

PRESENTATION TO THE 2022 INTERIM BUDGET COMMITTEE

Early Childhood and Family Support Division

Economic Security Services

Department of Public Health and Human Services

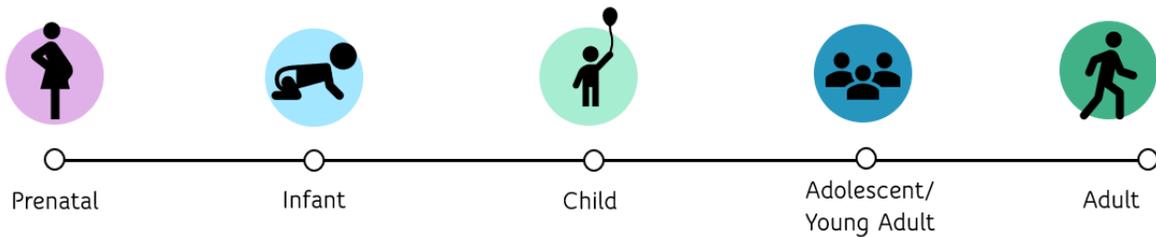
THE FOLLOWING TOPICS ARE COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- **Overview**
- **Summary of Major Functions**
- **Highlights and Accomplishments during the 2023 Biennium**
- **Efficiencies and Cost Savings**
- **Funding and FTE Information**
- **Change Packages**

OVERVIEW

The Early Childhood and Family Support Division (ECFSD) provides coordinated services and resources to promote the well-being, health, and development of children, individuals, families, and communities. ECFSD's programs provide early care and education, food security and nutrition education, violence and neglect prevention, family support, and preventive health care. A primary guiding principle for the Early Childhood and Family Support Division is that families are honored and recognized as their child's first and most influential teacher.

The division is comprised of three bureaus and operates over 30 different programs – from prenatal to adult.



The Early Childhood Services Bureau leads and coordinates the state's childcare programs, including Head Start. The bureau works with childcare small businesses and nonprofits by providing licensing, quality improvement, and professional development opportunities. Additionally, the bureau provides childcare financial assistance for low-income families.

The Family and Community Health Bureau focuses on preventive health care, maternal child health, supplemental nutrition assistance through WIC, children's special health services, and risk prevention education for adolescents.

The Fiscal and Operations Bureau uses a shared services model to ensure fiscal responsibility and accountability for the division's programs, and provides technology and business management for the division.

The Early Intervention and Prevention Unit and Montana No Kid Hungry round out the portfolio of services within the division. The Early Intervention and Prevention Unit includes the Children's Trust Fund and the Montana Milestones and Family Education Support Program. The Children's Trust Fund is driven by a board and is focused on initiatives to strengthen families and to keep children safe from harm and neglect. Montana Milestones and Family Education Support provides coordinated services for families and children experiencing developmental delays. Montana No Kid Hungry is part of a public-private partnership with Share our Strength, a nonprofit working to address hunger and poverty. All funding for Montana No Kid Hungry is privately raised.

Coordination and collaborative partnerships are at the core of how ECFSD delivers services. This is demonstrated through the various stakeholder committees, local teams, and coalitions, and through the 972 contracts or agreements for service, including universities, health care providers, local government, private nonprofit organizations, and small businesses throughout the state.

The Early Childhood and Family Support Division provides services throughout nearly all of Montana through its various programs.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FUNCTIONS

NUTRITION EDUCATION, SUPPORT, AND FOOD SECURITY

WIC

The WIC program aims to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age five who are at nutrition risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care. WIC works with 75 clinics throughout Montana, providing services to more than 13,000 families per month. Families with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty level qualify for WIC. For example, a family of three with an annual income of \$40,626 or less is eligible to receive WIC services.

The average WIC benefit is \$40/month, which aids the prescribed food package unique to the family's nutritional needs. Last year, participants spent \$8.1 million at local grocers and farmers' markets through the federal WIC program.

'WIC provided access to healthy groceries and tips on how to feed my child vegetables and fruits. Most importantly, it helped alleviate stress on providing nutritious food for my family. It helped financially.'

WIC Lodge Grass Mother

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federal program that provides reimbursements for nutritious meals and snacks to eligible children and adults who are enrolled for care at participating child care centers, day care homes, and adult day care centers. CACFP also provides reimbursements for meals served to children and youth participating in afterschool care programs, children residing in emergency shelters, and adults over the age of 60 or living with a disability and enrolled in day care facilities. In FY 21, 5.4 million meals were provided in 675 facilities.

