



FAMILY NEWSLETTER

Happy New Year!

As we enter 2026, we are looking forward to a new layout to our monthly First Steps Family Newsletters.

- Pages 1-2 will include themed information or educational topic
- The remaining pages will typically include flyers and information about events and opportunities to meet other parents and grow additional parenting skills across our central MN region.

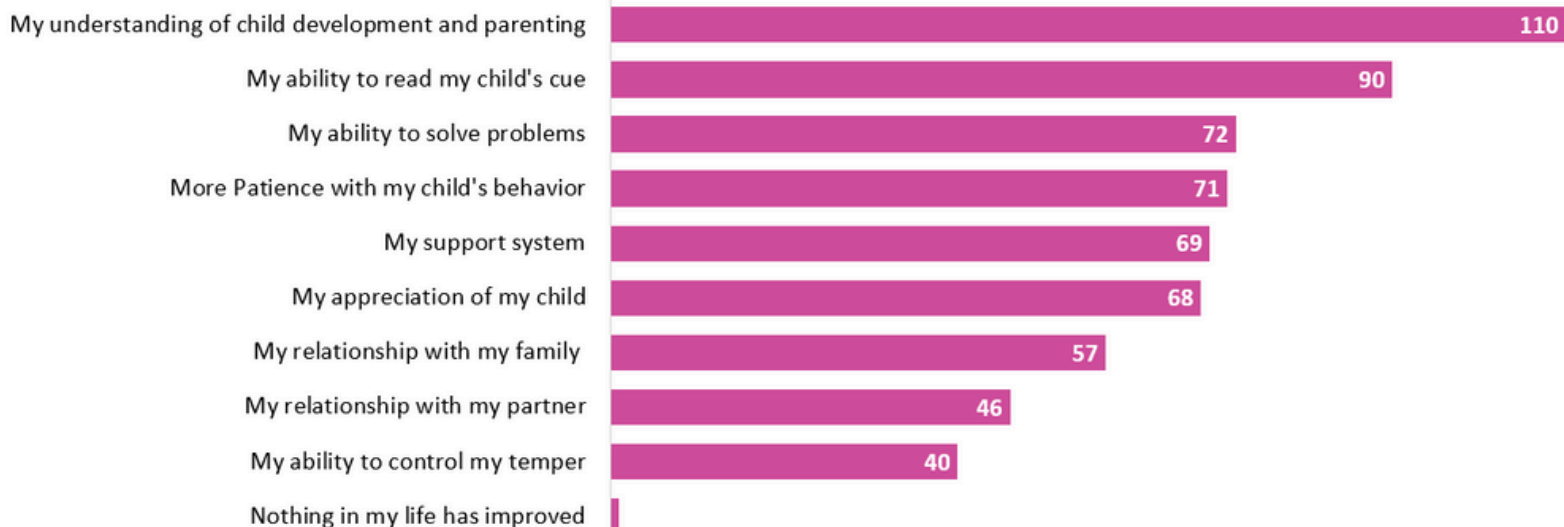


Thank you, families, for being a part of the First Steps Central MN community! Our team wishes you a happy year ahead!

Family Feedback Survey

Each fall, we ask all families current enrolled in our home visiting program across our four First Steps counties to participate in our Family Feedback Survey. Responses are voluntary and anonymous. This year, we received 147 family responses to the survey, which included questions for families to share how they felt about their home visiting program experience and the positive impact it is having on their life. Thank you to all of the families who completed the survey!

FS FAMILY AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT





99%

FELT THEY **ALWAYS/ALMOST ALWAYS** HAVE ENOUGH TIME WITH HOME VISITS (LENGTH, FREQUENCY) TO HAVE NEEDS MET

90% Always; 9% Most of the time

99%

FELT **RESPECTED** DURING HOME VISITS IN PARENTING STYLE & CHOICES MADE FOR CHILD(REN)

88% Extremely Well; 11% Very Well

95%

FELT HOME VISITING MATERIALS & INFO WERE **EASILY UNDERSTANDABLE** AND/OR **PROVIDED** IN THEIR PREFERRED LANGUAGE

An additional 5% of respondents felt they were **somewhat** understood and/or some in preferred language

97%

FELT HOME VISITING MATERIALS & INFORMATION ARE **USEFUL** FOR DETERMINING WHAT IS BEST FOR THEIR CHILD(REN)

76% Extremely Useful; 21% Very Useful

97%

FELT **CONFIDENT** THAT THEY CAN DO A GOOD JOB RAISING THEIR CHILD(REN) SINCE PARTICIPATING IN HOME VISITING

90% Strongly agreed; 7% Somewhat agreed

91% of families reported high likelihood to recommend family home visiting to other families.



