



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

## Clay County Early Childhood Initiative

Friday, April 16, 2021

### Meeting Minutes

Members in attendance: Karen Hellem, Clay County Social Service; Ashley Nelson, Moorhead Public Schools; Lacey Hoppe, MSUM Early Learning Child Care Center; Kay Heinrich, Trinity Preschool; Marsha Erickson, West Central Initiative; Maria Steen, Child Care Aware; Liz Bjur, Clay County Public Health; Jenna Kahly, Clay County Board of Commissioners/Lake Agassiz Library; Shanna Grefsrud, CAPLP/Head Start; Deana Overmoe, Child Care Aware; Joelle Hofer, Moorhead Public School; Carolyn Strnad, Coordinator;  
Guest: Senator Kent Eken

Discussion with Legislators: Senator Kent Eken attended today’s meeting to provide updates and answer questions on current legislative work. Representative Marquardt and Representative Keeler were not available to participate due to a DFL Caucus meeting. The current legislative session is focusing on the setting of a two-year budget. The Finance Committee is currently reviewing many bills before going to the House and Senate floor. The Health and Human Services bill will be a zero budget bill this year, meaning that there will be no increases. The agency is receiving COVID Relief Funds from the federal government, which should help with some budget needs. Other topics discussed included:

- assistance for child care providers, including setting up an ombudsman office specific for childcare providers, a Parent Aware rating study; a new licensing structure; and a child care advisory board.
- Senator Eken is a strong supporter of providing funds and programming for early childhood. The Senator signed on to the bill on the Senate side. He does not believe that the legislation to set up an early childhood division will pass this year.
- Shanna shared that she appreciated the flexibility of the home visiting funds.
- Paid family leave bill is not going far on the Senate floor. It is making more progress in the House. Senator Eken is not optimistic that something will happen with that bill this year.
- Senator Eken would like to see an expansion of MnCare for child care provider insurance.

#### Updates:

The YMCA will be providing a Farm to Table food distribution on April 27 at the Moorhead Center Mall and April 28 at the West Acres Mall.

Kidsfest will be held on Saturday, May 15, at MB Johnson Park in Moorhead. Carolyn will send out the flyer. Please distribute to families. If you want an item in the goodie bags distributed to those attending, please let Carolyn know. All items need to be to Carolyn by May 10.

Next meeting: May 21, 2021