



Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force

Presented by Task Force Co-Chairs:

Shakira Bradshaw, Parent of young child representative

Jenny Moses, Children's Cabinet representative

Sandy Simar, Head Start educator representative

Task Force Charge & Goals

Develop a **plan and implementation timeline** that **ensures all families have access to affordable, high-quality early care and education (ECE)** that enriches, nurtures, and supports children and their families.

Minnesota State Statute, 2021 first special session law, Chapter 7, Article 14, Section 18 directed the creation of the Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force.

Must phase in the plan over no more than six years, beginning in **July 2025** and finishing no later than **July 2031**.

AFFORDABLE

Create a system in which family costs for ECE are affordable

ACCESSIBLE

Ensure that a child's access to high-quality ECE is not determined by the child's race, family income, or zip code

SUPPORTED WORKFORCE

Ensure that Minnesota's ECE educators are qualified, diverse, supported and equitably compensated regardless of setting

Voting Members

*denotes co-chair

- **Pat Ives**, Director of Licensed Child Care Center (Greater MN)
- **Krystal Shatek**, Director of Licensed Child Care Center (7 County Metropolitan Area)
- ***Sandy Simar**, Early Childhood Educator, Head Start or Community Education Program
- **Adriana Lopez** (served from November 2021-October 2022), **Johanna Villa** (served from December 2022-January 2023) Early Childhood Educator - Licensed Child Care Center
- **Meghan Caine**, Early Childhood Educator, Public School-based Early Childhood Program
- **Kathleen Church**, Family Child Care Program License Holder (Greater MN)
- **Luciana Carballo**, Family Child Care Program License Holder (7 County Metropolitan Area)
- **Senator Liz Bolden**, MN House (appointed in November 2021 as member of House majority)
- **Representative Peggy Bennett**, MN House
- **Senator Karin Housley**, MN Senate
- **Senator Melissa Wiklund**, MN Senate
- **Jayne Whiteford**, Parent Children Under 5 (Greater MN; public program)
- ***Shakira Bradshaw**, Parent Children Under 5 (Metro; private program)
- **Brook LaFloe**, Representative of a Federally Recognized Tribe with Expertise in Early Care and Education
- ***Jennifer Moses**, Children's Cabinet Representative

Non-Voting Members

- **Nancy Hafner**, Faculty Representative, Early Childhood Education
- **Barb Fabre**, Indigenous Visioning Representative
- **Lydia Boerboom**, Kids Count on Us Representative
- **Suzanne Pearl**, Nationally Recognized Expert in Early Care and Education Financing
- **Summer Bursch**, Minnesota Association of Child Care Professionals (MACCP)
- **Amy Walstien**, Minnesota Business Partnership
- **Lauryn Schothorst**, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
- **Clare Sanford**, Minnesota Child Care Association
- **Cyndi Cunningham**, MN Child Care Provider Information Network
- **Michelle Trelsted**, MN Community Education Association
- **Tonia Villegas**, Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators
- **Kraig Gratke**, Minnesota Head Start Association
- **Missy Okeson**, Minnesota Initiative Foundations
- **Deb Fitzpatrick**, Statewide Advocacy Organization
- **Ann McCully**, Child Care Aware of MN
- **Debbie Hewitt**, Department of Education
- **Oriane Casale**, Department of Employment and Economic Development
- **Karen Fogg**, Department of Health
- **Cindi Yang** (served from November 2021-October 2022), **Bharti Wahi** (served from October 2022-January 2023), Department of Human Services
- **Nicole Blissenbach** (served from November 2021-September 2022), **Siv Dobrolvony** (served from September 2022-January 2023), Department of Labor and Industry
- **Laurena Schlottach-Ratcliff**, Department of Management and Budget
- **Janell Bentz**, Department of Revenue

Task Force Process

To address the aspects of the ECE system required by establishing legislation, Task Force members, staff, and facilitators **engaged with subject-matter experts, reviewed existing studies and recommendations, and refined and analyzed their proposals based on feedback** and an iterative process.

