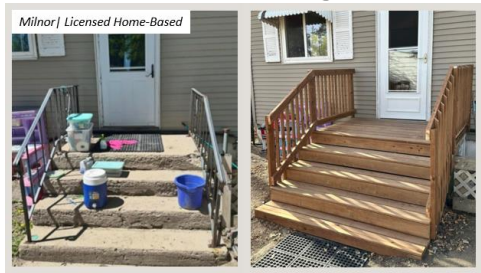


Over the last 4 years, ND's various child care initiatives have endeavored to:

1. Increase the number and distribution of quality child care spaces available to working families,
2. Increase the number (and percentage of eligible) of working families who are able to access child care assistance, and
3. Achieve a more proportionate distribution of child care assistance across the state.

Child Care related financial assistance fills gaps and catalyzes key priorities

Program Quality



Grants to support costs associated with providing quality care

Quality steps | Best in Class | CCAP quality tiers

2025-27 (budg) \$19M

Program Operations



Resources to help programs address key operating challenges

Offering non-traditional hours | Infant/Toddler care | serving Special Needs children | Emergency facility grants

2025-27 (budg) \$19.4M

Child Care Workers



Address child care workforce barriers & recognize above & beyond training

Career pathway grants | High priority training stipend | CCAP Workforce benefit

2025-27 (budg) \$24.4M

Families

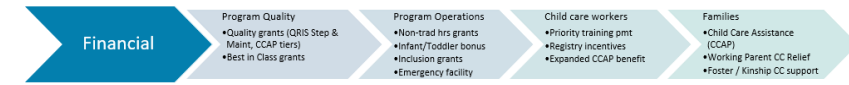


Help working families with costs of child care

Child Care Assistance (CCAP), Working Parent Child Care Relief, Upstart

2025-27 (budg) \$90M

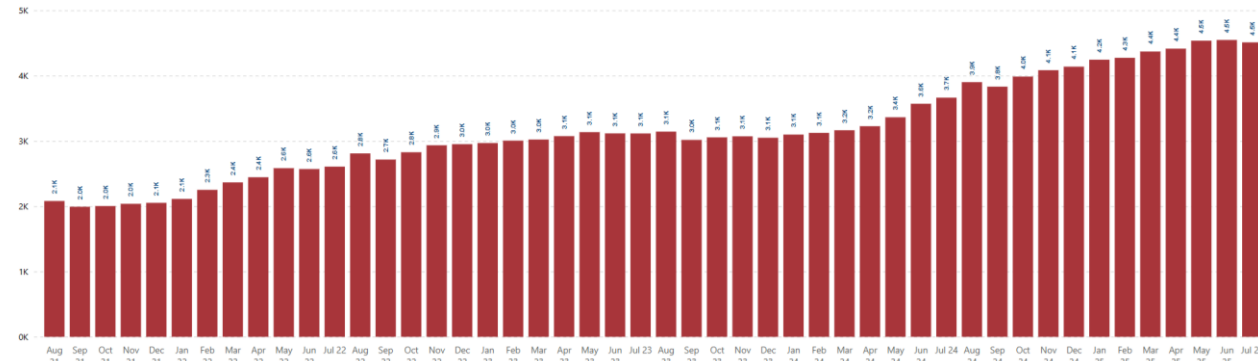
Child care grants affected hundreds of providers in 2023-25



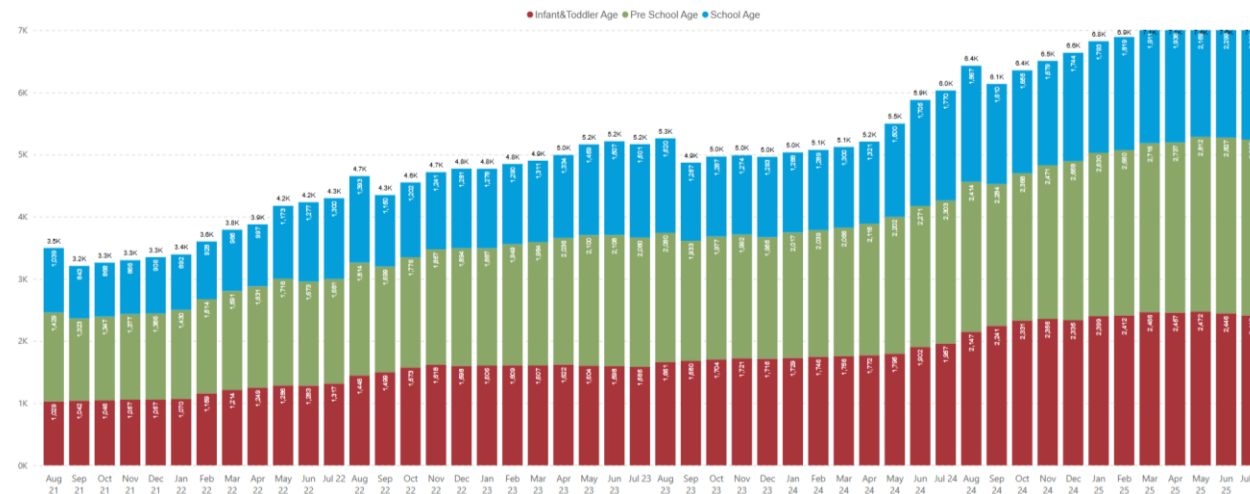
HHS						Commerce
2023-25	Facility	Grow	Quality	Non-Trad Hrs	Inclusion	RWIP <i>(in progress)</i>
Dollars available	\$3.1 million	\$1.7 million	\$1.1 million	\$1.8 million	\$2.2 million	\$13.5 million
# awards made	368	65	369	4	89	50
Max award amt	\$20,000	\$100,000	\$12,000	\$500,000	\$10,000 env. mods \$1,500 equipment \$500/quarter/child	\$500,000
Avg award amt	\$5,458	\$26,154	\$1,933	\$450,000	\$24,719	\$269,000 match requirement 25%
Impact	Awardees licensed to serve 15,863 children	824 newly available child care spaces (136 infant, 160 toddler, 528 desert)	42% increase in programs using data to inform qual impr; 30% of all licensed spaces are now in Step 2, 3 or 4 rated programs	Increasing child care spaces outside the hours of 7:30 a.m.- 5:30 p.m.	Care maintained in 97% of cases; 47% increase in programs served	1,153 net new licensed child care spaces (27 new builds/ bldg purchases (832 spaces), 14 facility updates (215 new spaces), 9 expansions (106 new spaces)
2025-27	Facility	Grow	Quality	Non-Trad Hrs	Inclusion	RWIP
Dollars available	\$50,000	\$1 million	\$1.5 million	\$1.8 million	\$1 million	\$0
Available	Sept 2025	Sept 2025	July 2025	Nov 2025	Oct 2025	N/A
Max award amt	Emergency / Disaster only \$10,000	\$100,000	\$12,000	\$500,000	TBD	

