Early Childhood Experiences
Rethinking our approach to early childhood services
Interim Human Services Committee | August 3, 2021
Senator Judy Lee, Chairman
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**.
Parents in workforce

73% of the 44,237 North Dakota households who have children younger than age 5 likely have at least some need for child care as all available parents are in the workforce.
Half of the 1,591 children in foster care in North Dakota are age 7 or younger. (2020)
### DHS 2021-2025 Key Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</table>
| **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 |

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**Reinforce the Foundations of Well-being**

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

**Licensing**
- 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

**Professional Development**
- Maintain workforce registry in support of early childhood workforce
- Provide technical assistance to providers to support health, safety and continuous quality improvement
- Provider start-up and expansion support

**Quality**
- 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

**Best in Class**
- 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

**Family Support and Education**
- Head Start Collaboration
- Early interventions for children with disabilities
- Behavioral supports and interventions
- Child Care assistance for lower income households
- Family education and outreach

**EC Operations**
- Early Childhood Integrated Data System
- Child Care Development Block Grant state plan
- EC Technology System coordination and support
EARLY CHILDHOOD DIVISION TIMELINE
Update on Progress in 2021

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

May 2021
- Develop BIC application
- Begin drafting RFPs and transitioning data system contracts

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

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

August 2021
- Award Best in Class grants
- Let’s Chalk 0-5 milestone celebration
- Finalize MOUs and contracts
- Waterford Upstart outreach & enrollment

September 2021
- Best in Class 1st cohort begins
- Award RFPs for EC services
- Open applications for provider and workforce grants
- Hunt Institute EC transition and policy supports begin
The EC team will establish from its inception, an expectation that the work is interconnected – both within the division and with those who work outside of it – which means that connections will always be more horizontal than vertical.

Over the next several months, DHS and DPI will work together with the Hunt Institute and others to explore ideas and practices that will help refine the state’s approach to early childhood services.