Policy Council Meeting Minutes
Mountain States Early Head Start
CDA Center
November 6, 2025 - 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Our Mission:

- Promote healthy pregnancies and healthy babies.
- Enhance the development of very young children.
- Promote healthy families.

Policy Council Member Attendance: PY 2025-2026					
Name & Title	*Center and Representative Type*	*Present*	*Absent*	*# of Absences*	*# of unexcused Absence*
Policy Council Members					
Mandy Milovich, Chairperson	Parent Representative	X		1 (Aug.)	
Chantel Petschel, Secretary/Treasurer	Parent Representative	X			
Ginger Buckley	Parent Representative	X			
Ashley Miles	Parent Representative	X		1 (Sept.)	
Heather Piper	Parent Representative	X		2 (July, Oct.)	
Jasmine Fairbrother	Parent Representative	X			
Karen Schmidt	Jannus Board Liaison	X		1 (Sept.)	
Jessica Geiger, NIC Head Start	Community Representative		X	1 (Nov.)	
Nanci Jenkins	Community Representative	X		1 (Oct.)	

Staff Present: Aleta Garcia-Clute, Jana Brooks, Karen Dapron, Sandra Menegas, Teresa Rains, Melissa Bennett.

Call to order: Mandy called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

Guests: Savannha Slaughter, MSEHS parent.

Connection Time: Aleta welcomed Savannah Slaughter and Policy Council members introduced themselves. Aleta recognized and thanked Heather Piper for her time on Policy Council. The connection question of the day was, "What was your first pet?"

Previous Meeting Minutes: Members reviewed the October meeting minutes.

Heather P. motioned to approve the October 2025 meeting minutes; Ashley M. seconded and the motion for approval carried.

Report-Outs / Training

PC Training: Handling Complaints, Investigations, and Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting – Karen Dapron

- Karen shared procedures found in our Jannus employee handbook and explained that our staff resolution procedure is similar to the procedure for enrollees.
- Begin at the lowest level and first address a concern with the individual involved professionally and in a timely manner. If not resolved, raise the concern with immediate

supervisor in an honest manner. If a supervisor is not available and the concern has not been handled, discuss with supervisor's manager.

- Formal procedure: put the complaint in writing with all pertinent information and present to HR at Jannus. If not solved there, report to the executive director of Jannus, and lastly to the president of the Jannus Board of Directors.
- We all are mandated reporters as stated in our Standards of Conduct with a process in place. In the state of Idaho, everyone is a mandated reporter. We at MSEHS report to our program immediately or as soon as possible, not later than seven calendar days following an incident.
- Childhelp has a national hotline: 1-800-4-A-CHILD. You can also call within 24-hours to Child Services and write a formal complaint.
- We always welcome your questions if you would like more clarity on any of these procedures.

Program Design & Management Report Out

Director's Report & Program Updates – Jana Brooks

Jana read our mission statement aloud to the group and presented recent updates including the upcoming Focus Area-2 review. She also shared a video presentation of our Annual Report.

- **Grant Updates/Director's Report -**
  - **Government update:** Every Tuesday and Thursday the National Head Start Association (NHSA) holds calls with Head Start programs across the country and it looks like things are starting to move in the senate. We are hopeful for a Continuing Resolution (CR) to be passed soon. If the shutdown continues, however, a "Call to Action" is planned for next Thursday, November 13th.
  - Our program received grant funding in July, so we are safe for this year and moving along as planned. Other programs across the country receive funding in October and November, with 20 programs now closed in 17 states and Puerto Rico affecting 10,000 children and their families. Some alternative funding has been received, but not enough for these programs to function full time. Once the shutdown ends, these programs should receive their funding and be up and running again for this program year. If the shutdown goes into December, there will be 132 programs closed affecting 50,000 children. Our regional specialists have not been working but will return after the shutdown ends.

