



# Parent Aware Equity Report

## Children and Family Services Administration

March 1, 2022

### **For more information contact:**

Minnesota Department of Human Services  
Children and Family Services Administration  
P.O. Box 64244  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0244

651-431-3809

---



For accessible formats of this information or assistance with additional equal access to human services, write to [dhs.child.care@state.mn.us](mailto:dhs.child.care@state.mn.us), call 651-431-3809, or use your preferred relay service. ADA1 (2-18)

Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 3.197, requires the disclosure of the cost to prepare this report. The estimated cost of preparing this report is \$95,312.

# Contents

- I. Executive summary..... 4
- II. Legislation..... 6
- III. Introduction..... 7
  - Purpose of report ..... 7
  - Engagement process ..... 7
- IV. Background..... 11
  - History ..... 11
  - Evaluation and ongoing continuous quality improvement process..... 11
  - Parent Aware Racial Equity Action Plan ..... 12
  - Family Child Care Task Force..... 12
- V. Barriers Identified and Ideas for Changes ..... 14
  - 1. Process Consistency, Information and Perceptions ..... 14
  - 2. Geographic and Technology Access, Experience, Literacy ..... 15
  - 3. Cultural Proficiency, Relationships, Trust..... 15
  - 4. Language Access, Jargon ..... 16
  - 5. Expertise Definitions, Recognition ..... 16
- VI. Plan to address barriers ..... 19
  - Timeline ..... 21
  - Budget ..... 22
- VII. Appendix ..... 23
  - A. Links to Parent Aware Evaluation and Reports – 2007 - current ..... 23
  - B. Racial Equity Engagement Report ..... 25

# I. Executive summary

This report is being submitted to the Minnesota Legislature, pursuant to Minn. Laws of 2021, 1<sup>st</sup> Special Session, [chapter 7, art. 14, misc., sec. 4, subd. 4] directing the Minnesota Department of Human Services (department) to conduct outreach with early learning and care providers who are racially, ethnically, culturally, and geographically diverse to identify barriers preventing providers from pursuing Parent Aware ratings.

Parent Aware is a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), offering tools and resources to help families find quality child care and early education children need to succeed in school and in life. This report includes background information on Parent Aware authorizing language, its purpose as described in state law, and how it was piloted and evaluated in the past. Current evaluation activities, and other recent engagement and task force efforts contributing to plan development, are included.

The engagement process used to inform this report included one-on-one phone interviews, small group virtual sessions conducted online with child care providers and other stakeholders, and an online survey. Engagement goals were to work directly with child care providers throughout the process to ensure their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood, considered, directly reflected in alternatives developed, and that they were informed of how their input influences decisions.

There were two rounds of engagement. The first round included one-on-one interviews, six online sessions, and those who could not participate in an interview or session were encouraged to complete an online survey. In the second round, three online sessions were held, combined with an online survey. The purpose of the second round was to present findings from the first round, allowing participants to provide feedback.

The process engaged Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) providers, white providers, and stakeholders from the Twin Cities' metro area and greater Minnesota.

Barriers identified fall into the following categories:

- Process consistency, information and perceptions
- Geographic and technology access, experience, literacy
- Cultural proficiency, relationships, trust
- Language access, jargon
- Expertise definitions, recognition.

This report provides a plan for reducing identified barriers, including strategies in the following categories:

- Changes to the Parent Aware advisory committee structure required to make lasting, ongoing improvements.
- Short-term strategies that can begin prior to completion of a major forthcoming Parent Aware evaluation to be carried out February 2022 through December 2024.
- Long-term strategies that need more time to be developed, or cannot be started prior to completion of the evaluation and addressed January 2024 through June 2026.

Updates to the Parent Aware Advisory Committee structure are underway and will be implemented soon.

Short-term strategies include:

- Updating forms, the Parent Aware data system, marketing materials, timing of cohorts, and grants payment process
- Efforts to improve access technology, training, and coaching, especially coaching in languages other than English, and
- Increased outreach for higher education scholarships.

Long-term strategies include:

- Development of new peer-to-peer supports strategies
- Improvements to data collection, addressing access to data on provider race and ethnicity
- Updating Parent Aware standards and indicators, forms, and data systems
- Training on cultural proficiency and responsive instruction, and access to flexible pathways for training and degrees.

The plan includes a timeline and budget with known costs based on initial planning and legislative proposal development. Many strategies need additional analysis, user testing, and stakeholder engagement before costs and detailed plans for implementation are determined.

## II. Legislation

Minnesota Laws of 2021, 1<sup>st</sup> Special Session. [Chapter 7, art. 14, misc., sec. 4, subd. 4]

**Equity report.** The Department of Human Services shall conduct outreach to a racially, ethnically, culturally, and geographically diverse group of early learning and care providers to identify any barriers that prevent the providers from pursuing a Parent Aware rating. The department shall summarize and submit the results of the outreach, along with a plan for reducing those barriers, to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over early learning and care programs by March 1, 2022.

