

Caring and Sharing

New Providers

June 2025

- Nisreen Bader
Woodbury
- Mai Xiong
Woodbury

July 2025

- Hailey Chumley
Lake Elmo
- Isabelle Jantzen
Stillwater

Provider Milestones

5 Years

- Katie Frid

10 Years

- Kia Garofano

25 Years

- Charlene Bergstrom

30 Years

- Kathleen Schute

35 Years

- Cheryl Quast



Community Services
Child Care Licensing
14949 62nd Street N.
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[Email](#) | [Website](#)

Provider of the Year

The 2025 Provider of the Year for Washington County is **Jen Sterner** of Lake Elmo, Minn. Jen was recognized by the Washington County Board of Commissioners on July 8, 2025.

Each year Washington County celebrates family child care providers for excellence in providing family child care. Families in the community nominate providers then the applications are reviewed and the honoree chosen by a committee.

Jen runs a half-day nature preschool in a quiet residential neighborhood in Lake Elmo on just over one acre of land. Jen has a double bachelor's degree from Winona State University in Early Childhood and Elementary Education and a master's degree from St. Mary's University. Starting her preschool allowed Jen to work with young children while combining her passion for environmentalism, outdoor recreation, and play. She has an outdoor classroom and a fully devoted indoor preschool space filled with opportunities for art, movement, music, building, dramatic play, reading, cooking/baking, and more. Jen has a wonderful location backing up to the Lake Elmo Park Preserve which offers additional land for exploration.

At Sunrise Nature Preschool, Jen follows the natural curiosity and interest of the children as well as the seasons of Minnesota as their learning guide. Some topics they have explored include: Butterflies, pumpkins, harvest, snow, animal signs, gardening, streams, weather, woods, animal care, and so much more!

Jen wrote that she believes children learn best through play and by giving plenty of opportunities for independence, creative problem solving, and a safe place to make

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The Washington County Board of Commissioners recognized Jen Sterner as the county's 2025 Family Child Care Provider of the Year. The county commissioners with Jen and her child care families are pictured above.

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and learn from mistakes as well as abundant opportunities to form meaningful relationships. She wants every child that leaves her program to feel empowered by and grounded in the idea that they are capable, lovable, and worthy just as they are.

Congratulations Jen Sterner and thank you for your excellent care of the children in your program and supporting local families.

Nominations for next year's provider of the year are now being accepted. Providers can be nominated by using the [online nomination form on our Child Care Licensing website](#).

Left to right: Commissioner Karwoski, Commissioner Bigham, Commissioner Cox, provider Jen Sterner, Commissioner Miron, and Commissioner Clasen.



Regional Grants

Regional grants are intended to support, sustain, and increase the quality of child care programs. Any program that is actively providing early learning services to children ranging in age from birth to school-age and is currently licensed may apply for this grant.

The application period for regional grants is open September 1 - 25.

Think Small administers the regional grants for Washington County.

To inquire about regional grants, you can [email their grant administrator](#) or call 651-366-6797.

[View instructions to apply for a grant.](#)

Provider Hub Update

The State of Minnesota continues to prepare the [Provider Hub](#) and Agency Hub for family child care (FCC) providers and county licensing staff.

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) previously communicated that family child care licensing would tentatively launch in the Provider Hub the summer of 2025. This timeframe has been adjusted to support successful experiences for providers and licensors. *The current date for launch is being determined.*

DCYF has decided to pilot the Provider Hub with the following counties: Becker, Cass, Crow Wing, Douglas,

Hubbard, Morrison, Stevens, Todd, and Wadena. *After the pilot, the Provider Hub will go live by region.*

Providers will be notified well in advance of when they can begin using the Provider Hub for licensing.

The Provider Hub team will offer an in-person support event for providers in each region when their launch occurs. Providers who have families on the child care assistance program will be notified via email about setting up an account for that program.

Save the Date

October is Fire Safety Month!



Washington County Licensing has been collaborating with the state fire marshal for a training for both family child care and family foster care providers. This training will be both informative and interactive. The presentation will cover smoke alarms, egress windows, fire extinguishers, recognizing fire hazards, and more. *Fire extinguisher servicing will be available.*

Thursday, Oct. 9 | 6-7:30 p.m.

Free | 1.5 credit hours

Look for a poster in the coming weeks.

Early Childhood Connector Newsletter and Call

As a reminder, the Early Childhood Connector is a cross-agency resource available to anyone interested in asking questions or learning more about state information and resources for child care and early childhood education.

Calls happen quarterly and are hosted online via Webex. If you can't attend the call, it is recorded. Questions and answers are available in a document as well. Spanish, Hmong, and Somali translations are available.