No Kid Hungry (NKH)

Montana No Kid Hungry is dedicated to ending childhood hunger in Montana. NKH raises awareness and collaborates with communities to improve food access and nutrition education for children across the state with the aim of helping them grow into healthy and successful adults. All funds for NKH are raised privately through the national Share Our Strength organization and other national and state philanthropic organizations. In January 2022, NKH awarded more than \$150,000 through grants to 11 local organizations across Montana. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, NKH awarded more than \$2 million in grant funds to 58 communities across the state to bolster food access and nutrition projects.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES, PREVENTING ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Montana Children’s Trust Fund (CTF)

The Montana Children’s Trust Fund is the state lead agency for federal community-based child abuse prevention funding and strives to strengthen Montana’s families and keep children safe from abuse and neglect.

CTF has supported community-based initiatives, including:

- Parent education for 2,826 individuals
- Consumer awareness to reduce abusive head trauma in children
- Promotion of the “Not Even for A Minute” campaign to never leave children unattended in or around vehicles

Healthy Montana Families

The Healthy Montana Families Home Visiting Program (HMF) is funded primarily by the Maternal Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) federal grant and provides voluntary, family-centered services in the home to pregnant women and families with new infants and children under the age of six. Home visiting services are available to at-risk families and aid the following:

- Healthy pregnancy outcomes
- Parent education
- Positive child health and development
- Strengthening parent-child relationships
- Referrals to community resources

A competitive RFP process in summer 2021 for home visiting services resulted in 23 home visiting contracts in 18 counties, including three tribal reservations. Last year, 1,101 families received 1-2 home visits per month.

Fetal, Infant, Child, and Maternal Mortality Review and Prevention

Fetal, Infant, Child, and Maternal Mortality Review (FICMMR) is a statewide effort to reduce preventable fetal, infant, child, and maternal deaths through educational outreach and evidence-based, best-practice prevention initiatives at the community level. In partnership with 54 county health departments, local county committees review infant and child-related deaths to identify community-level trends and prevention opportunities. For example, counties have implemented prevention activities such as youth suicide prevention in schools, a safe sleep education initiative in partnership with the local hospital, and increasing access to child car seats and car seat installation and inspection for families.

SERVING FAMILIES AND CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

Children’s Special Health Services (CSHS)

Nearly all infants born in Montana receive universal newborn screenings for genetic and metabolic conditions, hearing impairment, and critical congenital heart disease. More than 31,000 screenings were conducted for babies in Montana last year. Children and youth with special health needs are children and youth who have or are at risk for chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional conditions and require additional health or related services. ECFSD has a variety of programs designed for children and youth with special health needs, including:

- Genetics counseling and testing and diagnoses.
- Cleft/craniofacial clinics in Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, and Missoula offer multiple specialists who support families in one space. Specialists in these clinics may include nurse care coordination; speech-language pathology; surgery; orthodontia; psychiatric; audiology; dental; primary care; and ear, nose, and throat practices.
- Financial assistance for children with special health needs for costs incurred over and above insurance reimbursement, as the payor of last resort. Support includes adaptive equipment, genetic testing, medication, and supplies, educational materials. Assistance is capped at \$2,000 per child and is based on available funding.
- Parent Partners is a peer-to-peer program that matches parents of a child with special healthcare needs with another parent who is personally experienced and professionally trained to help them as they navigate the health care system.

Montana Milestones and Family Education Support

The Montana Milestones Program is Montana’s early intervention program for families who have children ages zero through three years old experiencing significant developmental delays or disabilities. In FY21, 1,233 infants and toddlers with disabilities received services.

The Family Education and Support Program, available to families whose children or teenagers have developmental delays, served 784 families last year.

Examples of early intervention services include screening and evaluation, service coordination, occupational and physical therapy, and speech-language services. The Montana Milestones Program and the Family Education and Support Program are administered through five regional contracted agencies. Outcomes for the Montana Milestones Program are tracked for both children and families.