The number of working families who are able to work, at least in part because of child care assistance, has increased from 2,081 to 4,548 over the last 4 years (Aug 21 to Jul 25).

Number of Families participating in CCAP | Aug 2021 to July 2025



Number of Children by Age who are benefitting from CCAP | Aug 2021 to Jul 2025



Family co-pays range from 0% to 6% of income

2024-25 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 income / hourly wage.

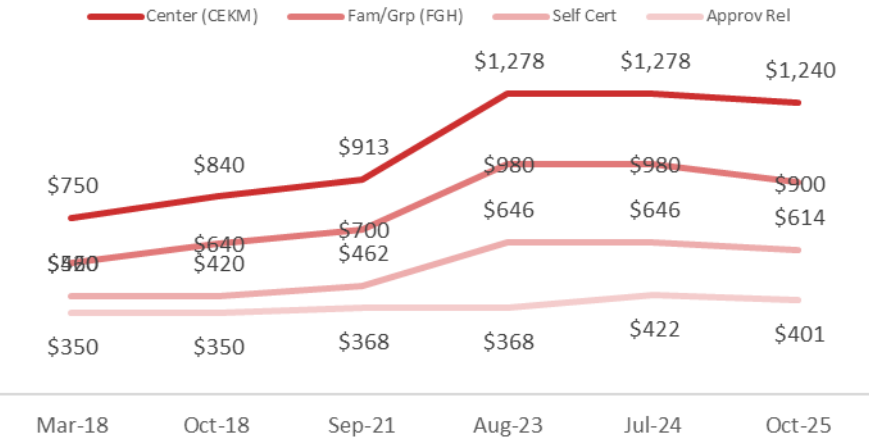
	30% SMI		50% SMI		60% SMI		75% SMI	
Household Size	Annual Income	Hourly Wage	Annual Income	Hourly Wage	Annual Income	Hourly Wage	Annual Income	Hourly Wage
2	\$ 25,111	\$11.23	\$ 41,851	\$20.12	\$ 50,222	\$24.14	\$ 62,777	\$30.18
3	\$ 31,019	\$13.87	\$ 51,699	\$24.86	\$ 62,038	\$29.83	\$ 77,548	\$37.28
4	\$ 36,928	\$16.51	\$ 61,546	\$29.59	\$ 73,855	\$35.51	\$ 92,319	\$44.38
5	\$ 42,836	\$19.16	\$ 71,393	\$34.32	\$ 85,672	\$41.19	\$ 107,090	\$51.49
6	\$ 48,744	\$21.80	\$ 81,241	\$39.06	\$ 97,489	\$46.87	\$ 121,861	\$58.59
7	\$ 49,852	\$22.30	\$ 83,087	\$39.95	\$ 99,705	\$47.93	\$ 124,631	\$59.92
8	\$ 50,960	\$22.79	\$ 84,933	\$40.83	\$ 101,920	\$49.00	\$ 127,400	\$61.25

Co-pay expectation (as percent of your gross household income)			
0-30% of SMI 0%	30-50% of SMI 2%	50-60% of SMI 4%	60-75% of SMI 6%

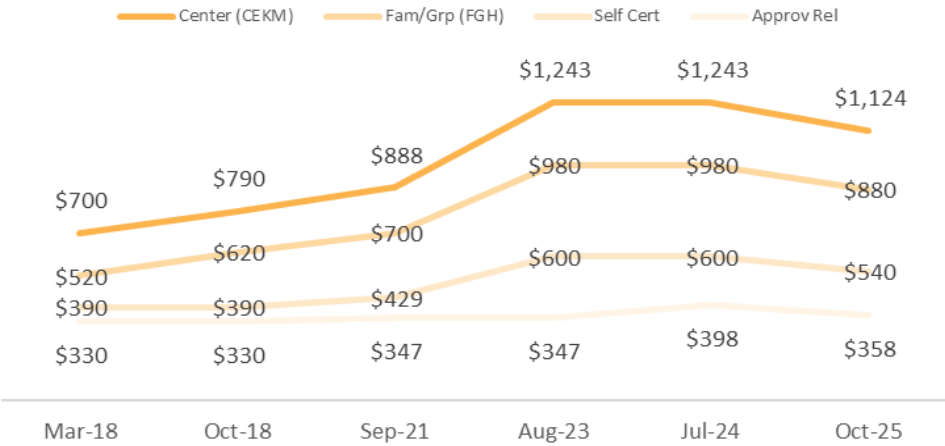
# of children receiving CCAP by income category by age of child (average Jan-Jun 2025)					
0-30% of SMI		30-50% of SMI	50-75% of SMI	75%+ of SMI	TOTAL
Age 0 to 3	934	633	614	219	2,401
Age 3 to 6	968	798	700	228	2,694
Age 6 to 12	698	616	438	145	1,897
TOTAL	2,600	2,047	1,752	592	6,991