A newsletter is sent quarterly to subscribers and early educators who can submit questions to the state to be answered during Early Childhood Connector Calls.

Questions are due two weeks before the call.

Next call date: Tuesday, Oct. 21 | 7-8 p.m.

[Access the meeting using this link.](#)

Subscribe to the newsletter and learn more on the [Early Childhood Connector website.](#)

Craft Supply Swap



refresh your craft supply stash or declutter it? Come to our Craft Supply Swap. Who knows what you'll find!

This free, drop-in craft supply swap is "while supplies last." What will be available depends on community donations.

Saturday, Oct. 4 | 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Wildwood Library, Mahtomedi

To donate: Drop supplies off at Wildwood Library during open hours beginning Monday, Sept. 22 through Thursday, Oct. 2. All art and craft supplies in good condition will be accepted, including yarn and fabric. No aerosols, hazardous materials, food containers, or open containers of paint or glue, please.

Do you have craft supplies left over from a project you didn't finish or from one that you didn't start? Want to

Leftover supplies will be donated locally or used for future library programming.

Emergency Plan Update Reminder

All providers are required to complete the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) Child Care Emergency Plan during the 2025 calendar year.

- This new plan was available April of 2024.
- The plan does not need to be given to parents, but the plan needs to be available for them to review if requested.
- All staff including second adults, substitutes, and helpers need to review the plan annually and document (in writing) they have done so.
- Emergency plans still need to be reviewed annually by the provider and updated if needed. The State of

Minnesota has created a planning document called “Keeping Kids Safe” which can help providers when completing their emergency plan.

- Licensors will expect providers to have the new plan completed when you have your visit in 2026. **You do not need to send the plan to your licensor.**

View:

- [Keeping Kids Safe: Child Care Provider Emergency Planning Guide-DHS-7414](#)
- [Child Care Emergency Plan-DHS-7955](#)

Substitutes and Emergency Replacements

What is a substitute in a family child care program?

A substitute is an adult who in the license holder’s absence, provides care for 500 or less annual hours. If the substitute works more than 30 times in a 12 month period, a physician’s statement needs to be submitted to Licensing. A substitute requires a minimum of:

- The Basics for Licensed Family Child Care for Substitutes (every three years).
- Pediatric First Aid and CPR (every two years).
- AHT (yearly).
- SUID; if caring for infants (yearly).
- BEST; if transporting.

Background study clearance is required prior to using a caregiver. Substitutes should also be trained on program emergency plan, chemical use policy, and any allergies.

What is an emergency replacement?

This person is an adult who is allowed to supervise children in a family child care in an emergency. An emergency situation would be when the provider has begun operating for the day and for reasons beyond their control, including, but not limited to a serious illness or injury, accident, or situation requiring the provider’s

immediate attention where the provider needs to leave the licensed space. An emergency replacement would contact the parents or guardians of the attending children and have them picked up. Other information to consider:

- The provider must make reasonable efforts to minimize the time the emergency replacement has unsupervised contact with the children in care.
- The provider shall not knowingly use a person who has committed an action or been convicted of a crime that would cause them to be disqualified from providing care to children.
- The provider should notify licensing within seven days that an emergency replacement was used and specify the circumstances that led to the use of the emergency replacement.

Events that are planned in advance such as a dentist appointment or legal appointment would require the use of a substitute.

Please contact your licensor if you have any questions.

[Minnesota Statute: 142B.74.](#)



Contact Information

Please keep your licensor informed of any changes to your home/cell phone numbers

and email address so you can continue to receive notifications from us.

What to Know About Cannabis for You, Your Baby, and Young Children

Many people wonder if it is safe to use cannabis (also known as marijuana, weed, pot) while they are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding (feeding an infant human milk via breast, chest, or pump). Cannabis is used in many ways, including smoking, vaping, or consuming in candy, food, or drinks and can change how you think, feel, and make decisions. Using cannabis in any form during pregnancy and breastfeeding may affect you and your baby's health. Even though cannabis is legal for Minnesotans 21 and older, that doesn't mean it's safe to use during pregnancy or while breastfeeding.

Get the facts

We know you want to make the best choice for you and your baby. While there is still a lot we don't know about the health effects of cannabis, here is what we do know:

- What you put in your body can pass to your baby. Using cannabis may harm your baby's brain development and increase the risk of:
 - Your baby being born too small or too early
 - Stillbirth or infant death
 - Learning, behavioral, or other health problems
- Cannabis is stored in your body's fat for weeks. Some cannabis chemicals can stay in your milk even after you stop using cannabis. Pumping and dumping milk is not effective when it comes to cannabis use.
- Using cannabis during your pregnancy can increase your risk of complications, including:
 - Gestational hypertension (high blood pressure)
 - Preeclampsia
 - Weight gain
 - Placental abruption (the placenta detaches from the uterine wall)
 - Gestational diabetes
- The more you use cannabis, the more you increase your health risks, especially if you also smoke cigarettes.



