



INTRODUCING THE NEW EARLY CHILDHOOD DIVISION DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

ITS MISSION – ENHANCING EARLY CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

The purpose of the Early Childhood Division is to build greater access to quality early childhood experiences, so children ages zero to five from all backgrounds and circumstances have the opportunity to reach their potential.

WHY DOES EARLY CHILDHOOD MATTER? IT'S AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A LONG-TERM IMPACT.

Ninety-five percent of brain development occurs before the age of five, which means investing in early experiences generates long-term returns. During the first five years of life, emotionally nourishing relationships lay the foundation for lifelong health and well-being. By supporting parents and the other care giving adults who touch the lives of infants, toddlers and preschoolers in supporting quality early childhood experiences, we can realize long-term positive outcomes for children, families and our communities.

ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE IS A WORKFORCE ISSUE.

More than 44,000 North Dakota households have children younger than age five. Nearly 75% of these households have at least some need for child care as all available parents are in the workforce. As a result, access to quality care and support is a key constraint on North Dakota's economy and a key concern for parents. Ensuring access to quality early childhood care for every North Dakota working parent is a key focus of the new early childhood division.

See the [“Why does early childhood matter” infographic](#) for more information.

BEST IN CLASS GRANT AWARD PROGRAM – INNOVATION TAKES SHAPE

The Best in Class grant award program supports quality early childhood experiences for children in the year before they enter kindergarten. See [Best in Class information sheet](#) for more details.