



“Working together to create a better future for children and their families.”

Clay County Early Childhood Initiative

Friday, May 21, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Tamia Zerr, YMCA; Chandra Calixte, Churches United for the Homeless; Teresa Haider, Sanford Safe Kids; Sarah Beach, Our Redeemer Preschool; Lacey Hoppe, MSUM Early Learning Center; Jenna Kahly, Lake Agassiz Library/Clay County Board of Commissioners; Julie Klier, Clay County Social Services; Marianne Smith, CAPLP/Child Care Aware; Shanna Grefsrud, CAPLP/Head Start; Alicia Bauman, CAPLP/Child Care Aware; Lisa Beil, Clay County Public Health; Joelle Hofer, Moorhead Public Schools; Deana Overmoe, CAPLP/New American Project; Carolyn Strnad, Coordinator;

Carolyn welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Parent Education Series: Our 2021 Workplan includes a parent education series. Two of the three workshops will be Literacy and Oral Hygiene. For each event, the families will share a meal. After the dinner, the children will separate from the caregiver for fun activities around the event theme. Caregivers will participate in a short educational presentation on the topic of the night. Moorhead Public School will lead the literacy education event. Each child attending will receive a book. Moorhead Community Technical College dental students will lead the oral hygiene event. A dental grant of \$500 has been received from the Dental Network to support this educational event. All attendees will receive new toothbrushes, floss, and toothpaste. Another topic may be paired with this event to make it more appealing for families to attend. Care must be given in what we title the event so that families will attend. For example, a mental health discussion could be titled something creative to reduce the stigma of attending. Other suggestions for educational topics included challenging behaviors, mental health (possibly Deb DeWitz on removing the stigma and normalizing the way to talk and perceive mental illness), screen time, and Cheryl Walker and Deana Overmoe with Working for Kids. Shanna will check on the possibility of helping with the transportation of Head Start families for one of the events in the series. Providing a bus pass for the event was also discussed. The events will be held in the fall, one in late January, and one in the spring. Each event will start at 5:30 with a meal, separating at 6:30 pm for child activities and caregiver presentation, and ending at 7:30 – 8:00 pm

Updates:

The email address for the ECI is now eciclaycounty@gmail.com

The phone number will remain at 218-443-3916 until August 1.

Carolyn announced that she would be stepping down as the Initiative’s coordinator the first week of August. Those interested in applying for the coordinator’s position can speak with Nancy Jost or Marsha Erickson at West Central Initiative. Those with questions on the job responsibilities can contact Carolyn.

The budget for the Initiative was reviewed. In 2020 we received \$5,000 from West Central Initiative to be used towards programming. Because of the pandemic, no events were held, and the money has remained

unspent. It was to be used for 2021, but Marsha, through a grant, was able to find the money for the Initiative to use for this year's programming. There was a discussion on using the 2020 funds to support three projects in the community. Possible amounts included \$2000 for the Natural Playground project, \$2000 for the Inclusive Playgroup project, and \$1000 to be used to support the ongoing work of the Library Book Truck. Marianne will contact the Natural Playground group to find out what their funding levels are. Jenna is the contact for the Book Truck. Lacey will work on finding a connection for the Inclusive Playgroup project.

Summer meeting schedule: We will meet on Thursday, June 17. There will be no meeting in July and August. Carolyn will check on an outdoor space for the June meeting.

Kidsfest was held on May 15. Approximately 160 children and their caregivers attended the event. The first 125 children attending received a kite. One hundred fifty children received a Goodie bag with activities and community resources. The United Way of Cass Clay provided 75 books and 25 literacy kits that were included in the goodie bags. In addition to kite flying, a chalk obstacle course, a storybook walk, bubbles, and community providers were part of the event. People seemed to enjoy having the event outside instead of the regular location of the Moorhead Center Mall. A big thank you to Lacey Hoppe, Kay Heinrich, Marianne Smith, and Jenna Kahly for their work on the event. Thank you to Moorhead Parks and Recreation, who covered the park rental fee for the activity.

Provider Appreciation: A big thank you to Marianne for her work on securing donations for the home-based providers in our county. Each provider received a card along with a token for free coffee or a coupon from the Dairy Queen.

Agency Updates:

Clay County Social Services staff, will be back in the county offices on June 1.

Head Start is in the recruitment stage for the upcoming school year. The Head Start Initiative is pushing towards having the open school year classrooms fully enrolled and in-person. Home visiting programs will also begin to meet in person. Some of the families that Head Start serves may not be comfortable and ready for in-person classrooms and visiting. Contact Tiffany at the Head Start offices for enrollment forms and information. Child Care Aware is planning an in-person training in Hawley. It will be by invite only to keep the numbers low. Up to fifteen people can attend the training. Pandemic restrictions will be in place. If the training goes well, they will continue to bring additional in-person training to the county. The July cohort registration deadline is three weeks away. The January cohort has submitted their packet of forms and is waiting to hear on their star rating. Working with West Central Initiative, the agency has quite a bit of supply available to childcare providers and preschool programs. Supplies include wet wipes, hand sanitizer, bleach, masks, thermometers, and gloves.

Sanford Safe Kids will hold their annual Safari Safety Fair at the zoo this Saturday. For 4:00 pm – 7:00 pm. The agency has received a grant to educate children on medicine safety and laundry pod safety. Contact Teresa to set up a training for your agency. Parenting classes are being offered on a hybrid model of in-person or virtual options.

Mothers Against Gun Violence also do presentations for children, families, and staff. Shanna will look for contact information.

Public Health continues to offer vaccination clinics. They will soon start to provide the Phizor vaccine at local schools for youth ages twelve and up. The agency is still providing home visits through virtual or phone options. They hope to be able to offer outside in-person meetings.

New American Child Care project: Deana is currently working with a new provider to complete the necessary paperwork to become a home-based provider. A current provider is going through the annual relicensing process. Child Care Aware will be hiring a bilingual New American Child Care Navigator that will work with

providers on paperwork and other requirements. The project is expanding to work with the Latino population. Deana will be working on that project and with the legal non-licensed Family Friend and Neighbor program. MSUM Early Learning Center is switching to summer programming. Preschool graduation will be held on May 25.

Lake Agassiz Library book truck is gearing up for plenty of summer events. If you have an event, you would like to have the book truck attend, contact the library to make those arrangements. The youth summer program will be held outside and online. Storytime will be held in the Rourik courtyard adjacent to the library. Building the Habit of Reading summer program focus will allow children and youth to track the time they are reading to exchange for prizes. Centers, child care providers, and families can register their child through the Beanstock app. There is also an adult reading program – Sixty books for sixty years.

Clay County Commissioner report: Jenna encouraged everyone to reach out to her with any concerns. Churches United for the Homeless is waiting on final approval for the basement remodel to provide family rooms. Some of the upstairs family rooms will be converted over to medical rooms. A painter will be painting murals throughout the family wing. The center is preparing for the rent moratorium to be lifted, possibly increasing homelessness.

The YMCA is offering its Farm to Table distribution on May 26 at the Moorhead Center Mall from 4:00 – 6:00 pm.

Next Meeting: Thursday, June 17, 2021

Clay County Early Childhood Initiative 2021 Work Plan

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

Goal #2: Continue to build a strong 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.