

# 2025 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT



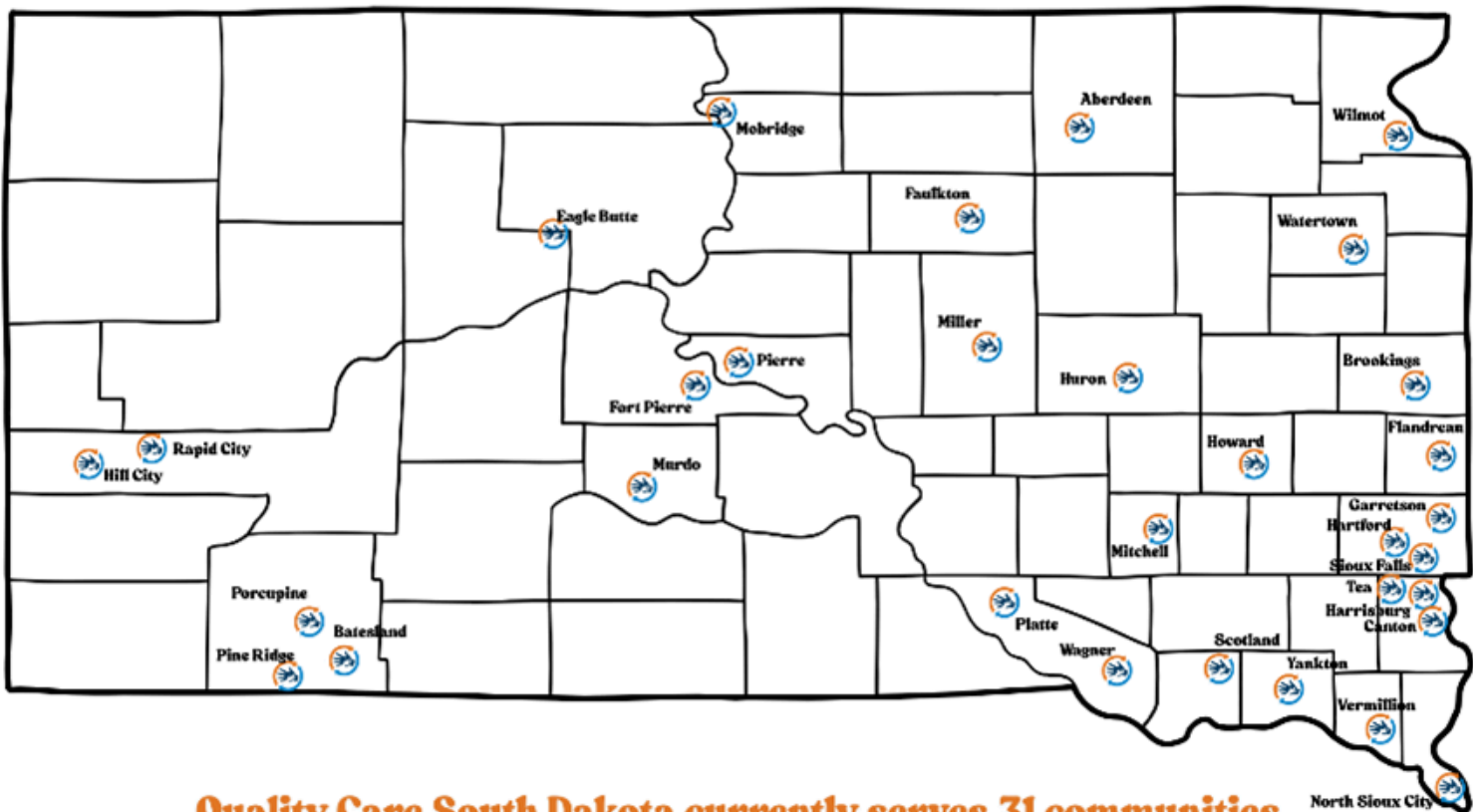
## Mission

Quality Care South Dakota (QCSD) is dedicated to enhancing the quality of early childhood and school-age care by providing a comprehensive framework to evaluate and recognize childcare services. Our mission is to support state-registered and licensed childcare providers by offering clear standards, resources, guidance, and support to improve care environments for children. Through Quality Care South Dakota, we aim to foster growth, accountability, and continuous improvement, ensuring that all children receive the highest quality care. QCSD is committed to empowering parents with the information they need to make informed choices, while also supporting providers to grow professionally.