- **OHS Correspondence – FA2 Notification** (see packets)
  - We learned our review will be held during the week of December 15th.
  - A few reviewers will be on site and others virtual. The review includes a conversation about our program and the work we do with families and others in the community. There will be an interview and discussion with Jana at the end of each day, providing an opportunity for her to fill in any blanks. It is not a test, and questions will be focused on clarification.
  - The review is scheduled to last between 3-5 days, and the main reviewer will be visiting us from Maryland. This will be a significant opportunity for us to share our story, how we run the program and why our approach works.
  - Within 90 days following the review, we will be given a report detailing our strengths and our weaknesses.

- They focus on six key areas that represent what we do every day:
    1. Program Design, Management and Improvement - How we use data and support staff.
    2. Fiscal infrastructure – How we manage funds, track budgets and maintain accountability.
    3. ERSEA – How we ensure families are eligible, enrolled and supported.
    4. Child Development & Disabilities Services – How we individualize learning through home visits, playgroups and parent classes.
    5. Health Services – How we promote safety, health and wellness for children, families and staff.
    6. Family & Community Engagement – How we partner with families and involve them in decisions.
- During the review Policy Council members will meet with reviewers sharing how families have a voice in our program planning and decision-making. Your voice matters, and there is nothing you will need to prepare. Share your real experiences as parent leaders and what participation looks like. For example, you may be asked to describe what home visits and playgroups look like, what you have gained from parent classes and parent connections. Reviewers want to understand how families and staff work together and will be listening for examples of partnership. Be open, honest, and speak from experience and feel free to ask for clarification from the reviewer as they may be using different terms such as *socializations* versus *playgroups.* There are no right or wrong answers, just open conversation.
- We are working on providing a playtime for kids during your time with the reviewers.
- We are proud of what we do at MSEHS, and this is our opportunity to show off the program!

- **Annual Report for Program Year 2024-2025**
    - Every year we present the annual report to the public with information and data, demonstrating what we accomplished throughout the year and where we are going. (see packets).

- **Financial Report for September 2025**
    - Total spending for 2025-2026 year-to-date is: $604,356.
    - Non-Federal Share (In-Kind) must be 20% of total federal dollars awarded, and our current percentage is 17.88%
    - Administrative expenses can be no more than 15% of total federal dollars, and our current percentage is 12.98%

- **Credit Card Report for September 2025 –** The report was reviewed and presented by Chantel today and members voted to approve:

    Ashley M. motioned to approve the September financials; Chantel P. seconded and the motion for approval carried.

    Heather P. motioned to approve the September credit cards; Ginger B. seconded and the motion for approval carried.

Jannus Board Report/Updates – Karen Schmidt and Jana Brooks

Karen and Jana attended the Jannus Board meeting in Boise on October 23rd. Karen shared that the board is impressed with the program and with Policy Council and you are a "gold standard" for them. Hard conversations were had around government funding. Once the government re-opens, the Idaho DOGE list will go into full effect, stating the 988 Suicide Hotline may be cut, immigrant programs are no longer accepted, and our program could be on the chopping block. Another group slated for elimination includes the Commission on Library Services. If they decide to eliminate the Commission on Library Services, all programs put on by the library will go away along with internet service for users across the state affecting libraries drastically.

Semi-Annual Report – Jana Brooks

Jana presented a semi-annual report of our program to the Jannus Board for Directors. The report focused on what we're learning from our communities and the things we are doing within our program. She presented a recent staff survey which shows that our staff remain committed to supporting families and doing this work.

Program Services Report: Nutrition Services Update

Tabled until next meeting.

