



Rural Child Care Innovation Program

Koochiching County

Progress Update September 2020

The Koochiching County Core Team has been working on the Rural Child Care Innovation Program since 2018.

The core team has worked hard since developing the community action plan. The Core team and the Koochiching Resource Council continues to make progress on their community goals.

This team was formed to help create solutions for the local child care shortage and has identified a way to do this through a collaboration of partnerships by using the Special Child Care License for a Community Collaborative Child Care Model. This model will help in addressing the child care shortage in the area by engaging multiple sectors working together to invest in child care and ensure that children have a safe place to go while parents are working.

This model has oversight by KOOTASCA Community Action Agency in collaboration with the Koochiching Resource Council. By creating a community collaborative model, it supports new providers coming into the child care industry and creates additional needed child care slots in the community. This model incorporates resources from both public and private sectors to address the challenges of child care in a rural community and gives the opportunity to leverage multiple resources, build partnerships, and advocate for sustainability. Another benefit of this model is that it uses vacant space, providing income for the host facility, and reducing the start-up cost for new providers.

Most of the time these vacant commercial buildings need renovations to be able to meet regulations for child care. The most common renovations of commercial spaces for child care are bathrooms, heating and air conditioning, outdoor play area, fire escape exits and fire alarm and suppression systems. Both the business and the provider are unable to finance these large costs, so in partnership, the Koochiching Resource Council provides the leadership in obtaining the funding and overseeing the construction for these projects through grants, donations, and fundraising efforts.

Currently the Koochiching Resource Council has two locations within Koochiching County for Family Child Care that are in commercial locations. The first one is located in the KOOTASCA Community Head Start building in International Falls and has been in operation for several months.



The second location is in the Koochiching Health Services – Care Center building in Littlefork, MN. This location has two separate child care businesses. One child care business has just begun accepting children. The other space is available for a child care business. The Care Center location in Littlefork is connected to the local clinic, assisted living facility, and elderly care facility. This option allows for meals to be catered directly onsite.



The team continues to work toward finding solutions for child care and supporting new and existing providers in Koochiching County.