# QUALITY CARE SOUTH DAKOTA

## Quality Care South Dakota Participating Programs

State Fiscal Year 2025-2026



**Quality Care South Dakota currently serves 31 communities  
across South Dakota**



**14,693 Children Impacted**

In January 2025, Quality Care South Dakota (QCSD) launched statewide to strengthen early childhood and school-age care quality across South Dakota. In just one year, QCSD established a strong foundation of coaching, professional development, and quality recognition systems that are already impacting thousands of children. QCSD was honored with high interest from across the state regarding this new initiative. Participation from 77 programs and providers required readiness and sustained engagement for this continuous quality improvement (CQI) journey.

**46**

Licensed  
Child Care Center

- A licensed child care center is a facility that provides care and supervision for 13 or more children from more than one unrelated family for part of the day as a supplement to parental care and must meet health and safety requirements through the South Dakota Department of Social Services.

**12**

Registered Family  
Child Care Homes

- Registered family child care is in a caregiver's home for fewer than 13 children from more than one unrelated family and must meet health and safety requirements through the South Dakota Department of Social Services.

**19**

Licensed School  
Age Programs

- A licensed school-age program is a program that provides care and supervision specifically for school-age children before or after school or during school breaks and meets health and safety standards set by the South Dakota Department of Social Services.

# COACHING & SUPPORT

Five Quality Coaches from Brookings, Mitchell, and Pierre, delivered relationship-based support statewide to 77 programs. Support includes coaching sessions with an identified leadership team to create continuous quality improvement goals. Coaching visits are primarily onsite at the program or providers' home with follow up resources, touchpoints, and regular check-ins. In 2025, the quality coaches supported 164 educators with over **1,392 hours** for their quality improvement journey.

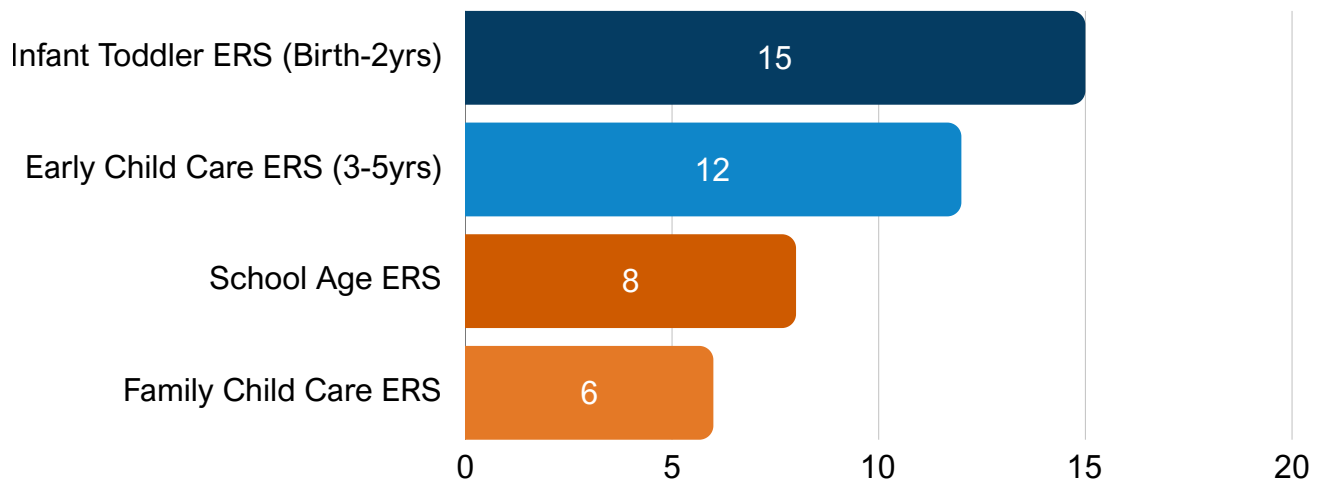
**For every hour of direct coaching, additional time was invested in preparation and follow-up — ensuring support was strategic, individualized, and sustainable.**

## Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Observations

Environment Rating Scale (ERS) observations are provided to participating programs and are completed by valid and reliable trained observers. The observations are used in a reflective manner and designed to support continuous quality improvement. Observations focus on identifying strengths to celebrate, while also highlighting opportunities for growth. The process encourages thoughtful reflection, professional learning, and practical next steps rather than enforcement or judgment.

