



FINAL 2024 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The 2024 Legislative session concluded on Monday, May 20. While not a traditional budget year, there were still gains for child care and early learning across all programs, sectors, and focus areas. Six omnibus bills included policy and/or funding that will impact our field.

Below is a recap of the elements included in each of the primary omnibus bills; we have also included links to the final bill language for anyone who wants to read more. Thank you to everyone who followed along this year. We will see everyone back here next session which convenes on January 14, 2025.

HF 5237- Children & Families, Licensing, Education

Child Care Program Support and Appropriations

- Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate funding for early educators
- Funded at \$500,000 in one-time funds for 2025
- Office of the Family Child Care Ombudsperson ongoing funding to support providers with licensing, compliance, and other needs.
- Funded at \$350,000 per year/\$700,000 biennium ongoing beginning in 2025
- Child Care Facility Improvement Grants
- Funded at \$1.125 million in one-time funds in 2025

Voluntary Prekindergarten

Increases the number of voluntary prekindergarten (VPK) and school readiness plus (SRP) seats from 7,160 to 12,360 for fiscal year 2025 (an increase of 5,200 seats for that fiscal year).

Early Learning Scholarships (beginning January 1, 2026):

- Directs the commissioner to make scholarship payments to early care and learning programs before or at the beginning of the delivery of services, rather than after services have been provided
- Directs the commissioner to implement a process for transferring scholarship awards between programs when initiated by a scholarship recipient.
- Requires that the department have information technology systems that support specified functions in place by January 1, 2026, and directs the department to consider integration with the Great Start Scholarships program when creating these systems.
- Allows the commissioner to use up to \$12 million in early learning scholarship funds to create information technology systems for the program, and up to \$2.4 million annually for maintenance.

- Directs the commissioner to annually report to the legislature on the use of scholarship funds for any activities other than providing scholarships to children.
Head Start programs: Beginning in fiscal year 2025, provides up to 2 percent of the Head Start state appropriation for administrative costs.

Children, Youth, and Families Intergovernmental Advisory Committee

Establishes an intergovernmental advisory committee to advise the commissioner of children, youth, and families on planning, funding, evaluating, and providing services to children, youth, and families. Gives each of the state's federally recognized Tribal Nations the option to participate in the committee.

Ombudsperson for Family Child Care Providers:

- Clarifies that the ombudsperson for family child care providers must annually report to the commissioner of children, youth, and families rather than the commissioner of human services.
- Directs the commissioner of children, youth, and families to provide information on licensing actions issued to family child care providers to the ombudsperson for family child care providers.
- Clarifies that the commissioner of children, youth, and families, rather than the commissioner of human services, must post information about the ombudsperson for family child care providers on the department's website.

HF 4024 - Omnibus Higher Education Bill

Head Start on Campus

Provides funds to the Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities to partner with the National Head Start Association and the Association of Community College Trustees to establish Head Start centers on college campuses. *Included at \$500,000 in one-time funding for FY 2025.*

SF 4929 - Omnibus Energy and Agriculture Bill

Farm to School

Modifies the farm-to-school program requirements to include child care facilities. This will provide increased access to food and the purchase of equipment and agricultural products. Includes centers, schools, and family child care programs, so long as they participate in the National School Lunch Program or the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Included at \$1.275M for FY 2025, with \$150K of that set aside for a statewide coordinator for the program (not EC specific). Ongoing funding of \$1.274M in future years.

SF 5289 - Omnibus Jobs/Workforce Bill

Workforce Funding

Funds an additional grant to WomenVenture for their work with child care. Included at \$1 million in one-time funds for FY 2025.

HF 5216 - Omnibus Judiciary Bill

Protections for Family Child Care in HOA Settings

- A private entity (HOA-controlled communities, condo associations, etc.) must not prohibit, unreasonably restrict or refuse to permit the dwelling owner from providing child care under a family and group family child care provider license.

- It also must not impose a fee, assessment, or other cost upon the owner of a dwelling in connection with providing child care.

HF 5237 & SF 4699 - Child Care Licensing Changes

Child Care Weighted Risk System

- Directs the commissioner of children, youth, and families to develop and implement a weighted risk system that provides a tiered enforcement framework for child care licensing (for both family child care providers and child care centers).
- Directs the commissioner to provide documented technical assistance to a child care license holder in place of a correction order under specified circumstances.
- Provides that documented technical assistance states the conditions that violate a law or rule, references the law or rule violated, and explains remedies for correcting the violation. Prohibits the commissioner from publicly publishing documented technical assistance on the department's website.