Using cannabis is not recommended while pregnant or breastfeeding.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend you stop using cannabis during pregnancy and while breastfeeding.

Reduce potential harm

Some people may find it difficult to quit cannabis. To reduce potential harm, consider the following:

- Reduce the amount and frequency of cannabis use.
- Being high while caring for a child is not safe. If you plan to use cannabis, arrange for childcare.
- Smoke outdoors as much as possible to prevent a child's exposure to secondhand cannabis smoke.
- Do not drive after using cannabis. Do not let your child ride in a car if the driver is high. Cannabis can cause slower reactions, dizziness, confusion, and trouble thinking.
- Store cannabis products in a locked area where your child cannot see, reach, or access them.
- If you have been using cannabis to manage a medical condition or pregnancy symptoms, talk to your health care provider about what you're experiencing and other treatments available.



Support options

If you or a loved one would like to talk about reducing or stopping cannabis use, there are resources that can help.

- Talk to your health care provider for referrals.
- Visit FindTreatment.gov (www.findtreatment.gov) to find treatment programs.
- Visit the [Fast Tracker](https://fasttrackermn.org) (<https://fasttrackermn.org>) webpage or call 651-426-6347 to find substance use disorder services near you. Includes Tribal providers.
- Call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Hotline at 800-662-HELP (4357).

To obtain this information in a different format, call 651-201-3650.

Minnesota Department of Health
Child and Family Health Division
health.mch@state.mn.us | 651-201-3650
www.health.state.mn.us

5/2025

mn DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH

Training

DISCLAIMER: In preparation of this newsletter, every effort has been made to offer the most current, correct, and clearly expressed information possible. Nevertheless, inadvertent errors in information may occur. For training information, please check the sponsor listing to be certain of all the details related to the training.

Trainings sponsored by:

Washington County Community Services

Reporting Child Maltreatment (Abuse & Neglect) Training for Mandated Reporters (Child Care/Child Foster Care Providers Only)

This training is designed for child care and child foster care providers interested in learning more about requirements for reporting child abuse and neglect in Washington County. View more information on the [Child Protection website](#). **Access the packet forms before the training.*

Wednesday, Dec. 3 | 6-7:30 p.m.

FREE

Online with Teams

[Register via email](#)

Develop

Registration: [On the Develop Tool Minnesota website](#).

In-Person Classes:

Fostering Connection and Respect with Families: Mastering Communication and Boundaries

Promote communication strategies, establish clear, respectful boundaries in this comprehensive 2-hour course designed for early childhood educators. Participants will engage in practices that facilitate open and transparent dialogues with families, effectively addressing scholar progress and concerns. Participants will examine methodologies for setting and maintaining professional boundaries that promote mutual respect while safeguarding the educator's role. Emphasis will be placed on balancing supportive relationships with families without compromising professional limits, ensuring that the scholar's needs remain paramount. By the conclusion, attendees will acquire practical tools to cultivate trust, fortify family partnerships, and foster a positive environment that enhances early learning outcomes.

KCF: III

Thursday, Sept. 11 | 6:30-8:30 p.m.

\$10 | 2 credit hours

Think Small, Little Canada

Health and Safety I: Family Child Care

Enhance health and safety management in the family child care setting. Review Minnesota Rule 2 health and safety licensing standards along with best practices related to children's health/wellness, medication administration, responding to allergies, food safety standards, standard precautions, infectious diseases, and mandated reporting. Explore influences on health and safety and promote a safe environment with child care practices to minimize risks for children. KCF: VIIA

Saturday, Sept. 13 | 10 a.m.-Noon

FREE | 2 credit hours

Kaposia Library, South St. Paul

Caregiving Strategies: Building Resilience in Children at Risk

Explore risk factors for children's development including common internal and external stressors. Examine strategies within the child care setting for strengthening resiliency for children at risk. KCF: IIC

Tuesday, Sept. 16 | 6:30-8:30 p.m.

\$10 | 2 credit hours

Forest Lake Area High School, Forest Lake

Breaking Bad...Habits; Setting Boundaries with Families

Set boundaries with families to allow for a professional environment and mutual respect. Discover what boundaries participants want in their unique environment and make a plan to implement them. Create an environment that is open and supportive with families, yet has professional boundaries. KCF: III

Thursday, Sept. 18 | 6:30-8:30 p.m.

