



2026 ANNUAL REPORT



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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



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Our work continues to be guided by a commitment to be child-centered, family-focused, locally led, state-supported and grounded in shared accountability.

On behalf of the entire Children’s Cabinet, it is my honor to present the following annual report reflecting the work of the Cabinet for the benefit of all North Dakota children. This report demonstrates our shared commitment to ensuring every North Dakota child has the opportunity to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Over the past year, the Children’s Cabinet has advanced a simple but important belief: no single agency, program or community can meet every child’s needs alone. Lasting outcomes depend on how well we work together across education, health and human services, juvenile justice, early childhood and our local communities. The Cabinet exists not to create new systems but to strengthen the connections between them.

Throughout this report, we provide an overview of our goals, how we operationalized our mission at the state and local level, our outcomes to date and how the Cabinet hopes to continue to lead this work into the following year. Our subcommittees have ensured we listened to stakeholders across the state and were nimble enough to focus on the work that ensures every North Dakota child has the necessary skills, knowledge and resilience to realize their best selves. Our work continues to be guided by a commitment to be child-centered, family-focused, locally led, state-supported and grounded in shared accountability.

As we advance this work, you will learn about our efforts to better understand child well-being through stronger data governance; to measure and elevate best practices in a child’s early years, ensuring all children are school ready; and to empower local North Dakota leaders to work better together to ensure youth with the most complex needs have the same opportunities to thrive.

Thank you for casting the vision and challenging our Cabinet to bring North Dakotans together, breaking down silos, reducing inefficiencies, and providing the best policy, practices, and people to serve the children and families of North Dakota.

Sincerely,

Michelle Axtman
Sen. Michelle Axtman

2025-2026

CHILDREN’S CABINET MEMBERSHIP

Lt. Governor Michelle Strinden
North Dakota Governor’s Office

Sen. Michelle Axtman (Chair)
North Dakota Senate

Kimberly Jacobson (Vice Chair)
Human Service Zone Director

Sen. Kathy Hogan
North Dakota Senate

Rep. Jayme Davis
North Dakota House of Representatives

Rep. Brandy Pyle
North Dakota House of Representatives

Shawn Huss
Local Special Education Representative

Shanda Cool
Parent

Superintendent Levi Bachmeier
North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

Chief Justice Lisa Fair McEvers
North Dakota Supreme Court

Pat Traynor
Commissioner of ND Health and Human Services

Daniell Breland
Tribal Nations Representative

Veronica Zietz
Director, Committee on Protection and Advocacy

Russell Riehl
Local School Representative

Janell Regimbal
Private Agency Representative that Provides Services to Vulnerable Children

Staff & Support of the North Dakota Children’s Cabinet

Maria Neset
Chief of Staff to Lt. Governor Strinden
Office of the Governor

Jason Callahan
Children’s Cabinet Coordinator

Mary Christy
Regional Coordinator
Office of the Governor

Pritha Goplan, Ph.D.
Deputy Director-Policy
The Hunt Institute

BACKGROUND AND GOVERNANCE

Establishment of the Children’s Cabinet

Beginning in 2019, the North Dakota Children’s Cabinet was established by Senate Bill No. 2313 to assess, guide and coordinate care for children across North Dakota’s three branches of government and tribal nations to ensure children at risk or identified as having a behavioral health condition have the necessary system of supports including early intervention, treatment and recovery services. As outlined in North Dakota Century Code 54-07-13, the Cabinet’s scope of work includes the following:



