

# The Loop

QUALITY CARE SOUTH DAKOTA NEWSLETTER



May 2025 | Issue 21

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Quality Care South Dakota is designed to support child care and school-age programs in meeting benchmarks of quality and identifying their strengths as well as areas for growth. The Quality Care Team is housed at the Child & Family Resource Network at South Dakota State University and works in collaboration with the South Dakota Early Childhood Enrichment System with support and direction from the South Dakota Department of Social Services.

### Interested In Learning More?

Registered family day care homes and licensed child care centers and school-age programs can voluntarily participate in this opportunity. Please check out [www.sdece.org/quality-care-south-dakota](http://www.sdece.org/quality-care-south-dakota). For more information or to apply, please email [sdsu.sdqris@sdstate.edu](mailto:sdsu.sdqris@sdstate.edu).

## News to Support Your Program

## Congratulations - April Level Designations

- Shout-out to Our Quality Champions! □

We are proud to recognize and celebrate the outstanding providers and programs who have recently reached new milestones in Quality Care South Dakota (QCSD). These providers have shown incredible dedication to continuous quality improvements for children and families.

### Level 1 - Registered Family Child Care

- Briana Thomas

### Level 1 - Licensed Child Care Centers

- Bright Start Childcare
- Just Kidding Childcare
- Panther Cubs Academy
- Trinity Learning Center
- Nana's Love Bugs
- Learning Ladder Adventure
- Cultivate Childcare Nursery
- Cultivate Childcare Prep
- Children's Care Corner
- First Lutheran Child Learning Center
- EmBe Downtown
- Lake Oahe Learning Academy

## Level 1 - Licensed School-Age Program

• EmBe Horizon OST

□ A big congratulations to these providers and programs for achieving their new QCSD levels! Your hard work, commitment, and passion for early childhood education are truly making a difference. We celebrate your success and are honored to walk alongside you in your quality journey.

□ Interested in joining QCSD?

Learn more and get started at <https://sdece.org/quality-care-south-dakota/> or email us at [sdsu.sdqris@sdsu.edu](mailto:sdsu.sdqris@sdsu.edu)!



## May is Mental Health Awareness Month

As a child care provider, you support both the learning and emotional development of young children—and that starts with your well-being. Children reflect the emotional tone around them, so caring for yourself helps create a healthier environment for them.

This month, explore mental health resources from [Sesame Workshop](#) for child-friendly videos and activities, and visit [MindSpa](#) for a printable, fillable self-care checklist and tips to make self-care part of your daily routine. Remember, taking care of yourself isn't selfish—it's essential.

If you are looking for mental health support, consider reaching out to a professional counselor. The links below can help you begin the process of finding a provider in your area.

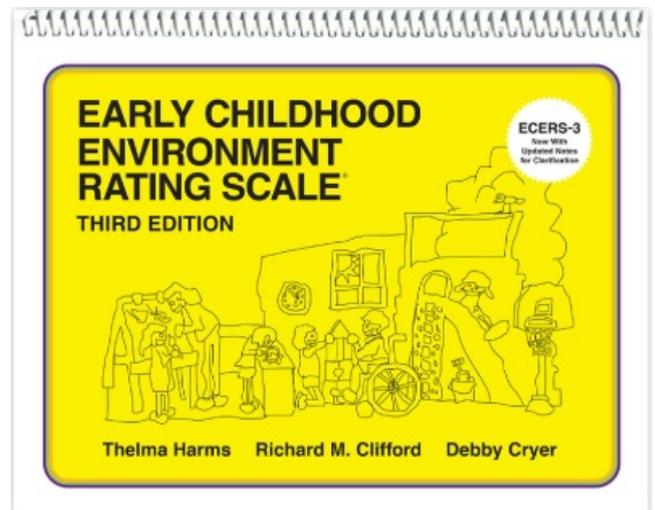
[Helpline Center](#)  
[SD Community Mental Health Centers flyer](#)

## Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) is a trusted tool used to evaluate the quality of early childhood programs for children ages 3 to 5. It focuses on how well classrooms and learning environments support children's developmental needs through a comprehensive, evidence-based framework.

During the QRIS pilot, preschool classrooms showed the most significant improvement in the Interaction subscale from pre- to post-assessment. This subscale evaluates key components such as supervision during gross motor activities, individualized teaching and learning, staff-child and peer interactions, and discipline. The notable growth in this area highlights an increased focus on nurturing positive relationships and responsive teaching practices, which are essential for supporting young children's social and emotional development.

To learn more about the ECERS tool, please visit the [ECERS fact sheet](#).



## Provider Appreciation Day Giveaway Winners



In celebration of Provider Appreciation Day and to show our gratitude, all Pathways members were entered into a drawing for a classroom gift.

Congratulations to Sarah Meland and Amber Abrahamson, the lucky Pathways members chosen in our Provider Appreciation Day giveaway! [Join Pathways](#) today to be included in future drawings and opportunities.



## SD ECE Resources



### Emergency Preparedness: Summer Weather

As spring and summer storms roll in, it's important for child care providers to be ready for sudden weather emergencies—especially tornadoes. While tornadoes can be frightening, having a solid plan in place will help keep the children in your care safe and calm.

Preparedness can turn a scary situation into a safe one. With a little planning and regular practice, your child care program can be ready for whatever summer weather brings!