# III. Introduction

## Purpose of report

This report is submitted to the Minnesota Legislature pursuant to Minn. Laws of 2021, 1<sup>st</sup> Special Session, [chapter 7, art. 14, misc., sec. 4, subd. 4] directing the department to conduct outreach to a racially, ethnically, culturally, and geographically diverse group of early learning and care providers to identify barriers preventing providers from pursuing a Parent Aware rating. This report summarizes results of outreach and engagement, and a plan for reducing barriers.

## Engagement process

The legislated timeline for this report made it challenging to provide a truly community-centered and inclusive engagement process. Equitable outcomes for children, families and providers require an equitable and inclusive process. Department staff compensated for the short amount of time by leveraging information and recommendations from other on-going efforts to make Parent Aware more inclusive and equitable, including ongoing evaluation and reports (see appendix A for a list of reports), the Family Child Care Task Force Report, and the Parent Aware Racial Equity Action Plan.

The department contracted with Carroll, Franck and Associates (CFA) to conduct outreach, provide engagement, and write a report on the results of this project. The engagement goal was to work directly with child care providers and other stakeholders throughout the process, ensuring their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood, considered, and directly reflected in alternative options developed. The process included the important step of informing providers and other stakeholders about how their input influenced ideas for change.

Key stakeholders invited to participate in engagement were unrated and recently Parent Aware rated child care providers. Providers engaged were racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse. Providers engaged were geographically diverse, including providers living in both the Twin Cities' metro area and greater Minnesota. Other stakeholders were also engaged, including Parent Aware implementation partners and early care and education advocates.

Participants who engaged in one or more engagement opportunities included 275 child care providers, and 62 other stakeholders. The following table provides the race and ethnicity of participating child care providers, based on their responses in the Business Update Survey, conducted annually by the Child Care Aware system.

**Table 1. Race/ethnicity of child care providers participating in the engagement, aggregated**

<b>Race/ethnicity</b>	<b>Number of engagement participants</b>
African	3
American Indian	3
European Immigrant	3
Other race	3
Multi-racial	9
African American	15
Hispanic or Latino	16
Asian	20
White/European American	58
Two or more ethnicities/races reported	85
Unreported race/ethnicity*	60
Total	275

\*46 of the 60 engagement participants in this group provided a verifiable child care license number

Data collected on race and ethnicity by the Child Care Aware System includes the option to provide additional detail within the categories of African, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian. The options provided include: Eritrean, Ethiopian, Somali, Sudanese, Other African, Cambodian, Hmong, Karen, Lao, Vietnamese, Other Asian, Central/South American, Chicano, and Other Hispanic/Latino. The following table provides responses for providers who reported additional detail within the categories African, Asian, Hispanic or Latino, and whose responses in Table 1 were aggregated as two or more ethnicities/races reported. Some of the providers responded with multiple races and ethnicities, and therefore the numbers below cannot be totaled.

**Table 2. Race/ethnicity of child care providers participating in the engagement, disaggregated**

<b>Race/ethnicity - category</b>	<b>Additional detail</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
African	Somali	3
African	Sudanese	1
African	Other African	9
Asian	Hmong	3
Asian	Vietnamese	4
Asian	Other Asian	25
Hispanic or Latino	Central/South American	12
Hispanic or Latino	Chicano	4
Hispanic or Latino	Other Hispanic/Latino	23

In this report, the term BIPOC is used to describe providers and other stakeholders who reported their race and ethnicity as one or more of the following: African, American Indian, Other race, Multi-racial, African American, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian. The term white is used to describe providers and other stakeholders who reported their race and ethnicity as white/European American. European Immigrants are individuals who could self-identify in either of these categories. For this report, they were engaged in a way that was consistent with BIPOC providers because they are culturally, and may be linguistically, diverse providers.



## Round one interviews, survey, and virtual sessions

### Engagement of unrated and recently rated child care providers

To gather in-depth responses, the engagement project offered interviews to all identified unrated and recently Parent Aware rated providers, or participation via an online survey with the same content. Providers were asked about barriers to earning or maintaining a Parent Aware rating, and what would be helpful in overcoming barriers.

This process was launched in early November 2021 with introductory emails from the department to child care providers who self-identified as BIPOC or who did not speak English as their primary language. Providers received a communication from one of 12 CFA team interviewers, who were also racially and ethnically diverse, and spoke languages including Spanish, Hmong, Somali and Urdu, in addition to English. Interviewers were also demographically aligned with providers to the extent possible. Interviewers followed up with providers via email, text messages, and phone calls to conduct brief phone or Zoom interviews. Providers who were not able to join an interview were encouraged to complete a short online survey.

