Report re 4-Year Old Program (Best in Class) and DHS Early Childhood division
DHS 2021-2025 Key Priorities

**Strong Stable Families**
- Maintain family connections
- Improve stability and prevent crises
- Promote and support recovery and well-being

**Early Childhood Experiences**
- Support workforce needs with improved access to childcare
- Help kids realize their potential with top quality early experiences
- Align programs for maximum return on investment

**Services Closer to Home**
- Create pathways that help people access the right service at the right time
- Engage proactively with providers to expand access to services

**Efficiency Through Redesign**
- Embrace process redesign to find efficiencies in our work
- Leverage technology to support greater efficiency, quality and customer service

**High-Performing Team**
- Develop a One DHS Team culture
- Engage team with opportunities for learning and development
- Implement fiscal scorecard to drive efficiency and effectiveness

Reinforce the Foundations of Well-being
- Economic Health
- Behavioral Health
- Physical Health
BEST IN CLASS

Quality Early Childhood Experiences for children in the year before kindergarten

- Is a competitive grant award program for child care, head start, and school districts
- Builds on program characteristics that drive results
- Is based on 25-plus years of research
- Represents a targeted investment in families that wouldn't necessarily be able to access an early childhood experience
- Was authorized in HB 1466 during the 2021 North Dakota Legislative Session
BEST IN CLASS
Quality Early Childhood Experiences for children in the year before kindergarten

- Operate at least 400 hours
- Incorporate 10 hours research-based family engagement
- Offer various health screenings
- Utilize TS GOLD assessment
- Maintain a 1:10 teacher to child ratio
- Charge tuition on a sliding-fee scale (if charged)
- Participate in coaching sessions
- Work with a Best in Class monitor and the research team
Applications opened June 28, 2021
42 programs applied for 78 classrooms
- 1 Head Start/Child Care
- 17 private child care
- 22 public schools
- 2 Head Start/public school partnerships

Announced awards August 2, 2021
First on-site coaching visits August 23, 2021
2021-2022 BEST IN CLASS PROGRAMS
Where are they?

- 23 programs
  - 1 Head Start/child care
  - 1 private child care
  - 1 Head Start/Public School
  - 20 public schools

- 29 classrooms
  - 18 with approx. 9 children
  - 11 with approx. 18 children

- 374 children enrolled
  (as of 10-19-21)
BEST IN CLASS
Early observations

• By including both small and large group size options – BIC opened door to participation by smaller programs
  • 62% small size / 38% large size rooms
  • 43% of children in small size room / 57% in large size

• Higher than expected participation by public school pre-K programs
  • Affordability and household income, inclusion of children with special needs, definitions of quality
  • Connecting early childhood staff in K12 setting with early childhood Best in Class coaches and supports

• Increased interest by private child care providers in Bright & Early quality rating system
BEST IN CLASS

Next steps

- Professional development sessions for staff who work in Best in Class settings
- Data collection
  - Quality improvements
  - Evaluation of services available to Best in Class programs
  - Connections made to health screenings
  - Child outcomes
- Applications will open in early 2022 for the 22/23 program cohort
EARLY CHILDHOOD IN DHS
A team built to embody the interconnectedness of human services work, who through their work will emphasize the essentialness of a two-gen approach
The purpose of the Early Childhood division is to build greater access to quality early childhood experiences so kids age 0-5 from all backgrounds and circumstances have the opportunity to reach their potential.
**EARLY CHILDHOOD**

In ND early childhood is a mixed delivery system, involving both public and private partners using both federal and state funds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dept of Human Services</th>
<th>Training and Early Childhood Supports</th>
<th>Early Childhood Experience providers</th>
<th>Dept of Public Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Early Childhood division</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children and Family Services – home visiting, child protection, abuse prevention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dev Disabilities – early intervention, in-home supports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Economic Assistance – child care assistance program</td>
<td>• Training providers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Coaches, mentors and consultants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Health and wellness consultants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Business success and quality improvement consultants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consumer education resource and referral</td>
<td>• Early childhood programs, including center-based, group, and family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Public Pre-K programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Early Childhood Special Education services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Head Start and Early Head Start</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Home visiting providers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Developmental Disability &amp; Early Intervention providers</td>
<td>• Office of Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• K-12 Coordinating Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Comprehensive State Literacy program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### EARLY CHILDHOOD DIVISION