SCOPE OF WORK

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>01</p> <p>Coordinate broad-based leadership across programs, agencies, branches of government, and tribal nations to meet the needs of children.</p> | <p>02</p> <p>Develop strategies to address gaps or needs regarding early care and education, medical and behavioral health, community, child welfare and juvenile justice.</p> | <p>03</p> <p>Develop strategies to provide for the full continuum of care in the delivery of services, including promotion, prevention, early identification and intervention, service delivery and recovery.</p> |
| <p>04</p> <p>Seek to engage cooperation across public and private service providers.</p> | <p>05</p> <p>Provide a comprehensive vision for how and where children are best served, attending to children in a respectful and relevant manner.</p> | <p>06</p> <p>Seek strategies to provide services to children without consideration of prior engagement with juvenile services.</p> |
| <p>07</p> <p>Provide for the active participation of consumers and providers statewide on advisory committees.</p> | <p>08</p> <p>Receive information and recommendations from the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and other state agencies.</p> | <p>09</p> <p>Provide an annual report to the legislative management and governor regarding the activities and findings of the cabinet.</p> |

Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Goals

Following the 2025 legislative session, the Cabinet was moved within the Office of the Governor. To fulfill its mandates, the committee established core values, vision and mission statements and strategic goals.

Our Vision

The North Dakota Children’s Cabinet ensures that all children are prepared and successful, equipped with the skills, knowledge, and resilience to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Our Mission

The North Dakota Children’s Cabinet collaborates to elevate what works and drive toward a seamless network of services and supports that meet the needs of every child and family.

Our Values



360 Communication

The Children’s Cabinet will engage in open, honest and meaningful communication that leads to positive results for all children and families.



Optimism

The Children’s Cabinet will be solutions-based, adopting a can-do attitude while avoiding the impulse to admire the problem.



Accountability

The Children’s Cabinet accepts clear accountability for leadership and allows all members to know their roles and responsibilities while sharing a common vision.

Our Strategic Goals

01

Strengthen foundational elements of the North Dakota Children’s Cabinet through the development and communication of a strategic plan.

02

Define, measure and report out on the status of child well-being in North Dakota.

03

Identify and elevate promising practices to advance a seamless network of services and supports throughout North Dakota.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is to provide an update on the progress of the North Dakota Children's Cabinet over the course of the 2025-2026 year. The report summarizes the work toward strategic priorities, legislative directives and statewide systems alignment focused on improving the status of children while reducing state and local inefficiencies.

Strategic Priorities

Over the course of the last year, the Cabinet has made great strides in operationalizing its intended purpose of serving as a convener of youth-serving entities to improve services and supports for North Dakota children, focusing on the continuum of a child's life ages 0-21. The Cabinet recognizes that this work begins at the youngest years of life with early intervention through intensive support systems for our youth with complex needs.

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When government stays in silos, it leads to duplicative work. Our goal is to create efficiencies, reduce the footprint of government and save North Dakota taxpayers money.

- Gov. Kelly Armstrong



In 2025, the Children's Cabinet began its strategic planning process, identifying three priority goals:

STRATEGIC GOAL 01

Strengthen foundational elements of the Children's Cabinet through the development and communication of a strategic plan.

To achieve this goal, the Cabinet is working toward establishing itself as an umbrella organization that ensures alignment across youth-serving systems as a statewide convener. The Cabinet continues to seek stakeholder engagement across the state through listening sessions and regional meetings, promoting its current strategic plan to include Cabinet vision, mission, values and goals aimed at improving the status of children ages 0-21. To ensure the Cabinet maintains a sustainable, outcomes-based approach, an operations manual was designed and adopted in early 2026. The Children's Cabinet strategic plan remains the guiding framework for the focus of its subcommittees, providing unified strategies to align efforts across youth-serving systems. By fostering collaboration among education, health and human services, juvenile justice and community partners, the Cabinet seeks to reduce fragmentation, eliminate duplication of effort and strengthen a coordinated system of care. Central to this work is a scalable model that empowers local leaders to respond to community needs while leveraging state-level support, shared accountability and collective ownership of outcomes for children, youth and families. In line with the Cabinet's value of being a "solutions-based, can-do" organization, the Cabinet has sought opportunities to grow its capacity through broader collaboratives. The Cabinet applied and was accepted to both the National Governors Association's (NGA) [Policy Academy to Advance Data Dashboards Measuring Student and System Success](#) and [The Children's Funding Project Fiscal Mapping Project](#). Both of these efforts provide support for the Cabinet's strategic plan, while elevating North Dakota as a national thought leader. Current and future outcomes of the strategic plan are included in the appendices of this report as additional evidence of work for the three Cabinet subcommittees.