### Engagement of other stakeholders

Other stakeholders included implementation partners and early care and education advocates. These additional stakeholders were invited by email to contribute via live virtual sessions or an online survey. The questions were similar to those for providers but asked at a more general or systems level.

Implementation partners included staff across Minnesota working in Child Care Aware agencies that comprise the state's child care resource and referral system. These agencies are grantees of the department. Minnesota Tribal Resources for Early Childhood Care (MNTRECC) provides technical assistance and support to tribal child care programs in Minnesota, and facilitates collaboration between tribal child care programs and the Child Care Aware of Minnesota system.

Six virtual engagement sessions were held via Zoom between Nov. 22 and Dec. 30, 2021, as follows:

- Nov. 22, 2021, Child Care Aware and MNTRECC staff who support child care providers in participating in Parent Aware
- Nov. 30, 2021, MNTRECC staff
- Dec. 14, 2021, BIPOC Child Care Aware and MNTRECC stakeholders
- Dec. 16, 2021, recently rated family child care providers – BIPOC and greater Minn. stakeholders
- Dec. 28, 2021, recently rated child care center owners/directors -- BIPOC and greater Minn. stakeholders
- Dec. 30, 2021, early care and education advocates and partners.

**Round one participation** included 337 participants, and 362 responses. Some participants were engaged through more than one type of engagement strategy. For example, some providers were interviewed and also responded to a survey. Responses included:

- 205 unrated BIPOC and greater Minn. child care providers, via interviews and online surveys
- 70 recently Parent Aware rated BIPOC providers and greater Minn. child care providers via online surveys, virtual sessions, and interviews
- 62 implementation partners and early care and education advocates via online surveys and virtual sessions.

### **Round two virtual group engagement sessions to offer feedback**

Three virtual engagement sessions were held via Zoom between Jan. 24 and Feb. 1, 2022, to present summary results and gather feedback on ideas for change. The same information and questions were offered in an online survey. Virtual session dates and invitees included:

- Jan. 24, 2022: BIPOC Child Care Aware system and MNTRECC staff
- Jan. 25, 2022: Child Care Aware system and MNTRECC staff
- Feb. 1, 2022: Recently Parent Aware rated BIPOC family child care providers, BIPOC child care center directors/owners, and providers from greater Minn.

## IV. Background

Parent Aware is Minnesota’s Quality Rating and Improvement System, established in law to ensure that Minnesota's children have access to high-quality early learning and care programs in a range of settings so that they are fully ready for kindergarten. [[Minn. Stat. §124D.142](#)]

### History

Parent Aware started as a pilot in 2007 funded initially by a combination of public and private funding. The pilot ended in 2011. The department was directed by the Minnesota Legislature to use evaluation results from the pilot to develop quality rating standards, or measures of quality, and leverage federal child care funding to continue and expand Parent Aware. As of January 2015, Parent Aware was available statewide.

### Evaluation and ongoing continuous quality improvement process

Evaluation of the program, which includes engagement with child care providers and families with young children in child care, informed improvement to Parent Aware since its inception. The three phases include:

- 2007 -- 2011: Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF) Parent Aware evaluation/validation study
- 2012 -- 2016: Parent Aware for School Readiness (PASR) evaluation of Parent Aware
- 2017 -- 2021: Federal funds, including a grant from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, provided funding for additional evaluation, used in combination with the state’s reporting cycle. (See Appendix A for a full list of past evaluation reports.)

After each cycle of evaluation, changes to Parent Aware policies and processes were implemented.

The 2021 Minnesota Legislature appropriated funding and directed the department to arrange a major independent evaluation of Parent Aware. The evaluation findings, along with the commissioner’s recommendations for revision, potential future evaluation, and plans for continuous improvement, must be provided by Dec. 31, 2024. This law also directed the department to prepare this Equity Report.

Key milestones for the Parent Aware evaluation (validation study), and planned changes, include:

- Contract with a vendor for the evaluation begins in February 2022
- Information to inform changes to Parent Aware’s measures of program quality or standards, and indicators received early in calendar year 2024
- Legislative report with plan for updating standards and indicators due to the legislature by Dec. 31, 2024
- Changes to Parent Aware standards and indicators announced; work begins for implementing changes, including updating forms and data systems by August 2025
- Changes fully implemented by June 2026.

The timeline for the improvement plan included in this Equity Report aligns with the one for the Parent Aware evaluation to be conducted between February 2022 and June 2024. Findings from the Parent Aware evaluation will inform decisions and timing related to updating Parent Aware standards and indicators.

