

Family, Friend and Neighbor Provider Grant Program: Supporting Children with Quality Care and Learning

Every Minnesota child deserves access to high quality care and early learning experiences. The high costs of child care and shortage of child care slots means more families are turning to family, friends and neighbors for care. In addition, many working families across all income levels prefer having their young children cared for by someone they know, trust and shares their culture and family values. Unfortunately, the lack of early child development knowledge, resources and support for family, friends and neighbors providing care in communities that struggle to find affordable, quality care is increasing inequities in education and health outcomes in Minnesota's children.

Estimates of Family Friend and Neighbor (FFN) Care* in Minnesota:

- Nearly 40% of children age 2 and younger,
- 25% of children age 3 to 5, and
- 20 percent of children age 6 to 12.
- 240,000 children in total

* Use of FFN care as their only or primary child care arrangement. (Friend, Family and Neighbor (FFN) Care, Wilder Research, 2016).

Certain families are hit harder by the cost and shortage of childcare:

- Low-income families
- Children with special needs
- Racial, Indigenous and ethnic minority families
- Immigrant and refugee families
- Single-parent families
- Parents working non-traditional hours.
- Families across Greater Minnesota, in particular in rural communities

Community-driven Solutions:

The Family, Friend and Neighbor Provider Grant funds can help equalize access to quality care and early learning that families want but may not be able to get. The grant program

- Promotes social emotional learning and health development,
- Early literacy with a focus on school readiness, and
- Fosters community partnerships among families and care providers.

Friend, Family & Neighbor Grant Program resources are used to provide:

- Training and resources on health, safety, nutrition and early learning
- Resources on early childhood screening
- Resources to access community-led learning opportunities through libraries museums and local businesses
- Information to care providers on licensing and potential business practices

FFN Networks Make a Difference

One member of a local FFN network says that before participating, she didn't know anything about quality care. The parents say: "you can entertain them by giving them the tablet. They will be happy and won't bother you." And that's what she would do --just give them the tablet and let them entertain themselves.

Now after coming to the FFN Network, she teaches the children to know the colors, the ABCs, she works with them to eat healthy, and she focuses on showing them manners. In addition, La Red has helped her create rules for her work, validate her time and labor, and establish a regular routine.

Model Solutions Exist:

Effective, low-cost local models of FFN support have been functioning for several years and have been incredibly successful. This grant program would build upon their success and make these strategies available to more FFN care providers across the Minnesota*.

*Functioning FFN networks exist in Bloomington/Richfield, Dakota and Scott counties. https://youtu.be/zvo_6buneEo.

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