STRATEGIC GOAL 02

Define, measure and report on the status of child well-being in North Dakota.

To achieve this goal, the Cabinet is creating a child well-being scorecard designed to tell a comprehensive data story of child well-being across systems. These indicators will reflect key transitions, behaviors, experiences, challenges and outcomes that indicate child well-being for all North Dakota youth ages 0 to 21 years. This scorecard will consider both the current challenges to well-being as well as an upstream approach that can serve as a progress tool to drive data-informed decisions.

In the spirit of efficiency, the Cabinet began the process by identifying existing metrics for children ages 0-21. Through a national scan on child well-being, the Cabinet identified a variety of national reports to include [Annie E. Casey's Kid's Count](#), Tulane University's [State of the States](#) and the Center for Disease Control's [Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#), coupled with a scan of North Dakota-specific accountability metrics to include the Department of Public Instruction's [InsightsND](#) and the work of North Dakota State University's [ND Compass](#). Additionally, the Cabinet has engaged with the North Dakota Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) about possible data availability and current SLDS priorities. The synthesis of these national and state efforts led the Cabinet to organize child well-being metrics around the following themes: Education; Economic Stability; Family and Community; Health and Safety; and The Early Years. As part of the NGA's Policy Academy, the Cabinet is receiving direct support in developing the dashboard.

GOAL 03

Identify and elevate promising practices to advance a seamless network of services and supports throughout North Dakota.

The Cabinet has made tremendous progress in building a seamless network of systems that highlight best practices, from early childhood experiences to ensuring our most vulnerable children receive the necessary services and system supports, helping all North Dakota youth reach their full potential. Later in the report it will be shared how both the Early Childhood and the Youth with Complex Needs Subcommittees have been focused on this goal.

The Cabinet's Early Childhood Subcommittee has partnered with The Hunt Institute to engage over 500 stakeholders across the state in the strengths and gaps in early childhood services. A recurring area for improvement was the transition from early childhood programming into the school environment. To better prepare classrooms and educators for the learners entering schools, the Early Childhood subcommittee is focused on recommendations aligning practitioners statewide around a common understanding of school readiness.

Between December and February, the Youth with Complex Needs Subcommittee conducted eight regional in-person meetings with youth-serving systems to solidify a standard definition of youth with complex needs and to learn more about the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities at a local level. The subcommittee plans to re-engage all eight regions to continue to address the continuum of care to understand if the gaps in services and supports are either people, process, practice or policy issues. This personalized approach empowers local leadership to reflect on localized "solutions" to challenges while elevating the greatest priorities for state support.

ENGAGED
1,000+
STAKEHOLDERS

ESTABLISHED
3
SUBCOMMITTEES

PARTICIPATED IN
20+
IN-PERSON
COMMUNITY
CONVENINGS



IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC GOALS THROUGH CABINET SUBCOMMITTEES

In an effort to advance its vision, the Children’s Cabinet organized its work through three subcommittees during the 2025–2026 year. Together, these subcommittees represent a cross-systems, continuum of care approach focused on improving child outcomes from the early years through adolescent recovery and intensive supports. The three subcommittees were:



The Children’s Cabinet Strategic Planning Subcommittee

Designed to support the Cabinet to develop metrics and a road map toward defining and quantifying child well-being. The subcommittee seeks to ensure that the Cabinet stays true to its value of being solutions-based in its approach and to establish operational expectations.



The Early Childhood Subcommittee

Designed to reduce disparities, support families and ensure children arrive at school ready to learn and thrive by increasing access to quality early childhood experiences and improving transitions in the system.