## Parent Aware racial equity action plan

Minnesota participated in the [BUILD QRIS 3.0 Think Tank](#) technical assistance opportunity with five other states in 2019. The purpose of the Think Tank was to assess the statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System using a tool developed by BUILD, and receive national-level technical assistance on how to approach and prioritize future improvement. Through this process, the team of department staff and community partners determined the first priority was to develop a Parent Aware racial equity action plan. With financial support from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Minnesota Foundation in 2021, a facilitated planning process occurred in partnership with community leaders to develop an action plan to be completed in early 2022.

Findings from work conducted with community partners to develop a Parent Aware racial equity action plan informed strategies in the plan included in this report.

## Family Child Care Task Force

The Minnesota Legislature established the Family Child Care Task Force in 2019. Legislation establishing the task force included direction to examine barriers to family child care provider participation in Parent Aware, and make recommendations to address barriers. Additional recommendations related to training for family child care providers are also relevant considerations for how to improve participation in Parent Aware.

Findings and recommendations from the 2021 [Family Child Care Task Force Legislative Report](#) also informed strategies in the plan included in this report.

## Parent Aware coach demographics, experience and preparation

The next two sections include barriers, ideas, and plans regarding Parent Aware coach demographics, experience and preparation. Background information in this section provides a description of characteristics of Parent Aware coaches to help understand the context in which these ideas for changes are provided.

### Coach race, ethnicity, and language

There are 64 Parent Aware coaches working in the Child Care Aware system. These coaches support child care providers to improve their program's quality, supporting them through the Parent Aware rating process.

During fiscal year 2021 (July 1, 2020 -- June 30, 2021), the race/ethnicities of coaches as reported in Develop, Minnesota's Training and Quality Improvement Registry, included:

- 9% Black/African American/African immigrant
- 2% Indigenous/Native American/American Indian
- 5% Latino/Latina/Latinx
- 3% Asian/Asian immigrants
- 79% white/European American
- 2% did not report their race.

Languages spoken by coaches reported in Develop in FY 2021 included:

- Fifty-five (86%) reported speaking only English
- Twelve (19%) did not report a language
- Three (5%) reported speaking a language in addition to English (one Somali, one Spanish, one Hmong).

Coaches are also supported by staff who provides language access services. These services allow coaches who do not speak languages other than English to support child care providers whose home languages are not English to participate in Parent Aware through translation and interpretation. These services are provided in Hmong, Spanish and Somali. When providers do not speak one of these languages, coaches can call the language line provided by the Minnesota Department of Human Services for translation and interpretation support.

### **Coach experience and preparation**

Parent Aware coaches must be approved by Achieve, Minnesota Center for Professional Development. This includes the following requirements:

- Upon starting, a career lattice step of six or higher. Options for reaching step six include:
  - Eight approved college credits.
  - A Child Development Associate (CDS) from the Council for Professional Recognition, or
  - National Association for Family Child Care Accreditation.
- On second renewal, a career lattice step of 10 or higher. Step 10 is a bachelor's degree with six or more approved credits.
- Data privacy training.
- Mandated reporter training.
- Participation in ongoing training provided to all coaches through the Child Care Aware system. Ongoing training includes topics regarding diversity, equity and inclusion.

Coach prior experience varies widely. However, all coaches have experience working in early care and education. Coaches were surveyed in 2019 on their prior work experience. The results were reported in [Parent Aware: Perceptions of the Building Quality Relationship-based Coaching Model \(state.mn.us\)](#). The following statistics were included in this report (n=30 for this question):

- 100% had experience as an early care and education teacher
- 53% had experience as a family child care provider
- 50% had experience as a trainer of child care providers.
- 47% had experience as a center director or owner
- 40% had experience working in the Child Care Aware system
- 37% had experience working as a K-12 educator.

# V. Barriers identified and ideas for change

Information below summarizes findings from the outreach and engagement process about challenges, issues, and needs limiting participation in Parent Aware for some providers. The tables also provide corresponding ideas and options suggested by providers and other stakeholders to address these issues.

The full report from Carroll, Franck, and Associates is at [parentaware.org/programs/equity-engagement](http://parentaware.org/programs/equity-engagement).