99% of families expressed improvement in 1 or more area of life, since beginning home visiting.

Activities of the Month

Snow Globe Craft

<https://childhoodmagic.com/snow-globe-craft-with-handprints/>



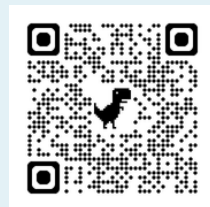
Snowball Painting

<https://brilliantlittleideas.com/super-easy-snowball-painting/>



Mindfulness Moment

Hot Chocolate Breaths (1:05)
<https://youtu.be/yIB9Bc1VtIs>



Imagine you are holding a warm mug of hot chocolate. Breathe in through your nose slowly and smell the sweet chocolate scent. Then blow out through your mouth slowly to cool down the hot chocolate. It is still too hot to drink. Try breathing in and cooling the hot chocolate two more times.



What is ECFE?

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is a family education program that provides programming and services for families with children between the ages of birth to Kindergarten.

Learning opportunities may occur in a variety of settings, such as the families' homes, district or community sites, and online parenting education and support. Classes often include parent discussion time; joint parent and child activities; and children learning and play time. Programming can vary by school district.

Eligibility

All Minnesota caregivers of children from birth to kindergarten enrollment. ECFE offers sliding scale fees. No family is turned away due to inability to pay.

Find your local ECFE program by searching ECFE on the Minnesota Help Me Connect website
<https://helpmeconnect.web.health.state.mn.us/HelpMeConnect/>



First Steps Fun Facts



Learn something new about our team

- The Stearns First Steps team welcomed two Public Health Nurses in late 2025--Lucy & Tamara!
- We average 80 incoming referrals to family home visiting each month!
 - Approximately one-third (34%) of our referrals are prenatal.
- We are currently serving 373 families in our family home visiting program across Benton, Sherburne, Stearns & Wright Counties.
- There are an average of 652 visitors to our First Steps Central MN website each month.
- Our First Steps staff have a total of 337 years of public health experience collectively.

Drop-In Feeding Support

Tuesdays

- 10a-12p, Monticello Community Center
- 9:30a-11:30a, St. Cloud YMCA 

Wednesdays

- 9:30a-11:30a, Wright County Historical Society, Buffalo 
- 1:30p-3p, Maple Grove Hospital

Thursdays

- 10a-12p, Mainstreet Family Resource Center, Elk River 
- 11a-12:30p, Cambridge-Isanti Adult Enrichment Center

Fridays

- 10a-12p, Options for Women -Cornerstone, St. Michael



=First Steps staff present

Refer a Friend

Having supports in your life when pregnant and in the early years of your parenting journey can help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. They can also reduce the risk of complications during pregnancy and birth. Our nurses are here for you!

If you have a friend who is pregnant or recently delivered, encourage them to reach out to learn more. They can self-refer on our website
<https://firststepscentralmn.org/make-a-referral> email us at referrals@firststepscentralmn.org, or call or text us at 763-276-0441



**FREE
EVENT**

WINTER Crafts and Fun

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7TH

10:00AM-1:00PM

DROP IN ANYTIME!

Join us for January Fun!

We will be **decorating cookies and creating a sparkly snowflake sticker craft.**

Come play, create, and make friends!



Main Street Family Resource Center
400 Jackson Ave NW
Elk River, MN 55330



Ellison Center Book Clubs

WINTER 2026

LET'S LEARN TOGETHER!
for caregivers & professionals

12pm Tuesdays (Virtual) Jan 20, 27, Feb 3, 10, 17, 24

1pm Tuesdays (Virtual) Jan 20, 27, Feb 3, 10, 17, 24

9am Thursdays (Virtual) Jan 22, 29, Feb 5, 12, 19, 26

Tuned In
at Ellison Center
Virtual Meetings 12pm
and 1pm Tuesdays



REGISTRATION & MORE INFO

Includes a video overview of all offerings! If accessing this flyer virtually, registration [LINK HERE](#) as well.

SCAN ME



COST

Suggested donation of \$60 for club registration. You will be invoiced during the first week of your meeting. Scholarships are available.