The Youth With Complex Needs Subcommittee

Organized to respond to the legislative charge of Enrolled House Bill 1556, 2025-2026. This subcommittee is committed to developing a comprehensive plan to improve collaboration/coordination and expand needed services to ensure that children/adolescents with significant behavioral or psychiatric needs and their families are being addressed.

Subcommittee 1: Strategic Planning

Building the Foundation for Child Well-Being and Shared Accountability

The Strategic Planning Subcommittee was established to provide overall leadership, coordination and accountability for the Children’s Cabinet. Serving as the advisory group for the long-term priorities, the subcommittee was charged with ensuring that the work of the Cabinet remained aligned to its

vision, mission and strategic goals while advancing measurable outcomes for children and youth-serving systems across North Dakota.

A major accomplishment during the reporting year was the development and implementation of the Children’s Cabinet Operations Manual. The operations manual established a shared understanding of the Cabinet’s legislative authority, decision-making processes and strategic priorities. The manual provides continuity for future administrations and ensures the Cabinet remains focused on outcomes rather than organizational silos. With the Cabinet now administered within the Governor’s Office, it has the opportunity to serve not only as an umbrella organization of youth serving systems, but also as a repository and alignment of present and future child-fo-

cused initiatives, thus ensuring systems continue to work collaboratively and efficiently.

Recognizing the importance of establishing statewide alignment, improving system communication and renewing relationships, the Strategic Planning Subcommittee also supported the establishment of three standing subcommittees to organize the Cabinet's work around the full continuum of child development. This structure focused attention on school readiness, child well-being outcomes and intensive supports for youth with complex needs.

The subcommittee has also worked to strengthen statewide engagement and awareness of the Cabinet's role as an umbrella organization for youth-serving systems. Through the various subcommittees and full day, in-person retreats, members have traveled to communities, met with regional groups and toured various programs and facilities to see services in action. The Cabinet hopes to continue engaging with regional leaders and host a road show in fall 2026 to continue building awareness of the Cabinet's role, provide a platform for local voice and feedback and continue driving forward our strategic lens of "locally-led, state-supported, shared accountability."

As part of its commitment to family voice and lived experience, the Cabinet officially welcomed new membership during the year to include a parent representative. This addition reflects the Cabinet's belief that North Dakota families should be seen as active partners in the design and improvement of systems intended to serve children and youth.

Looking ahead to the 2027 legislative session, the Cabinet is developing a policy recommendation designed to improve government efficiency by creating stronger alignment among youth-serving committees and advisory bodies. This recommendation seeks to establish clearer reporting structures and coordination mechanisms that reduce duplication while increasing collaboration and shared accountability.

Developing a Child Well-Being Framework for North Dakota

The Strategic Planning Subcommittee also serves as the lead work group for Strategic Priority #2: Define, Measure and Report on Child Well-Being in North Dakota.

Over the past year, the subcommittee has led a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process to identify indicators that most accurately reflect child well-being across the state. More than 30 stakeholder meetings were conducted with representatives from education, healthcare, behavioral health, human services, workforce development, juvenile justice, tribal nations, community organizations and nonprofits.

Locally-led. State-Supported. Shared Accountability.

Through these discussions, the Cabinet worked closely with state agencies and the North Dakota Statewide Longitudinal Data System to inventory existing data sources, identify data gaps and determine which measures best tell the story of child well-being from birth through adulthood.

This work resulted in the creation of a thematic framework organized around five domains of child well-being defined as:

ECONOMIC STABILITY: The conditions in which families and communities have the financial security and resources needed to support children's healthy development into young adulthood.

EDUCATION: The learning experiences and support systems that empower children to engage in their learning and acquire the knowledge and essential skills that prepare them for their adult life.

HEALTH AND SAFETY: The essential physical, mental and environmental conditions that children need to grow and develop.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY: The relationships, support networks and environments that nurture children's growth and well-being.