SD ECE Resources offers many tools to help you create or update your emergency preparedness plans. Don't wait—start today to ensure your program is storm-ready. Use the links below to explore each resource.

#### [Emergency Preparedness: South Dakota Resources](#)

#### [Emergency Preparedness: Planning](#)

#### [Emergency Preparedness: Checklists](#)

#### [Emergency Preparedness: Hurricanes & Tornadoes](#)

#### [Forms, Policies, & Templates: Forms: Safety](#)

- Basic Emergency Plan
- Basic Emergency Plan: Supporting Documents
- Disaster Checklist for Child Care Professionals
- Emergency Contact Information & Consent Form for Families
- Emergency Contact Information & Consent Form for Staff
- Emergency Plan Template
- Emergency Preparedness Checklists
- Red Cross Tornado Safety Preparedness

If you are an educator working in a registered or licensed program, please [register here](#) for membership at no cost to you.



## Books of the Month



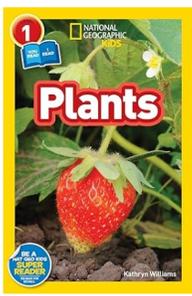
Each month, this section highlights children's books that are linked to monthly themes and/or valuable reads for child care providers. This curated selection aims to be a helpful resource of introducing titles to care givers they may not have seen before.

As the days grow longer and warmer, it's still a great time to slow down and enjoy a good story together. Reading with children supports language growth, builds attention skills, and fuels creativity—making it a special and beneficial part of every day, all year long.



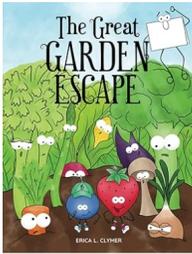
Ladybugs, snails, and butterflies! Oh my! This charming introduction to ten garden bugs, paired with friendly text and bold, basic patterns, provides a great high-contrast experience for young developing eyes.

Reading age: 0-12 months



Adult and child readers will learn all about plants together in this new Co-reader from National Geographic Kids. Find out how plants grow as well as the different parts of plants, seeds, and flowers.

Reading age: 3-5 years



Best friends Sally and Billy go on an unexpected adventure through Vegetable Garden after getting lost during a fun day in Fruit Garden. With the help of a friendly squash, they must solve ten clues before sunset to find the secret gate home. Filled with rhymes, riddles, and colorful illustrations, this story is one children will want to read over and over again!

Reading age: 3-7 years

\*\*Please note, all book descriptions and suggested reading ages are provided by Amazon. While suggested reading levels can provide guidance, they should be seen as flexible recommendations rather than strict rules. By using suggested reading levels as guidelines, you can choose books that not only match children's developmental stages but also ignite their curiosity and enthusiasm for reading. This personalized approach fosters a more meaningful and enjoyable learning experience.

→ Mark Your Calendar ←

### Upcoming Statewide Conference Dates

[South Dakota Early Childhood and School Age Leadership Summit](#) \*\*Spots are limited! [Register](#) today!\*\*

Oacoma, SD; July 18-19, 2025

[Family Child Care Professionals of SD \(FCCPSD\)](#)

Huron; September 26-27, 2025

[SD School-Age Care Alliance \(SoDaksACA\) Conference](#)

Spearfish, SD; October 23-25, 2025

[South Dakota Early Childhood Education Conference](#)

Rapid City, SD; April 9-10, 2026

[SD School-Age Care Alliance Out of School Time Leadership Retreat](#)

Keystone, SD; TBD April 2026

### Quality Child Care in South Dakota

Whether you're interested in applying or just seeking more information, please view our executive summary on the [QRIS pilot](#) and the video below to learn how QCSD supports licensed child care centers and school-age programs, and registered family day care homes.



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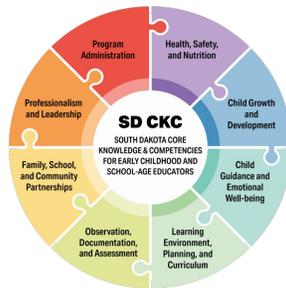


If you're an educator in a registered or licensed early childhood or school-age care program, we'd love to celebrate *you* next!

Apply to be a member of  
Pathways



Visit our new Pathways Facebook page and join us in celebrating the early childhood and school-age care educators who make up our Pathways community!



The South Dakota Core Knowledge and Competencies (CKCs) guide self-reflection and professional growth by describing what early childhood and school-age care educators need to **know**, **understand**, and **be able to do** at all levels of professional practice in eight areas of knowledge.

Click the button below to learn more, to view the document, and to order free copies of the SD CKCs for yourself or your team.

View SD Core Knowledge &  
Competencies

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## Quality Care South Dakota Team

- Rachel Busmann, Outreach Coordinator and QCSD Lead
- Amelia Gullickson, Early Childhood Quality Assistant
- Nichole Lanning, Early Childhood Quality Assistant
- Maria Picek, Lead Coach and Observer
- Cheyanne Kamps, Early Childhood and School Age Program Observer
- Deb Owens, Early Childhood and School Age Quality Coach
- Cassie Stoltenburg, Early Childhood and School Age Quality Coach
- Clover Herdman, Early Childhood and School Age Quality Coach

[South Dakota State University](#)

[Quality Care South Dakota](#)

[South Dakota Quality Recognition and Information System](#) | [Website](#)

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