CCAP programmatic rates over time

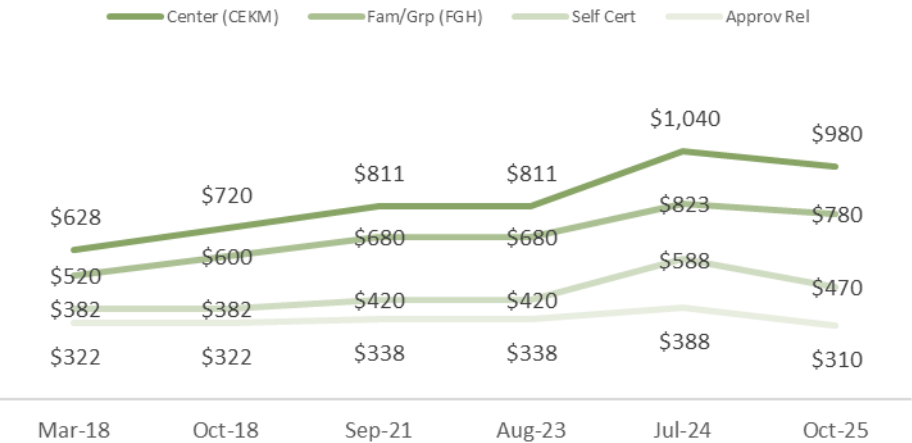
CCAP Rates - Infant (0-24 mo)



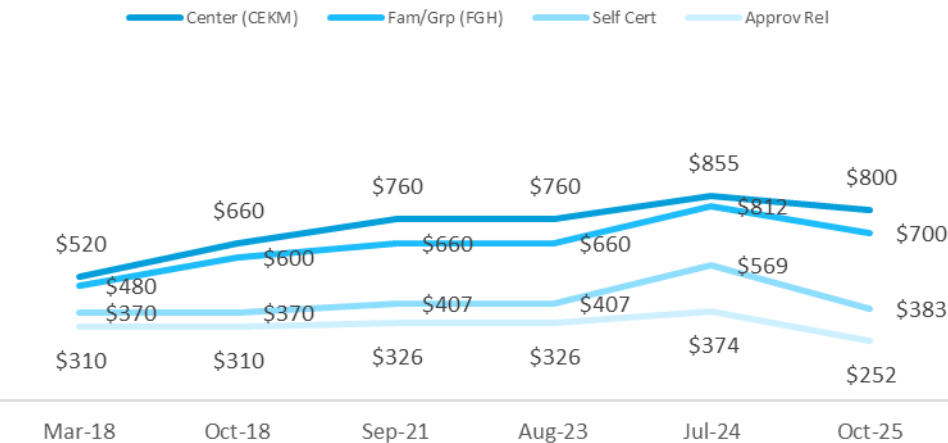
CCAP Rates - Toddler (24-48 mo)



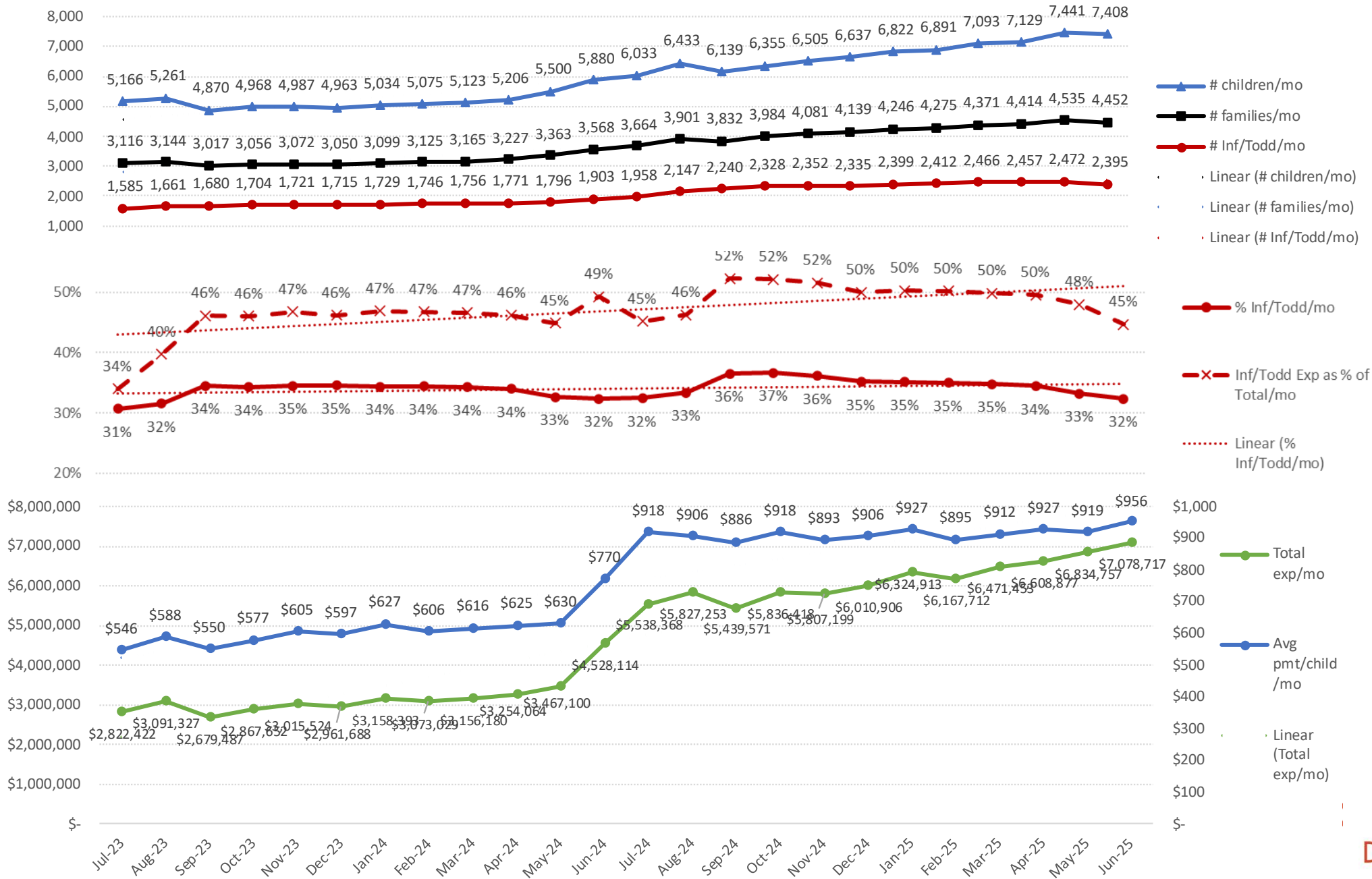
CCAP Rates - Preschool (48-72 mo)