**What we do**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Licensing</th>
<th>Professional Development</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Best in Class</th>
<th>Family Support and Education</th>
<th>EC Operations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Issue licenses and certifications to early childhood programs in North Dakota  
• Monitor compliance with early childhood health and safety regulations  
• Maintain child care provider profiles for both licensing and resource/referral | • Maintain workforce registry in support of early childhood work force  
• Provide technical assistance to providers to support health, safety and continuous quality improvement  
• Provider start-up and expansion support | • Operation of Bright & Early – the ND quality rating improvement system  
• Maintenance of early childhood standards and practices  
• Assessment and validation of quality rated EC programs across ND | • Grant program to grow access to high quality EC experiences delivered in the year before kindergarten  
• Targeted coaching and professional supports  
• Active monitoring for fidelity to quality standards | • Head Start Collaboration  
• Early interventions for children with disabilities  
• Behavioral supports and interventions  
• Child Care assistance for lower income households  
• Family education and outreach | • Early Childhood Integrated Data System  
• Child Care Development Block Grant state plan  
• EC Technology System coordination and support |
May 2021
- Develop BIC application
- Begin drafting RFPs and transitioning data system contracts

April 2021
- HB1416 moves Office of Early Learning from DPI to DHS
- HB1466 establishes Best in Class program
- HB1012 authorizes 8 FTE for EC division
- Begin co-pay relief for families receiving CCAP

June 2021
- Open applications for Best in Class
- Draft plan for COVID-related childcare grants and incentives
- Begin hiring EC team members
- Finalize 3-year CCDBG plan

July 2021
- New EC division launches, coinciding with new biennium
- Complete hiring of state EC team
- Publish RFPs for EC services

Aug 2021
- Award BIC grants
- Let’s Chalk 0-5 milestone celebration
- Finalize 1416/1466-related agreements
- Waterford Upstart outreach & enrollment

Sept/Oct 2021
- Best in Class 1st cohort begins
- Award RFPs for EC services
- Open applications for provider grants
- Child Care lic benchmarking study
- DPI SpEd/DHS B-5 plan for Part C to Part B transitions
- CCAP outreach initiative

Update on Progress in 2021
Launch of inclusion supports by USpire
Launch of Child Care Aware TA/coaching/referral services by SEEC
Pyramid Model and NCEDTL courses available via Growing Futures
ECIDS project planning

Nov 2021
- Launch of inclusion supports by USpire
- Launch of Child Care Aware TA/coaching/referral services by SEEC
- Pyramid Model and NCEDTL courses available via Growing Futures
- ECIDS project planning

Dec 2021
- Award contract for QRIS supports
- Launch COVID-funded child care worker incentives

Jan 2022
- Child care/workforce barrier study
- Finalize integrations for CCL development
- ECIDS priority use cases

Feb 2022
- Open application for Best in Class 2022-23 cohort
- Launch QRIS supports by new vendor
- Website updates

Mar/Apr 2022
- Testing of new child care licensing database
- Award 2022-2023 Best in Class cohort

May/Jun 2022
- Training for new CCL / Go Live June 2022
- Projected go live for CCAP self service portal enhancements
- Complete reporting from 2021-2022 Best in Class cohort
During the **first 5 years** of life, emotionally nourishing relationships lay the **foundation** for lifelong health and well-being.

The caring adults who touch the lives of infants, toddlers and preschoolers can maximize our long-term impact in ensuring all children have an **opportunity to realize** their **full potential**.
Contact Information

Kay Larson, Director
Early Childhood Division
600 E Boulevard Ave, Ste 325
Bismarck, ND 58505

Phone: 701-328-7564
E-mail: kaylarson@nd.gov
Phone: 701-328-2115
Toll Free: 800-997-8516 or 711 (TTY)
Email: dhsec@nd.gov
www.nd.gov/dhs/services/earlychildhood