

Panhandle Childcare Expansion Project

Program Overview

The Panhandle Childcare Expansion Project is a regional initiative designed to expand licensed family home childcare capacity across the Nebraska Panhandle. The program supports individuals interested in starting a childcare business through mentorship, practical toolkits, financial incentives, and local peer support. This program is tailored to meet the unique rural, workforce, and community needs of the Panhandle in partnership with the Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative (NECC).

Eligible Participants

Participants must:

- Be located in the Nebraska Panhandle (Sioux, Dawes, Sheridan, (West) Cherry, Box Butte, Scotts Bluff, Banner, Morrill, Garden, Grant, Kimball, Cheyenne, Deuel)
- Be starting a licensed family home childcare program
- Complete all required NECC toolkits and mentorship
- Participate in check-ins and local support opportunities

Mentorship & Toolkits

- Structured childcare business and licensing toolkits provided by NECC
- One-on-one or guided mentorship through NECC

*Toolkits and mentorship available in English and Spanish

Regional and Local Support

- Quarterly in-person support opportunities for peer learning, childcare resources, and problem-solving.

Incentives & Stipends

- Up to \$1,000 in incentives (after 2nd toolkit completion) for approved childcare items
- \$2,500 stipend upon receiving DHHS childcare provisional license.

Use of Funds

- Incentives must be used for approved childcare-related items
- Stipends support business startup or licensing costs

Note: Documentation may be required

Timeline

Flexible pace, not to exceed 24 months

Participant Expectations

- Maintain communication with Western Regional Child Care Navigator
- Complete required documentation and progress tracking
- Participate in feedback and evaluation activities

Participants will additionally be connected to:

- Ongoing training and licensure support
- Quality improvement programs (Step Up to Quality, Sixpence, etc.)
- Regional and statewide early childhood resources

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