

# Child Care Connections

ND Early Childhood Section and Child Care Assistance Program



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## Child Care Facility Improvement grants are now available for licensed providers – apply today!

Health and Human Services is pleased to offer Child Care Facility Improvement grants. As a component of the [ND Child Care Initiative](#), the grant is designed to support the state's ongoing effort to stabilize the child care sector, ensuring all families have access to high-quality, affordable and available child care.

Grants will be awarded to HHS licensed family and group child care providers, child care centers, licensed preschool and school-age programs. The intent is to assist existing child care businesses with facility revitalization and can be used for costs related to meeting health, safety, and licensing needs. These grants are not for learning materials such as toys or manipulatives, may not be used to repay loans and cannot be used as a match to other state funds. Facilities must be located within North Dakota and be licensed by HHS for six or more months before applying. Facilities that received a Start Child Care or Grow Child Care Grant in the last two years are not eligible.

[Learn more](#)

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## CCDF State Plan - public comment period

The public hearing on North Dakota's triennial Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, May 30. The plan will be posted to the [Early Childhood Section](#) of the HHS website no later than Friday, May 10.



Public comment will open by May 10 and will close at midnight on May 30. Instructions to submit comments or attend the public hearing will be found on the website.

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## Introducing the Child Care Workforce Benefit pilot – going live June 1, 2024



We are excited to introduce the CCAP Child Care Workforce Benefit pilot, made possible by the [ND Child Care Initiative](#).

### What is it?

The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Child Care Workforce Benefit offers free child care tuition at the state max rate, with CCAP copay waived, to your child care staff working 25 or more hours a week

regardless of their household income. Staff must have children birth to age 12 enrolled in licensed or self-declaration child care to receive this benefit. Eligible employees may receive the benefit even if their children are enrolled in a program other than where the parent works. As an added benefit, these children will count in any additional state CCAP bonuses a program receives such as the infant/toddler bonus payment and tiered quality bonus payments.

### Why participate?

Attracting and retaining child care staff is critical to sustaining your business operations. If you are currently offering a tuition benefit to your employees, there is a loss of revenue for your program. The CCAP Child Care Workforce Benefit aims to alleviate financial burdens for child care programs and their staff with young

children. Even if you haven't offered a tuition benefit in the past, your eligible employees can now get tuition assistance through CCAP.

### How does it work?

Employees of HHS licensed child care programs who are interested in applying for the benefit through CCAP will need to provide a Child Care Workforce Benefit Verification (SFN 354) that must be completed by their employer and household income information for the current and prior month.

Although the benefit is available to all licensed child care program employees regardless of income, the employee's household income is required to process applications and to inform the effectiveness of the pilot.

CCAP applications submitted before June 1, 2024, will not be eligible for the Child Care Workforce Benefit pilot.

### Questions?

The [CCAP website](#) will be updated with more details and documents that can be shared with your staff on the Child Care Workforce Benefit pilot in the next few months.

For questions about the Child Care Workforce Benefit pilot not answered on the website, please email [ccap@nd.gov](mailto:ccap@nd.gov).

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## CCAP infant/toddler bonus payment

Beginning in July 2024, providers that participate in North Dakota's Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) will be eligible to receive an additional CCAP payment per CCAP infant and toddler. These funds are separate from the CCAP payment and do not need to be applied to a family's bill.

The first payments will be processed on July 5, 2024, and will include all approved June and July payments for infants and toddlers. These payments will continue to be processed once a month, on the fifth of every month and will be received within three to five days. Payment amounts will be 30% of the state max rate for each infant and/or toddler.

### Below is an example of a payment:

A child care provider who is licensed as a group has been approved for a full-time CCAP payment for a 12-month-old and a 2-year-old. This provider will be approved for an additional \$588 on July 5.

