

# Early Care and Education Guide for Legislators

*Prepared by Minnesota's Future, a coalition of early  
childhood organizations*





## Dear Senators and Representatives:

This legislative guide is the product of a broad coalition of early care and education organizations, called Minnesota's Future, working together toward a common goal; to ensure that Minnesota children are nurtured, healthy, eager to learn and prepared to succeed in school AND in life.

The Minnesota's Future coalition includes early childhood organizations that represent young children, families, professionals and providers throughout the state of Minnesota.

The objective of the legislative guide is to be a resource for you as you develop and debate policies that support the ability of parents, providers of early care and education, and other community members to interact positively with children in stable and stimulating environments and help create a sturdy foundation for later school achievement, economic productivity, and responsible citizenship.

Please feel free to call on any of us with questions you may have about our programs, the field in general, research results, legislation, etc. We are happy to be a resource and look forward to working with you to implement policies that will improve children's development and readiness for school and for life.

## Minnesota's Future Allies

- Child Care Aware of Minnesota
- Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children / Minnesota School-Age Care Alliance
- Minnesota Child Care Association
- Minnesota Coalition for Targeted Home Visiting
- Minnesota Community Education Association
- Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education
- Minnesota Head Start Association
- Minnesota Licensed Family Child Care Association
- Parents as Teachers
- Think Small

## Our vision:

- Offer voluntary home visits and parent education to strengthen families and promote positive parent-child interaction, so children are safe, healthy, and ready for success in school and in life.
- Secure sufficient resources to ensure all children have the opportunity to receive high quality early learning services.
- Sustain implementation of an effective Parent Aware infrastructure that affirms our commitment to quality, accessible, and accountable early care and education.
- Support community partnerships to coordinate and leverage investments in children's and families' success.
- Encourage coordinated and sustained commitment on the part of state and local governments to strengthen our statewide system of child development and early learning services.



# Child Care Aware of Minnesota

Child Care Aware of Minnesota provides statewide leadership in shaping collaborations that collectively build a diverse, high quality child care system accessible for all Minnesota families through partnership with and in support of local resource and referral services.

## 2014 legislative priorities:

- Increase access to affordable, high-quality early care and education
- Build and sustain the quality of care in Minnesota
- Ensure that current state investments in early learning are maintained

## Areas of expertise:

- We work to connect parents with the type of child care their children need to grow and learn.
- We work alongside child care professionals and offer education and support so they may incorporate the latest best practices in caregiving, including implementation of the Parent Aware program.
- We stand with our community leaders to ensure that every child enters school ready to learn and continues to thrive throughout their years in child care.

## Populations served:

- **PARENTS:** 23,570 parents received referrals/ information on quality care by phone or through the statewide website.
- **PROFESSIONALS:** over 15,000 providers benefitted from training sessions, improvement and retention grants, and scholarships to complete credentials and/or higher education degrees.
- **COMMUNITY:** Parent Aware – Minnesota’s Quality Rating and Improvement System – completed its pilot phase in 4 communities with over 400 participants.

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# Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children & Minnesota School-Age Care Alliance

MnAEYC-MnSACA is a statewide organization that promotes quality in early care and education and out-of-school time programs and supports the leadership and development of early care and education and out-of-school time professionals.

## 2014 legislative priorities:

- Eliminate barriers so all children can attend high quality early childhood and school-age care programs
- Achieve continuity of care in the child care assistance program.
- Support training requirements in licensing that support best practices.
- Support the statewide expansion of Parent Aware

## Areas of expertise:

- Promote quality through our Accreditation Facilitation Projects
- Create and offer one-of-a-kind training opportunities
- Voice at the Capitol on issues critical to the field

## Populations served:

- Early Childhood Professionals (800 members statewide)
- School-Age Care Professionals (600 members statewide)

## Contact:

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[www.twitter.com/MnAEYCMnSACA](https://www.twitter.com/MnAEYCMnSACA)



# Minnesota Child Care Association

The Minnesota Child Care Association (MCCA) is a statewide organization representing licensed child care centers throughout Minnesota. MCCA advocates so that policy makers and elected officials understand the important role licensed child care centers play in supporting families and providing quality early learning opportunities for Minnesota's youngest learners.

