

Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council Meeting

November 3-4, 2021

Location: Zoom

November 3, 2021

Attendance

Council Members Present:

Meghan Ballenger, Marty Blair, Taylor Boylan, Beth Branam, Jennifer Burckhard, Patty Butler, Stacey Clement, Lesa Evers, Scott Eychner, Leigh Ann Holmes, Caitlin Jensen, Kim Latrielle, Laurie Lincoln, Tobin Novasio, Meghan Peel, Ashley Pena-Larsen, Adam Schafer, Wendy Studt, Brock Tessman, Christie Twardoski, Rachel Wanderscheid

Council Members Absent:

Kristen Day, Nikki Grossberg, Darlene Schottle, Charlie Brereton

Called to order:

Meeting was called to order at 9:02 am by Council Chair, Kim Latrielle

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

Presentations:

Leslie Lee, Healthy Montana Families, [presented on home visiting](#).

Ashley Pena-Larsen presented on [Montana Head Start Programs and collaboration grants](#).

Kirsten Smith with Bloom Consulting presented on the work with [Child Care Licensing and the process/regulation improvement project](#).

Jamie Palagi, Early Childhood and Family Support Division Administrator presented on the [American Rescue Plan Act Funding](#) and updated the council on where the division is with awarding the funding.

Open Discussion

The floor was opened for questions and discussions.

Discussion was held around after school programs and their eligibility for ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Stabilization Grant funding. Jamie Palagi confirmed that if the program was licensed and registered with the State of Montana, then they would be eligible for funding.

It was also mentioned that OPI put out funding opportunities for afterschool programs.

Marty Blair shared the [Tip Sheet](#) resource from the [Rural Institute](#).

A question around federal funding for universal preschool and child care was brought up. Jamie Palagi stated that as a department, we are not ready to respond to questions about that funding potential, as it is still in discussion at the congressional level, but that we would share information that we had received from our national partners as informational. Jamie mentioned the bill would likely shift since it's still being debated nationally. For an overview from national partners, click [here](#).

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjourned

Meeting adjourned for the day at 11:23 and will reconvene tomorrow (Thursday, November 4th) at 9:00 am.

November 4, 2021

Attendance

Council Members Present:

Meghan Ballenger, Marty Blair, Taylor Boylan, Beth Branam, Jen Burckhard, Patty Butler, Kristen Day, Scott Eychner, Caitlin Jensen, Kim Latrielle, Tobin Novasio, Meghan Peel, Ashley Pena-Larsen, Kathy Rich, Adam Schafer, Wendy Studt, Brock Tessman, Christie Twardoski, Rachel Wanderscheid

Council Members Absent:

Charlie Brereton, Stacey Clement, Lesa Evers, Nikki Grossberg, Leigh Ann Holmes, Laurie Lincoln

Call to Order: Kim reconvened the council at 9:00 am.

Kim and Jamie went over committee descriptions and agenda for the breakout sessions.

Committee Notes

Expansion/Business Development

Structure will be to meet monthly yet keep it flexible to adjust to committee and council needs.

Focus Areas:

1. General awareness campaign sharing information on how to connect providers and families to community partners and resources available for assistance.
2. Create and share resources and support around navigating a new or expanding childcare business.
3. Gain more understanding around the peer support structure and how to leverage those partnerships.
4. Connect with Workforce Development committee to see where efforts can be combined.
5. Discuss barriers and solutions for child care businesses and providers.

Retention and Quality

Structure has not been determined yet; not enough members of the committee were able to be present at this meeting to make this determination.

Focus Areas:

1. Building trust between the childcare providers and state programs.
 - a. Increase awareness and utilization of available programs, especially in rural areas
 - b. Have direct conversations with those providing care to determine needs.
 - c. Acknowledge providers experience and decrease the stigma associate with using state services.
2. Increasing awareness
 - a. Cross promotion between programs - to ensure families and childcare providers have all the resources available
 - b. Incentives for licensed childcare providers - using funding without creating a void at the end of the funds.
3. Improving accessibility and value of trainings
 - a. Determining what trainings are relevant, engaging, and useful.
 - b. Incentives to aid businesses in the cost of trainings.
 - c. Retaining staff after trainings.

Workforce Development

Structure: Looking at a monthly meeting type of structure.

Focus Areas:

1. Trainings: Training can be a barrier with staff; substitutes have to complete training as well. Barriers to training are approvals, paid time for the training. Create incentives for career pathways. Align incentives with the career pathways and broaden the career pathways. Work toward general recognition that early childhood is more than just child care.
2. Look at the training approval process and identify opportunities for reciprocity with OPI renewal units and the ECP training approval process.
3. Workforce Shortage: Offer incentives to those living in certain areas and/or willing to live and work in certain areas with not enough early childhood professionals.
4. Benefits: Help to create a “pool” of providers to help lower the cost of insurance benefits. Child care is an area with low wages and high expectations.

Family Support

Structure:

Focus Areas:

1. Communication: Create a repository of resources for families that can connect across all systems and organizations. Resources should include early intervention services.

2. Mental health support for providers, children, and families: Provide assessment(s) for child, with training and resources for providers. Offer education for families. Reduce child expulsion rate through education, resources, and mitigation of provider burnout.
3. Financial: Expand access for families to early care programs and provide financial assistance and by utilizing other resources. Find resources to offer higher wages to child care providers.

Presentations

Patty Butler presented the [Child Care and Development Plan Updates](#).

Public Comment

Christina Rush from SKC joined the meeting. She stated that she had helped several students with various applications and agreed that the application process for public assistance should be streamlined. Additionally, she thanked the council for being able to listen. She stated that all of the ideas and suggestions she heard were good.

Adjourned

Kim Latrielle adjourned the meeting at 11:43. The next meeting will be held in April. Location will be in Helena. More details will come at a later date.