



**"Working together to create a better future for children and their families."**

Clay County Early Childhood Initiative

Thursday, June 18, 2020

Meeting Minutes

Carolyn welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Early Childhood Dental Network – Jane Neubauer, ECDN Coordinator. Jane thanked us for the work that we are doing in spreading the news about the importance of good oral health. Minnesota is the lowest in 48 states when it comes to reimbursement rates. Currently, the following dental clinics are operating – Apple Tree, Children's Dental, and Family Healthcare. Clinic days for children and pregnant women have been placed on hold due to COVID 19. Family Healthcare, located at the Family Service Center, is seeing patients by appointment only. Jane has a lot of resources to offer our group, including a short children's video on wearing masks. This video helps kids be more comfortable with people around them wearing personal protection items such as face masks. Check out the Early Childhood Dental Network Facebook and the ECDN web page on the West Central Initiative website [www.wcif.org](http://www.wcif.org) Jane recently accepted a position with Blue Cross Blue Shield as a dental access coordinator. She will be working with adult and children dental access in the state.

#### Agency Updates:

Somali Child Care Project: Deana shared that she has been working with a woman from the Somali community who is working towards becoming a licensed child care provider. The provider hopes to have everything completed and be ready to open in July. Deana is also working with a second individual to help with the paperwork for applying to be a child care provider.

Headstart closed out its regular year in May and are now enrolling for next year's program. The early Headstart program will continue through the summer. A summer classroom experience for students entering kindergarten in the fall, and for those with special needs will begin in July. Head Start plans to serve 24 children in the summer program. Options for fall are being considered, including a possibility of no full-time programming.

First, Children's Finance: Kari continues to offer training opportunities and meeting with clients over the web. Two upcoming courses include: Separating Your Finances which will be provided at the end of July and end of August and RE-opening your program after a crisis.

West Central Initiative is partnering with Child Care Aware to meet the needs of child care providers. They are waiting for a shipment of safety items, which will be distributed to child care providers. Most providers are doing okay in meeting their needs for supplies. Providers have shared their concerns with the cost of food for their program

Child Care Aware: Eighteen programs are awaiting word on the Parent Aware rating, which should be coming out July 1. There have been some policy changes with the rating process. Going forward, if a provider decides to rerate early, they must apply for the next rate up from where they currently are. There have also been

some incentive changes to encourage providers to participate in Parent Aware and to rerate to higher levels. It also reverted to the need to be a three or four rated program to access county child care reimbursement programs. The state wants families to be able to make a choice of providers based on quality, not what they can afford. The new Parent Aware cohort membership is significantly larger than previous summer cohorts. The agency is working with new providers to support them in setting up their environment and accessing funds for things such as outdoor play items and fencing. It is a challenge to help set up space over the web! There is a supply of bleach, hand sanitizer, masks, and gloves to be delivered shortly. Providers should be encouraged to complete the order form for what they need. Maria is also working on getting spray bottles and bleach strips. The number one concern now is food cost and food access. Maria is working on a grant to help with food costs. The state legislators are meeting this week. One item up for consideration is to increase reimbursement rates for county child care stipends so that it aligns with federal funding.

Churches United for the Homeless currently has eighteen children living at the shelter. One family obtained housing with Down Home furnishing the home for them. The agency has one open family room. The intern from Concordia College is working 30 hours a week to offer a variety of fun and learning experiences for children. The shelter has relaxed some of its COVID policies to make it easier for individuals and families to go out into the community.

Lake Agassiz Library received a grant to offer "Hot spots" for check out. You can find out how to check out a hot spot in their online catalog. The book truck should be hitting the streets soon. A couple of childcare have already made arrangements for the book truck to stop at their place. Email [booktruck@larl.orf](mailto:booktruck@larl.orf) to arrange for a visit to your location. You can now sign up for a library card online, and the card will be mailed out to you. The summer reading program launched this week. All programming will be virtual. Library staff will attend the summer lunch programs to read and distribute free books to children. They are looking for ideas on storytime spaces and ideas on how to keep children somewhat socially isolated during storytime. Wiggle bodies are hard to contain! Eight hundred art kits were distributed among the libraries for a virtual painting class. The libraries will distribute them out to children. The library will begin opening up on a limited basis.

Next meeting: Thursday, August 20, 2020

### **Clay County Early Childhood Initiative 2020 Work Plan**

*Goal #1: Increase awareness of the importance of quality early childhood experiences*

*Goal #2: Continue to build a robust early childhood coalition in Clay County.*

*Goal #3: Meaningful parent outreach that includes skill-building in parenting, promoting reading, and support healthy social and emotional development*

*Goal #4: Support Child Care Providers to retain current providers and recruit new providers.*