## 2014 legislative priorities:

- Support access to high quality, affordable child care for all families
- Reform state licensing regulations for child care providers

## Areas of expertise:

- Child care assistance program- center based care
- Accreditation- center based care
- Licensing regulations- center based care
- Business of child care

## Populations served:

- Providers (225 child care centers represented statewide)

## Contacts:

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# Minnesota Coalition for Targeted Home Visiting

Maintain a cross sector advocacy coalition to influence and inform state policy and budget debates, and preserve public funding for home visiting.

## 2014 legislative priorities:

- Educate legislators on the importance of assuring access to voluntary home visits to strengthen families and promote positive parent-child interaction, so children are safe, healthy, and ready for success
- Preserve existing TANF funding for home visiting activities
- Educate legislators on pending reauthorization of federal (MIECHV) funding for home visiting services
- Support other organizations in their efforts to provide a system of supports for children and families

## Areas of expertise:

- Evidence-based home visiting to support and improve parenting skills and improve outcomes for children
- Impact of early childhood trauma (0-5 year-olds with an emphasis on 0-2) on children's future life success
- Building family relationships in the context of community
- Infant mental health

## Populations served:

- Families up to 200% of federal poverty level
- Families experiencing risk factors, such as adolescent parents, alcohol and drug abuse, mental health problems, and lack of education and basic needs
- Families whose children are at risk for child abuse/neglect and future juvenile delinquency and parents who experienced abuse and neglect as children themselves

## Contact:

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# Minnesota Community Education Association Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education

MCEA and MNAFEE provide the leadership, resources and support services needed to develop and sustain leading-edge Community Education programs and services.

## 2014 legislative priorities:

- Close the achievement gap with our earliest learners
- Expand learning opportunities beyond the school day/school year
- Improve Minnesota's workforce

## Areas of expertise:

- Long practiced philosophy of citizen and community engagement and collaborative partnerships, connecting schools and communities
- Statewide universal access for Early Childhood and Family Education, targeting those most at-risk
- Community Education programs available in all Minnesota school districts

## Populations served:

- Children, ages birth to 4 years (300,000)
- Adults (over 900,000 yearly)

## Contact:

**Wendy Webster**, MCEA Board President  
612-706-1166

**Robert Meyer**, MCEA Executive Director  
651-213-2601

**Linda Vukelich**, MNAFEE Administrative Director  
651.278.4241



# Minnesota Head Start Association, Inc.

The Minnesota Head Start Association (MHSA) is a non-profit 501c(3) organization that advocates for low-income families and inspires high standards of service for young children by providing innovative leadership and programs to help children, families, and communities reach their full potential.

## 2014 legislative priorities:

- Increase access to quality early care and education for children under 5
- Ensure that current state investments in early learning are maintained
- Support the development of Minnesota's Race to the Top Grant/Early Learning Challenge Grant

## Areas of expertise:

MHSA inspires high standards of service for young children and their families by:

- Being a trail blazer in holistic family and child development services,
- Creating quality early education training and support for staff and parents,
- Forging community collaborations to support the healthy development of at-risk children and families, and
- Educating policymakers to make the best decisions for this and future generations.

## Populations served:

- Children ( 14,898 funded enrollment)
- Families (15,461 served)
- Head Start Staff (3,490 employed)
- Volunteers (23,482 engaged annually)

## Contact:

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218-728-1091

**Kraig Gratke**, President  
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[www.mnheadstart.org](http://www.mnheadstart.org)

[www.facebook.com/mnheadstart](https://www.facebook.com/mnheadstart)



# Minnesota Licensed Family Child Care Association

The mission of MLFCCA is to support licensed family child care providers to achieve the highest standards of care for children in Minnesota's diverse licensed family child care homes and communities through education, resources, services, recognition and advocacy.

