

Over the past few weeks I have had the pleasure of meeting with many of our local Childcare providers. I have learned from these experts concerning the greatest needs of our County related to Childcare. Thank you to everyone that welcomed a meeting with me. The bottom line is that our current providers are doing all that they can and are at the maximum allowed child slots. We simply need more Childcare providers. With that said, I met with Central Lakes College and discussed their Early Childhood Education opportunities. They have provided me with some great information on opportunities for people to become licensed childcare providers.

Early Childhood Education Certificate: (one semester)

The goal of the certificate is to get students out into the workforce quickly with a base of early childhood knowledge that supports effective, intentional positive practice. Students will gain 60 hours of on-site lab experience with children.

Early Childhood Education Diploma: (2 semesters)

This is a good option for full- and part-time students, whether they are new to the field or want to work toward higher qualifications in their career. Students will gain at least 255 hours of on-site work experience with children aged birth to 3rd grade. This degree stacks into the two-year pathway degree.

Early Childhood Education Transfer Pathway A.S. Degree (4 semesters)

This advanced degree allows for careers as a paraprofessional or a lead teacher position in a childcare center. Students who complete this degree can also transfer to a university to complete their Birth to Grade 3 Minnesota Teacher License. Students will gain at least 255 hours of on-site work experience with children aged birth to 3rd grade. This degree transfers into Minnesota State universities that offer teacher licensure degrees in early childhood birth to third grade.

“Aitkin County is proactively creating grant programs that provide support for our existing childcare providers,” said Mark Jeffers, Aitkin County Economic Development Coordinator. “We are also working to increase childcare slots by attracting new childcare providers to our area.

Aitkin County will assist with the licensing process from start to finish. There are pre-licensing and annual training requirements. There are also potential start-up costs for things such as toys, cots, cribs, fence, etc. and understand these things can be costly. We connect you with resources and organizations that administer grants to try and alleviate some of those costs.

If you have dreamed of being a childcare provider and are interested in learning more about family child care licensing, please reach out to [Brenda Butterfield](#) at Aitkin County Health and Human Services at 218-927-7200.