- ✓ Fifteen meetings of the full Task Force
- ✓ Two working groups on affordability and workforce compensation
- ✓ Member surveys, office hours, and one-on-one calls
- ✓ Over 40 existing articles, proposals, studies, and reports
- ✓ Four virtual listening sessions

Task Force Essential Commitments

- Identifying historically disenfranchised groups who have not experienced equity in the ECE system and so are most in need of prioritization. The group agreed to **center equity** throughout their process of developing recommendations. Historically disenfranchised groups include:
 - Racial and ethnic minorities, including People of Color and Indigenous people (POCI)
 - Members of the LGBTQIA community
 - Those experiencing multi-generational or ongoing trauma
 - Those at risk of or with developmental delays or disabilities
 - Those from homes where English is not the primary language
 - Those experiencing homelessness or living in low-income households
- Formal acknowledgment of a **commitment to the Mixed Delivery System**, recognizing that all types of providers and settings provide value to families and children, and family preference must be honored and respected by design.
- Acknowledgement that **care and education cannot be separated**: Every single experience a child has is a learning opportunity, making care and education inextricably intertwined.

Fiscal Impact Recommendations

Though the establishing statute did not address the fiscal impact of the legislative charge, the Task Force recognized that the recommendations would have significant financial implications. To fully understand these implications, the Task Force recommended:

1. A fiscal study of each budget-related recommendation included in the plan and implementation timeline;
2. A comprehensive economic impact assessment of the long-term recommendations, which should consider child and family outcomes, economic impacts including potential savings, and cost to taxpayers; and
3. A strategic financing study to identify and assess the impact of revenue options available and ways to maximize existing funding streams to cover the costs of the long-term plan. (*pages 20-21*)

Key Long-term Recommendations

1. Create a family benefits system that provides affordable access to early care and education for all families, with an affordability standard of no more than 7% of income for all families. *(pages 24-26)*
2. Provide early childhood programs with adequate funding to deliver effective services for children and families. *(pages 29-32)*
3. Pay the early care and education workforce at least a living wage. *(pages 44-54)*
4. Invest in increasing access to effective programs. *(pages 39-43)*

Key Short-term Recommendations (1 of 3)

Affordability (pages 26-26)

- Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP):
 - Expand eligibility to 85% of State Median Income (SMI) and by increasing eligible activities
 - Increase hours covered to ensure continuity of care
 - Reduce family co-payments for CCAP
 - Make permanent the reprioritization of Basic Sliding Fee CCAP waitlist
- Early Learning Scholarships:
 - Increase scholarship funding to cover full cost of care
 - Expand scholarship age eligibility to include birth-3
 - Expand priority populations for scholarships to include families with a caregiver in substance use treatment, families experiencing domestic violence, families with an incarcerated caregiver, and families with a caregiver in a mental health treatment program
- Simplify administration system and reduce burden, including by:
 - Effective electronic systems that can be updated
 - Having one billing and tracking system for both programs
 - Making income eligibility guidelines consistently based on one metric (percentage of SMI)

Key Short-term Recommendations, Continued (2 of 3)

Program Funding (pages 29-32)

- Establish funding amounts based on cost modeling rather than market rates
- Continuation of base operational funding

Accessibility (pages 33-38)

- Conduct a study of other programs (ECE in other geographies or non-ECE programs) that have successfully invested in incubation, start up, and expansion to identify appropriate infrastructure and funding mechanisms.
- Support and expand the state's efforts around program navigation for families, provide community planning funding and support in all regions.
- Conduct family focus groups to better understand some of the specific systemic barriers they face, by community. This could start through existing networks of advocates and support organizations. Some potential additional barriers:
 - Ensuring language barriers are inclusive of ASL or hearing impairments.
 - Accessing care if you are undocumented.
 - Accessing care if you lack access to health care (e.g., immunizations for children are required in many settings).
 - Caregivers who are not legal guardians; how can they access and advocate for kids in their care?

Key Short-term Recommendations, Continued (3 of 3)

Effectiveness (pages 39-43)

- Endorsement of ongoing efforts: continuous improvement of Parent Aware and Child Care Regulation Modernization projects
- Planning efforts for technology, staffing, and programmatic changes

Workforce Compensation and Supports (pages 44-54)

- Expand Grow Your Own program and Minnesota Transfer Pathways
- Create regional substitute pools
- Establish and conduct a workforce study every three years, with outcome metrics established for decreasing wage disparities
- Continue and expand successful programs: Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, grant funding for professional development, Early Childhood Mental Health Grants
- Short-term financial relief strategies, including:
 - Bonus for new employees who complete training, CDA, AA, BS, or BA degree
 - On-going funding to programs for ECE workforce, with a connection between grant funds and increased compensation

Thank you!