THE EARLY YEARS (AGES 0-5): The critical period of rapid growth in which children build the foundational skills, relationships and learning experiences that shape lifelong development.

Together, these domains provide a comprehensive picture of child well-being and create a common framework that can align agency priorities, funding strategies and outcome measures.

The Cabinet's commitment to data-informed decision-making was further demonstrated through North Dakota's acceptance into NGA's Policy Academy to Advance Data Dashboards Measuring Student and Systems Success. As one of only a small number of participating states and territories, North Dakota has gained technical assistance and national expertise to support the development of a statewide child well-being scorecard.

Strategic Planning Subcommittee
Progress, Strategic Purpose & Outcome

August 2025	Strengthen Governance Established 3 Subcommittees.
December 2025	Data Governance Created thematic structure to organize data reflective of child well-being.
In progress, December 2025	Data Governance Research data sets across agencies and SLDS; identify what exists and what does not.
January 2026	Strengthen Governance Completed Children’s Cabinet Operations Manual.
January 2026	Data Governance Accepted to NGA Policy Academy for Data Dashboards.
In progress, January 2026	Stakeholder Engagement Over 30 stakeholder meetings conducted to identify potential child well-being indicators.
April 2026	Strengthen Governance Added parent representative to the Cabinet board.
April 2026	Data Governance Attended NGA Policy Academy Kick Off Convening.
April 2026	Data Governance Requested Technical Assistance to support child well-being dashboard.
In progress, June 2026	Government Efficiency Applied and selected to participate in Children Funding Campaign.
In progress, Fall 2026	Strengthen Policy Develop recommendations to align youth serving committees to report to the cabinet.

Through this effort, North Dakota continues to demonstrate leadership by recognizing that child well-being extends beyond the traditional education-to-workforce pipeline and requires coordinated investment across the full continuum of child development.

Another unique opportunity in which North Dakota will engage is the Children’s Funding Project – Fiscal Mapping. Fiscal mapping analyzes the variety of funding sources that support programs and services. The analysis gets to their fundamental question, “WHO invests HOW MUCH money and in WHAT?”. Having this tool will help build understanding about public funding sources and investments in child-serving systems, leading to greater financial transparency and stewardship of state and federal funds. The fiscal map analysis is on track to launch publicly by mid-2027.

Subcommittee 2:
Early Childhood

Strengthening School
Readiness Through Early
Intervention and Best Practices

The Early Childhood Subcommittee was established to identify, elevate and scale promising, upstream practices that improve outcomes for North Dakota’s youngest citizens.

Aligned with the Cabinet’s commitment to prevention and early intervention, the subcommittee focused its work on strengthening school readiness and ensuring children who enter kindergarten and first grade are prepared to succeed academically, socially and developmentally.

Since January 2026, the subcommittee has partnered with The Hunt Institute to conduct a comprehensive review of school readiness efforts across North Dakota. This work reflects the Cabinet’s belief that early childhood investments provide one of the strongest opportunities to improve long-term outcomes.

Over the course of the work, The Hunt Institute conducted 85 stakeholder interviews involving state leaders, legislators, agency staff, educators, providers and parents. These conversations helped identify strengths, challenges and opportunities related to early childhood programming and the transition from 4-year-old programs into the school environment.

Through monthly meetings and the Cabinet’s in-person retreat, subcommittee members engaged in discussions focused on common definitions, outcome measures and policy opportunities to strengthen early childhood systems statewide.

To capture additional input from perspectives of early childhood and K-12 educators, a statewide survey was administered in partnership with the Governor’s Office, Department of Public Instruction and Health and Human Services. More than 500 educators participated, sharing valuable insight into readiness expectations, professional development, opportunities for parent education and integration of community supports.

The subcommittee also examined national research and reviewed successful readiness initiatives from other states to learn about scalable models and best practices that could be adapted in communities. By establishing a common understanding of school readiness and promoting evidence-based practices, the Cabinet seeks to create a more coordinated and seamless transition from early childhood services into K-12 education.

