



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Health

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

Anchorage

3601 C Street, Suite 902
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5923
Main: 907.269.7800
Fax: 907.269.0060

Juneau

P.O. Box 110601
350 Main Street, Suite 404
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0601
Main: 907.465.3030
Fax: 907.465.306

April 3, 2024

Senate Health and Social Services Committee
Alaska Senate
State Capitol, Room 205
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Follow up to inquiries (S)HSS committee March 21, 2024

Dear Chair Wilson and Honorable Members,

Thank you for your questions regarding childcare programs and practices.

What is the percentage of child care facilities taking in child care assistance clients?

As of December 2023, 89 percent of all licensed providers accept child care assistance. Approximately 20 to 30 percent of children attending child care are receiving a subsidy through the child care assistance program, and the remainder of the children attending child care are private pay.

What are the qualifications for quality childcare programs? What is the curriculum? What does the classroom need to look like? What are the developmentally appropriate expectations for the training? When we say, "quality childcare what do we mean by that?"

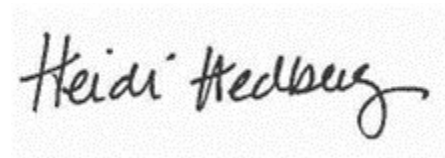
How does this dovetail with Head Start? What is the intersection between childcare and Head Start access, and do we mirror what Head Start families are provided within the state system?

A quality child care program is first and foremost focused on ensuring the health and safety of children. Child care licensing has developed regulations and provides oversight that meet the federal guidelines for the health and safety of children in licensed child care facilities. These requirements include background checks, qualifications for administrators and staff, adequate indoor and outdoor space, developmentally appropriate environments, supplies and activities for children, child/adult caregiver ratios that support supervision and engagement, as well as requirements for initial and ongoing training.

In 2016, Alaska launched [Learn & Grow, Alaska's Quality Recognition and Improvement System \(QRIS\)](#). A QRIS is a framework with a set of quality standards, supports, and resource systems designed to help *all* early childhood programs (Head Start, Pre-elementary, and Child Care) become high-quality. When Learn & Grow developed its quality standards we reviewed other

states' quality standards, Head Start, and the National Education of Young Children Accreditation standards. Alaska's quality standards are similar to what other states have developed, with some small variations. The Learn & Grow quality framework was developed with all three Early Childhood (EC) program types (Head Start, Child Care and Pre-elementary) in mind to bring parity across all EC program types and to increase access to high-quality EC programming. In Alaska, it is voluntary for a licensed child care facility to participate in Learn & Grow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heidi Hedberg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Heidi Hedberg
Commissioner

