

# Early Childhood Connector | Winter 2024

*Your quarterly newsletter on child care and early education.*

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## Welcome to the Early Childhood Connector

Thank you for signing up for the Early Childhood Connector Newsletter! The Minnesota Children’s Cabinet and the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services created this newsletter to streamline communications to child care providers and early educators in Minnesota. Child care providers and early educators can expect a quarterly newsletter and some additional email updates. Please fill out the survey linked at the bottom of this newsletter to let us know what you think of the content and how we can improve our communications.

## Early Childhood Connector Calls

On a quarterly basis, the state is hosting Connector Calls with child care providers and early educators to answer questions related to legislation, licensing, programs, grants and more. The purpose of the call is to answer clarifying questions that providers may have. Calls are hosted online on WebEx, [recorded, and available on the Early Childhood Connector webpage](#).

Educators of all types are invited to these calls. We welcome questions from licensed programs, certified centers, exempt programs, legally nonlicensed providers, Family, Friend and Neighbor caregivers, and individuals interested in starting a child care business.

### Join us at the next Early Childhood Connector Call

- **Next call date:** Tuesday, April 16, 2024 at 7 p.m. Central Time
- **Where:** Hosted virtually on WebEx
- **Meeting link:** <https://minnesota.webex.com/minnesota/j.php?MTID=m092fb7af42ff60c351ce2daf20cd446e>
- **Purpose:** For the state to answer clarifying questions for child care providers and early educators. The state will not address individual grievances during this time.
- Please [submit your questions here](#). Questions must be submitted before the event; we will not answer live questions. We will do our best to answer all questions as time allows. Please submit your questions two weeks before the call.

Please save the date and meeting link on your calendar; the state will not send a meeting invite. The call will be recorded and temporarily available to folks who cannot attend.

[Learn more about Early Childhood Connector Calls, including upcoming dates, and submit your questions here.](#)

We look forward to seeing you at the next call!

## Transforming child care licensing: The Provider Hub

The Minnesota Department of Human Services is [modernizing the child care licensing process](#) through an online system called the Provider Hub. This new platform aims to streamline licensing functions and create a more efficient, transparent user experience for child care providers and agencies.

The Provider Hub has rolled out in phases; with launches in April 2023 for certified child care centers and November 2023 for licensed child care centers, allowing them to manage licensing and certification completely online instead of using paper forms and mail.

Child care providers already using the Hub have shared that they enjoy having one place to manage and update their license or certification information at a team that is convenient for them.

In the upcoming months, the Provider Hub will launch Phase 3, which includes family child care providers, Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) provider registration and renewal, and a new public compliance monitoring website to replace Licensing Information Lookup (LIL) for child care. Notably, child care providers will be able to register and renew CCAP across multiple counties with one application.

Beyond licensing, the Provider Hub will soon support Early Learning Scholarships, attendance tracking and applications for Great Start Compensation Support Payment Program. The 2023 legislative session also funded broadening the scope beyond child care to the other human services license types in Minnesota.

In the weeks leading up to the launch of Phase 3, training resources will help prepare providers. Providers should watch for specific launch communications for their provider type through GovDelivery bulletins.

The Provider Hub marks an exciting shift to modernize critical system infrastructure for child care in Minnesota! This innovative solution aims to reduce provider administrative burden so they can stay focused on delivering quality care and education.

The Provider Hub Product Team can be reached at [ccproviderhub.dhs@state.mn.us](mailto:ccproviderhub.dhs@state.mn.us) with questions or feedback, and more information is available on the [Systems Transformation Website](#).

## Toolkit for Healing-Centered Practice

The [Toolkit for Healing-Centered Practice](#) is designed for professionals who work with children prenatal to age 6, their families, and those who care for them. It was created in partnership between the Department of Education and the Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health. **The toolkit is a collection of online resources on stress and trauma-informed care**, and is tailored to meet different learner's needs. Materials include webinars, fact sheets, resource lists and training modules that can be accessed on demand. There are also Spanish, Hmong and Somali translations of documents available.

Toolkit resources are broken into three categories and mirror the [Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework for Early Childhood Professionals](#):

- **Explores category** – resources exploring the impacts of stress and trauma on young children, their families and caregivers.
- **Implements category** – resources examining ways to support children and families with a stress and trauma-informed lens.
- **Design and Leads category** – resources providing guidance in using a stress/trauma-informed lens to transform and sustain systems.

The toolkit for Healing-Centered Practice also includes four developed and approved training modules on the topics of stress and trauma, relationships and attachment, resilience and professional wellness. You can access them for free on demand, and they can be done individually or in groups. Find these modules under the ‘Resources’ section on the [toolkit website](#).

