



Southern Oregon Early Learning Services

**SOELS
Agency Advisory Council
Meeting Agenda
January 8, 2021
10:00-12:00pm**

Zoom Meeting

<https://soesd.zoom.us/j/98929771308>

Meeting ID: 989 2977 1308

Attendees: Jessica Machen, Peter Buckley, Kelsey Dennis, Bethanee Grace, Donna Lipparelli, Stacy Inman, Lisa Farlin, Riki Rosenthal, Susan Davis, Devon Finley

Hub: René Brandon, Chelsea Reinhart, Teresa Slater, Vicki Risner

Agenda

Welcome & Partner Updates

René: Just a quick reminder, if you have flyers that you want to share with the group, please email myself, Vicki or Chelsea and we will make sure that your flyers are sent out to our partners.

René Brandon, the director of the Early Learning Hub. Most of you have been with us as we started digging into the Raise Up Oregon plan. The next couple meetings will continue to be focused on going through the Raise Up Oregon plan. Once we go through our introductions and updates we will refocus on that. The state just released an update which I'll share with you at that time.

Lisa Farlin, director of Southern Oregon Head Start: Our enrollment is at 75%, a combination of hybrid and center based. Most of those are virtual. The state's current average is 65%. We have opened about 27 out of 70 classrooms. About to open 12 more in a few weeks. They are opened with half capacity hybrid model of 10 kids with a modified schedule. We are sending home grab and go meals for those kids who are onsite. We are working towards Grab and Go meals for all of our children that we serve virtually as well. To produce 800 Grab and Go meals is going to be quite the feat for our food service folks. Our staff are all chomping at the bit to get back. They want to be with the kids. They don't want to be doing this virtual thing. The staff who are in centers and doing center-based serves are much happier, their morale is much higher than those who are doing the virtual only. We have very few staff who are afraid to come back. The families all want center-based services. We are hiring. We pushed out a ton of ads. We have openings for 13 center assistants, many teacher positions as well as others. We haven't had to do any layoffs.

Chelsea Reinhart with the Early Learning Hub: I'm still sending out the resource emails. If you have things you want to share with our large distribution list please send it to me and I will send it out. We still have Preschool Promise slots available for most of our programs, an average 1 to 4 spots still available for each. Some of our Spanish speaking programs have more than that. So, if you have families with 3 or 4-year olds who are interested in preschool for this year, they can apply by going to our website. They had to be 3 before September 1, 2020 for this year's program. So, when talking with families, have them check the birthday to make sure they are age eligible this year. Once they fill out the screening form they get entered into the lottery. All of our Preschool Promise locations are offering onsite, full time learning, based on their classroom schedules. Most mirror traditional school schedules of 8-2 or 8-2:30.

Jessica Machen, DHS: There are a lot of changes at DHS, specifically with our child welfare program. They are working on a new vision for how they deliver services. They are working towards providing more equitable services for children and families. They are looking through a more culturally specific lens on how we work with families. If you haven't received our Transformation Vision, please let me know and I can send that out to everyone. It's really exciting work that we're doing in terms of recognizing some of the disparities in child welfare and how we have worked with families. We are really working hard on changing some of those practices. And changing our culture as well. A lot of trainings on trauma informed practices, a lot of training on cultural understanding and recognizing that not everybody has the same experiences growing up.

Another really cool thing that is happening is that our SNAP benefits have been increased across the board for all families. We recognized that the people who were struggling the most and in the deepest poverty didn't get that much help with some of the COVID relief from our agency because they had already been receiving the maximum allotment. There has been an increase that started the beginning of this year and runs through June 30th. Child Welfare has two new program managers, Holly Hurley who was a manager up in Grants Pass. The other is Natalie Bedell. Natalie has been a certifier, teen worker, supervisor here in Jackson County for a while. Lots of changes but all pretty exciting.