LUNCH BREAK: 11:15-11:30am

Report Outs

Enrollment, Community Outreach & Engagement Reports:

- **October 2025 Enrollment Report and Infographic –** Sandra Menegas
  - Enrollment is at 90 and we continue to be fully enrolled with a healthy waitlist.
  - 12 enrollments were completed in October.
  - Exits: 12 occurred in October - four children aged out of the program, three moved out of state, two families stated being too busy to participate, and we received no response from three families after multiple attempts to contact.
  - 18 enrolled children currently have active IFSP's.
  - October referral sources leading to enrollments were varied this month including; Two from Kootenai Health, one from Kaniksu, one from Heritage Health, one from DHW Preservation, two from the Fostering Idaho event, one from a recent Child Care Resource event, two from ITP, two currently enrolled parents re-enrolled.
  - Waitlist information: Six families currently meet eligibility, and 15 families are over income. We are already filling our waitlist and can address the people on our list. The process is running well.
  - We have four enrolled pregnancies.
  - Seven exits are forecast for November. One enrollment has been completed this week, with another happening this afternoon, and one more in Bonner at the end of the week.

- **Eligibility Percentages:**
    - SNAP / SSI / TANF – 37%
    - Over Income – 3%
    - Income Below 100% - 17%
    - Income 100-130% - 9%
    - Foster Care – 11%
    - No Permanent Housing – 13%

  County Snapshot:
    - Bonner – 23
    - Kootenai – 55
    - Shoshone – 12

MSEHS Center Updates: Karen Dapron

Upcoming opportunities and center happenings were shared.

- November 5th – MSOYW wrapped up in Shoshone
- November 6th - Policy Council meeting at CDA.
- November 11th – Veterans Day, centers closed.
- November 13th – Parent Connect at the Sandpoint center.
- November 17th – Integrative Parenting class continues through November 17th (virtual)
- November 27-28th – Thanksgiving, centers closed.
- December 4th – next Policy Council meeting at CDA.
- December 15th-19th – Focus Area 2 Review.

Community Happenings

- Nanci shared an upcoming Coalition for Health meeting.
- Karen shared a pamphlet containing upcoming youth programming and events at all Community Network libraries. Local authors coming soon from 12-4pm,
- Parent Connect in Sandpoint on November 13th will focus on safety in the home. Local fire department will attend, and kids will have the chance to sit in a fire truck!
- Circle of Security training coming up in January in CDA.
- Kootenai Health and Selkirk are once again sponsoring families for Christmas. Family Consultants will share information with families.
- November 18th at 6pm in the Harding Gym, free nutrition and cooking class. Learn tips for easy prep, eating together as a family and receive a free gift at the end.
- Five Thanksgiving baskets have been gifted to our program from a local business.
- We received a donation to support nutrition services – soon a curriculum nutrition kit containing food will be going out to our families.
- Volunteer opportunities are always available!
- Food specific food drive for MSEHS families will be upcoming. Stay tuned!

New Business:

Final Self-Assessment Report - Teresa R.

Self-Assessment and Continuous Improvement highlights were presented by Teresa, sharing program information about the MSEHS 2024-25 program year along with goals and next steps (see packets).

Our first annual staff satisfaction survey was completed in 2023-2024. We were able to identify needs which focused our attention on family services processes, retention, training and professional development. In the spring of 2025, Jennifer Hepinstall, our Parent Family Community Engagement Specialist, piloted a new family outcomes tool and this program year, we rolled this out to all staff and families. In the spring and fall of 2025, we hosted Keith Orchard, LCSW, who provided in-person training on motivational interviewing which was extremely beneficial fall our staff.

Also in 2025, we received our first annual parent feedback report, our second staff engagement survey, and community assessment. We will explore new databases and see what the change process is. Needs identified included data collection/database, professional education, family needs. It was identified that our staff need time for personal professional development focused on essential topics, along with time allowed for activities.

Our program continues to address family needs and allows exploration of community networks.

- Vote for approval of this assessment will be held at next meeting.

Policy Council New Member

Members held a vote to approve Savannah Slaughter as a new Policy Council member. The vote was unanimous, and Savannah was elected to the 2025-26 Policy Council.

IHSA Conference Planning and Updates - Aleta

Tabled until next meeting.

Meeting Wrap-Up – Aleta

Reviewed plan for next meeting.

- ***The meeting was adjourned by Mandy at 12:05 pm***
- Our next Policy Council Meeting will be December 4th from 10:00 am to Noon at the CDA/Zoom.