Fair Hearing Allowed for Providers

Allows a child care provider who accepts child care assistance to request a fair hearing if DHS or a county agency ends a provider's rate differential for being accredited or for having a three- or four-star rating under Parent Aware.

Notice to Providers

- Changes the timing requirements for the notices that must be sent to child care providers before a county agency or DHS takes specified actions.
- Provides that a notice must include the right to appeal if a county issues a payment and the provider disagrees with the amount of the payment. Requires that a provider's request to appeal a payment amount must be received no later than 30 days after the date a county sends a payment notice to the provider.
- Makes technical changes to allow child care providers to receive specified child care assistance notices through the provider and licensing hub.

Exemptions from Immunizations:

- The exemption to immunization based on the conscientiously held beliefs of a parent or guardian does not apply to a child enrolling or enrolled in a licensed child care center or a licensed family child care program if the center or program adopts an immunization policy.
- Allows a licensed child care center or a licensed family child care program to adopt an immunization policy that prohibits a child over two months of age from enrolling in or remaining enrolled in the center or program if the child is not immunized or exempt from immunization as specified.

Training

- Individuals who work in licensed family child care settings who are required to retake pediatric first aid training every two years must do so within 90 days of the date the training was previously taken.
- Individuals who work in licensed family child care settings who are required to retake pediatric CPR training every two years must do so within 90 days of the date the training was previously taken.

Licensing data

E-mail addresses of license holders, certification holders, and former licensees are considered public data, except for the email addresses for family child foster care providers. Effective January 1, 2025.

Reusable water bottles or cups

Allows a licensed child care center to provide water to children in reusable water bottles or reusable cups if the child brings home the water bottle or cup.

Stairways

Modifies requirements governing stairways in licensed family child care homes and moves the requirements from rules to statute.

Child Care Centers; Risk Reduction Plan

A licensed child care center's risk reduction plan must include information about how preschool children are supervised when using an individual, private restroom within the classroom.

Reporting of Suspected Fraudulent Activity

Requires that the name of a person who reports suspected fraudulent activity in the child care assistance program is kept confidential and provides that the subject of the report may compel disclosure of the reporter's name only in specified circumstances.

Changes to Certified/License-Exempt Centers

- Requires that an "authorized agent" in a license-exempt certified child care center complete a background study. Makes the section effective October 1, 2024.
- Adds age definitions of Infant, Toddler, Pre-schooler, School-Age child to statute
- Requires that certified, license-exempt child care centers maintain a record for each child enrolled in the program. Specifies the information the record must contain and provides that some of the information (immunization information, medication administration documentation, and allergy documentation) must be accessible during all hours of operation to staff.
- Gives DHS the authority to issue a conditional certification to a certified, license-exempt child care center
- Clarifies that a certified, license-exempt child care center must designate a staff person to fulfill the director's duties when the director is absent. Specifies that the staff person must be at least 18 years old and must be aware of the designation and associated responsibilities but does not need to meet the required qualifications for directors. Makes the section effective October 1, 2024.
- Makes conforming changes related to adding definitions to the chapter of statute governing certified, license-exempt child care centers.
- Makes conforming changes related to adding definitions to the chapter of statute governing certified, license-exempt child care centers.
- Provides that staff in certified, license-exempt child care centers must complete first aid and CPR training within 90 days after the first date of direct contact with a child.
- Provides that staff in certified, license-exempt child care centers must complete child development and learning training within 90 days after the first date of direct contact with a child. Makes the section effective October 1, 2024.
- Applies statute governing non-maltreatment mistakes for licensed child care centers to certified, license-exempt child care centers and makes conforming changes. Makes the section effective October 1, 2024.

Parent Aware

Provides that the requirement for all licensed child care programs to receive at least a one-star rating under Parent Aware (unless a program opts out) goes into effect on July 1, 2026.

Administrative Disqualification of Child Care Providers Caring for Children Receiving Child Care Assistance

Provides that when the commissioner initiates an administrative disqualification for a child care provider that accepts child care assistance, the commissioner must send written notice using a signature-verified confirmed delivery method.