### Environment Rating Scale Observations in 2025

**41 Total Observation**



## Embedded Goal Focused Training (LearnERS/Cypherworx)

Educators use data from the ERS observations to strengthen child-centered care and their environments. With support from a Quality Coach, educators set goals and are then connected to online professional development platforms, LearnERS and CypherWorx. These opportunities allow educators to select trainings, create SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely) goals, and reflect upon the opportunities noted from the ERS observations. Because of the virtual learning world, coaches can stay connected and champion those ongoing efforts. Educators in QCSD completed over 310 two-hour learning modules. These 35 modules have a variety of options with topics ranging from literacy, math, music, program structure, and gross motor safety.

*Through LearnERS, educators receive clear, consistent feedback that supports reflective practice and guides intentional improvements in learning environments.*

## Continuous Quality Improvement

The reflective process of QCSD has continuous quality improvement at the core of all services and supports. Primarily, this is most visible in the monthly goal setting that occurs between the QCSD Quality Coach and the educators. In 2025, the QCSD team supported early childhood and school-age educators in creating 472 goals, with over 209 of those goals completed.

 **472** Goals Set

 **209** Goals Achieved

The goal-setting process helped us create more accessible and child-centered spaces. Through Quality Improvement and Achievement grants, we were able to make changes that directly benefit children and families.

# QUALITY CARE SD FRAMEWORK

## QUALITY CARE SOUTH DAKOTA HIGHLIGHTS SIX SIGNS OF QUALITY IN ACTION



HEALTH & SAFETY



LEARNING  
ENVIRONMENTS



ACTIVITIES &  
EXPERIENCES



RELATIONSHIPS  
& INTERACTIONS



PROGRAM  
MANAGEMENT



WORKFORCE  
SUPPORTS

## Top 3 Quality Improvement Grant Investments in 2025

1.

Infant and Toddler

2.

Blocks & Manipulatives

3.

Active Play

Quality Care South Dakota has frameworks for child care centers, family child care and school-age care programs. These three frameworks feature a building block model designed with small achievable steps and are built from the SD child care and school age care regulations.

Each framework has six categories of focus and four levels of building quality. Achieving a Level 1 designation means that a program has taken steps to move beyond the required licensing health and safety requirements and completed additional requirements and training in the first block of the framework. The design of the framework provides an opportunity for programs to complete goals, be recognized, and celebrate their achievements.

As a program submits sources of evidence for quality recognition and is awarded a level, they are eligible for an Achievement Grant towards their continuous quality improvement goals. Additionally, programs receive a Quality Improvement Grant in Level 2 to support environmental quality enhancements for child-centered care.

**In 2025, 51 programs in South Dakota achieved quality designation levels, demonstrating measurable progress toward quality standards of early childhood and school age care.**

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## SOUTH DAKOTA EARLY CHILDHOOD ENRICHMENT

Quality Care South Dakota partners with the South Dakota Early Childhood Enrichment (SD ECE) System, to strengthen the early childhood workforce. Through aligned training, coaching, and coordinated resources, the SD ECE System responds to the needs of child care and school-age programs across South Dakota.

The SD ECE System's key efforts for impactful professional development support the ongoing growth of South Dakota's early childhood and school-age education workforce by strengthening knowledge, skills, and reflective practice. Through the Quality Care and School Development (QCSD) initiative, educators in 46 participating programs engaged in professional development designed to enhance responsive caregiving and support high-quality learning environments. In 2025, educators completed extensive training across multiple age groups and focus areas.

### Infant-Toddler Focused Trainings

→ 1,012 HOURS

### Preschool Focused Trainings

→ 492 HOURS

### Management and Leadership Trainings

→ 98 HOURS

### School Age Focused Trainings

→ 270 HOURS

### Early Childhood Education Foundations

→ 282 HOURS

# QCSD ADDITIONAL IMPACTS

The SD ECE Resources hub gives early childhood and school-age care educators working in registered and licensed programs across South Dakota, access to valuable resources and tools.

