



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

Clay County Early Childhood Initiative

Thursday, June 17, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Members present: Chandra Calixte, Churches United for the Homeless; Deana Overmoe, Child Care Aware; Jenna Kahly, Clay County Board of Commissioner/Lake Agassiz Library; Kay Heidrich, Trinity Preschool; Lacey Hoppe, MSUM Early Learning Center; Liz Bjur, Clay County Public Health; Terri Busch, Clay County Public Health; Sadiyo Osman, Child Care Aware; Marianne Smith, Child Care Aware; Nicole Flick, ABC123 Childcare Center; Shanna Grefsrud, Head Start; Teresa Haider, Sanford Safe Kids; Carolyn Strnad, Coordinator;

Carolyn welcomed everyone to the meeting. ECI members provided Carolyn with a retirement gift, balloons, and cupcakes. Carolyn asked that each member share something they like about the ECI. Members shared how much they value the networking and partnerships that have been formed, the various events that this group has sponsored, and how well everyone works together to accomplish great things. Thank you for filling up my bucket of memories!

Quarterly update on Nurse-Family Partnership and Healthy Families America: Liz Bjur and Terri Busch provided an update on the family services offered by Public Health. Much of the past year has been spent on COVID response. The pandemic also changed the way staff interact with families and resulted in fewer referrals to the programs. Public Health will no longer be offering Healthy Families America. After working with the program for several years, it was determined that it was not the best fit for families. Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting (MECSH) will take the place of Healthy Families America. Three nurses have been trained in the program, which serves mothers and infants up to age two years of age. Families need to enroll before the infant turns two months old. Those in Healthy Families America were grandfathered into the new program. The program covers a continuum of needs, including the need for weight gain and behavioral challenges. MECSH is an evidence-based program out of Australia. The Verizon phone assistance program used under the Nurse-Family Partnership has expired. The department is looking at other options. Visits are being completed through virtual or outside visits when weather permits. The program is in a rebuilding stage as many families chose not to participate or moved during the pandemic time. Nurses in the program are focusing on outreach. Referrals for both programs should be sent to public health.

Decision on 2020 carryover funds: The ECI has carryover funds from the fiscal year 2020 due to not holding events during the pandemic. After discussion, it was determined by consensus that the Initiative would support the Natural Playground at the stone level of \$2,500, which will provide us with recognition on the website, at the playground, a Facebook feature, and we will be able to place a wish in the time capsule. The Natural Playground will be located in Moorhead. Another \$2,500 will go towards supporting the Inclusive Playground at Southside Regional Park in Moorhead. This donation allows us to be recognized under the Leader category, which provides recognition permanently placed at the playground site and an invitation to the groundbreaking ceremony with preferred recognition.

Agency Updates:

Churches United for the Homeless: Children staying at the shelter will participate in school and summer camps. Marianne provided information on supplies the children need for camp. She will send the information out to the group.

Head Start is operating two summer classrooms of seventeen children each through a partnership with United Way. The agency is operating under Head Start Forward, requiring the program to be operating at full capacity come this fall, including all classrooms and home visiting programs. Virtual learning will no longer be an option for the Head Start program beginning in September. On June 23, they will be partnering with Public Health to host a vaccine clinic for their families, who have been reluctant to get vaccinated.

Child Care Aware: Deane introduced Sadiyo Osman, who will be working in the New American child care licensing program. She and Deane will also be working to support the Family, Friends, and Neighbors program. In addition, Deane will be expanding her work with the Latino population in Morris to increase that community's child care options. Eighty child care programs took part in the previous Parent Aware cohort. They will receive their star rating on July 1. To date, 140 programs in the region have signed on to the current Parent Aware program cohort. That is the largest group the program has served since its beginning. The first in-person training in Clay County will be held in Hawley. On August 12, the training Why Children Act the Way They Do will be offered at the Travelodge in Moorhead.

MSUM Learning Center has two openings in the Tuesday/Thursday toddler group. They also have openings in the younger preschool program for the fall.

ABC123 Child Care Center currently has no infant spots available until March of 2022. However, they are receiving a lot of calls for the four-year-old programs and school-age care.

Clay County: Jenna has been talking with legislators about child care needs. There is a concern in the state because another residential treatment facility has closed its doors. That leaves only one site available in Duluth for the whole state. The waiting list to access that program is long and children needing that service need it immediately, not in six to nine months.

Sanford Safe Kids continues to offer safety equipment and clothing at a reduced rate. In addition, they will be holding car seat fitting throughout the summer.

****A personal note from Carolyn Strnad

I would like to personally thank all of the ECI members for their partnership over the years. It has been a fun and informative group to work with at our meetings and various events. I will miss all of you and wish you the best as you move forward with your new coordinator. I encourage anyone interested in becoming the coordinator to talk with me, Marsha Erickson or Nancy Jost. It's a great job!!!

Next meeting: Friday, September 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.