



Chapter 2: Services Provided

<http://ecls.mn.gov/#/ch2>

Minnesota children and their families may participate in one or more public Early Care and Education (ECE) services designed to meet their health, educational, social, and economic needs. ECE services are explored in the coming chapters, and data from these programs help us understand the successes, challenges, and opportunities the state faces to better serve our children.

CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

CCAP helps low-income families pay for child care so that parents can work or go to school. Families are allowed to choose the child care provider that best meets their needs. These may be licensed child care centers, licensed family child care homes, licensed exempt centers (i.e., school-age programs run by schools), or legally non-licensed providers.

EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION

ECFE provides parent education for parents (including expectant parents) and their children ages birth through third grade. ECFE focuses on strengthening families by enhancing the ability of all parents to provide the best possible environment for the healthy growth and development of their children. Since all parents need information and support to raise healthy children, ECFE is a universal program, and participation is not restricted by income level or special needs. ECFE recognizes that the needs of families can vary by location and works closely with public and private community organizations to create programs and connect families with resources that serve the needs of the families in their particular district.

EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION

ECSE provides supports and services to infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities and their families. Children and families are connected to ECSE services via referral from a variety of providers, including pediatricians, school districts, child care providers, and Head Start.

MINNESOTA FAMILY INVESTMENT PROGRAM AND DIVERSIONARY WORK PROGRAM

MFIP/DWP are economic supports to low-income families. MFIP/DWP have work and work preparation requirements intended to help parents secure and retain employment. Families must be income-eligible; these families are also eligible for CCAP.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

SNAP (formerly also known as food stamps) provides families with supplemental resources to purchase food for their households. Families must be income-eligible.

SCHOOL READINESS

The School Readiness program, or “Minnesota District Prekindergarten” programs, are intended to prepare children for kindergarten. A child is eligible to participate in a school readiness program if he or she: is at least three years old on September 1; has completed health and developmental screening within 90 days of program enrollment; and either qualifies for free or reduced-price lunch, is an English learner, is homeless, has an ECSE plan, has an identified learning risk factor identified through health and developmental screening, or is at risk by school district definition.

School Readiness Plus (SRP) is a fairly new early learning program, created in the 2017 legislative session, and targeted to four-year-olds demonstrating one or more risk factors. Voluntary prekindergarten (VPK) prepares children for kindergarten success. Funding allows school districts, and charter schools with MDE-recognized early learning programs, to incorporate a VPK program into their E-12 system. A child who is four years old on September 1 is eligible to participate free of charge.

EARLY LEARNING SCHOLARSHIPS⁵

Scholarships provide funding to increase access for three- and four-year-old children with the highest needs to high-quality early childhood programs with the goal of improving their school readiness. To be eligible, a program must be rated through Parent Aware, Minnesota’s quality rating and improvement system. Children age birth to

age two are eligible if they meet any of the following criteria: child of a teen parent, currently in foster care, in need of child protective services, experienced homelessness in the last 24 months, or has a sibling awarded a scholarship and attending the same program.

READ MORE ABOUT MDE EARLY LEARNING

<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/early/>

The Minnesota Department of Education's division of Early Learning Services supports schools, communities, and districts to implement inclusive and comprehensive prenatal through 3rd grade systems aligned with [World's Best Workforce](https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/wbwf/) (<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/wbwf/>). MDE's Early Learning Services division vision is that all Minnesota children are prepared for kindergarten, proficient in 3rd grade reading, and prepared for life-long learning. To support this vision, the following strategies are implemented by Early Learning Services:

- Enhance system of prenatal through Grade 3 leadership.
- Expand access to high-quality education, services, and instructional time for all children.
- Strengthen and align instruction, assessment, and curriculum.
- Support evidence-based practices for family and community engagement.
- Ensure a highly skilled workforce.
- Use data to inform policy, planning, practice, and professional development.



KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ Minnesota has a number of funding supports and programming options for young children and families. Some are targeted; some are an option for every child.

- ✓ The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) helps low-income families pay for child care.
- ✓ Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is a universal program that provides education for families on enhancing the environment for child healthy growth and development.
- ✓ Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) provides supports and services to young children with disabilities and their families.
- ✓ The Minnesota Family Investment Program and Diversionary Work Program (MFIP/DWP) provides economic support to help parents secure and retain employment.
- ✓ The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides supplemental resources for low-income families to purchase food.
- ✓ School Readiness is a district-implemented preschool program for children with specific needs.
- ✓ Early Learning Scholarships increase access to high-quality Parent Aware-rated programs statewide for children with the highest needs.

⁵ For those interested in learning more about Early Learning Scholarships in their area, visit the Early Learning Scholarships page (<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/early/sch/index.htm>) on the Minnesota Department of Education website.



End of Chapter 2