## 1. Process consistency, information and perceptions

Challenges, issues, needs	Ideas, options
<p><b>Time, scheduling, paperwork:</b> Providers struggled with requirements, forms, documentation, and limited scheduling options; worst for programs that participate in other programs that require their own separate paperwork as well, such as child care assistance.</p>	<p>Simplify and streamline rating process to reduce time spent completing requirements; expand options for connecting and scheduling.</p>
<p><b>Requirements, supports, navigation:</b> Inadequate and inconsistent information, responses, plus huge Develop website navigation problems caused frustration, dismay.</p>	<p>Provide correct, complete, clear information; clearly illustrate steps and requirements; revamp online tools; allow individualized processes; no-wrong-door system.</p>
<p><b>Training, coaching, and other resources:</b> Too hard to find required training, when and how it is needed; helpful coaches, not always consistent information provided.</p>	<p>Ensure comparable, equivalent training and coaching access, options and excellence; meet cultural and language needs; support peer-to-peer networks.</p>
<p><b>Information, misinformation and choices:</b> Poor info leads to misinformed/unaware providers and parents; Parent Aware may not be a good fit for every provider.</p>	<p>Provide correct, complete, and clear information to everyone, tailored to culture, language and location; use multiple methods and personalized approaches.</p>
<p><b>Bureaucracy, terms, and timing/cohorts:</b> Rigid Parent Aware Rating application and funding timelines and the cohort model for child care providers participating in the Full Rating process threatens success; the policy of making Parent Aware Quality Grants available only on a reimbursement basis is inequitable, unworkable.</p>	<p>Allow provider-driven timelines; offer a collaborative cohort option; simplify process to spend grant funds; eliminate Parent Aware Quality Grant policy of awarding grants on a reimbursement basis.</p>

## 2. Geographic and technology access, experience, literacy

Challenges, issues, needs	Ideas, options
<p><b>Geography:</b> Providers in less densely populated communities have less access to and fewer choices for in-person training and coaching, purchasing classroom equipment and materials, plus transportation barriers.</p>	<p>Ensure equitable opportunities for in-person training and coaching regardless of geography; expand options for purchasing classroom equipment and materials.</p>
<p><b>Technology:</b> Many BIPOC providers and greater Minn. providers lack computers/tablets and are not active e-communicators; broadband (non-mobile) access is a huge problem; together these pose enormous barriers for BIPOC providers and greater Minn. providers for training, coaching, information access, and navigating through the Parent Aware Rating process.</p>	<p>Support all providers to access high-speed, affordable broadband; work to resolve and support provider technology needs and skills so they can have an optimal Parent Aware experience.</p>

## 3. Cultural proficiency, relationships, trust

Challenges, issues, needs	Ideas, options
<p><b>Content:</b> Parent Aware-approved curriculum, materials, and information does not include or recognize cultural and tribal differences and norms; definitions and understanding of what constitutes quality do not recognize the varying forms this takes across cultures and over time; information, materials, and supports are not culturally nuanced.</p>	<p>Update and expand materials to reflect rich diversity of people and ideas; ensure understanding among coaches and others where quality measures value cultural responsiveness and proficiency; update and improve Parent Aware to make cultural differences and norms more central to quality measures; highlight cultural proficiency and responsive instruction in training content and quality improvement process; lean into culturally reflective and language-specific training and support materials.</p>
<p><b>Support, guidance:</b> Parent Aware quality coaches working in the Child Care Aware system are mostly white, English-speaking, highly educated individuals who have less experience in multi-age family child care settings, and limited cultural proficiency and understanding of trauma-informed care; there is significant variation among coaches; equity is not at the center of their work.</p>	<p>Hire, develop and retain more culturally congruent and bilingual coaches; expand provider access to better-aligned coaches and other supports; ensure statewide access and equity; make and leverage community connections.</p>

Challenges, issues, needs	Ideas, options
<p><b>System, accountability:</b> Parent Aware does not measure, support, or require cultural proficiency or responsiveness; rigid systems and narrow definitions affect assessments and supports; no systems to routinely listen to BIPOC providers and other providers and make improvements.</p>	<p>Routinely seek feedback from all stakeholders to improve Parent Aware; create assessment systems for Child Care Aware staff; ensure consistent, equitable support for providers; assess and improve performance and outcomes.</p>

#### 4. Language access, jargon

Challenges, issues, needs	Ideas, options
<p><b>English primacy:</b> Language barriers prevented many providers from joining Parent Aware or completing the process; newly rated providers whose first language is not English struggle to keep up with the timelines, training, coaching and content.</p>	<p>Lean into community-based resources to hire/develop new bilingual support for Child Care Aware staff; build or access more training in other languages; support providers to complete the process in their home language; support language-specific peer networks; market to parents in their home languages.</p>
<p><b>Jargon:</b> Excess jargon is a barrier for all participants, and can make the process impenetrable for providers whose first language is not English.</p>	<p>As the Parent Aware process is simplified, streamlined and clarified, edit all written materials and guidance for plain language standards, and put in place a process to make all materials plain language moving forward.</p>

#### 5. Expertise definitions, recognition

Challenges, issues, needs	Ideas, options
<p><b>Education and related documentation:</b> Immigrant providers may not have or be able to obtain transcripts or other proof of educational attainment. It is more difficult for those without a higher education degree to achieve a high rating.</p>	<p>Begin by assuming trust and best intentions and learn from other agencies and organizations on how to work with non-U.S. documents/information, and recognize capabilities without higher education degrees.</p>



