

# Early Learning Scholarships

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## Early Learning Scholarships help Minnesota families pay for quality early care and education.

Quality early learning experiences are a great use of public dollars. Children who receive quality early care and education (ECE) not only are more likely to be ready for kindergarten,<sup>1</sup> but they are also less likely to need special education services<sup>2,5</sup> and more likely to graduate high school.<sup>3,4</sup> They are also more likely to attend post-high school training or college,<sup>6</sup> work in higher skilled jobs,<sup>6</sup> earn more income,<sup>4</sup> and have better health outcomes.<sup>7</sup> There are short- and long-term benefits for both children and society when we make investments into quality ECE.

## Why are Early Learning Scholarships a great way to fund quality ECE?

- **Starts Early.** Children can start receiving quality ECE at birth. Starting earlier is better for children!<sup>3,8</sup>
- **Flexibility.** Parents can use scholarships at any Parent Aware participating program. Options for families include:
  - » Licensed Child Care Center
  - » Licensed Family Child Care
  - » School-Based Programs
  - » Head Start/Early Head Start
  - » Tribal Programs

## Who can get an Early Learning Scholarship?

Children from birth to kindergarten entry in families earning lower incomes can get a scholarship. Children in recognized priority groups are awarded scholarships first. Some priority groups are:

- Children with a parent in a substance use or mental health treatment program.
- Children in foster care.
- Children who have experienced homelessness in the last 24 months.

4,600

Children who qualify for scholarships are on the waitlist.\*

\*Statewide waitlist as of December 31, 2024, Pathway I only. Information provided by the MN Dept. of Children, Youth, and Families.

## Fast Facts\*

94%

of scholarship recipients attend a high-quality program!  
(Parent Aware 4 star)

47%

of recipients are in Greater MN

53%

are in the seven-county Metro

15,000

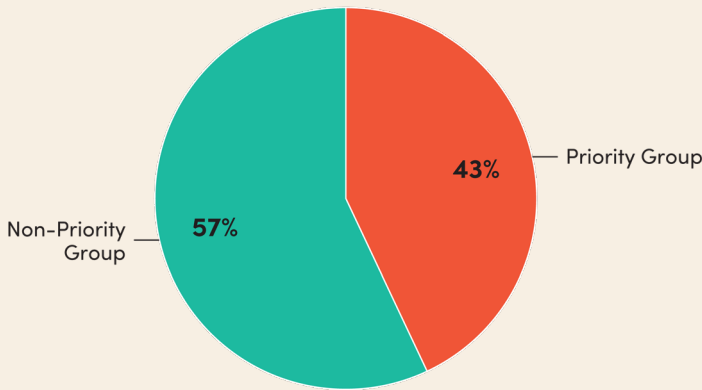
eligible Minnesota children need funding for Early Learning Scholarships+

\*Preliminary FY2024 data provided by the MN Dept. of Children, Youth, and Families; includes recipients of both Pathway I and Pathway II Early Learning Scholarships.

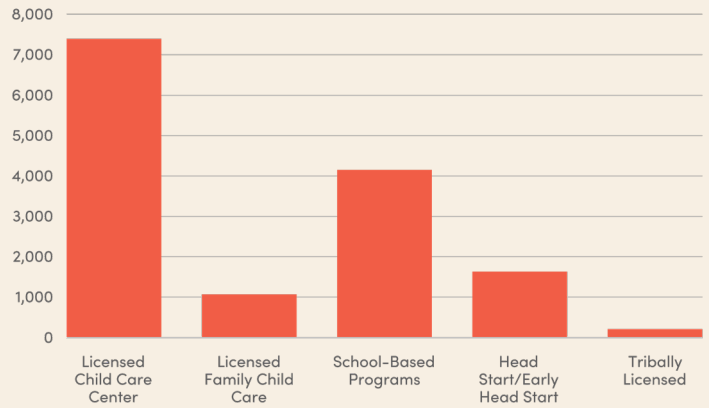
+ Think Small calculation based on census data and information on existing public investments.

# Early Learning Scholarships are helping Minnesota children get quality ECE!

Priority Group Status for Early Learning Scholarship Recipients

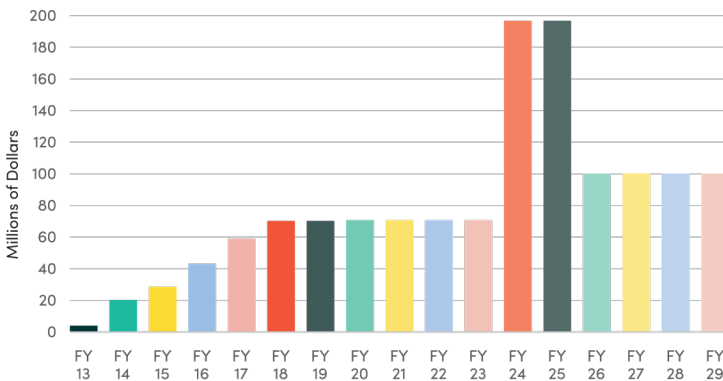


Type of Program Chosen by Family

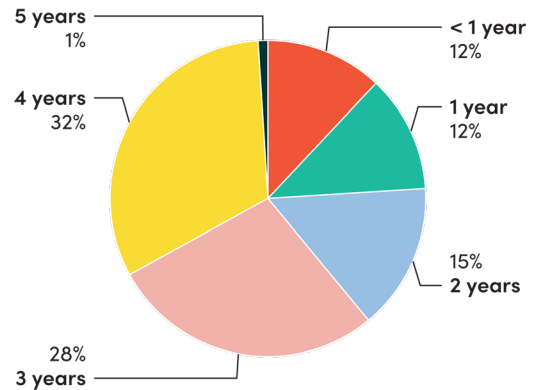


**Note:** Preliminary FY2024 data provided by the MN Dept. of Children, Youth, and Families. Data includes recipients of both Pathway I and Pathway II Early Learning Scholarships.

Early Learning Scholarships Funding by Fiscal Year



Early Learning Scholarship Recipients by Age



**Note:** Preliminary FY2024 data provided by the MN Dept. of Children, Youth, and Families. Data includes recipients of both Pathway I and Pathway II Early Learning Scholarships.

## Too many Minnesota families are waiting.

In the midst of Minnesota's severe child care crisis, **we must ensure that all eligible children receive Early Learning Scholarships.** This will help more struggling families afford child care, enable more parents to remain at work to ease Minnesota's severe labor shortage, allow more financially fragile child care providers to keep their doors open to families, and ensure that vulnerable young children get the quality early learning they need to succeed in school, work, and life.

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