STRENGTHENING MONTANA'S EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM PROJECT UPDATES

The Early Childhood Services Bureau launched stakeholder engagement and outreach activities to support a Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning Process as part of a one-year grant awarded by the US Department of Health & Human Services' Administration for Children and Families. Parallel to the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan work is happening in areas of Family Engagement and Sharing of Best Practices.

The Strengthening Montana's Early Childhood System Project is focused on developing the state's comprehensive early childhood system to support early learning and development, health, and family support and engagement. The project will promote access to high-quality early childhood care and education (ECE) for infants, toddlers, and preschool age children in a mixed-delivery system to support the state's vision that children achieve their highest potential in school and in life. The target populations are underserved children, families, and geographic regions, and the early childhood providers and supporting system.

What we've done so far

Internal Kick-off meeting held on January 15th

External Kick-off meeting engaging stakeholders held on January 24th

Needs Assessment

As part of the needs assessment, we held the following focus groups:

In person focus groups

- 13 locations
- 26 groups total
    - 178 providers participated
    - 98 caregivers participated
- Virtual focus groups
    - Home-based child care providers (2 meetings)
    - Head Start Directors
    - Child care assessors
    - Early Intervention contractors

Regional Strategic Planning Workshops

Stakeholders were engaged to participate in developing an early childhood strategic plan using a consensus-based approach at the local level, leveraging the infrastructure of local early childhood coalitions. Strategic planning workshops were conducted in the following communities to discuss needs assessment findings and recommendations, prioritize then with stakeholders, and develop associated draft goals, objectives, and strategies.

Missoula, Billings, Helena, Great Falls, and Bozeman

Planned submission is August

Engaging Stakeholders

DPHHS conducted a Tribal Consultation in June with representatives from Tribal Governments and included discussion on early childhood services delivered throughout DPHHS. This was an exciting opportunity to listen and learn from tribal partners about how the early childhood system is operating in tribal communities and have dialog around strategic opportunities.

Hosted an informational session informing stakeholders and partners about the Strengthening Montana's EC Systems Grant- School Readiness & Transitions on June 4th.

Best Beginnings State Advisory Council convened on April 23-24th to review preliminary results and recommendations from the needs assessment.

Best Beginnings State Advisory Council met on July 24th. Systems grant updates shared with stakeholders.

Local Community Coalition work

Contracted with 20 local coalitions to implement work in both Family Engagement and Sharing Best Practices. Nine coalitions hired Family Engagement specialist to engage and support the local community in best practice to engage families in their child's development and education.

Held the first local coalitions meeting for contracted coalitions with professional development focused on best practice in engaging the community and families in school readiness and transitions.

Hosted a second Community Coalition meeting prior to the Best Beginnings Advisory Council in July to develop next steps to developing coalition work.

Contracted with the following partners to expand on concurring work of Family Engagement and Sharing Best Practices

The Montana Head Start Association is conducting professional development and best practices on Family Engagement.

Rocky Mountain Head Start hosted a 2-day Family Engagement Summit "Better Together". The summit included Keynote speaker Jonnae Tillman. Tillman also presented on motivational interviewing and Jim Fitzgerald presented on Resilience. The second day combined topics on homelessness, legal issues facing families, and child protective services.

Upcoming is the Regional Head Start Conference in Billings, October 17-18th.

Child Care Resource & Referral Network-Developing and leading marketing campaign recruiting infant toddler providers, providers into STARS to Quality, and informing families what evidence to look for in high quality care.

Child Care Resource & Referral- Supporting development and Implementation of Early Childhood provider Learning Communities, as well as targeted supports for home-based child care providers.

ParentingMontana.org- Expanding parentingmontana.org to include 0-4-year old.

*DPHHS-*Moving to an ECE portal to centralize and improve delivery of state-based data.

Upcoming

Best Beginnings Advisory Council meeting scheduled for November 13th & 14th.

Submit Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan

Renewal Grant – Estimated postdate September 1st- Due October 31st, 2019.