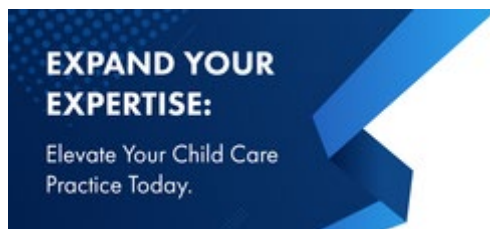
- Full-time state max rate for a 12-month-old is \$980, the infant bonus payment is \$294.
- Full-time state max rate for a 2-year-old is \$980, the toddler bonus payment is \$294.

The most updated provider rates [can be found here](#).

Infant/toddler bonus payments will be rounded down if the rate is not a full dollar amount.

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## Training guidebook and video



The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) has recently launched informational modules to help providers understand the requirements of accepting child care assistance and other commonly asked questions. In addition to the [modules](#), be sure to check out the [CCAP Provider](#)

[Guidebook](#) for even more information and resources.

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## Market Rate Survey gift card winners

### Congratulations to the winners of the gift card giveaway!

The following providers were randomly drawn to receive a \$500 gift card for participating in the 2023 Market Rate Survey:

**Amanda Nadeau**

Little Foot's Herd in West Fargo

**Monica Dragt**

Sunshine Street Child Care Preschool in West Fargo

**Aimee Jo Martinek**

Just Like Home Family Child Care in Bismarck



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## Change to 18-month eligibility

Families who receive [child care assistance](#) will now be approved for 18 months of eligibility for the program instead of the previous 12 months. This change became effective on April 1, 2024, for all applications and reviews.

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## Updating to child care assistance for summer

As we gear up for the summer season, we want to ensure that all families who need full-time care in the summer are well-prepared for that change. Families requiring full-time care during the summer should reach out to our Customer Support Center before the end of the school year to ensure there are no delays for child care assistance with the change from part-time care to full-time care.



Families can request this change through their Self-Service Portal.

[Learn how to complete this request](#)

Families can also contact the Customer Support Center through email or phone.

Contact the center at:

**Email:** [applyforhelp@nd.gov](mailto:applyforhelp@nd.gov)

**Phone:** 1-866-614-6005 or  
(701) 328-1000; 711 (TTY)

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## Learn more about renewing your child care license

Did you know that training and first aid/CPR cards are the most common items missing when a licensing specialist is reviewing applications for license renewal?

We want your renewal to be successful and help you avoid a lapse in operation. Learn more about license renewal in [this short video](#):



If you have questions about using the child care licensing system or run into issues, please contact your licensing specialist. They can help you troubleshoot and escalate issues to the data system vendor. [Find your licensing specialist here.](#)

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## Meet our licensing team



### **Kayla Ness - Early Childhood Licensing Specialist**

Prior to working for the HHS Early Childhood Section, Kayla worked for a Head Start/Early Head Start program for 10 years, starting as the administrative assistant and eventually working her way into the family services/enrollment manager position.

Kayla serves Trail, Steele, Griggs, Grand Forks, Nelson and Walsh counties.

What Kayla loves about her current role: “I love meeting new people and building relationships with the providers. I enjoy talking with the kids and finding out what

they like the most about their child care provider, it's usually the toys or the staff! There is never a dull moment in this position!"

**Fun Fact:** Kayla was born in Honolulu, Hawaii.



## Morgan Biss – Early Childhood Licensing Specialist

Morgan worked for Valley Senior Services in Lisbon, ND as a resource specialist before joining the HHS Early Childhood Section. Morgan provided senior citizens with resources to keep them in their homes and also provided transportation to appointments and meals on wheels.

Morgan serves Barnes, Dickey, LaMoure, Sargent and Ransom counties.

What Morgan loves about her current role: "I love being able to go into different spaces and meeting providers. It is always so fun to see how setups vary between each provider. It is great being able to see the kids interacting positively with the providers!"

**Fun Fact:** Morgan and her husband have been on six cruises! Their first cruise was in 2017 and the only year they missed was during the COVID-19 pandemic. Morgan and her husband love going on cruises and seeing different countries and islands. The picture above is of Morgan with her husband Issac and their baby Zane who is already 3 months old!

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## Monitoring isn't just for licensed child care programs. Did you know HHS gets monitored too?