CONTACT INFO

- Six weekly 45 minute meetings will be a time to process and reflect on what you've read.
 - These are **NO-GUILT** book clubs
 - You are encouraged to attend meetings regardless of whether you are "caught up" with the reading.
- Email: beka@ellisoncenter.org
Phone: 320-406-1600



A veces todos los padres se sienten perdidos o sin pistas sobre lo que nuestro niño/a puede necesitar de nosotros. Imagina ¿Cómo te sentirías si fueras capaz de darle sentido a lo que tu hijo/a realmente estaba pidiendo de ti? El programa de Círculo de Seguridad Parental™ se basa en décadas de investigación acerca de cómo se pueden ayudar y fortalecer las relaciones seguras entre padres e hijos.

Objetivos de aprendizaje de la capacitación:

- Entender el mundo emocional de tu hijo/a mediante el aprendizaje de leer las necesidades emocionales
- Apoyar la habilidad de tu hijo/a para manejar con éxito sus emociones
- Mejorar el desarrollo de la autoestima de su hijo/a
- Honrar tu sabiduría innata y tu deseo de que su hijo esté seguro

Presentado por: Yoalys Ramos y Paola Cardenas

Las clases son gratuitas



¿Quiénes deben atender?: Padres, cuidadores, padres de crianza o sustitutos y tutores (custodios).

Puedes elegir entre dos opciones de clases:

Opción A: Virtual, los martes de 13:00 a 14:30 (presentado por Yoalys Ramos)

Fechas: 20 y 27 de enero, 3, 10, 17 y 24 de febrero, 3 y 10 de marzo.

Opción B: Virtual, los miércoles de 19:00 a 20:30 (presentado por Paola Cardenas)

Fechas: 21 y 28 de enero, 4, 11, 18 y 25 de febrero, 4 y 11 de marzo.

Para obtener ayuda con inscribirse, por favor comuníquese con Paola (346-475-0938) o Yoalys (320-469-6957)

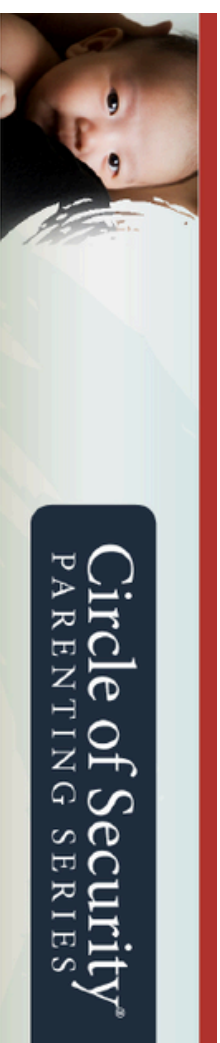
Por favor escanee el código "QR" para inscribirse.



SCAN ME

OR

[Click Here](#)



At times all caregivers feel lost or without a clue about what our child might need from us. Imagine what it might feel like if you were able to make sense of what your child was really asking from you. The Circle of Security® Parenting™ program is based on decades of research about how secure caregiver-child relationships can be supported and strengthened.

Learning Objectives of the Class:

- Understand your child's emotional world by learning to read the emotional needs
- Support your child's ability to successfully manage emotions
- Enhance the development of your child's self esteem
- Honor your innate wisdom and desire for your child to be secure in their relationship with you

Presented by: Belinda Labor

Cost: No cost to families thanks to grant funding

Location: Virtual via Zoom

Registration: Scan the QR Code or register (see info below)

Weekly, Thursday evenings, from 6:00-7:15 pm (Total of 8 sessions)

Dates: January 22, 29, February 5, 12, 19, 26, March 5 and 12.



SCAN ME

OR

[CLICK HERE](#)

Who should attend: Parents, Caregivers, Foster Parents, and Guardians

(Minimum of 5 caregivers, maximum of 15 caregivers)

Attending every week is important and expected! Families who attend every session will receive a small gift at the end of the class.

For questions or to register, please contact Cathy at Ellison Center:
320-406-1600, extension 0 or email: office@ellisoncenter.org

If you are a childcare provider, please contact Pam to find out about upcoming Circle of Security classes to earn Develop credit. You can reach Pam at pam@ellisoncenter.org.

Ellison Center
A place for growth, development, and reflection



2026 WINTER / SPRING

ECFE

classes

Early Childhood Family Education

isd742.org/ECFE


Parent Child Classes

Register now! Enroll anytime!