## 2014 legislative priorities:

- Ensure the Business Viability of the Licensed Family Child Care Industry
- Promote Quality through Accreditation and Mentoring
- Improve Investments in Early Childhood Education

## Areas of expertise:

- Accreditation: Family Child Care
- Mentoring to Promote School Readiness: Family Child Care
- Advocacy / Licensing: Family Child Care

## Populations served:

- Children: 94,500 Statewide
- Families: 37,800 Statewide
- Providers: 10,500

## Contact:

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**Parents as Teachers™**

# Parents as Teachers

Parents as Teachers is a worldwide leader in the delivery of evidence-based home visiting and parent engagement tools that demonstrate successful results in the school readiness, literacy, health and development of young children.

## 2014 legislative priorities:

- Build bi-partisan support for voluntary home visiting and early childhood development services
- To address Minnesota's critical need for increased access to high quality early care and education opportunities to ensure all children are prepared to succeed in school and in life

## Areas of expertise:

- Approved home visiting model meeting the evidence-based criteria of the Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting program (MIECHV).
- Developing research-informed curricula to support other EBHV programs such as Healthy Families America, Early Head Start and Head Start home base.
- Training professionals and advocating for children and families.
- Raising awareness and shaping policy around evidence-based practices that support the importance of enhancing school readiness by reaching children during the critical, formative years of life.
- Helping national, state and local decision-makers understand the important role parent education and family support play in a child's development.

## Populations served:

- Over 11 Minnesota organizations implementing the PAT evidence-based home visiting model, or trained in PAT evidence-informed curricula.
- Serving 800 families with 1,023 children ages prenatal to kindergarten-entry annually.
- Implemented by school districts/Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), Early Head Start, Head Start, Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) tribal governments and non-profit entities.

## Contact:

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# Think Small

Think Small has been dedicated since 1971 to advancing quality care and education of children in their crucial early years.

## 2014 legislative priorities:

- Support the MinneMinds policy agenda to expand access for 3- and 4-year-old children to high-quality early care and education programs by funding scholarships that can be used at high quality public and private programs
- Maintain investments in child care assistance programs and services
- Support robust funding levels for early childhood programming

## Areas of expertise:

With its deep connections and expertise, Think Small fills many critical roles, such as piloting the state's quality rating system (Parent Aware) and scholarship program, creating structures and pathways to bridge the early childhood and school systems, and developing public policy recommendations on behalf of children and families.

## Populations served:

Think Small programs and services are designed to support families in accessing quality child care for their children; to strengthen the ability of early care providers, and educators to meet the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development needs of children; and to advocate for early childhood system policies.

- 18,000 parents referred to child care annually
- 6,000 providers trained annually
- 6,000 advocates informed and engaged on policy

## Contact:

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# MINNESOTA'S FUTURE: AN EARLY CHILDHOOD AGENDA FOR THE YOUNGEST MINNESOTANS

	OUR VISION	PROGRESS TO DATE
<b>1. Offer home visits and parent education to every first-time parent to help get their children off to a great start.</b>	New and expectant parents will be offered voluntary home visiting and parent education that are matched to their needs and concerns. First time teen parents and other families under stress will be offered more intensive services.	<p>MN Future succeeded in preserving \$8 million in existing TANF funding for targeted home visitation, which was proposed to be cut during the 2010 Legislative session. We also supported ongoing base funding for Minnesota's Early Childhood Family Education program, which provides parent education through community education programs statewide.</p> <p>While not directly involved in the planning, MN Future is also in support of the Minnesota Department of Health's efforts to realize greater availability of targeted home visitation services delivered by local public health departments for pregnant mothers and first-time parents of newborns in targeted high needs communities. This work is supported by funding sources including \$8 million from the federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program established by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, and a \$1.7 million state allocation.</p>
<b>2. Double the number of at-risk children who participate in high quality early learning opportunities.</b>	By 2015, Minnesota should double the number of at-risk children participating in a variety of high quality early learning settings by expanding funding for high quality child care and pre-school programs— offering at least another 18,000 at-risk children access to high quality early care and education services.	<p>MN Future has played a significant role in moving the state forward in this area.</p> <p>MN Future, in partnership with the MinneMinds coalition, supported legislative efforts to fund early learning scholarships in the 2013 session. The legislature and Governor allocated \$43 million in 2014 and 2015 to fund approximately 8,000 scholarships over the two years.</p> <p>We advised and supported the state's application to the U.S. Department of Education, and in December 2011, Minnesota was awarded a \$45 million Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC). One cornerstone of this grant is to provide children with high needs access to high-quality early learning and development programs. The grant includes \$10 million to address this goal through scholarships for families who reside in four economically challenged "transformation zones" in the state.</p> <p>MN Future also supported legislative efforts in 2011 to create early learning scholarships for low-income families. During the 2012 session, the legislature allocated \$2 million in 2012 and \$3 million every year after for this effort. These funds will allow approximately 460 scholarships in 2012 and 690 scholarships in 2013 to be awarded in 10 counties/communities around the state.</p> <p>Finally, MN Future continues to push for no reductions in base funding for the existing early care and education infrastructure, including Head Start, School Readiness and Child Care Assistance Programs.</p>