Governor's Budget Alignment with GSTF Recommendations & Proposed Department of Children, Youth and Families

Stephanie Hogenson, Policy Director, Children's Cabinet

Tikki Brown, Assistant Commissioner, Children and Family Services, Department of Human Services

Alignment: Governor's Budget Proposals (1 of 3)

Family Affordability

- **Minnesota child and dependent care tax credit:** The proposal provides economic relief to low and middle-income MN families and reduces child care costs for 100,000 additional households. The average savings from the credit would expand from \$500 to \$1,500.
- **Child Care Assistance Program:**
 - \$15 million per year increase in funding to serve more children in the Basic Sliding Fee Child Care Assistance Program
 - Expanding eligibility to foster and kinship families
 - Permanent Reprioritization of Basic Sliding Fee Waitlist
- **Early Learning Scholarships:**
 - \$90 million per year increase to Early Learning Scholarships to serve an additional estimated 9,000 children per year
 - Expanding eligibility to birth to age five, while prioritizing children birth to age three
 - Adding children of incarcerated parents to list of priority populations
- **Targeted Mixed Delivery Early Learning Model:**
 - Establishing a forecasted full-day public pre-kindergarten program for eligible four-year-old children using a mixed delivery model comprised of school-based, Head Start, licensed community-based center, and family childcare programs, adding an estimated 13,000 slots by 2027.

Alignment: Governor's Budget Proposals (2 of 3)

Program Funding

- Increasing **CCAP rates to the 75th percentile** of market rate study.

Workforce Compensation and Supports

- **Retention payments** for child care programs to strengthen their ability to recruit and retain qualified early educators and increase access to child care for families.
- Increased funding for **T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Minnesota Scholarships**.
- Investing additional resources in the **Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation** program to expand the program to serve schools and Head Start.
- Creating a set aside to support non-licensed early care and education providers through **Grow Your Own programs**.
- Creating a **paid family and medical leave** insurance program.
- Increasing access to **earned sick and safe time** - this proposal would ensure workers can accrue up to 48 hours a year of earned sick and safe time.
- Expanding **health care coverage options**, including through a public option that will offer more choices to Minnesotans who struggle to afford private coverage, and proposing changing Medical Assistance eligibility to ensure a more equitable start for the youngest Minnesotans. This means eligible children under age 6 will remain eligible until their sixth birthday.

Alignment: Governor's Budget Proposals (3 of 3)

Accessibility

- Creating an **Office of Child Care and Community Partnerships** at DEED to establish a central office for partnering with the public and private sectors to address child care as an economic and workforce development issue across the state.
- Expanding the DEED **Child Care and Economic Development Grants** to support child care economic development, especially in Greater Minnesota, which will assist child care providers, create much-needed new child care slots, and increase the capacity and quality of child care across the state.
- Sustainable expansion of the **Community Solutions Fund for Healthy Child Development** at MDH.
- Establishing **Community Resource Centers** (funding at DHS with resources for interagency, cross-sector collaboration) with physical and virtual access points for families, supporting relationship-based culturally appropriate programs, service navigation, and case management.
- Resources for **Help Me Connect** family navigation tool and **Full-Service Community Schools**.
- Ongoing funding for the following ARPA-funded investments:
 - **Child Care Wayfinder**, the Child Care One-Stop Assistance Network, a network to support start-up of new child care programs, and expand/sustain existing programs.
 - **Empower to Educate Program** to recruit and provide child care training, job skills and job placement, targeted to economically disadvantaged individuals, to increase the number of people prepared to enter the early care and education workforce.
 - Child care **business training and supports**.

Effectiveness

- **Streamlining licensing application and renewal process** for family child care providers, making it easier and more flexible for providers and licensors.
- Proposing a new **Department of Children, Youth, and Families** that reimagines state government structures to elevate child, youth, and family priorities and funding needs by providing focused leadership in our executive branch and with the legislature. This new agency will bring together core programs from early childhood through youth. The One Minnesota Budget proposes a process for transitioning to the new agency and obtaining authority and resources to support the creation, alignment, and launch of a two-year process of moving core divisions beginning July 2024.

Proposed Department of Children, Youth, and Families

The Walz-Flanagan Administration proposes to create a Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) that reimagines our state government structures to elevate child, youth, and family priorities and funding needs by providing focused leadership in our executive branch and with the legislature.

Core programs proposed to move to new agency:

- Child care and early learning programs
- Child Support, Child Safety and Permanency, and other family-focused community programs
- Economic support and food assistance programs
- Youth opportunity and older youth investments



The 2023 Walz-Flanagan Budget Proposes Transition Office

- Obtains the authority and resources (\$7.37 million one-time) to support creation, alignment, and launch of a two-year process of moving core child, youth, and family support programs to the new agency that would begin July 2024.