Class schedule on the back

Scan for registration

- Parents are the child's first and most important teacher.
- We provide quality learning opportunities and resources for parents and children.
- Parents and children attend together.
- For parents and children birth to kindergarten entry. (0 - 5 years.)
- A sliding fee scale is used to determine cost for classes. **(We do not turn anyone away due to an inability to pay)**



f St. Cloud Area School District Early Childhood



ig ISD742_Early_Childhood



Quarryview Education Center

800 7th St. S., Waite Park, MN 56387 (320) 370-8250

St. Cloud Area School District



11/21/25

| ECFE Class Schedule | | | | | WINTER / SPRING 2026 | |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | | |
| 9:00-11:00 am 2s: 24-36 mo | 9:00-11:00 am Toddlers 12-24 mo | 9:00-11:00 am Toddlers 18-24 mo | 10:00-11:30 am Baby Talk: 0-12 mo (Free, Drop-In) | 9:00-11:00 am Toddlers 12-24 mo | 9:00-11:00 am Art, Music, Science 3s & 4s | |
| 9:00-11:00 am Family Time 0-5 yrs | 9:00-11:00 am Family Literacy 0-5 yrs | 9:00-11:00 am Family Time 0-5 yrs | 9:00-11:00 am Family Time 0-5 yrs | 9:00-11:00 am Family Time 0-5 yrs | 9:00-11:00 am Family Time 0-5 yrs | |
| 12:00-1:30 pm Infants 0-12 mo | 12:00-1:30 pm Family Time 0-5 yrs | 12:00-2:00 pm Family Time 0-5 yrs | 12:00-1:30 pm Infants 0-12 mo | 12:00-2:00 pm Outdoor Nature 18 mo - 4 yrs (Apr & May) | 12:00-2:00 pm ECFE Open Gym 0-5 yrs (3s), Drop-In (Jan, Feb, March) | |
| 12:00-1:45 pm 2s & 3s 24-48 mo | 4:30-6:00 pm 742 Teachers 0-5 yrs | 12:00-1:30 pm Way To Grow | 12:00-1:45 pm Explore, Play, Learn 3s & 4s | | | |
| 12:00-1:45 pm Bharaninda Dhaqamada Dhan 0-5 sano (oo leh turjuba) | | | | | | |
| 5:30-7:00 pm Infants 0-12 mo | 5:30-7:00 pm Crianza entre culturas 0-5 años (con intérprete de español) (Jan. 28 - Mar 25) | 5:30-7:00 pm Toddlers 12-24 mo | 5:30-7:00 pm Toddlers 12-24 mo | RUN & READ Ages 1-5 yrs 9:30-11:30 a.m. January 24 February 21 March 14 FREE Fun time in the gym, story time & snack | | |
| 5:30-7:00 pm 2s & 3s 24-48 mo | 5:30-7:00 pm ZSLGBRQA+ 0-5 yrs (Apr 8-May 27) | | | | | |
| 5:30-7:00 pm Family Time 0-5 yrs | | | | | | |
| Evening | | | | | | |

Child's age: as of September 1st, 2025

3 ways to register!

1. QR code (front page)
2. Call (320) 370-8250
3. In-person at Quarryview Education Center

Spring Fling
Tuesday, May 12
5-7 pm
For birth to Kindergarten entry
Free Spring Theme Activities

Super Saturdays
for Dads & Children
9:30-11:30 am
1/10, 2/7, 3/14, 4/11, 4/25



isd742.org/ECFE

Run and Read

Saturdays

9:30-11:30 a.m.

January 24 - February 21 - March 14, 2026

- A FREE event for parents/caregivers and children ages 1-5 yrs
- Fun time in the gym, story time and snack
- Free book for each child
- No pre-registration needed



Quarryview Education Center 800 7th St S, Waite Park, MN 56387

320-370-8250



isd742.org/ECFE

Open Gym

at Quarryview Education Center

Ages 0-5

Cost \$3.00 per family

Fridays: 12-2:00 PM

Nov. 7-March 27

No open gym on 11/28, 12/26, 1/2, 3/6, 3/20 & weather-related closures

Full schedule & registration at tinyurl.com/QVopengym
call 320-370-8250, or
just show up.



Parents and children play together in the gym and/or motor room.