CCAP Rates - School Age (6 thru 12 yrs)



23-25 biennium CCAP Utilization and Cost Trends



Jul '23-Jun '25

+43% - # families

+43% - # children

+51% - # infant/toddlers

+5% - % infant/toddler as % of children w/CCAP

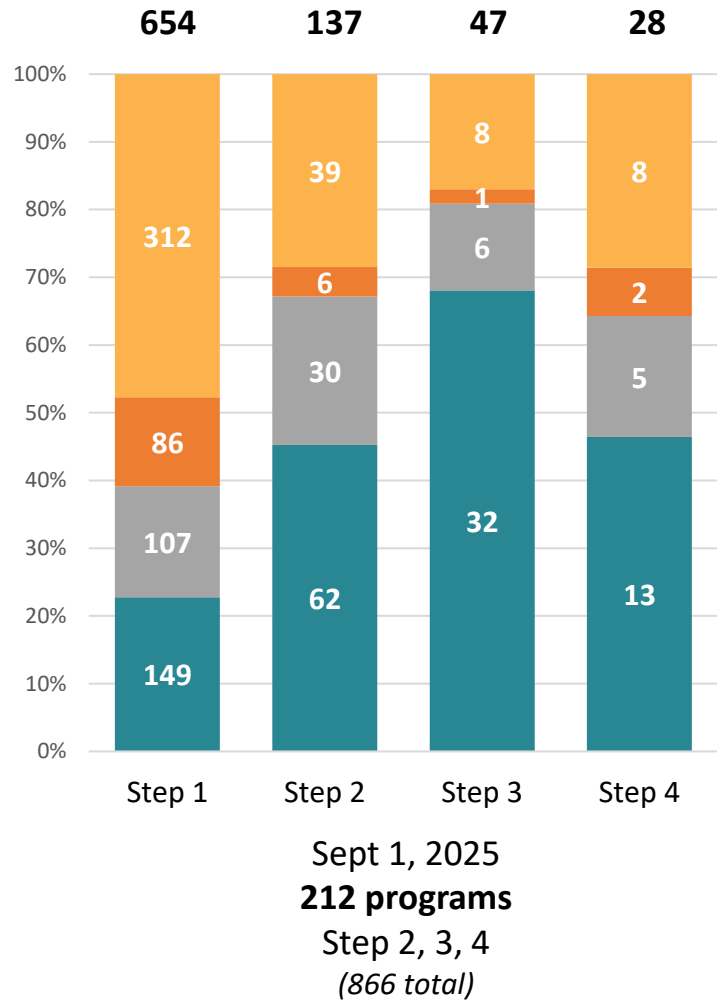
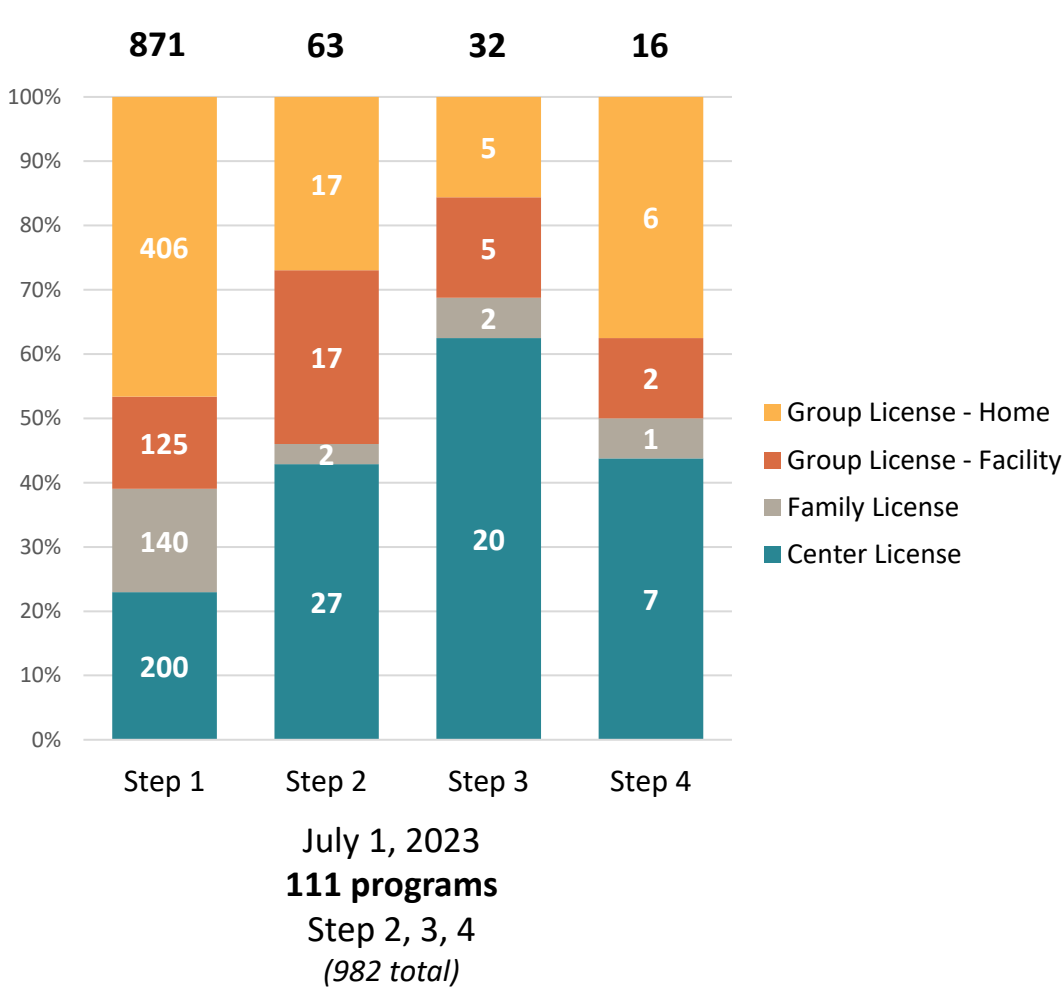
+31% - % infant/toddler as % of expenditure

