



Early Childhood Initiative



OVERVIEW

west central Minnesota

“We want to give our children the best possible start toward a healthy life of learning, achieving and succeeding.”

Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative mission

The six Minnesota Initiative Foundations—including West Central Initiative—formed the Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative (ECI) based on ground-breaking studies that show how strengthening early care and education for young children and their families is the most important investment communities can make for the future.

Think about it: Our young children are our future employers, workers, government officials, medical staff, engineers, parents, taxpayers, homeowners ... the list goes on. If we start now to make sure they grow into strong, healthy, community-minded adults, we build the foundation for a strong, healthy society and workforce.

Through the research, the ECI identified and planned strategies around five key components to raising healthy, thriving children:

- Strong families
- Engaged community members
- Effective and coordinated early care and education
- Early learning opportunities
- Ready schools

Building nurturing communities of thriving children

The ECI works by bringing people and organizations together to form communities that support the well-being of our youngest children. There are nearly 90 communities throughout Minnesota. West Central Initiative supports coalition building in 10 community sites throughout west central Minnesota. These ECI communities seek the involvement of parents, senior citizens, educators, business and community leaders, the faith community, policy makers and all citizens interested in making their community a nurturing environment for young children and their families. The ECI is not about specific programs or grant awards, it's about joining together in a long-term effort to make young children a real priority. The ECI is about working with others to assess current early childhood efforts, figuring out what more your community can do and then doing it.

Each ECI team is lead by a coordinator who facilitates the process of identifying, planning and implementing strategies specific to helping their communities become more nurturing places for young children and their families.

10 ECI communities:

- Becker County ECI
- Clay County ECI
- Douglas County ECI
- Grant County ECI
- Otter Tail County ECI
- Pope County ECI
- Stevens County ECI
- Traverse County ECI
- White Earth ECI
- Wilkin County ECI

Funds leveraged for west central Minnesota since 2001:

More than \$7 million

Regional projects:

- Early Childhood Dental Network
- School Readiness
- Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative
- Family Economic Success Child Care Workgroup
- Home visiting



Confirmed in compliance with national standards for U.S. Community Foundations

West Central Initiative is an equal opportunity provider, lender and employer.