Peter Buckley with Southern Oregon Success and the Oregon Early Learning Council: Jessica, I read the Transformation document and I was so delighted with seeing such a great vision for child welfare. It's been in discussion for years and years and now it's happening. It's very exciting to see that.

With Southern Oregon Success we have five different things going on of note. The workgroups that we've developed in the past year, one that René and Teresa are on is looking at the Kindergarten/Preschool alignment. We're going to have 2 summits, one in April and one in August. A number of you may be receiving a survey this month that is going out to help us plan those summits, bringing together early childhood educators, kindergarten teachers, elementary administrators and families to really focus on how we make that transition and align preschool and kindergarten to make that transition into kindergarten.

We have another group that is trying to expand the number of peer support groups. We've been able to develop two Spanish speaking peer support groups for families who lost their homes in the fire, one with La Clinica and one with Rogue Valley Mentoring. Our goal is simply to expand it so that anybody, anywhere in our region has access to a peer support group. We're going to start a partnership with the Family Independence Initiative, a regional partnership. That's an entity that recruits families, brings them into teams and facilitates goal setting. The families set goals, they leverage each other's resources, they help each other reach those goals. The organization has been

very affective, about 50% of the families they work with who were on TANF are now off of TANF within two years.

We have another work group looking to expand the number of school-based health centers to every school in Jackson and Josephine county, to have those centers available to anyone in the community. If you have a two-year-old child with an ear infection you can walk to your elementary school and get care for your child. The centers would actually be a health and resource center in every school.

We are also recruiting people for a family advisory council with the idea of getting family voices heard at a higher level in education, human services, health care, across the board in state and local government so you might also get a letter this month asking you to help us recruit people for that council. We are looking for up to ten diverse parents/caregivers/guardians to team up with up to ten people who work with agencies that work with families to develop a council that meets once a month to actually hear issues, the impact on families and to be able to be advocates for families in the region.

We are also focusing on the Behavior Health Workforce in our region. Working with Southern Oregon University, they are working on developing a micro credential program so that people who are working with anyone really and want to skill up in behavioral health, they will be able to take a course at SOU that might eventually help them become a skills trainer, maybe get hired by Options or one of our school districts, just trying to increase the number of behavior health workers in the area.

The Early Learning Council was part of the report that René mentioned for Raise Up Oregon. Their agenda that they requested the Governor to put into her budget, almost all of it is in the Governor's recommended budget. We're really pleased by that. We're hoping to be advocates during the legislative session to accomplish that agenda.

Devon Finley, CCRN: We are hiring a new position for Warmline. Molly Clement has shifted to Preschool Promise so we are hiring for Warmline which is support for special needs and behaviors, teacher/child interactions. There will be another position opening shortly. We have college classes beginning this week. If you have staff or know people who want to work their way up the Oregon registry steps, we will be starting a brand new RCC basic certificate series of classes in the spring. We will start recruiting for those in February. It's four classes and one practicum. So, they would end up with a Step 7, or the RCC One Year Certificate at the end of that.

There are amended emergency child care guidelines being issued. Next week, ELD is putting online support sessions to go over them on the 13th and 14th, and one on the 16th in Spanish.

Riki Rosenthal, Jackson Care Connect, Starting Strong Program: We have closed the original Starting Strong location after 5 ½ years. We are looking for a new space. It was the right time to do this since we are not meeting with members in person. We are still doing no contact ordering for Starting Strong members. The Family Nurturing Center has been gracious enough to let us to keep our information and drop box located at their 313 S. Ivy Street location.

Kelsey Dennis, Rogue Community College and Roots and Wings Preschool: RCC begins winter term on Monday. Our biggest update is that we've hired Bridey Mendoza-Moore as our new, full time faculty and department chair for our department. She starts on Monday. Eileen will still be with us part time.