+151% - Total expend

+75% - Avg pmt/child

91% increase in the number of licensed providers with a Step 2, 3 or 4 quality rating

of licensed providers by QRIS rating | July 1 2023 and Sept 1 2025



- **93** programs, serving 5,638 children are **pursuing “next step”**
- **91% increase** in programs having **attained a Step 2, 3, or 4** rating
- **33% of all statewide capacity** occurring in Step 2, 3, or 4 rated setting

Child Care Licensing forms the backbone of health and safety related oversight

Health & Safety

Child Care licensing

QRIS Health & Safety Standards

Best in Class Health & Safety best practices

Workforce background check processing

- **New** Licenses – an average of 15-17 per month
 - 178 in CY2024 and 134 CY2025 thru 8-31-25
 - 40% group, 28% family, 10% center, 8% multiple, 1% school age, 12% self-dec,
- Licensed **Renewals** – an average of 75-80 per month
 - 54% group, 13% family, 15% center, 7% multiple, 5% school age, 3% preschool, and 2% self-dec
- **Correction orders** – 20-30 per month
 - Most often for **staff requirements** (background checks, pediatric first aid and CPR, training) and **supervision**/staying in ratio
- **Inspections** (announced and unannounced) – approx. 250 per month
- **8 mobile fingerprint** units deployed
 - 12 staff trained, **94 printing sessions conducted** (Dec 24 – Aug 25)

Spring 2025

HHS launched an Orientation to Child Care Licensing course to help providers better understand child care licensing, regulations, and compliance. To date 700 people have completed.



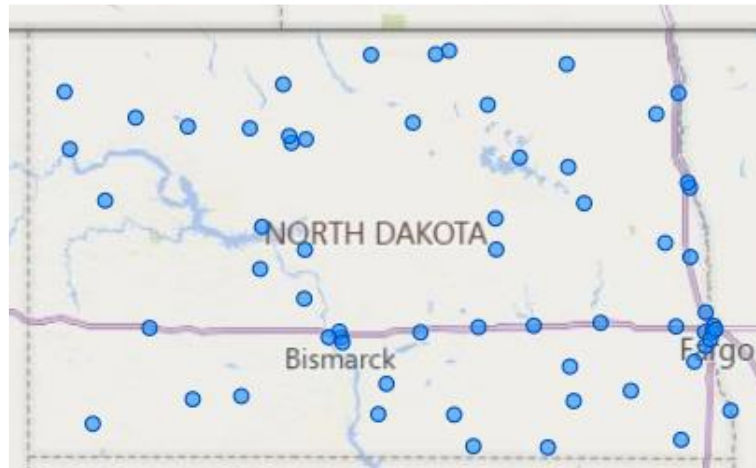
October 2025

Automated criminal background check process goes live

Connecting families to child care resources continues to evolve

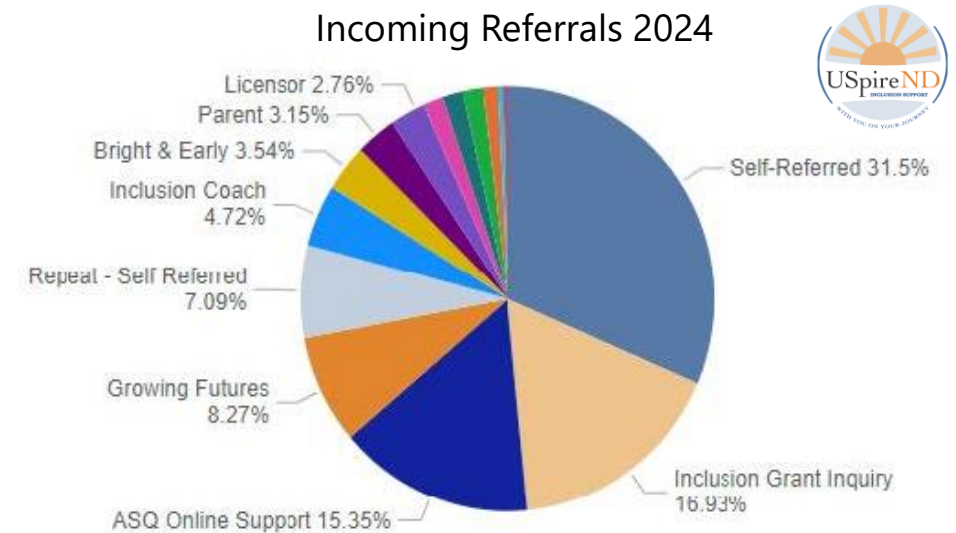
EXAMPLE: Inclusion specialists support programs who care for children with special needs (FY24 snapshot)

- 259 child care programs received inclusion support; 44 providers trained in developmental screening ASQ
- 3-4 years-olds represent 34% of requested support for specific children; followed closely by 1-2 year-olds (31%)
- Care was maintained in 97% of cases (3% of cases resulted in expulsion)



209% increase in inclusion support instances & 47% increase in programs served (FY 24)

Incoming Referrals 2024



"Getting the help we needed to make sure we are doing what is best for all children, while also making sure all children are included in all activities is the best aspect of receiving Inclusion Support."