Challenges, issues, needs	Ideas, options
<p><b>Alternative processes for assessing provider knowledge:</b> Reaching higher education levels may be inaccessible to providers due to barriers such as language or access (location, cost, time, and previous education). There is no alternative method of recognizing expertise. These are barriers to reaching higher rating levels in Parent Aware, frustrating providers.</p>	<p>Create in-house systems or learn from others to recognize and credit other sources of expertise and welcome a more diverse set of providers with broad credentials, experiences and backgrounds.</p>

### Strategies Working Well

Engagement results also found things that were currently working well that should be expanded upon, including:

- Parent Aware quality coaches and professional development advisors:** Providers and implementation partners overwhelmingly appreciate quality coaches, professional development advisors and others. Some providers experienced a highly collaborative, integrated approach that organizes various Child Care Aware and MNTRECC staff to deliver seamless support to providers. They were flexible, accommodating, and sensitive to provider schedules, preferred communications format, and content needs. Quality coaches who are BIPOC, bi/multi-lingual, from the same cultural background, or from their own or nearby communities are especially helpful and valuable to providers as they assisted providers to find and access language-specific training or coaching, arranged for interpreters, or brought language-specific training to their program. Some providers noted that quality coaches prepared materials using language that providers understood, with step-by-step pictures and/or videos as they supported providers to earn a rating.
- Increased quality supports:** Providers said they value opportunities and support that Parent Aware offers for learning, developing, and becoming better providers, along with Parent Aware Quality Grants that help them purchase items for their programs, accomplish goals, and continue learning journeys. Many programs share information and updates with parents, and actively promote Parent Aware and financial supports available for parents who choose rated providers.
- Professionalism and connection:** Some providers stated they like Develop, the online data system for Parent Aware, to keep track of their training and accomplishments in one place, shared across multiple organizations. Parent Aware in-person trainings and group coaching provide opportunities to connect with other providers, share, collaborate, and learn from each other.

## Lessons Learned

Department staff also received feedback and learned the following through the engagement process:

- Agency processes for collecting demographic data about child care providers; specifically race, ethnicity, and preferred language of those operating and working in child care settings, need to be improved to better serve providers and families in their communities.
- The department needs to:
  - Work more closely with partners throughout the state to help department staff reach out to and welcome provider perspectives, with special emphasis on BIPOC providers whose home language is not English, as well as providers in rural communities.
  - Coordinate and schedule child care provider engagements more efficiently to allow enough time for engagement events and reduce overlap with other invitations to engage.
  - Take time to expand and strengthen relationships with providers, directly and through partners and on-going engagement processes.

Challenges and ideas, along with what is working well, were used by department staff to develop a plan to address barriers. The plan, in this report, builds on strengths of current processes and services to address the needs of child care programs.

## VI. Plan to address barriers

Department staff proposes this plan to address barriers to Parent Aware participation for racially, ethnically, culturally, and geographically diverse early learning and care providers identified through outreach required for this report. This plan leverages feedback and information received through on-going evaluation conducted in collaboration with partners, the Parent Aware Racial Equity Action Plan Work Group, and the Family Child Care Task Force of 2021.

The department's strategies for addressing challenges are organized into three categories:

- Changes to the advisory committee structure, required to make lasting, ongoing improvements to Parent Aware
- Short-term strategies that can begin prior to completion of the Parent Aware evaluation, and
- Long-term strategies that need more time to be developed, or cannot be started prior to completion of the evaluation.

All strategies included in this plan will be further developed with support from a new Parent Aware advisory committee. The plan does not include costs and a detailed timeline for implementing changes. Additional work is needed to explore strategies, with help from stakeholders, to ensure they will work effectively. In some cases, a few different options will be developed and considered by the advisory committee, which will be tested with the best option selected, budgeted for, and implemented based on results.

### **Advisory committee structure:**

The department convened, at its initiative, a Parent Aware Advisory Committee operating in a somewhat informal manner with changing membership of implementation partners, advocates, and some child care provider representation since 2012. The Parent Aware Advisory Committee is in the process of being restructured, and will be launched in spring 2022. The new committee structure will include more representation from parents with young children, as well as family child care and child care center representatives. The new structure will be more implementation-focused and utilize smaller work groups to explore options for policy changes to address issues identified in this report, and later, issues identified through the Parent Aware evaluation. The process will leverage engagement meetings with providers and user experience testing.

### **Proposed short-term strategies:**

Proposed short-term strategies are those that could be addressed prior to December 2024, when results of the Parent Aware evaluation are available. Some strategies include:

- **Forms update:** Streamline and update forms used by providers participating in the Parent Aware quality improvement and rating process; forms will follow agency plain language standards and designed to make them easier and faster to complete. The timing of this update will coincide with the upgrade of Develop.