Early Childhood Subcommittee
Progress, Strategic Purpose & Outcome

October 2025	Promotion Statewide Site visits to early childhood sites.
February to April 2026	Stakeholder Engagement Conducted interviews, engaging with 85 stakeholders.
March 2026	Promotion Statewide Site visits to early childhood sites.
April to May 2026	Stakeholder Engagement Conduct school readiness survey statewide, collecting over 500 responses from 4 year old providers and elementary educators.
July 2026	Strengthen Policy Finalized the report on Strengthening School Readiness in North Dakota.
In progress, Fall 2026	Strengthen Policy Develop recommendations improve early childhood systems statewide to improve school readiness.

A final report and policy recommendations are expected to be completed early fall 2026 and will help inform future investments and system improvements designed to strengthen outcomes for North Dakota’s youngest learners.

Subcommittee 3:
Youth with Complex Needs

Building a System of Care for Youth with Complex Needs

The Youth with Complex Needs Subcommittee was established in response to the legislative requirements outlined in House Bill 1556 (2025).

Identifying Youth with Complex Needs

Youth with complex needs are individuals age 0-21 which span across multiple systems, requiring support and coordinated services.

Two or more of the following descriptors identify youth with complex needs:

- 1. Multiple systems involvement (childcare, child welfare, developmental disability, education, healthcare, juvenile justice, homeless, behavioral health services.
- 2. Behavioral Health Conditions with or without diagnosis (examples include but are not limited to youth with mental health conditions to include depression, PTSD, anxiety, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, substance use and other addictions.
- 3. Co-occurring disorder diagnosis (Behavioral Health issues combined with developmental disabilities, physical or intellectual disabilities).
- 4. Risky Behaviors (examples include but are not limited to running away, self-harm, truancy, expulsion or sexualized behaviors).
- 5. Environmental Risks (examples include but are not limited to living in poverty, homelessness, living in a home with domestic violence, and at risk of abuse and neglect).

The legislation directed the Children’s Cabinet to establish a workgroup to study the out-of-home placement and treatment needs of children with serious behavioral health conditions, including youth who are also involved in juvenile court proceedings due to criminal activity. In addition, the legislation charged the workgroup with developing and implementing a system of care for youth requiring intensive supports and out-of-home placement.

Throughout the year, the subcommittee has served as North Dakota’s primary forum for understanding the needs of youth with complex behavioral health challenges and multi-system involvement with a foundational goal to improve service delivery across systems.

Recognizing that no single system can effectively meet the needs of these youth alone, the subcommittee adopted a framework grounded in the following guiding values: child-centered services, family voice, no wrong doors, cross-system alignment and locally-led, state-supported with shared accountability.

One of the most significant accomplishments this past year was the development of a statewide working definition of “Youth with Complex Needs.” Developed through extensive stakeholder engagement, the definition provides a common language that can be used across education, behavioral health, child welfare, juvenile justice, developmental disabilities and healthcare systems.

The subcommittee also led local engagement efforts in all eight regions of North Dakota. These meetings brought together local leaders and service providers to identify existing strengths, service gaps and opportunities to strengthen local systems of care. These discussions were grounded in a case study that demonstrated that the lack of coordination, missed entry points, ineffective transition planning and lack of service contributed to youth ending up in the deepest end of the system.

Participants continue to work collaboratively to map local service continuums, identify barriers to service access and availability and examine the pathways youth follow as they move within systems. The conversations highlighted recurring challenges, including workforce shortages, limited availability to community-based services, inconsistent care coordination, disruptive out-of-home placements and barriers to sharing information between agencies.

At the same time, regions identified numerous examples of innovation, collaboration and local leadership that demonstrate North Dakota’s commitment to supporting youth with complex needs closer to home whenever possible.