8,700+ people utilize the EC workforce registry to access and manage training and career path progress

Career Pathway Category	Registry Members	Description
A	5,472	Entry level and paraprofessional
B	372	
C	102	
D	115	
E	223	Child development credential
F	23	Center director credential
G	254	Associate’s degree in early childhood education or child development
H	204	Bachelor’s degree in early childhood education or child development
I	33	Master’s degree in early childhood or child development
J	1	Doctoral degree in early childhood or child development
Not placed	1,937	
TOTAL	8,736	

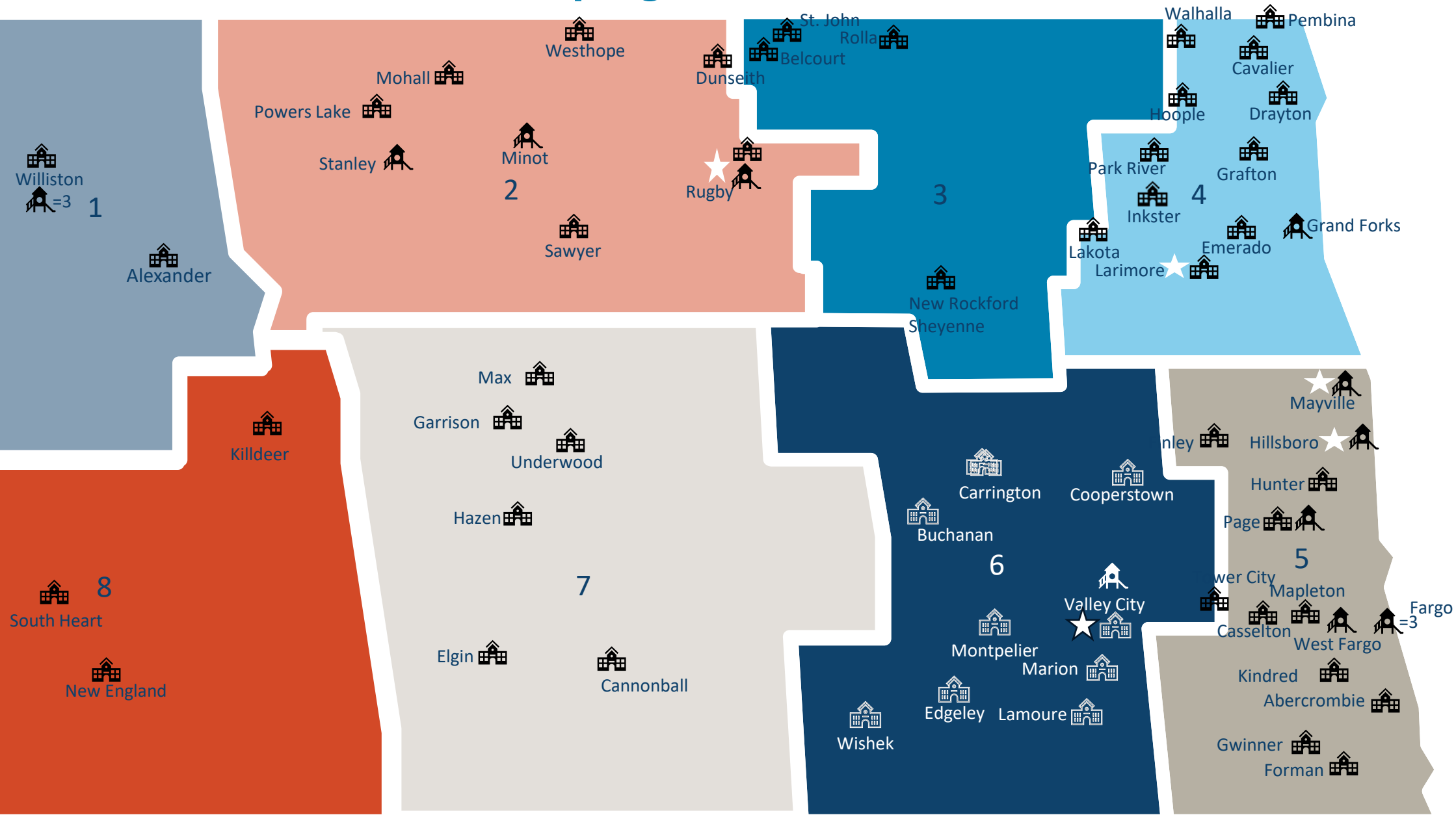
Meets “center director” qualification

Why is workforce preparation so important in Early Childhood?

“Positive **adult-child interactions** are **crucial** for establishing a secure foundation in early childhood settings, fostering trust, security, and a sense of belonging **essential for** a child's cognitive, social, and emotional **growth**.”

“These foundational interactions, like the "serve and return" exchanges between a child and caregiver, build strong emotional **bonds** and **form the basis** for motivation, self-regulation, and communication skills, ultimately **building the brain's architecture for a lifetime of learning**.”