## Child Care Aware of Minnesota begins new apprenticeship pilot

Learning the skills to create an environment where young children thrive and grow not only requires knowledge of the best ways to help children learn, but also hands-on practice of those skills in the classroom. Bringing time-tested apprenticeship strategies into the child care field offers new early educators a pathway to develop those skills with the support of a trained mentor.

The T.E.A.C.H Early Childhood Minnesota Apprenticeship Program supports skill development in the high-demand field of early childhood education. By combining employment, on-the-job training, college coursework, and individualized mentoring, apprentices will receive additional support in earning industry-recognized credentials and degrees and applying early childhood best practices in their programs.

Apprenticeship offers an opportunity to help new teachers succeed, makes a college education more accessible and affordable, and offers additional support during the crucial beginning of their careers. As a child care program looking to hire and retain staff, apprenticeship offers an opportunity to invest in new and existing teachers, which will positively impact the children in the program. The apprenticeship pilot is seeking Minnesota child care center educators who are early in their early childhood careers, ready to enroll in (or are already attending) a Minnesota college, and are working at least 30 hours per week in a licensed early childhood program. In addition, we are looking for child care center directors/owners who want to sponsor one or more of their current staff as an apprentice.

Please contact Erin Young at [eriny@childcareawaremn.org](mailto:eriny@childcareawaremn.org) or 651-290-9704 ext. 200 for more information or [visit our website](#).

## Don’t miss out on the new Child Tax Credit!

Even families not required to file Minnesota income tax returns can still file to claim valuable Minnesota tax benefits. The Child Tax Credit delivers tax relief to people whose income is below a certain level. You and the families you serve can receive this refund even if you do not owe tax.

### What is the Child Tax Credit?

The new [Child Tax Credit](#) is available to Minnesotans who have children under age 18. By filing a Minnesota tax return, you may qualify for \$1,750 per child with no limit on the number of children. The Child Tax Credit is phased out if your income is over \$35,000 for Married Filing Jointly or over \$29,500 for other filers. It is reduced by 12% of earned income or adjusted gross income, whichever is greater.

### **How do I claim the Child Tax Credit?**

The Child Tax Credit is available starting in tax year 2023. Eligible Minnesotans can claim it using Schedule M1CWFC, Minnesota Child and Working Family Credits.

### **Free Tax Preparation**

You may also qualify for free tax return preparation! Go to <http://www.revenue.state.mn.us> and enter free tax preparation into the Search box to find free tax preparation services near you.

## **The Department of Children, Youth, and Families transition**

Legislation creating a new Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) passed in 2023 with the goal to put children at the center of state government and align programs focused on children and families. The DCYF Implementation Office launched in July 2023 to provide project management, coordination, and capacity for the budget, policy, and administrative planning for the transition.

So far, the Implementation Office has helped support several planning decisions to establish DCYF, including identifying short-term facility plans, building engagement plans, announcing a planning timeline for program transfer, and more. The timeline includes:

- On July 1, 2024, when DCYF is established with a commissioner in place, identified programs from Children and Family Services at the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Early Learning Services division from the Department of Education (MDE), and some central operations functions will transition to DCYF.
- On January 1, 2025, Help Me Connect from the Department of Health (MDH) will transfer.
- On July 1, 2025, relevant licensing and program integrity functions from the DHS Office of Inspector General, the MDE after school community learning grant, youth justice programs from the Department of Public Safety, and remaining central operations functions will transfer.

The Implementation Office continues to focus on planning efforts and engagement activities to ensure that the voices of Tribal Nations, counties, providers, families, local partners, school districts and more are reflected in the new agency.

As leaders impacted by and interested in the DCYF transition, your feedback is critical to making this new agency successful. You can stay up to date on the transition by [signing up for our monthly newsletter](#) and [visiting the DCYF Implementation Office webpage](#). Please share engagement opportunities, recommendations, and questions with the Implementation Office at [dcyf.implementation.mmb@state.mn.us](mailto:dcyf.implementation.mmb@state.mn.us).

## Resources for families, children and providers

- [Additional resources for families, providers and communities](#)
- [Help Me Connect](#)
- [Office of the Ombuds for Family Child Care Providers](#)

## Have questions?

Email [ccs.communications.DHS@state.mn.us](mailto:ccs.communications.DHS@state.mn.us) with questions.

## Have feedback?

Let us know your thoughts on this newsletter [by taking a short survey](#). Your answers will help the state improve its communications with child care providers and early educators.