Donna Lipparelli, program manager for the kids' outpatient programs for Options in Josephine County: We're just continuing to provide as many services as possible. We're still doing a lot in telehealth. Some families prefer virtual support. For some of our kids it just doesn't work over telehealth so we are providing person support for them. We are hopeful for the future that we can continue to offer telehealth services in a much broader way than we did prior to COVID. We are hearing from the state that it probably will continue to support the expanded telehealth supports. We work a lot with the schools in Josephine County. One of our major ways of getting to the kids is through the schools and with the kids not in school it has reduced referrals. We're trying to respond to what's next with the schools as things keep changing. We are excited that our staff are now able to schedule their vaccine appointments through Asante.

Stacy Inman from Jackson County Early Intervention: EI is updating and doing a transition to a new program model called *The Primary Service Provider Model*. We're separating the service coordination role from the service so families will have a service coordinator that follows them through all of EI service from intake to transition. Then the service provider will be whatever the primary concern is, parent priority. The service coordinator will also walk families through resources. We've done a ton of hiring. EI/ESCE, both programs are still doing distance learning and providing teletherapy. They are looking at reopening but no details have been made. We did purchase a new building off of Superior Court in Medford. Those will be our administrative offices, evaluations, a big meeting room. Our staff is really reluctant to come back. They see the vaccines are coming and want to wait until they are established. They do want to see kids in person. We've been facilitating our reflective supervision cohorts, through a grant. We've received really positive feedback on that. Bridey Mendoza-Moore is facilitating that and RCC is graciously allowing us to still have her for the rest of the year for that. Having the group set up in reflective supervision, vs the previous 1:1 model, we're finding so many benefits to that beyond just the 1 on 1. Getting people to come from Eagle Point to Ashland has been great. The feedback has been positive. We're hoping to continue the virtual offering beyond COVID.

Bethanee Grace, The Family Connection, the regional parenting education hub: We are moving forward with programming "as usual" as much as possible. We are working on sending out Family Boxes to our parents participating in our classes as a way to increase engagement in classes. Parents will now be able to get the materials up front to do the activities in class with the parent educator. We will also be sending out games, books and finally getting the curriculum into the parents' hands. We have four offerings starting this week and next which is our *Nurturing Parenting for Teens and Tweens, Building Resilient Families, Nurturing Health Curriculum*, and continuing to offer *Imagination Yoga*. We have a new curriculum we are going to offer this month called *Mothers and Babies*. It's targeted towards the first 18 months of the child's life. We are excited to be getting an RCC intern/practicum student join our team.

Susan Davis from Josephine Community Library: Because of the rising COVID cases we've had to scale back our services. We suspended *Grab and Go* but we are still keeping curbside services to allow people to check out books. We have a new Zoom literacy program. Participants will receive props to participate from home. I was able to record my first story time. We also have a winter reading challenge for all ages, where they can record their reading for the next three months. Those who complete it will get a free book. There are also prizes that they can enter to win based on how much they read.

Teresa Slater, Early Learning Hub: We are starting a new pilot program with Project Youth Plus and Central Medford High School. We are offering paid internships for 17-18-year-old high school students and some transition students up to 21, working in early learning environments and programs. We're in the early stages with now 9 providers that are interested in accepting interns. Licensing let us know that they will be counted in the cohorts as a sub which will allow them to part

of their stable groups. Our program is offering up to 100 hours for the students to go in and work in the program. They will go through their safety sets, they will get some courses through ORO so that once they finish the program at the end of June they can enter into the workforce, maybe stay in that position to eventually move forward. We are working on a shared learning objective so that they can walk into any program as a qualified classroom aide. We are hoping to continue this program in the fall and hopefully expand into other districts.

René: It's been really great to see the response from our early learning partners to this opportunity. And I want to acknowledge Lisa Farlin for her role as a great champion, with your background supporting transition students and willingness to help other early learning programs who are interested but may not be comfortable or sure what they might be getting themselves into. It's nice that we are able to lean on your expertise as needed. Thank you, Lisa, for responding to the call.