Child Outcomes:

- 52% increased their rate of growth in positive social-emotional skills
- 54% Increased their growth in acquiring and using knowledge and skills, including language and communication
- 56% increased their rate of growth in communicating their needs

Family Outcomes:

- 86% of families report they know their rights about legal safeguards for their child's unique needs
- 89% of families report helping their children develop and learn
- 92% of families report they can effectively communicate their children's needs

PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION

The Maternal Child Health Block Grant (MCHBG) provides funding to local county public health departments to improve the health of women, children, and families in Montana. Through MCHBG, local county health departments are addressing national and state performance measures including access to care and public health services, infant safe sleep, family support and health education, oral health, medical home, bullying prevention, and women's preventative healthcare. The MCHBG also serves as foundational funding for maternal child health focused population based public health services such as immunizations and referrals. In FY20, the MCHBG supported services for 111,729 Montanans.

Addressing Montana's Oral Health Needs

Montana, in collaboration with the University of Washington's School of Dentistry, supports clinical rotations for dental students to gain experience and provide dental care in rural and frontier communities across Montana. Since 2018, senior dental students have completed 4,354 dental procedures.

ECFSD partners with Montana State University's College of Nursing and Head Start on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. Through this partnership, 476 preventive care visits, 299 dental screenings, 442 fluoride varnish applications, 821 sealants, and 157 referrals to a dental provider have occurred since 2018.

DPHHS has also worked with the Caring Foundation of Montana to pilot the integration of preventive dental services in mobile health clinics and non-traditional settings. There are currently partnerships in 14 counties and four reservations in Montana for mobile dental clinics.

Adolescent Health

ECFSD partners with community agencies to provide education to families and adolescents to prevent pregnancies and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), promote personal responsibility, and increase teen safety through violence prevention. For example, the *Power Up, Speak Out* program curriculum provides education related to healthy relationships, consent, and bullying for middle school students. 5,160 students have received this prevention education.

Family Planning +

Family Planning services are funded primarily through Title X federal funding. 8,718 individuals received reproductive health and clinical preventative services in FY 2021. Typical family planning services include basic infertility services, pregnancy testing and prevention, cancer screening, STI testing and treatment, and referrals to community resources. Montana has recently submitted a competitive application for continued Title X funding in accordance with the requirements set forth by HB 620.

Montana Obstetrics and Maternal Support (MOMS) PROGRAM

The MOMS program is a partnership project with ECFSD, the University of Montana Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities (UMRI), and the Billings Clinic. MOMS connects local providers to obstetric, perinatal, mental health, and substance use specialists through education, training, and assistance opportunities. More than 400 providers benefited from education, training, and support in FY21.

Additionally, MOMS recently launched the Empaths Perinatal Addiction Treatment Health System pilot project. Empaths is a system-level treatment model which implements universal screening for substance use in pregnancy in the OB/GYN setting with referral to a care manager and treatment as necessary. Through Empaths, telehealth services are available for patients living in remote areas, ensuring coordinated care for patients in their home communities.

ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE, SAFE, QUALITY CHILDCARE

Supporting the Workforce through Child Care Assistance

Eligible Montana families can receive assistance for childcare costs through the Best Beginnings Scholarship Program. The Best Beginnings Scholarship Program assists working families, students, children served through Child and Family Services, and families served through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Last year, the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship supported 4,465 working families.

Childcare businesses also benefit from the Best Beginnings Scholarship program. ECFSD uses validated market survey data to determine competitive reimbursement rates for licensed childcare providers.

Through additional, one-time-only pandemic federal funds, ECFSD raised eligibility for the Best Beginnings Scholarship Program to 185% of the FPL and ensured reimbursement rates matched the 75th percentile of provider rates throughout the state.

Safe, Quality Child Care is Good Business

Twenty-two thousand children attend one of 1,194 childcare programs throughout the state ranging from in-home relative care to licensed child care centers. These programs also employ more than 4,400 early childhood professionals.

The child care licensing program monitors childcare facilities to ensure childcare programs are licensed and meet required standards related to safe, stable, and nurturing environments.

Standards address areas such as:

- Background checks, education, and qualifications of the staff
- Health and safety, including sanitation and environmental standards and training in first aid and CPR
- Number of children and adults in the facility
- Supervision of classrooms
- Age-appropriate learning experiences

All new licensed and registered programs receive a pre-inspection. In FY21, DPHHS conducted 144 pre-inspections, 854 routine inspections, and 42 complaint investigations.

Continuous Quality Improvement in Child Care

The state is required to have a quality improvement system for childcare providers. Montana's system is voluntary for licensed/registered childcare providers. Through the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program, 21% of licensed and registered childcare providers are committed to the continuous program and educational quality improvement. Research-based criteria must be achieved and validated within the five-star system at each level. Environment rating scales measure the early childhood classroom quality and the interactions and experiences children receive. Administration scales are used to measure business effectiveness and operations.

