

# Our Story

The first program of the agency began as The Lending Machine, a toy lending library established in 1977. This program served Benton and Stearns Counties. In 1978, it merged with the Child Care Coordinating Committee and became Central MN Child Care, Inc. (CMCCI). The agency then operated the Lending Machine and conducted training for Family Child Care Providers in Benton and Stearns County. In 1978, CMCCI became a sponsor for the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) for Benton, Stearns and Sherburne Counties, funded by USDA through the Minnesota Department of Education. The CACFP is a nutrition program similar to the School Lunch program, where family child care providers receive reimbursement for serving nutritious meals/snacks along with a strong nutritional training component for all providers.

The agency continued operating and growing within the three counties until 1985 when the CACFP expanded substantially, taking on 38 additional counties in northern and central Minnesota.

In 1989 the agency submitted a proposal to the Minnesota Department of Human Services to operate a Child Care Resource and Referral program in Region 7W (Benton, Sherburne, Stearns, and Wright counties). The program was funded in February of 1990, and the name of the agency was changed to Child Care Choices, Inc. better reflecting the mission of the agency and representing the entire geographic area.

In January 1996, the agency was awarded a grant to operate the Child Care Resource and Referral for Region 6E covering the four county area of Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville

In July of 2004 the MN Dept. of Human Services and the statewide Child Care Resource & Referral system implemented a restructuring process with six new District service offices and 19 Regional offices. Child Care Choices was assigned to the new Midwest District, headed by Prairie Five CAP Agency in Montevideo, MN. Services transferred to the new District offices were parent referrals, provider trainings, and provider grants. Regional offices, such as Child Care Choices, deliver community outreach and provider support services. Regional offices also provide support to the District office in the areas of parent referral, child care grants, and training. This change significantly affected Child Care Choices Resource & Referral program with the loss of five staff members.

In March 2006, Child Care Choices became a regional service agency for the Minnesota Kinship Caregivers Association. This program serves grandparents and other relatives raising the children of families or friends.

Child Care Choices now offers Child and Adult Care Food Program services in 51 counties serving approximately 1,200 family child care providers and benefiting over 16,000 children. The Child Care Resource & Referral program serves in Regions 7W with over 1500 child care professionals benefiting.