

Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council Meeting

April 21-22, 2022

Location: Zoom

April 21, 2022

Attendance

Council Members Present:

Meghan Ballenger, Marty Blair, Taylor Boylan, Beth Branam, Jennifer Burckhard, Patty Butler, Jessie Counts, Leigh Ann Holmes, Caitlin Jensen, Kim Latrielle, Laurie Lincoln, Brandi Loch, Tobin Novasio, Ashley Pena-Larsen, Kathy Rich, Adam Schafer, Wendy Studt, Brock Tessman, Christie Twardoski, Rachel Wanderscheid

Council Members Absent:

Charlie Brereton, Stacey Clement, Kristen Day, Lesa Evers, Meghan Peel, Darlene Schottle

Staff and Guests Present:

Xanna Burg, Darla Dexter, Sam Garetson, Karen Gilbert, Jacqueline Isaly, Penny Job, Erica Johnston, Leslie Lee, Jody Lehman, Amy McDonald, Jamie Palagi, Rhonda Schwenke, Kirsten Smith, Erin Switalski, Morgan Taylor, Sally Tilleman, Liz Wood

Called to order:

Meeting was called to order at 10:02 am by Council Chair, Kim Latrielle

Kim introduced herself and Jamie Palagi, Administrator for the Early Childhood and Family Support Division. Each council member, staff and guest present had a moment to introduce themselves.

Presentations:

Xanna Burg, Kids Count, [presented on Montana Kids Count](#). For more information you can visit their [website](#). [Nationwide](#) data is available, as well as data specific to [Montana](#).

Kirsten Smith with Bloom Consulting presented an update on the [child care business process improvement project](#).

Committee Updates:

Workforce Development

Taylor Boylan gave an update regarding the committee work to have reciprocity of acceptance for both OPI renewal units and Early Childhood Project units and adjusting the process to make it easier for providers to receive continuing education credits, including eLearning credits. This committee will

continue to foster communication and conversations with OPI and explore shared benefits for early childhood providers.

Retention and Quality

Meghan Ballenger reviewed their top 3 priorities:

Access to capital and its importance in success for those interested in providing child care.

Facilities planning and the barriers and restrictions that can impact those wanting to offer child care services.

Improving connections and finding opportunities to reduce challenges, remove barriers, and improve connections throughout the network of child care providers and also state, local, and independent agencies.

Expansion and Business Development

Darla Dexter identified the new co-chairs: Caitlin Jensen and Adam Schafer. The committee will move forward meeting monthly to work on the framework of business supports available.

Family Support

Jennifer Burckhard gave an update that the committee had been unable to meet since November. They will plan a meeting and continue their work. Jamie asked the committee to think about family support in the broadest sense beyond child care and to think about including some of the other family support programs and strategies.

Maternal Child Health Block Grant

Blair Lund, Program Specialist, and Mackenzie Petersen, Section Supervisor for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) [presented an overview on the block grant and how it supports families across Montana.](#)

Open Discussion

Discussion occurred throughout the meeting regarding the presentations. The council was encouraged to consider children with special needs and their need for child care. How can the council help with this issue? Is the council desiring to assist in finding a solution for this problem?

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjourned

Meeting adjourned for the day at 3:51 pm and will reconvene tomorrow (Friday, April 22nd) at 10:00 am.

April 22, 2022

Attendance

Council Members Present:

Meghan Ballenger, Marty Blair, Taylor Boylan, Beth Branam, Jen Burckhard, Patty Butler, Jessie Counts, Leigh Ann Holmes, Caitlin Jensen, Kim Latrielle, Laurie Lincoln, Brandi Loch, Tobin Novasio, Ashley Penalarsen, Kathy Rich, Adam Schafer, Wendy Studt, Christie Twardoski, Rachel Wanderscheid

Council Members Absent:

Charlie Brereton, Stacey Clement, Kristen Day, Lesa Evers, Meghan Peel, Darlene Schottle, Brock Tessman

Staff and Guests Present:

Darla Dexter, Sam Garetson, Karen Gilbert, Jacqueline Isaly, Leslie Lee, Jody Lehman, Amy McDonald, Jamie Palagi, Rhonda Schwenke, Erin Switalski, Morgan Taylor, Sally Tilleman, Liz Wood

Call to Order: Kim reconvened the council at 10:03 am.

Kim welcomed everyone back and reviewed the agenda for the day.

Presentations

American Rescue Act Project Updates

Jamie Palagi, Administrator Early Childhood and Family Support Division of DPHHS, presented an update on ARPA funding and distribution. All funding was presented and approved by the [Health Advisory Commission](#) and the Governor. Jamie also introduced the new section to the division, Prevention and Early Intervention covering the Montana Milestones Program, Family Education Support and Children's Trust Fund.

Zero to Five in Montana

Erin Switalski, [Headwaters Foundation](#), presented on what the foundation is and how it serves the western Montana community. Caitlin Jensen presented on [Zero to Five in Montana](#) and how it is serving and helping Early Childhood.

General Discussion and Questions

Brief discussion was held around [temporary child care assistance for health care workers](#) and what positions this covered.

Head Start eligibility has now expanded to include SNAP recipients.

Marty Blair shared [resources](#) for families with children with complex health needs. He also shared a way to [actively participate in family conversations](#).

Leslie Lee, Healthy Montana Families, shared information regarding the upcoming Great Beginnings, Great Families conference, August 10-11. Leslie will share the call for proposals for this conference with the council.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Future Planning

The next meeting is scheduled on November 17-18, 2022. This meeting will be held in Helena. Details to follow.

Adjourned

Kim Latrielle adjourned the meeting at 11:26.