- **Develop data system upgrade:** Upgrade Develop, the data system used by providers participating in Parent Aware, to make online forms and processes faster and more user-friendly. The updated data system will closely align visually with updated paper forms, saving providers time by allowing them to re-use copies of evidence uploaded during prior rating cycles applicable to their current cycle.
- **Technology access:** Provide individualized assessments of provider’s access to computers, technology, and internet, taking steps to support those experiencing gaps to apply for Parent Aware and Child Care Services Grants. Seek resources for additional technology investments for child care providers.
- **Training and coaching accessibility:** Return to in-person training and coaching as COVID-19 case numbers decline. At the same time, continue offering online training and coaching options to maximize benefits for providers who found online options more flexible and accessible.
- **Outreach for scholarships for degrees and credentials:** Increase supports for culturally and linguistically diverse providers to access scholarships for degrees and credentials through the TEACH program. Ensure marketing and recruitment efforts reach these diverse providers to address disparities in degree attainment within the early care and education workforce, supporting providers to reach higher Parent Aware rating levels.
- **Timing and cohorts:** Explore options for new pathways and cohorts for child care providers who are not accredited, focusing on creating separate forms specifically for family child care providers who use terms and phrases specific to a family child care setting. This will explore options for an individualized, self-paced option supported by a combination of online tools and coach supports that are less structured, requiring fewer deadlines.
- **Language and culturally specific supports and guidance:** Explore options to successfully recruit and retain Parent Aware quality coaches who meet provider language and cultural needs. Options explored include creation of an incentive structure recognizing and rewarding quality coaches with specialized and unique language skills. Resources will be sought to increase the number of coaches with specialized language and cultural skills needed to recruit and successfully serve providers who speak languages other than English. Department staff will explore options for expanding language access supports more widely statewide.
- **Improve provider/coach matches:** Help providers learn more about training, languages spoken, and qualifications of coaches working in Parent Aware, such as providing written bios posted on a website; give providers more choice in their coach assignment to improve matches between coaches and providers.
- **Materials:** Update family-facing materials, marketing, and website to be clearer, more complete, and consistent with department plain language standards. Improve availability of information in languages other than English. Planning for updates leverages user experience testing and work group feedback.
- **Grants:** Explore options for making the Parent Aware grants payment process more flexible, reducing burdens resulting from deadlines and reimbursement requirements.

## Proposed longer-term strategies

Proposed longer-term strategies are those requiring more time or information from the Parent Aware evaluation before final decisions are made. For example, while ideas for changes to Parent Aware standards and indicators can be explored in the short term, final decisions cannot be made prior to Dec. 31, 2024, when the legislative report regarding the evaluation is completed and released. Strategies include:

- **Peer-to-peer supports:** Explore options for utilizing peer-to-peer mentoring supports through an infrastructure designed to recognize and support family child care mentors. Options for this infrastructure include those that would leverage child care associations, and allow mentoring hours to count toward training hours for Parent Aware and licensing.
- **Data on race and ethnicity:** Improve data needed for equity analyses, especially on race and ethnicity of those operating and working in child care and early childhood settings. Explore options for encouraging more individuals to voluntarily provide their racial and ethnic identities in required forms and databases. Also, explore ways to identify and provide targeted supports to child care centers located in historically marginalized communities using census data.
- **Update Parent Aware standards and indicators:** Complete the Parent Aware evaluation, using these results, combined with additional engagement, to redesign Parent Aware and update its framework, standards, and indicators to better reflect diversity of individuals, experiences and ideas.
- **Second phase update to forms and data system:** Parent Aware forms could be further streamlined and updated. In this phase, forms will be updated to include changes to the Parent Aware standards and indicators announced after completion of the Parent Aware evaluation. The timing of this update will coincide with a corresponding update to Develop.
- **Training on cultural proficiency and responsive instruction:** Explore options for including indicators in Parent Aware that recognize and reward providers who are culturally competent and use responsive instruction, or who complete training on these topics. Develop a training series designed specifically to support providers to meet these indicators.
- **Flexible pathways to early care and education training and degrees:** Explore alternatives to measuring education through degrees and credentials for individuals working in Parent Aware participating programs, seeking more flexible pathways that are more welcoming, with specialized outreach to ensure all individuals have what they need to successfully join the early care and education workforce.

## Timeline

This timeline is based on the one for the Parent Aware evaluation. Findings from the evaluation need to be used to inform decisions and timing related to updating Parent Aware standards and indicators. Changes to these need to wait until after the evaluation and accompanying legislative report is completed by Dec. 31, 2024.

**What:**

New advisory structure put in place

Short-term ideas for changes

Long-term ideas for changes

**When:**

Currently in process, new structure launched spring 2022

February 2022 – December 2024

January 2024 – June 2026

**Budget**

Costs to implement all short- and longer-term strategies included in this plan have not been determined with funding secured. Additional time is needed for department staff to explore strategies with the new advisory committee, carry out a cost analysis, and determine which strategies and options can be fully implemented.

