



Program Description

Empower to Educate helps current and aspiring early childhood educators begin, advance, and sustain their career goals in child care. The goal of the project is to increase the number of people entering the early childhood workforce by offering benefits such as a free training package, an education preparation stipend, job skills training, help accessing and navigating technology, a mentorship program, and a retention bonus after six months of employment. This is accomplished through personal support from a local Workforce Advisor.

Need for the Program

Recent research suggests that existing child care programs are having difficulty finding sufficient staff to operate at their licensed capacity, contributing to the care shortage. As a 2020 Minnesota DEED report notes, "Most of the cost of running early care and education programs is in staffing. But because programs rely on parents to pay, they can't raise prices above what their parents can afford, which means that they often cannot charge enough to compensate staff at a level that meets basic cost of living."¹ Job vacancy rates continue to be high in the state, meaning that workers can easily find other jobs, and those jobs often don't require the additional training necessary to work in the child care field.² A recent Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank survey found that 60% of child care programs said hiring was "very difficult," and another 22% said it was "difficult." A year ago, only 47% said hiring was "very difficult."³

Addressing Barriers to Entering the Field

Marketing research for a related program, Child Care Wayfinder, identified several barriers to people entering the early childhood care and education field, including low wages, lack of training and preparation, confusion about the licensing process, and technology assistance. Empower to Educate is designed to address many of these needs.

Interest and Outcomes

Since launching in July 2022 until January 2023, Empower to Educate has received a high volume of interest from future early childhood educators, child care professionals, and community partners around the state. The team of six Empower to Educate Workforce Advisors have connected with 278 potential early childhood educators across Minnesota and have supported 130 to begin a career path in early childhood education. Empower to Educate has administered 95 stipends to participants and has connected participants to the Child Development Associate® (CDA) Credential™, T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships and higher education, and additional training and professional development opportunities. Empower to Educate participants are advancing their careers in child care centers and family child care programs.

¹ Casale, Oriane, et al. Early Care and Education: Portrait of an Industry in Crisis." Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). September 2020. Accessed on 2/3/23 at mn.gov/deed/newscenter/publications/trends/september-2020/early-care-education.jsp

² Werner, Marnie. "Rural Child Care Solutions: From the Ground Up." Center for Rural Policy and Development, October 2022. Accessed on 2/3/23 at www.ruralmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Child-care-2022-0913-FINAL.pdf

³ Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank. "Half of Minnesota Child Care Providers Unsure How Long They'll Remain in Business." May 2022. Accessed on 2/3/2023 at www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2022/half-of-minnesota-child-care-providers-unsure-how-long-theyll-remain-in-business.



Participant Testimonials

- "I have found the Empower to Educate program to be one of the best resources for child care providers, and I hope to see it continually supported as such given the growing need for child care in my area. I am forever grateful for their ongoing support!" – Veda
- "Empower to Educate has helped me understand each step along the way in getting closer to my goal of becoming a Montessori teacher. They help me to set goals and figure out what steps I need to take in order to reach them, as well as keeping track of my progress and encouraging me to continue. It's great to have the support and resources to make this career goal a reality for me!" – Grace
- "Empower to Educate has been a great resource for me! They are helping me find trainings, pay my fees for the trainings I needed, helping me write my resume, etc. They give very detailed explanations and have very good advice." – Deqo
- "Empower to Educate has provided me with resources I didn't even know were available throughout my learning journey! I always knew I wanted to work with children but didn't know where to start. Empower to Educate has paved the path for me and is there to answer any questions I have!" – Chelsea
- "Empower to educate has helped me further my education by making it more affordable and giving me the resources I need to achieve my goals." – Brittany
- "Empower to Educate is helping me set goals to forward my child care career. I have become a member of MN Develop under the tutelage of an Empower advisor. I am learning how to put all the pieces into place so that when lead teaching roles arise I will feel confident that I have the skills and experience to apply." – Katie
- "I was first introduced to Empower to Educate by one of my current college professors. I filled out the application, and within a day, I had a meeting set up with my advisor. She has helped me figure out the direction of my career path in Early Childhood Education. This industry is in desperate need of staff development, and with Empower to Educate, we have that opportunity." – Paula
- "Empower to educate is helping me become the best [early childhood] teacher I can be by providing me with resources and trainings I need and want! Having someone else help guide me in the right direction is the kind of help and gently push I needed being a busy teacher and busier mother!" – Taylor
- "Empower to Educate has been a great resource with helping me find trainings and with the stipend, it will help me pay for fees and training I need to become a licensed child care provider." – Veronica