2025-2026 Best in Class = 64 programs, 93 classrooms



child care = head start = schools =

2025-2026 Best in Class Locations

PS = Public School CC = Child Care HS = Head Start

■ Region 1

- Alexander PS
- Williston PS, CC (3)

■ Region 2

- Minot - Kiddie Korral 2.0 CC
- Mohall/Lansford/Sherwood PS
- Powers Lake PS
- Rugby PS & HS & CC
- Sawyer PS
- Stanley - Ragamuffins Ranch CC
- Westhope PS

■ Region 3

- Belcourt PS
- Dunseith PS
- New Rockford/Sheyenne PS
- St. John PS
- Rolla PS

■ Region 4

- Cavalier PS
- Drayton PS
- Emerado PS
- Grand Forks - Altru YMCA CC
- Grafton PS
- Hoople - Valley/Edinburg PS
- Inkster - Midway PS
- Lakota PS
- Larimore – Mayville State PS & HS
- Park River Area PS & CC
- Pembina - North Border PS
- Walhalla - North Border PS

■ Region 5

- Abercrombie - Richland PS
- Casselton - Central Cass PS
- Fargo-YMCA of the Northern Sky, CC (3)
- Finley/Sharon PS

- Forman - Sargent Central PS
- Gwinner - North Sargent PS
- Hillsboro -Mayville State Univ. HS & CC
- Hunter- Northen Cass PS
- Kindred PS
- Mapleton PS
- Mayville State Univ. HS & CC
- Page/Hope PS & CC
- Tower City - Maple Valley PS
- West Fargo - YMCA Cass Clay, CC (1)

■ Region 6

- Buchanan/Pingree PS
- Carrington PS
- Cooperstown – Griggs County PS
- Edgeley PS

- LaMoure PS
- Litchville-Marion PS
- Montpelier PS
- Valley City PS, CC (1)
- Wishek PS

■ Region 7

- Cannonball PS
- Elgin/New Leipzig PS
- Garrison PS
- Hazen PS
- Max PS
- Underwood PS

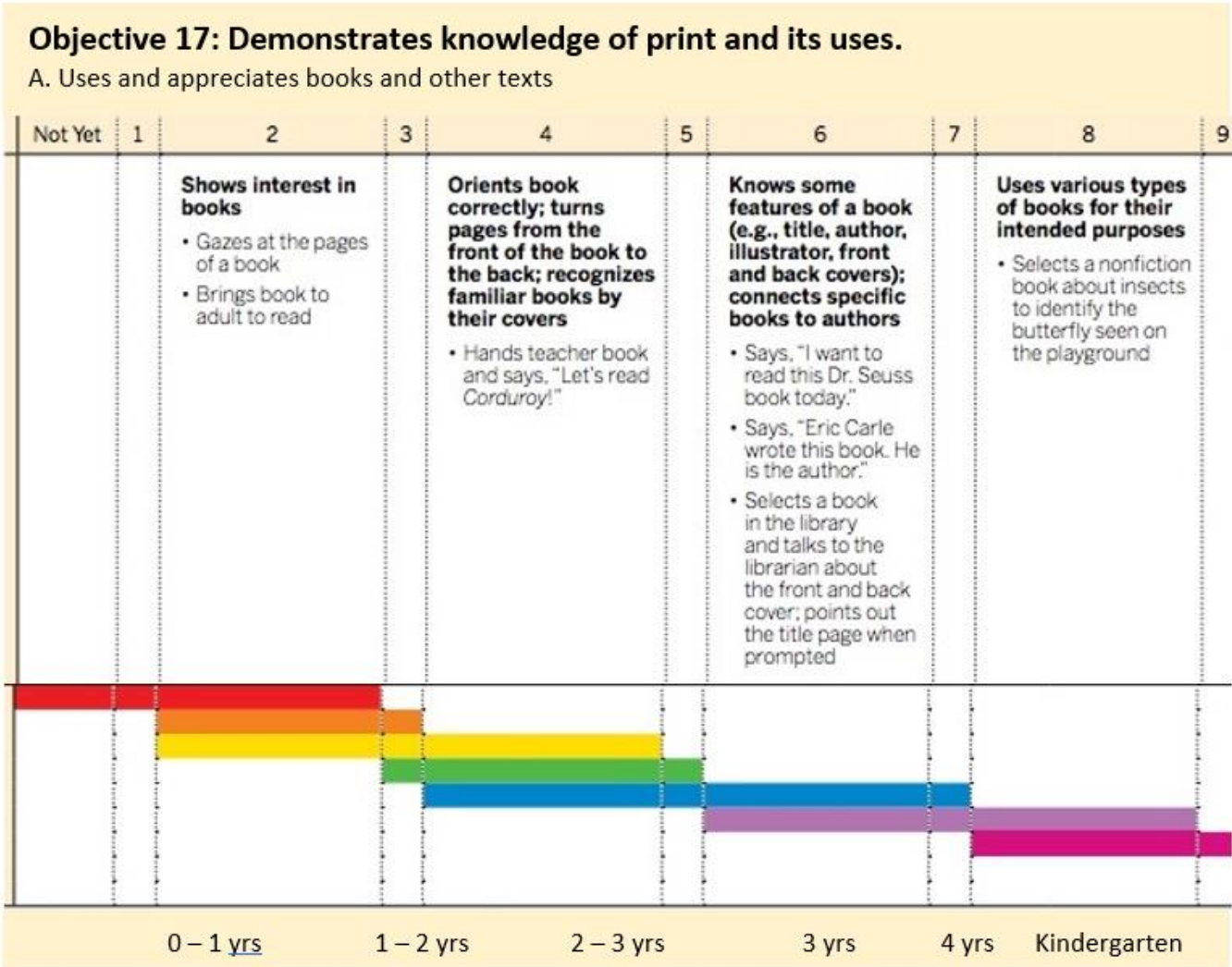
■ Region 8

- Killdeer PS
- New England PS
- South Heart PS

NORTH
Dakota Be Legendary.