Lisa: I'm super excited about the potential for this. I'm excited for what it's going to give for our staff too. It's going to give to the students but it's going to give to our children and our staff. It's going to be great all around.

Raise Up Oregon – Southern Oregon Strategic Planning

René: Started with sharing the Raise Up Oregon Progress Report 2019-2020. We will be sending this out to you. This is for the first two years of the five-year plan. They did a really nice job of breaking down highlighting the different goals. Just a reminder that the first three goals are:

- Children Arrive Ready for Kindergarten
- Children Are Raised in Healthy, Stable and Attached Families
- The Early Learning System is Aligned, Coordinated, and Family Centered

They highlighted the different state agencies that are involved in planning and executing the plan:

- Early Care & Education sector
- Human Services sector
- Housing sector
- Health sector
- K-12 sector

Really coming together to identify what needs to happen in order for families and children to be fully supported. Starting on page 15, they really go through the different objectives and strategies that we ourselves have been going through with a key or legend to identify who is holding that is represented or really carrying that goal, objective and strategy. If you were to look at Goal 1, Objective 1: Expand parenting education and family supports, it's telling you who the agencies are that are driving this. It's giving you data on what has happened to date for that specific strategy. This is what our objective is. What is Southern Oregon doing and what else can or should we be doing?

This is across the state, broad stroke brush of the progress to date of these *Raise Up Oregon* objectives and strategies. Soon we'll have our own Southern Oregon version of this that will hopefully really inform the early learning hub work plan and investment strategies. We hope that it will also be helpful for some of your own agencies to see how you are plugging into the state plan to help guide your strategies and investments as well. You will be getting this document in your email box. Feel free to share it broadly as well. We still have a long way to go but there is some really impressive work that's happening. The Governor is very supportive of and cognizant that's it's really

supporting the children and families in the beginning that is going to produce the outcomes we want to see later.

Peter: I encourage people to read it over. There's been great progress. Not to anyone's surprise it's the workforce that we've only made some progress on. There is so much farther to go.

René: The rest of our time will be spent continuing with our strategic planning. Last time we broke into different Jamboard sessions focusing on one of three objectives. #1 Families are supported and engaged as their child's first teachers. The group was tasked with looking at that objective, look at the strategies of that objective, there could be multiple under each objective, what are we currently doing and what else can/should we do. They were asked to rank them 1-3: 1 meaning critical, it needs to be addressed right now. 2 meaning very important to address within this next year. And 3, stating that although it's very important, it can wait until some of the other objectives are completed since we can't do everything at one time. At the bottom of each strategy I listed if there was a committee that I thought was probably best suited to carry that work forward. To be the responsible party to ensure that this work doesn't get dropped. So, for this objective #1 it's the Child and Family Wellbeing Subcommittee of the Early Learning Hub. There may or may not be a committee listed at the bottom of each strategy. If there is and your group disagrees, you can certainly suggest that another committee would hold that. If there is no committee listed, feel free to suggest a committee even if you're not a part of it. We can circle back to that committee and see if it's something they would be agreeable to.

We went through the first four objectives at the last meeting. We're going to be starting with Objective #5, 6 and 7 today.

- Objective 5: Young children with social/emotional development, and health care needs are identified early and supported to reach full potential.
- Objective 6: Children and families experience supportive transitions and continuity of services across ECE and K-12 settings.
- Objective 7: Parents and caregivers have equitable access to support for their physical and social-emotional health.

(The participants spent 20 minutes working in three groups to do this work)

There are 14 objectives in Raise Up Oregon and we have now have touched through 7 of them. We are half way there. The ones towards the end are much more about funding, policies, sustainability and maybe shorter discussions based on limited regional influences on some of those. I promise you that we won't be doing this for the next 6 months. Hopefully the work that we are doing will lend itself to a product that is really helpful to our region, our kids and our families and our program.

SAVE-THE-DATE FOR OUR NEXT SOELS AGENCY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING:

February 12, 2021
10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.