## Top 10 Most Accessed Resources in 2025

1.

In the Classroom

2.

Successful Program

3.

Forms, Policies, &  
Templates

4.

Resources &  
Opportunities

5.

Engaging Families

6.

ECE Regions

7.

Financial Management

8.

Saving Money

9.

Curriculum

10.

Becoming an HR Expert

# PATHWAYS TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

South Dakota's Pathways to Professional Development Career Ladder recognizes early childhood and school-age educators for their education, training, and professional growth. It also creates a pathway for educators, guiding them from initial orientation through advanced degrees, including master's or doctoral studies in the field.



Identifies Growth Opportunities



Recognize credentials and ongoing learning



Celebrate milestones through certificates and welcome kits



Engage educators through activities such as the Literacy Challenge

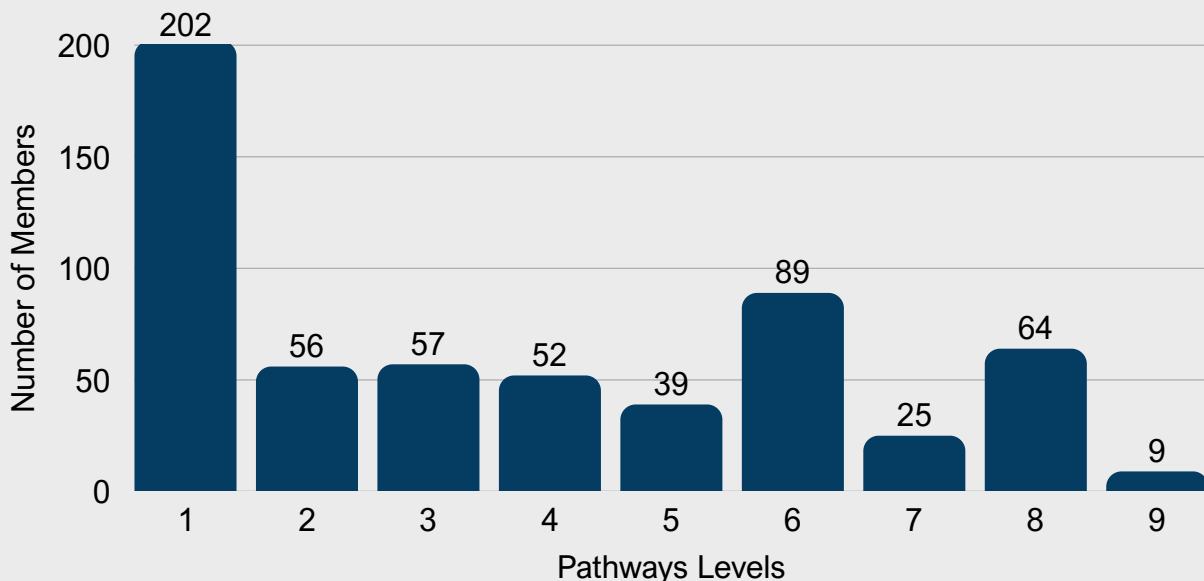
**One member shared upon receiving her Welcome Kit:**

**“This is the first time I have felt seen as a professional.”**

**Recognition strengthens retention. When educators are seen, valued, and supported, quality improves for children.**

## Number of Pathways Members at Each Level as of December 31, 2025

**593 Total Members**



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# LOOKING TO 2026

Quality Care South Dakota's first year demonstrates the impact of strong partnerships, shared commitment, and a focus on continuous quality improvement. This progress is made possible by the dedication of educators and the ongoing support of the Department of Social Services, the Office of Licensing and Accreditation, and the South Dakota Early Childhood Education System, whose leadership and resources continue to strengthen early childhood and school-age care across the state.

Looking ahead to 2026, QCSD will enhance parent communication, strengthen coaching and professional development, and increase access to quality improvement supports and recognition. With this continued momentum, QCSD remains committed to empowering providers and enhancing quality care for South Dakota's children and families.

## CONTACT US

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