Health & Human Services

Child outcomes associated with early childhood investments are closely linked with program quality



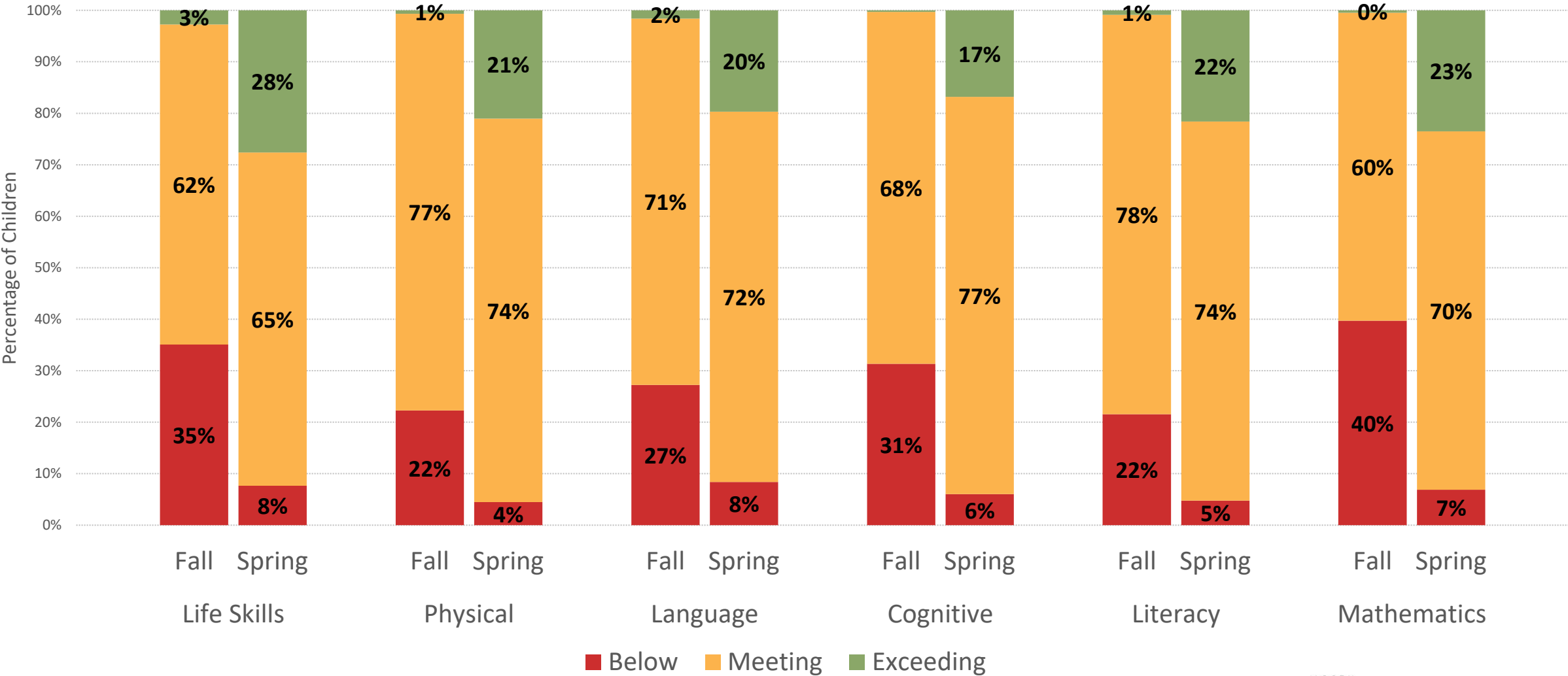
What are Widely Held Expectations?

Widely-Held Expectations describe the **range of knowledge, skills, and abilities** that children of a particular age typically demonstrate over a year of life.

These expectations are based on the latest research in early childhood and are **frames of reference** that help parents and teachers **focus on the development of the individual child**.

- ✓ Unique to each child
- ✓ Observation based
- ✓ Inter-rater reliability
- ✓ Benchmarks
- ✓ Supporting materials

2024-25 Best in Class Widely Held Expectations Outcome Measures





A welcoming early childhood environment tells a child:

- This is a good place to be.
- You belong here.
- You can trust this place.
- There are places where you can be by yourself when you want to be.
- You can do many things on your own here.
- This is a safe place to explore and try out your ideas.

Quality environments have key elements that are always present, whether in center or home-based care



Ragamuffins Ranch Best in Class, Stanley



Quality environments have key elements that are always present, whether in center or home-based care



Let's take a closer look at the elements of quality...



Art Supplies

Bathroom

Library Area

Games and Manipulatives

Blocks

Discovery Area

Sensory Table

Dramatic Play

Music

All interest areas are designed for



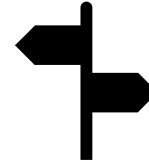
Play-based learning

Children can explore, experiment, and interact with a variety of materials and activities in engaging ways



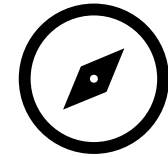
Holistic Development

Interest Areas support the development of various skills and abilities, including cognitive, social, physical, and creative skills



Choice & Exploration

Children can choose which interest area they want to explore, fostering autonomy and allowing them to follow their interests and curiosities.



Teacher Facilitation

Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating learning with each interest area, guiding exploration by asking questions and providing support.

Best in Class Tours – Monday, October 6, 2025

8:15 a.m. ————— 9:30 a.m. ————— 11:00 a.m. ————— 1: 30 School
2:25 Child Care

YMCA Northern
Sky –West Fargo

- Bright & Early
ND Step 3
- Third Year of
Best in Class

Mapleton Public
School

- HHS approved
Four-Year Old
program
- Second Year of
Best in Class

Maple Valley
Public School –
Tower City

- HHS approved
Four-Year Old
program
- Second Year of
Best in Class

Valley City Public School &
Circle of Friends Preschool

- School is HHS approved
Four-Year Old Program;
Circle of Friends is Bright
& Early ND Step 3
- First year of Best in Class
for both sites

Contact Info

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Apply for Help

866-614-6005



Child Care Resource and Referral

800-997-8515

