



**Southern Oregon**  
Early Learning Services

**SOELS**  
**Agency Advisory Council**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**September 8, 2022**  
**10:00 - 12:00pm**

Attendees: Alejandra Moreno, Amber Lease, Cori Thye-Couch, Cynthia Anderson, Debra Koutnik, Stacy Fields, Stephanie Finch, Bethanee Grace, Sara Hollingworth, Martha Rivera Canjura, Kristie Soares, Sadie Emmons

Hub Staff: René Brandon, Sydney Wing, Teresa Slater, Molly McLaughlin, Claudia Leonard, Vicki Risner

**Welcome & Introductions in the chat**

Bethanee Grace: The Family Connection

Stacy Fields: Bridging Communities

Alejandra Moreno: Jackson County Mental Health

Cori Thye-Couch: OFSN

Sarah Hollingworth: Jackson Services, Kairos

Martha Rivera Canjura: Doulas & Company, Family Community

Amber Lease: Southern Oregon Head Start

Debra Koutnik, MD: Behavioral Pediatrician, member of Jackson County Early Autism Identification Team and Consultant for SOESD.

Kristi Soares: Facilitator for KPL group

Stephanie Finch: Southern Oregon Head Start

**Presentations on Family Community Center Progress**

3 main pieces from the parent survey. Many respondents to our family survey stated that they are feeling isolated. No connection to their community. They have concerns about their children's social interactions and how that is impacting their development. The need for more support around child care.

Grants Pass – Sadie Emmons

A welcoming space for all families. Lease is being held by the Family Nurturing Center. Sadie will be holding the calendar for scheduling. Priorities are our KPL groups, family support. A virtual tour of the Grants Pass Family Center was given. Still under construction. Focus is on small peer groups, mom groups, dad groups. Comfortably fits groups up to about 20 people.

Big room, murals to come. A local Ukrainian artist. Big and spacious. There will be four computer stations with printers available for parents. Putting in wheelchair ramps. A small office for community partners to land. A medium room for smaller groups, a trauma informed space. A small office for the main staff. Looking to fill 2 positions for that, with their own office. Sadie is available to give tours. Hoping to have a grand opening, maybe the first Friday in October 7<sup>th</sup>. The address is 310 SW H Street. The old historic fire station, once the city hall.

Medford – Martha Rivera Canjura, Owner of Doulas & Company, holders of the lease on the space. Family Community Center, Located at Pear Blossom Park. Vision was to bring community partners together. We have a resource stand for families to access. Have a kids' cave. The Family Connection brought in some things. Support groups: children age specific, circumstance specific. Movement classes: baby & me. Parenting Preparation Classes. A walking group, every Wednesday at 8:30 am. For the community, by the community. Bethanee Grace talked about offering classes and ways for families to connect to serves in this space. More comfortable for some families. Stacy Fields with Bridging Communities mentioned that this is perfect timing as they are looking for spaces to meet.

### **Discussion: Identifying Opportunities to Respond to Needs – What Level of Engagement Works for Your Agency?**

Child care came up as a huge need from our family surveys. 50% or more, almost 10,000 children at or below 200% of the FPL. More children are arriving at Kindergarten not socially and emotionally regulated. We categorized the data for families with a child experiencing a disability, rural, home language is Spanish, foster families, families who identify as homeless. The top preference for child care is location. Mirrored the Southern Oregon Success Family Empathy interviews as well as our Family Surveys.

Head Start has about 1000 children, 40 spots that are home based as well. Preschool Promise has 249, with a possible 170 additional.

Far short of supporting the 10,000 children who would benefit from these supports. The one program that I believe that is under utilized or promoted is ERDC. Employment Related Day Care sub through ODHS. Is shifting to the Oregon Department of Early Learning & Care. It's our opportunity right now to reach as many families with ERDC. Families can choose the provider that is most comfortable to them, then approved by DHS.

Copays are very low, maximum of \$130 per month. Many levels are free. ERDC is for working families and is under-utilized. The most recent report from Our Children Oregon stated that for Jackson County less than 1,000 families, with less than 200 for Josephine County. We can start to ease that child care burden if we start making this a regular part of our conversations with families.

As partners we need to know how to access Head Start, Preschool Promise and ERDC quickly for families.

Link to ERDC: <https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/assistance/child-care/pages/parents.aspx>. Families have to already be working to qualify for ERDC. Still a barrier to get families working. For families that aren't already working but are receiving TANF, there is funding through TANF for child care

that will then allow them to qualify for ERDC. What would it cost to provide bridge funding, 2-3 months, for those getting started working? These are things that don't have to remain barriers.

### **Family Data Review: What Do We Know? What Else Do We Need to Know?**

PAUSED. Waiting for additional data. Looking at child population and regional districts. Listening sessions? More surveys? Kind of in a weird spot that most of the data is from right before the shutdown in 2020. That's why we looked at our family surveys, to see what it is they need now, with the new circumstances.

### **Community Partner Updates**

Debra Koutnik: We lost our building 2 years ago yesterday in the Alameda fire. The Jackson Co Early Intervention team did a search training. Working on autonomy training from toddler age up. Rene: Cynthia and I are chipping away at the tiered measure of support. I would love to have more conversation with you about this.

Stacy Daniszewski: We've made slight adjustments to our programs, short staffed. Amber has been doing a great job getting our offerings out there. We always could use more.

Stephanie Finch, Southern Oregon Head Start: We started services this week. We still need staff. Looking for volunteers.

Cynthia Anderson, CCRN: Supporting the PSP expansion, new and existing providers. Our inclusion specialist started a couple months ago and is going great. A child care expansion grant, outside of PSP, is just getting started. Multiple providers are interested and getting started. Rene: more opportunity means more work for our teams. Sometimes can feel a little overwhelming. Support for our teams is important.

Alejandra Moreno: Jackson Co. Mental health is still doing mostly telehealth appointments. We can make exceptions based on their needs. Most clients are preferring telehealth. Crisis team is working both virtual and in person. The children's team is mostly virtual. We have room for more clients.

Riki Rosenthal: Starting Strong is being reimaged for the new year. Information will go out by the end of October as the current program is phased out and the new version is phased in. It's still in the planning stage. There was a lot of confusion about the air purifiers that state gave out. Oregon Health authority determined who is eligible. Letters are going out to those who are qualified.

Stacy Fields: Bridging Communities resumed in person support groups. Our families were eager for in person activities. We have been operating for a year and a half without a contract. We are in conversation about the contract. We are still supporting Alameda families with children experiencing a disability. A lot of fire survivors support groups. Have an IEP clinic coming up. In October we will have a bike & walk run in Ashland. We are looking for volunteers to help, cheer on.

Teresa Slater: Most exciting is that our KLP groups are up and running. 9 KLP facilitators with 15 times covering both counties. We are excited to look into offering groups in the new Grants Pass location Sadie shared. Our summer programs are coming to an end. We offered scholarships for kids entering kindergarten this fall. Art and Science program in Cave Junction has requested to

continue offering this program throughout the year and we are beginning this partnership. Had a successful partnership with the Butte Falls school district and the Learning Landing. They provided this program for about a dozen children this summer. The amount of trust that was built for the families of the new kindergarteners has truly changed their experience for the best. We are working to expand more facilitators and locations. We have a closed group that is just for Oasis families, working on their parenting skills.

Sydney Wing: Working on putting a session for those offering home visiting support and those who are interested in home visiting. Who they are, who they serve. Interest emails have been sent out. If you are interested in presenting or being there, please contact me.

**NEXT SOELS AGENCY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING:**

**January 13, 2023**

**10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

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