	OUR VISION	PROGRESS TO DATE
<p><b>3. Implement a statewide quality rating and improvement system for early learning programs.</b></p>	<p>With a statewide quality rating and improvement system (QRIS):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents are empowered to become savvy consumers, and have easily accessible information about the quality of early care and education programs.</li> <li>• Programs and providers use one streamlined set of standards that are connected to supports and fiscal incentives to help them meet and maintain the standards.</li> <li>• Policymakers understand where and how to invest additional resources.</li> <li>• The public feels confident that their tax dollars are invested in quality opportunities.</li> </ul>	<p>In this policy area, the efforts of MN Future have helped to catalyze change for Minnesota families. Since the inception of MN Future, Parent Aware, a statewide quality rating and improvement system has been piloted and adopted for statewide expansion. MN Future provided input into the revision process for Parent Aware standards, as well as supporting its expansion. Parent Aware will be available statewide by 2015.</p> <p>Parent Aware is a central component of the state’s Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant and is interwoven with both the RTT-ELC scholarships and the state’s early learning scholarships. Families who wish to use these scholarships must do so at a program that has received a rating from Parent Aware.</p>
<p><b>4. Create community partnerships to coordinate and leverage investments in children’s and families’ success.</b></p>	<p>Building on their unique assets, communities throughout Minnesota will develop community partnerships to provide a family-friendly system of services and supports to children and families.</p>	<p>MN Future has sought to foster greater coordination between community partners to facilitate the construction of stronger support structures for increased quality in and access to early care and education—particularly for high needs children and families. Examples of the burgeoning commitment to community development include the four transformation zones funded with the RTT-ELC which include the Minneapolis and St. Paul Promise Neighborhoods, the White Earth Reservation, and Itasca County.</p> <p>In some Greater Minnesota communities such as Itasca County, early learning and development stakeholders have found ways to leverage the strong connections and manageable scale inherent in smaller communities, bringing together community partners, programs, and funding streams to create a unique service delivery model to meet the needs of young children in their community.</p>
<p><b>5. Appoint a cabinet-level position to lead a statewide system of child development and early learning services.</b></p>	<p>Minnesota’s Early Childhood Director will focus the state’s efforts to educate, care for and support our youngest citizens. Minnesota’s children deserve to have a smart, strong and well-led system that invests in their success and is one of the state’s top priorities.</p>	<p>The work of MN Future to ensure a state government focus on early childhood issues has been successful. While there is not a member of the cabinet with a portfolio solely dedicated to child development and early learning services, the efforts of MN Future have led to effective state government leadership through other governmental entities.</p> <p>In August of 2011, the Governor announced a new state commissioner level Children’s Cabinet to address the needs of Minnesota families, and a newly created Office of Early Learning was established. The work of the Children’s Cabinet and the Office of Early Learning has already benefitted low-income children in Minnesota. These bodies provided early education leaders in Minnesota a vehicle for collaboration on the successful proposal for the Early Learning Challenge Grant.</p> <p>In addition, the Early Learning Council has been re-vitalized since September of 2011, meeting with greater frequency and playing an important role advising the Governor’s office, the new Children’s Cabinet, and the Legislature.</p>