The Federal Office of Child Care Monitoring conducts triennial monitoring of HHS to ensure compliance with Child Care and Development Fund regulations and our approved state plan, identify technical assistance needs and promising practices that can be shared with other states.

Our pre-visit phase began in late November when HHS Early Childhood and Economic Assistance began participating in planning calls and submitted documents for a desk review. The onsite visit phase is taking place this month.



When the federal monitoring team is onsite, they will be talking with state staff and local partners. They will be looking at consumer education, 12-month eligibility and policies for child care assistance, health and safety requirements for providers, pre-service/orientation and ongoing training for providers, inspections for licensed providers, background checks, and program integrity and accountability.

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## Administrative code “rules” update

You may remember, HHS proposed amendments to the Administrative Code and a public hearing and comment period was held in December. Some proposed amendments came on the heels of the last legislative session, such as the Mandated Reporting Training requirement. HHS reviewed each comment and provided a public response, abandoning the proposed fencing and insurance requirements. On March 5, updates to the Administrative Code were accepted by the Legislative Rules Committee chaired by Representative Brandy Pyle and became effective April 1, 2024. Information has been available on our website throughout the process.

[Learn more](#)

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## Leadership Opportunities:

HHS is looking for members to fill leadership roles as members of the Early Childhood Services Advisory Board and the North Dakota Early Childhood Council.

[Learn more about these opportunities](#)

The **Early Childhood Services Advisory Board** is composed of seven members appointed by the HHS Commissioner. The term of office is typically four years expiring on July 31. This board typically meets in person as needed. We need members representing the following licensed child care types/locations:

- center-based child care (western ND) - fill a term to July 31, 2025
- center-based child care (eastern ND) - fill a term to July 31, 2027



- family child care provider (statewide) - term Aug. 1, 2024 -July 31, 2028
- group child care provider (eastern ND) - term Aug. 1, 2024-July 31, 2028

To be considered, complete the [ECS Advisory Board application](#) and submit it to [dhsec@nd.gov](mailto:dhsec@nd.gov) no later than Wednesday, May 15.

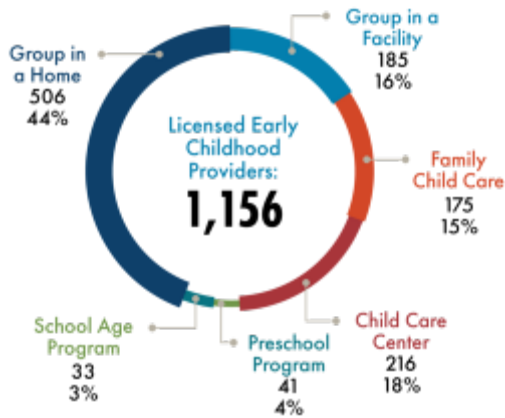
The **North Dakota Early Childhood Council** is accepting applications for members. This board is composed of statutory members as well as positions appointed by the Governor. At this time there is an opening for someone representing a non-religious-based provider of early childhood education. You can learn more about this appointment and apply by [visiting here](#).



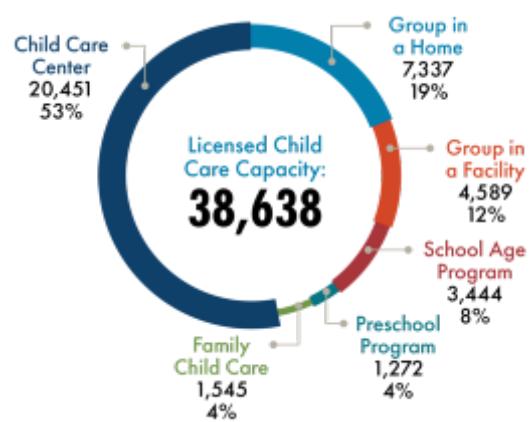
## Quarterly provider snapshot

(As of Apr. 3, 2024)

**Number of Licenses by Provider Type**



**Number of Licensed Slots by Provider Type**





[Learn More at HHS.ND.GOV](https://www.hhs.nd.gov)

