



Early Childhood Initiative

The Early Childhood Initiative works to give children the best start for a lifetime of learning, growth, and success.

Growing Futures & Strengthening Communities



Like a pebble creating ripples in a lake, our youngest children are the start of something beautiful that impacts entire communities.

SINCE 2012



30+

Mobile Outreach Dental Clinic sites established.



\$449K+

In loans distributed to child care businesses.



\$3.3M+

In grants to support early care & education for kids under five.

We launched the Early Childhood Initiative (ECI) in 2002, alongside the other Minnesota Initiative Foundations, with support from the McKnight Foundation. This statewide effort focuses on strengthening resources for children from prenatal to kindergarten, ensuring they have the support they need to grow, learn, and thrive.

Today, the initiative includes ten ECI coordinators—one for each of our nine counties and White Earth Nation. While coordinators may live in specific communities, they support children and families across their entire county. They bring together parents, educators, businesses, and local leaders to identify needs, plan solutions, and create positive change for young children and their families.

By working together, we can build a future where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential—because when our youngest community members succeed, we all do.



Learn More

Visit our website to explore how the Early Childhood Initiative is making a difference and how you can get involved!

Networks & Focus Areas

Early Childhood Dental Network

- Improving oral health for children ages 0–5.
- Increasing access to dental care.
- Focusing on families enrolled in Minnesota Health Care Programs or those without insurance.

Early Childhood Mental Health Network

- Reducing stigma around mental health for all.
- Providing training for parents, educators, and caregivers.
- Developing innovative ways to connect with children needing additional developmental support.

Access to Early Care & Education Services

- Addressing child care shortages and building strong local systems.
- Supporting high school and adult learners to pursue early childhood careers.
- Providing connections and resources to child care providers.
- Advocating for better pay and benefits for early care.

Together for Children

The Early Childhood Initiative connects local communities with regional, state, and national leaders to create meaningful change and ensure the success of young children and their families.



Marsha Erickson

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"Every child deserves the strongest start possible, and it's been our passion to help build communities where that can happen. Through collaboration, advocacy, and support, we've seen how investing in early childhood shapes a stronger future for our entire region."