\$10 | 2 credit hours

Veterans Memorial Community Center,
Inver Grove Heights

SUID/AHT: Sudden Unexpected Infant Death/Reducing the Risk of Abusive Head Trauma

This class meets DHS Licensing training requirements for both Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) and Abusive Head Trauma (AHT). Content includes recommendations

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to reduce Sudden, Unexpected Infant Deaths (SUID) including SIDS, suffocation, and other sleep related infant deaths; safe sleep environments; Minn. Child Care regulations related to safe sleep; as well as symptoms and consequences of abusive head trauma, risk factors for abusive head trauma; strategies to use when stressed, angry, or frustrated. KCF: VIIB

Saturday, Sept. 27 | 9:30-11:30 a.m.

FREE | 2 credit hours

Pleasant Hill Library, Hastings

September Super Saturday

Attend this Saturday training where you complete six hours of training for just \$15. The two classes are: Race and Culture in Early Childhood Settings and Well-being at Work: Emotional Care. Bring your own food and drink for lunch break. KCF: IIF and VI

Saturday, Sept. 27 | 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

\$15 | 6 credit hours (half hour lunch break)

Think Small, Little Canada

Active Supervision: Provider Self-Care and Privacy

Define Minn. DHS Rule 2 licensing standards regarding supervision in family child care settings. Identify the effects of caregiver mental health and well-being on supervision of and interaction with children. Identify appropriate self-care and privacy strategies that promote effective supervision and safety in child care. KCF: VIIB

Thursday, Oct. 2 | 6:30-8:30 p.m.

\$10 | 2 credit hours

Cottage Grove Middle School, Cottage Grove

Emergency Preparedness for Child Care Programs

It is crucial for child care programs to be prepared to respond and recover from emergencies. Discuss the importance of emergency preparedness in child care and how to respond to different types of emergencies, identify ways to support children's needs in emergencies, and create or update a written child care emergency plan. KCF: VIIB

Saturday, Oct. 11 | 8:30-11:30 a.m.

FREE | 3 credit hours

Think Small, Little Canada

Online Scheduled Classes:

Sticks and Stones: Supporting Child Safety and Healthy Risk-Taking in Nature Play

Explore the correlations between child development, healthy risk-taking, and child injury in nature play.

Assess opportunities, variables, and hazards found in outdoor environments and implement safety measures to prevent child injury. Create outdoor environments and facilitate play activities that support children's creativity, motor, and sensory development, as well as their developmental needs for risky play. KCF: VIIB

Monday, Sept. 22 | 6-8 p.m.

\$20 | 2 credit hours

Those Icky Germs! Reducing Contagious Illnesses

Design policies and practices that reduce the spread of illness to keep the children and their early educators healthy and happy! Support children's healthy well-being by teaching basic hygiene skills in fun and engaging ways. Create environments that contribute to children's health and safety while allowing them to explore and enjoy their messy world. KCF: VIIIA

Tuesday, Oct. 14 | 6:30-8:30 p.m.

\$20 | 2 credit hours

Other Trainings

Adult and Pediatric CPR and First Aid

Learn to respond confidently in emergencies with Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), Automated External Defibrillator (AED), and Basic First Aid training. This hands-on event covers cardiac events, choking, injuries, and more. Sponsored by Stillwater Community Education.

Saturday, Oct. 11 | 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. OR

1:30-4:30 p.m.

\$89 | 3.5 credit hours

Oak Park Learning Center, Stillwater

[Register](#)

Shaping the Future Conference

The conference committee has arranged a terrific lineup of topics including trauma informed care strategies, working with families, curriculum ideas, self-care, business development, and building community connections. 16 hours of training to choose from.

Friday-Saturday, Oct. 17-18

\$125 full conference | \$75 single-day

Park Event Center, Waite Park, Minn.

[Register](#)



Community Services
Child Care Licensing
14949 62nd Street North
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Washington County Child Care Licensing Contact Information

- Annie Walton, Licensor: [Email Annie](#) | 651-430-6539
- Becky Knighton, Senior Licensor: [Email Becky](#) | 651-430-6574
- Jennifer Rodriguez, Licensor: [Email Jennifer](#) | 651-302-6898
- Michelle McIntosh, Licensing Unit Supervisor: [Email Michelle](#) | 651-430-6476
- Child Care Licensing Email/Case Aide Phone Line: [Email Child Care Licensing/Case Aide](#) | 651-430-8307

Key Contacts

- Think Small:
 - Grants: 651-287-6919
 - Navigator: 888-986-8207 ext. 6005
 - Professional Development: 651-641-3549
- Training/register for classes through the [Develop website](#)

Contact Us for Article Submissions

Contact Becky Knighton, using the information above, with questions or to submit article submissions. The Child Care Licensing program of Washington County Community Services publishes this newsletter bi-monthly.