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Early Childhood Coalition of the Greater Helena Area

Monday, January 11 at 4 pm

General Meeting Minutes

Meeting Recording: <https://youtu.be/zTGQonEzKus>

**Facilitator(s):** Brandi Thomas

**Minute-Taker:** Megan Peters

**Agenda review.** 1 min.

**Introductions.** 5 min.

* Icebreaker: If you could learn one new personal skill, what would it be?

**Featured Focus/Foci.** 25 min.

* ENHANCE Montana Survey Report: Essential Child Care Needs COVID-19 and Beyond
	+ Presented by Amber Caldwell, SciGaia
	+ Presentation attached to email
	+ In response to COVID-19, state VOAD established sub-committee to discuss child care needs, included representatives from many non-profits and organizations
		- Discussed distribution of relief funds & built out Enhance survey
			* Received 3,000 responses with majority from families living in more urban areas of Montana (not evenly distributed which was expected)
			* Also combined with recent data from BBER report: <http://www.bber.umt.edu/pubs/health/ChildCare2020.pdf>
* Enhance survey talks about the effect of COVID-19 on providers, families, businesses, schools
	+ Results available on <https://enhancemt.org/>with more datasets and insights
	+ Not affordable or accessible to all families, especially quality care
		- Recommended affordability is 7% of income but in LCC, cost was about 29% of family income (median of $65K)
	+ System would benefit from integrated coordination & collaboration across businesses and schools
	+ Child care after onset of pandemic was especially challenging for essential workers
	+ 33.68% of parents can no longer afford child care due to employment changes related to COVID-19: even more of a burden for less affluent families and single-parent households
		- Disproportionately affecting women’s ability to return to work
	+ Parent performance was already affected by child care with needing to leave early, getting distracted, etc. before COVID-19
		- BBER noted that financial burden for Montana businesses is $55 M annually due to inadequate child care
	+ Increased statewide need for child care when schools closed, extended to families with school age children
		- Child care providers needed to rise to meet demand without certainty of funding, fear about exposure, etc.
			* Unable to meet surge demands because of capacity limitations due to COVID-19 precautions & staffing limitations
	+ Majority of provider responses on survey came from group care: led to reduced enrollment for 56% of providers, reduced pay/hours and layoffs for 60% of providers
		- At least 8.62% were worried about permanent closures when the survey was sent in July (before school started)
	+ Most state funds target families receiving Best Beginnings, but that scholarship reaches only 25% of eligible families
		- Copayments distributed for March through May, sent scholarship supports to providers, directed grants based on program size
	+ Enhance advocated for additional $50M in block grant funding which was awarded and allocated as the following
		- $30M for maintaining and expanding child care during out-of-school time
		- $10M for families with special circumstances requiring in-home care
		- $8M for supplemental payments to licensed child care facilities
		- $2M to CC&R agencies for admin and outreach
		- Lewis and Clark County received most funds: over $1M
	+ Child care is susceptible to market, not considered as a public good which makes it difficult to sustain during economic downturns: must meet Iron Triangle to survive due to thin margins
		- Iron Triangle: full enrollment every day, collect tuition on time in full, match annual revenue to expenses
		- Could benefit from long-term state support or reimagining of economic structure for child care
	+ 34% of providers did not expect to survive closing for more than 2 weeks, another 25% were concerned about any type of closure; about 52% had families already unable to cover copays & fees
	+ NAEYC report included more family home responses: <https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/state_by_state_child_care_crisis_coronavirus_surveydata.pdf>
		- Many providers feel unable to recover in the next two years: Regions 4 and 6 in Montana are more rural and at risk
	+ Coordinated responses were revealing because COVID-19 was a new type of disaster: showed that we could build upon partnerships between schools, businesses, response organizations, etc.
	+ Only 8.72% of schools supported direct emergency child care solutions for COVID-19
		- Work on leveraging structure of elementary schools in future if future issues come up similar to COVID
		- Communities are still responding to school closures and impacts on families
			* Missoula is trying to help with finding child care slots within school districts to aid coordination
	+ 54.47% of businesses report that employees are struggling to continue or return to work due to child care issues, 62.5% report that employee child care needs have impacted bottom line
		- Affecting bottom line as employees are dealing with at-home child care issues
		- Opportunity to educate businesses and reinforce child care structure by offering pop-up care, onsite child care services, work on flexible work schedules
	+ Working from home is not the solution for businesses to maintain employment of parents
		- Family Forward Montana, <https://familyforwardmt.org/>, provides resources for family-friendly work policies
	+ Invest in future child care: for every $1 spent on early care in MT, an additional $0.61 is generated in new spending
	+ Enhance next steps include advocacy, communication, monitoring progress
		- Working to educate new administration and politicians across the state
		- Creating innovative and user-friendly resources
	+ All work available at [www.enhancemt.org](http://www.enhancemt.org) , can email at info@enhancemt.org for help/more info
	+ Enhance group meets weekly to work on child care issue: still looking to engage more businesses (put in touch directly with MBAC)
		- Leverage collective if you have any needs related to this child care conversation
	+ Question about explaining the financial benefit with 16:1 ratio
		- Uses data that looks at the long-term impact on economy
		- New studies show that short-term impacts the long-term, like businesses struggling to reopen without access to child care during pandemic
		- Also see loss to taxpayers in addition to families: included in report
		- When engaging in advocacy, valuable to talk about bottom lines with the fiscally conservative decision-makers (translate heart strings into economics to speak the language of new administration)
			* [Link to one-pager](https://enhancemt.org/documents/L%26C%20EMPLOYER%20SUPPORTED%20CHILD%20CARE%20%20%281%29.pdf) by county that relates investment in child care: available on Enhance’s website

**Task Force Updates.** 15 min.

* Maternal Mental Health
	+ Kelsey Kyle & Emily Clewis taking over in 2021 as co-facilitators
	+ Continuing work on vetted resource guide for perinatal mood disorders & peer support groups
		- Group Peer Support training starts tomorrow for five individuals
* Home Visiting
	+ In 1/8 meeting split into two sub-groups working on peer network and crosswalk resource guide
		- Resource guide will identify issues for families and connect to correct supports, leveraging CONNECT
		- Peer network starting with Circle of Security training for 13 home visitors, additional training for DFS
* Early Care and Education
	+ Point of transition with conclusion of Zero to Five & United Way relationship
	+ Will try to host conversation between early care providers & kindergarten teachers
	+ Continuing Bright by Text for the next couple of months

**Announcements/Updates.** 15 min.

* Megan shared new features on <https://helenaecc.org/>
	+ Zoom link to general meetings will be shared on home page, allows anyone to join directly from website
		- May occasionally be available for other task force meetings
	+ Calendar is available at bottom of page, includes upcoming meetings with links to agendas
		- Also can submit events using the link, will send to Megan for approval

**Upcoming Meetings**

* Thurs., Jan. 21: Maternal Mental Health Task Force, 1:00-3:00 pm, <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83880748185?pwd=eGRDYTY2anN1SGVya2I3bUFoK0JUQT09>
* Thurs., Jan. 21: Early Care and Education Task Force, 4:00-5:00 pm, Zoom link to come
* Mon., Feb. 8: General Membership, 4:00-5:00 pm, Zoom link to come
* Fri., Feb. 12: Home Visiting Task Force, 12:00-1:00 pm, Zoom link to come

5:00 Adjourn