An important component of quality improvement is staff education and professional development. In partnership with the Montana State University Early Childhood Project (ECP) and local Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, 5,606 professionals obtained over 136,976 hours of professional development last year. In addition, more than 295 individuals have participated since the beginning of the Montana Child Care Apprenticeship Program, which is a partnership between DPHHS, Department of Labor and Industry, and ECP.

HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THE 2023 BIENNIUM

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted Montana's children, families, and service providers. The Early Childhood and Family Support Division has used ARPA funding to maintain or enhance programs and services to children, youth, and families with additional pandemic relief funds.

Meeting the Needs of Families

Child Care

Working families have been supported through a variety of childcare strategies:

- 484 additional families received expanded Best Beginning Scholarships when eligibility increased to 185% of the FPL
- 2,225 families have received co-payment relief since June 2021 with family cost-sharing reduced to \$10 per family
- 48 parents working in the health care sector have received additional childcare assistance as of March 11, 2022

WIC

The WIC program added telehealth to their service delivery model to reach families. Additional staff assisted local clinics to keep clinics open and maintain access to WIC benefits throughout the pandemic. Between June and September 2021, additional funds allowed 13,435 WIC participants to purchase \$638,875 in fruits and vegetables benefits.

Home Visiting

Healthy Montana Families provided laptops, iPads, and hotspots to ensure families could continue to receive valuable parenting support from home visitors. Through additional funding, these same families will receive help with groceries and diapers as needed.

Early Intervention Family Support

The Montana Milestones program is increasing opportunities to screen and refer children who may be experiencing developmental disabilities or delays through added Child Find events. In addition, funds are available to help contractors provide summer bridge activities for children transitioning from the Part C Early Intervention program to Part B services through local school districts. In summer 2022, ECFSD will be engaging in a specific needs assessment to understand strengths, gaps, and opportunities in meeting the needs of families with children who have special needs.

Supporting the Early Childhood and Family Support Workforce

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding provided opportunities to offer incentives to retain workers serving children and families.

- Through the Montana Milestones Program, Family Support Specialists provide valuable screening, referrals, and coordination of services for families of children under the age of 3 with developmental delays or disabilities. ECFSD is in the process of contracting American

Rescue Plan funding to regional agencies to aid in recruitment and retention efforts. Retention efforts will be tied to professional development advancement and certifications of approximately 75 Family Support Specialists. Additionally, staff will be offered professional development focused on infants/toddlers with disabilities and their social emotional development.

- In December and January, 69 home visiting staff received an average retention stipend of \$499 for a total of \$34,428. Home visitors will also be eligible for additional incentive payments based on performance, experience, and longevity. ECFSD will be offering professional development opportunities for home visitors to include Collaborative Safety Science.
- In partnership with the Early Childhood Project at Montana State University, staff working in child care facilities are also eligible to receive a workforce incentive stipends with first payments anticipated in May 2022 and a second round in December 2022 for those who remain employed.

Stabilizing and Strengthening the Child Care Industry

Childcare stabilization grants are available to licensed/registered childcare businesses throughout the state. Stabilization grants are used to offset eligible operating costs in child care facilities, such as personnel costs, rent and utilities, health and safety training, and facility maintenance. ECFSD began accepting applications on October 7, 2021 and as of March 10, 2022, 382 awards have been issued for a total of \$28.5 million. ECFSD continues to process applications to award funding and plans to accept applications again in April 2022.

ARPA funding also provides a variety of specialized training, technical assistance, and business supports for new and existing child care businesses.

- In partnership with RAISE Montana, the statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Network, home-based learning communities and an annual conference tailored for in-home providers will be provided.
- RAISE Montana will also build on a shared services platform for in-home providers to leverage pooled resources to procure goods and services such as a substitute teacher pool, accounting services, or supplies.
- ECFSD intends to award a contract, through an RFP, for specialized training, technical assistance, and support for early childhood businesses, including formalizing a mentor network for successful entrepreneurs and novice early childhood leaders. The department anticipates an award announcement in the late spring.
- ECFSD also plans to release an RFP in late spring to fund 15-20 community innovation and expansion grants to address child care needs in communities. Applicants will demonstrate a match requirement, and projects should address affordability of child care, increased access in underserved areas, partnerships with business leaders, employer-supported child care, infant and toddler care, non-traditional care hours, equitable access for children with special needs, or creative community collaborative models.

ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY

The Early Childhood and Family Support Division addresses food insecurity through multiple programs and community partnerships.

Montana Partnership to End Childhood Hunger

No Kid Hungry leads a diverse, statewide, multi-sector coalition called the Montana Partnership to End Childhood Hunger to comprehensively tackle childhood hunger. Since 2010, members and partners of the MT-PECH have accomplished the following for Montana's children:

- Increased summer meals for children from 358,304 meals to 692,834 meals in 2021
- Significantly increased the number of Back-Pack Program sites from 22 schools to 222 schools, providing food to 65,413 Montana K-12 students who qualify for free and reduced meals

Pilot project to increase access to WIC

The Montana WIC Program is partnering with the Montana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MT AAP), No Kid Hungry, and the Montana Food Bank Network to promote access, coordinate services and improve referral systems to address food insecurity for children by connecting healthcare and WIC clinics in Missoula, Bozeman, and Billings.

KEY LEGISLATION FROM 2021 BIENNIUM

HB 423 Revise laws to provide for additional screening of newborn infants

The Montana Legislature passed HB423, which established a Newborn Screening (NBS) advisory committee to provide a formal process for adding congenital conditions to the NBS dried blood spot screening panel. To date, advisory committee members have been nominated and invited to serve on the committee, with the first meeting scheduled for April 2022.

HB 328 Provides guidelines for assessing language development in children

HB 328 required the department to establish a list of tools for qualified personnel to evaluate and assess the language and literacy development of deaf and hard-of-hearing infants and toddlers enrolled in Montana Milestones Part C. The department collaborated with stakeholders to identify appropriate tools and processes. Since October 1, 2021, 18 children have been evaluated who were enrolled in Part C and deaf or hard of hearing.

SB 142 Increase the number of children who can be present in day-care homes

SB 142 increased the number of children who can receive care at a group or family childcare facility. The department adopted rules to incorporate the new service levels on October 1, 2021. Group and family childcare providers are required to update their program capacity information insurance, but not required to obtain a new licensing inspection prior to accepting more children. The minimum space requirement for square feet per child remains in effect. The department will evaluate the number of licensed slots in group and family homes to determine the impact of SB 142 on the childcare supply.

EFFICIENCIES AND COST SAVINGS

CHILDCARE LICENSING REGULATION REVIEW AND BUSINESS PROCESS REDESIGN PROJECT

The Early Childhood Services Bureau launched the Child Care Licensing (CCL) Business Process Improvement and Data Analysis project on September 24, 2021. This work aims to remove barriers to becoming licensed and to increase capacity of the child care system. This project includes an environmental scan to understand how the child care licensing system works for stakeholders; recommendations to improve the business process; an extensive review of statutes, regulations, and policy; and organizational change management to create a more efficient and streamlined process for everyone interfacing with the licensing system.

WIC FORMULA DISTRIBUTION

The Montana WIC Program orders and distributes medical formulas and foods outside of the regular EBT/retailer system when stores do not carry the necessary items or in the event that supply is limited. WIC currently purchases these items manually from each unique company by the case, and the items are shipped to local WIC clinics for distribution to WIC participants. To streamline this process, WIC will contract with a formula distribution warehouse, reducing staff time associated with ordering; eliminating waste by allowing exact quantities to be ordered; reducing costs through lower price schedules; allowing for shipping to clinics or directly to WIC participants, and decreasing time spent on invoice and reconciliation processes.

FUNDING AND FTE INFORMATION

	FY 2022	FY 2023
	BUDGET	BUDGET
EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY SERVICES DIVISION		
FTE	59.24	59.24
Personal Services	\$ 5,071,124	\$ 4,832,745
Operating	3,419,910	3,748,455
Equipment	75,000	75,000
Local Assistance	-	-
Grants	16,670,381	16,702,381
Benefits and Claims	58,879,827	58,879,827
Transfers	5,000	5,000
Debt Services	6,958	2,189
TOTAL COSTS	\$ 84,128,200	\$ 84,245,597
General Fund	\$ 12,034,211	\$ 12,057,150
State Special Fund	4,289,497	4,294,223
Federal Fund	67,804,492	67,894,224
TOTAL FUNDS	\$ 84,128,200	\$ 84,245,597