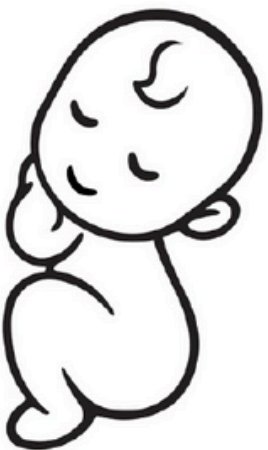
ECFE staff are there to answer questions about ECFE classes and other Early Childhood resources at Quarryview Education Center.



Quarryview Education Center

800 7th Street South, Waite Park, MN 56387

320-370-8250



BABY TALK

For parents/caregivers & 0 to 12 months old babies

isd742.org/ECFE

10:00 -11:30 a.m. on THURSDAYS

Sept. 4 - May 28

(No class on 10/16, 11/27, 12/25, 1/1, 3/5, & any weather related closures)

Connect with other parents of newborns & infants and gain insights from educators.

Join us for support, guidance, and community as you navigate life with a baby.

Topics to be discussed: *Adjusting to parenthood, baby care/caring time, sleep, post-partum, self-care, play, cognitive & social emotional development, motor & language development, family change, etc.*

FREE!

No Registration Required.
Just Show Up!



Quarryview Education Center

Check out our parent child classes at



800 7th St. S., Waite Park, MN 56387 (320) 370-8250



Early Childhood Family Education

isd742.org/EC

FREE Way To Grow Classes

Way to Grow is a free ECFE resource for families with classes that offer more flexibility.

- For parents and children birth to age 5
- Families may join anytime
- General parenting topics are covered as well as individualized discussion opportunities for any specific concerns related to the families attending the group

Classes meet on

Wednesdays

12:00-1:30 pm

OR

Thursdays

9:00- 11:00 am

Register by phone: (320)370-8289

Or email: jeanine.schroeder@isd742.org



Quarryview Education Center

800 7th Street Waite Park, MN 56387

(320)370-8289







FREE SENSORY-FRIENDLY playdate

Join the **Family Resource Center** for a special playdate at the **HHH Pediatric Therapy Gym**, which is designed just for families of children with special needs. This sensory-friendly event offers a safe, welcoming space for kids to play, explore, and have fun—while parents and caregivers create meaningful connections.

Thursday, January 22nd
6:30pm-8:00pm

HHH Pediatric Therapy
 9457 Hwy 10 NW
 Ramsey MN 55303



Register Here:



Note! Space is limited- RSVP Required!

 612-473-1079

 www.mainstreetfamilyservices.org



Diaper Club

Join us once a month at the **Family Resource Center** for our **Diaper Club** — a supportive event where you can pick up **FREE** diapers for your family!

400 Jackson Ave NW
 Elk River, MN 55330



January 7, 2026 @ 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Join us once a month at the **Family Resource Center** for our **Diaper Club** — A supportive resource for families!

Location: Elk River Family Resource Center 400 Jackson Ave NW
 Elk River, MN 55330

***Note:** Big Lake families can also request pick up from Liberty Elementary by sending a request in advance. Please email shari.ley@mainstreetfamilyservices.org for more information.



"CREATING AND MAINTAINING FAMILY CONNECTIONS"

Come discover the little things that help families feel close, the everyday hurdles we all navigate, and simple ways to deepen connection at home. Bring a friend and grow together!

**Wednesday, January 21st
6:00pm–7:30pm**

Liberty Elementary FRC Rm. 104
7901 205th Ave NW, Big Lake, MN 55309

Free Childcare Available!
*Registration requested below



Meet Our Presenter: Julie Schultz
Executive Director, Main Street Family Services

Serving families since 1990, Julie brings 31 years of experience supporting parents and children. She shares practical strategies to nurture stronger family connections.



Register Here:



www.mainstreetfamilyservices.org

For more information call: 612-473-1079

Join us for our Parenting Support Group: Learn, Grow & Go
Free event • Free childcare provided [Click to register](#)

This month, we're diving into the topic of creating and maintaining family connections. Together, we'll explore what connection really looks like in our homes—how everyday routines, meaningful moments, and simple habits can strengthen the bond between you and your child.

We'll talk about common challenges families face today, such as busy schedules, stress, and technology, and discover practical, doable ways to improve communication, build trust, and help children feel valued and heard. Parents will leave with ideas they can use right away to bring more warmth, closeness, and calm into their family life.

We'd love to have you join us for an encouraging evening of learning, support, and connection with other parents!