

# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PARTICIPATION

## for children in foster care

In consultation with the Minnesota Departments of Human Services and Education, researchers at the University of Minnesota conducted a study on participation in early childhood education (ECE) programs for young children aged 0-5 in foster care in Minnesota.

In 2023, study researchers conducted focus groups and interviews with 69 foster and biological families, child welfare workers, and ECE program administrators across Minnesota to better understand the barriers and facilitators to ECE participation for young children in foster care.



**Less than half (43.7%) of young children in foster care in Minnesota participated in ECE in 2019.**

**Participants also emphasized facilitating factors that support participation and engagement in ECE for children in foster care.**

Child welfare workers are often the first point of contact for hearing about ECE benefits and programming.

Child welfare workers can help connect families to information on priority seats in ECE programs and scholarships.

Child welfare and ECE staff support can help increase awareness of ECE for families and support a smooth enrollment process.

Existing federal and state policies that prioritize children in foster care for ECE program seats and scholarships can help improve ECE access.

Visit <https://z.umn.edu/94tj> for more information!

Center for Advanced Studies  
in Child Welfare

**CEED** | Center for Early Education  
and Development

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

**Existing research suggests that participation in ECE positively impacts:**

- School readiness and achievement
- Cognitive and social-emotional health and development
- Parenting practices and school involvement

ECE is especially important for children in foster care, who are at greater risk of academic and developmental challenges, and adverse outcomes.

**Study participants shared several barriers to ECE participation:**

- Lack of ECE program availability
- Scheduling conflicts and transportation challenges
- Lack of information about ECE programs and scholarships
- Lack of funding for ECE programs

**How Can We IMPROVE ECE ACCESS for Children in Foster Care?**

**PRIORITIZE RELATIONSHIP BUILDING** between child welfare and ECE staff and systems, as well as with community-based programs.

**STRATEGIZE INFORMATION SHARING** by creating “one-stop shop” materials (e.g. brochures, pamphlets, etc.) and maintaining up-to-date information on local (e.g. county) resources and availability.

**ESTABLISH FOLLOW-UP MECHANISMS** by checking in with families after initial contact so they don't get “lost in the cracks.”

