



Montana Early Childhood Account Board Meeting
March 26, 2026
10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Via Zoom

Welcome

The meeting is called to order by board chair, Lisa Malmquist, at 10:01 a.m.

Roll Call

Present:

1. Tory Malek
2. Tracy Moseman
3. Lisa Malmquist
4. Jackie Ronning
5. Beth Branam
6. Crystal Armstrong
7. Louisa Libertelli-Dunn
8. Caitlin Jensen
9. Mackenzie Espeland
10. Kathy Deserly

- Confirmation of Quorum

Review and Approve Prior Meeting Minutes

- Tracy Moseman motions to approve the meeting minutes
- Tory Malek seconds the motion
- Approved unanimously by the board
- Motion passed

Conflict of Interest Clarification

Lisa reviews clarification she received from the Lieutenant Governor in regards to conflict of interest. This Provision applies specifically when the board is voting on board funds that could potentially be received by board member's businesses. All conflicts of interest must be disclosed. Board members may help with implementation and participate in discussions but may not vote, make decisions, or award funds.

Meeting Norms Review

Lisa clarifies that the goal of the board is to maintain respectful discussion that allows all members to contribute, while staying focused on strategic priorities.

Board Committee Progress

Lisa has appointed two implementation committees to support Michelle Cusey in working to develop proposals for the board's consideration. The purpose of these committees is to allow a small group to work key implementation details, explore



potential pilot ideas, and brin developed recommendations back to the board. Michelle Cusey will participate in all committees. Committees will meet on a weekly basis.

Special Needs Training Implementation Committee

- Board members on this committee include Lisa Malmquist, Lousia Libertelli-Dunn, and Kathy Deserly. Louisa Libertelli-Dunn is serving as the Committee Chair.
- This committee is focused on strengthening support for providers who serve children with special needs. This includes strengthening early identification of developmental delays by increasing the provider's ability to conduct developmental screenings, interpret results, and connect families to services when needed.
- Core strategies include expanding training access to deliver in person or hybrid developmental screening training statewide with a focus on practical skills, developmental milestones, screening administration and interpretation, family communication, and referral pathways.
- Committee members identified that many providers and staff do not have access to tech outside of personal phones. Because of this the committee is suggesting the use of a technical mini grant (up to \$1,500). This would be an application grant that supports providers' ability to participate in training as well as implementing screenings.
- Ongoing technical assistance would provide post training support to ensure implementation, explore coaching models and reinforce practices using DPHHS contracted staff.
- System coordination would include strengthening connections to early identification systems as well as building a provider understanding of referral processes for specialized services.
- Success of this should be shown through growth in number of providers conducting screenings, increased use of standardized screening tools, increase in family communications, and increase in referrals for developmental evaluation as well as specialized services.
- The committee would like to design training that would help providers sequentially build knowledge. This training should be widely advertised and free to include any providers who would want to utilize it.
- Eligible applicants should include out-of-school time programs.
- Part C and early intervention within DPHHS should be oriented within these trainings as well so that providers know what resources are available for children with special needs.
- Tracy would encourage looking at what state contractors already offer for PD on this topic to make sure committee work is not duplicative.
- Training courses should have crediting hours available.



Public Comment and Vote

Four members of the public made comment.

- Tory Malek motions to accept the continuation of development of this proposal
- Kathy Deserly seconds the motion
- Unanimously approved by the board
- Motion passed

Quality Incentive Implementation Committee

- Board members on this committee include Caitlin Jensen, Tracy Moseman, Beth Branam, and Mackenzie Espeland. Mackenzie Espeland is serving as the Committee Chair.
- This committee has met to explore strategies related to strengthening incentives for providers and identifying ways to support and improve quality across the early child care system.
- Core strategies include providing stipends or financial incentives to support recruitment and retention of early childhood professionals including child care workers, home visitors, and family support specialists.
- Data tracking should include year-over-year retention rates among participating providers and length of time positions remain unfilled.
- Implementation of these strategies includes incentives for home visiting and Part C, recruitment and retention grants for childcare providers, direct payments to eligible caregivers, and telehealth benefit support for early childhood staff.
- These strategies would require annual funding to sustain.
- Another strategy explored is childcare facility improvement grants.
- Tracking for this strategy would include collecting data on grants awarded by facility type, geographic distribution of funded projects, number of child care slots created or expanded, and identification of common barriers programs face when meeting licensing requirements.
- Implementation of this strategy includes construction grants for new or expanding facilities, license and safety improvement grants, and stipends for workers who have been in the child care field for five years or more (this time frame was decided upon as including providers who have been in the field less than five years would lower the stipend amount significantly to the point where it would not be effective or especially useful to providers).
- Stipends would total approximately \$1.6 million including research study. This study would drive long-term recommendations to address systemic issues in the field.



Public Comment and Vote

Four members of the public made comment.

- Louisa Libertelli-Dunn motions to accept the continuation of development of this proposal
- Jackie Ronning seconds the motion
- Unanimously approved by the board
- Motion passed

Evaluation Committee

- Board members on this committee include Crystal Armstrong, Tory Malek, and Jackie Ronning.
 - This committee was appointed by Lisa in today's meeting and does not have a committee chair at this time.

General Public Comment

Two members of the public made comment.

Four written public comments were received by the board.

Adjournment

- Caitlin Jensen motions to adjourn
- Tory Malek seconds the motion
- Unanimously approved by the board
- Motion passed

Meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.