Building on these discussions, the subcommittee is developing a review process designed to empower local leadership

to analyze whether policy, process, practice and people within each system are able to provide necessary and timely support to children with complex needs. This framework will drive strategic prioritization and include shared accountability made possible through agreed upon metrics of success.

By creating greater alignment among systems, the Cabinet seeks to ensure that youth receive the right service at the right time while reducing unnecessary system involvement and placement disruptions.

Youth with Complex Needs Subcommittee

Progress, Strategic Purpose & Outcome

June 2026	Stakeholder Engagement Convened local youth system practitioners around shared understandings of youth with complex needs.
In progress, December 2025	Strengthen Governance & Government Efficiency Conducted regional in person meetings to build a system of care framework that embraces the concept of locally-led, state support and shared accountability.
March 2026	Promotion Statewide Site visits to Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility and Level D Education Setting.
June 2026	Data Governance Using the draft definition, DPI released data report on special education identified youth with complex needs and outcomes.
July 2026	Strengthen Governance Finalized a statewide definition of youth with complex needs, engaging over 200 stakeholders through the process.
In Progress	Strengthen Policy Develop a list of recommendations to address cross-systems serving youth with complex needs, as outlined in House Bill 1556.

The subcommittee continues to provide regular updates to the full Children’s Cabinet regarding regional findings, emerging policy recommendations, system challenges and opportunities for improvement. Recognizing that systems all too often become reactive, the subcommittee has adopted a “go slow to go fast” approach, taking the necessary time to build relationships, establish trust and develop credibility with a shared goal of improving the lives of all children. Recommendations generated through this work will inform future policy proposals and help establish a more coordinated and responsive system of care for North Dakota youth and families.

NEXT STEPS

The work completed over the past year has strengthened the foundation of the Cabinet, clarified our shared vision for child well-being in North Dakota and identified opportunities to better align services and supports for children, youth and families across the state.

Between May and September, Cabinet members and supporting workgroups will focus on translating findings into actionable policy priorities and budget recommendations for preliminary discussions with the Governor’s Office and youth-serving state agencies.

By early fall, the Cabinet will finalize its recommendations, subcommittee reports and potential budget requests. These recommendations will be grounded in the principle that every child and family should have access to the right service, at the right time, in the right place, regardless of where they live in North Dakota.

This fall the Children’s Cabinet will launch a statewide “road show” to share findings, celebrate regional successes, gather additional stakeholder feedback and build awareness of the Cabinet’s priorities. This effort will help ensure transparency, strengthen partnerships and continue building momentum toward a more coordinated and responsive system of care for North Dakota’s children and families.

The work ahead is significant, but so is the opportunity. By working together across agencies, systems, communities and regions, we can continue to advance a shared vision where all North Dakota children are prepared, supported and equipped to thrive.

APPENDICES

Children’s Cabinet Operations Manual

www.governor.nd.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Children's%20Cabinet/ND%20Children's%20Cabinet%20Ops%20Manual%20-%20202.20.26.pdf

Definition of Youth with Complex Needs

<https://www.governor.nd.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Children's%20Cabinet/2026.07.10%20-%20ND%20CC%20HB1556%20Subcommittee%20-%20Youth%20with%20Complex%20Needs%20Definition%20Final.pdf>

Report on History of Children’s Coordinating Councils

<https://www.governor.nd.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Children's%20Cabinet/2026.07.31%20-%20Children's%20Services%20Coordinating%20Committee%20-%20Report.pdf>

The Hunt Institute School Readiness in North Dakota Executive Summary

https://hunt-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/2026.7.8-ND_SchoolReadiness-Executive-Summary_DIGITAL.pdf

The Hunt Institute School Readiness Report

https://hunt-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/NorthDakota_SchoolReadiness_Report_2026_DIGITAL.pdf

2025-2026 Agenda, Minutes and Information

www.governor.nd.gov/north-dakota-childrens-cabinet





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