The following are known costs through planning and legislative proposal development. Costs for provider technology supports are included in the 2022 Governor’s Budget Recommendations to Stabilize and Support Child Care for State Fiscal Years 2023 – 2025, and added to the base for ongoing funds. Costs associated with updating Parent Aware standards and indicators were developed alongside budget estimates needed for the Parent Aware evaluation.

**Table 3. Funding needed**

Cost category	SFY 22	SFY 23	SFY 24	SFY 25	SFY 26
Provider technology supports ongoing (proposed in 2022 governor’s budget recommendations)		\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000*
Facilitation of on-going engagement related to updating Parent Aware policies, standards, and indicators		50,000	50,000	75,000	
Update forms					50,000
Update data system					100,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>300,000</b>	<b>350,000</b>	<b>375,000</b>	<b>450,000</b>

\*On-going funding needs to be provided through a base state general fund appropriation.

# VII. Appendix

## A. Links to Parent Aware evaluation and reports – 2007 -- current

### Parent Aware pilot phase evaluations (200 -- 2011)

1. (2008) Evaluation Report, Child Trends, December 2008, [Fact Sheet full report](#)
2. (2009) Evaluation Report, Child Trends, March 2010, [Fact Sheet full report](#)
3. (2010) Evaluation Report, Child Trends, November 2010, [Fact Sheet](#)
4. (2011) Evaluation Report, Child Trends, December 2011, [Fact Sheet Summary Technical Report](#)
5. Parent Priorities in Selecting Early Care and Education Programs: Implications for Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System, Aisha Ray, Ph.D., February 2010, [Fact Sheet full report](#)

### Parent Aware expansion phase evaluations (2012 -- 2016)

1. Evaluation of Parent Aware: Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System – Year One Implementation Report (December 2012), [Full Report](#)
2. Provider Perceptions of Parent Aware, May 2013, [Full Report Summary](#)
3. Evaluation of Parent Aware: Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System – Year Two Implementation Report (April 2014), [Full Report](#)
4. Provider Perceptions of Parent Aware, September 2014, [Full Report Summary](#)
5. Evaluation of Parent Aware: Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System – Year Three Implementation Report (April 2015), [Full Report](#)
6. Evaluation of Parent Aware: Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System – Year Four Implementation Report (June 2016), [Full Report](#)
7. Parent Aware Provider Perceptions Report (April 2016), [Full Report Summary](#)
8. Parent Aware Validation Study (February 2016), [Full Report Executive Summary Brief](#)

### Evaluations and reports on Parent Aware as a statewide program (2016 to present)

- [Parent Aware Fast Facts](#), updated quarterly
- [Parent Aware: Perceptions of the Building Quality Relationship-based Coaching Model, DHS-7942AA-ENG \(PDF\)](#), published November 2019
- [Parent Aware: Programs' Experiences with Building Quality Coaching, DHS-7942-BA-ENG \(PDF\)](#), Fact Sheet for DHS-7942-AA, published November 2019
- [Parents' Perceptions of the Parent Aware Website and Search Tool, DHS-7937 \(PDF\)](#), published September 2019
- [Provider Perceptions of Parent Aware: Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System, DHS-7859-ENG \(PDF\)](#), published May 2019
- [Parent Aware Rated child care programs across Minnesota, DHS-7086Bc-ENG \(PDF\)](#), published October 2019
- [Parent Aware Rated child care programs across Minnesota, DHS-7086Bb-ENG \(PDF\)](#), published July 2018

- [Parent Aware Rated child care programs across Minnesota, DHS-7086Ba-ENG \(PDF\)](#), published March 2017
- [Participation in Parent Aware Ratings Across Minnesota, DHS-7086B \(PDF\)](#), published March 2016
- [Parent Aware by the Numbers, DHS-7086Ac-ENG \(PDF\)](#), published June 2019
- [Parent Aware by the Numbers, DHS-7086Ab-ENG \(PDF\)](#), published June 2018
- [Parent Aware by the Numbers, DHS-7086Aa-ENG \(PDF\)](#), published March 2017
- [Diversity of Child Care Programs Participating in Parent Aware, DHS-7086Ca \(PDF\)](#), published March 2017
- [Diversity of Child Care Programs Participating in Parent Aware, DHS-7086C \(PDF\)](#), published March 2016
- [Parent Aware Quality Rating and Improvement System: Standards and Indicators, DHS-6346B \(PDF\)](#), published October 2016
- Evaluation activities funded through the U.S. Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, carried out through the Minnesota Research Partnership, are in process and not published.



## **B. Racial Equity Engagement Report**

Information on the engagement process and a report by Carroll, Franck and Associates with complete results is online at <https://www.parentaware.org/programs/equity-engagement/>.