Policy Council Meeting Minutes
Mountain States Early Head Start
CDA Center/Zoom
February 5, 2026 - 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		2 (Aug., Dec.)	
Chantel Petschel, Secretary/Treasurer	Parent Representative	X			
Ginger Buckley	Parent Representative	X			
Ashley Miles	Parent Representative	X		1 (Sept.)	
Jasmine Fairbrother	Parent Representative	X		1 (Jan.)	
Savannah Slaughter	Parent Representative	X			
Alissa Rudebaugh	Parent Representative	X			
Karen Schmidt	Jannus Board Liaison	virtual		2 (Sept., Jan.)	
Jessica Geiger, NIC Head Start	Community Representative	X		1 (Nov.)	
Nanci Jenkins	Community Representative	virtual		1 (Oct.)	

Staff Present: Aleta Garcia-Clute, Jana Brooks, Catie Kotmel, Jennifer Hepinstall, Karen Dapron, Krista Haller, Mikayla Brown, Sandra Menegas, Teresa Rains, Melissa Bennett.

Guest: Garrett Hill, Jannus program accountant for MSEHS, joined us virtually for a presentation on the Jannus Inc. annual independent audit.

Call to order: Mandy called the meeting to order at 10:02 am.

Previous Meeting Minutes: Members reviewed the January meeting minutes.

Chantel P. motioned to approve the January 2026 meeting minutes; Jessica G. seconded and the motion for approval carried.

Report-Outs / Training

Monthly Information Reports / Training:

Understanding Audits and Summary of Jannus' Annual Independent Audit Report – Garrett Hill

Garrett Hill, the MSEHS program accountant, has been with Jannus for three years. He joined the meeting today to present information on the annual independent audit.

Why do we need one? An independent annual audit is required for nonprofits receiving more than $750,000 annually from the federal government. Jannus Inc. received $18,212,766.00 during the 2025 fiscal year which is significantly above that threshold. Of that amount, MSEHS accounts for $2,565,587 in federal funds for FY 2025 which is the budgeted amount for our program. One of our grant requirements states that Policy Council be made aware of the annual audit.

- **What is an independent annual audit**? It is an in-depth examination of the records, accounts, and internal controls of an organization performed by an independent auditor retained through a contract of services. Following the review, a report is issued to the Jannus board of directors by the accounting firm expressing their professional opinion of our organization's practices.
- **Who conducts the audit?** The firm of Sorren CPAs, previously Harris CPAs, performed the audit which began in early July 2025. Their final report was issued later than usual due to the government shutdown. An unmodified clean report was submitted which states the Jannus Inc. financials for fiscal year 2025 have been presented fairly and, in their opinion, ended in accordance with requirements. No material weaknesses or deficiencies or non-compliance were found. One process for internal control over statement reporting was found stating Jannus Inc. should report when statements are received instead of when earned and Jannus has updated these procedures.

Program Design & Management Report Out

Director's Report & Program Updates – Jana Brooks

- **Grant Updates –** Jana and Teresa Rains
  - Timeline: Our budget is currently being reviewed by the fiscal department, and we are working on the In-Kind payment schedule which reflects the hourly wages allowed for our non-federal share. The budget will then be reviewed by Jana, Darnisha, and Karen and following any further edits will return to Teresa and the grant will then be pretty much complete. It will be presented to Policy Council during the March meeting, and the Jannus Board will vote during the third week in March. We will submit the final grant by April 1st and wait until we are notified, usually sometime in June.
  - No delays in receiving the 2026-27 grant are anticipated and we are currently fully funded through June 30th.

- **OHS Correspondence –**
  - We are still waiting for the final report on our Focus Area-2 Review (which can be 90-120 days or more) and we're around 60 days right now.
  - FY26 has been finalized in Congress with a .6% COLA, which is quite an improvement from threat of total elimination of our program which looked like a possibility earlier this year.
  - Travel Stipend Reimbursement – (Childcare reimbursement to be reviewed next month.) The goal is to help reduce barriers for parents to attend meetings and participate in program leadership. It is not intended to cover full cost, just to make participation more accessible. Programs must reimburse reasonable costs for actual travel and childcare expenses related to participation in Policy Council. The current rate chart was presented. Members discussed the zero reimbursement for 0-4 miles.

Chantel P. motioned to include a 0-4 miles reimbursement; Ashley M. seconded and the motion for approval carried.

- Reimbursement Rates:

Ashley M. motioned to approve the 2026 reimbursement rates; Chantel P. seconded and the motion for approval carried.

- **Financial Report for December 2025**
  - Total spending for 2025-2026 year-to-date is: $ 1,252,643. .
  - Non-Federal Share (In-Kind) must be 20% of total federal dollars awarded, and our current percentage is 20.55%.
  - Administrative expenses can be no more than 15% of total federal dollars, and our current percentage is 12.77%.

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

Jasmine F. motioned to approve the December financials; Ginger B. seconded and the motion for approval carried.

Savannah S. motioned to approve the December credit cards; Ginger B. seconded and the motion for approval carried.

Jannus Board Report/Updates – Karen Schmidt and Jana Brooks

The Jannus Board of Directors met in January with an optimistic view of the future of its programs. Looking ahead the board is working on how to be proactive with potential shutdowns and future changes in funding. They are currently searching for two new board members with financial and law backgrounds to replace two members who have resigned.

Report Outs

Program Services Report: Mental Health Services Update

"Ways to Support Mental Health and Wellness" – Krista Haller (see packet)

Krista was pleased to share that her two-year anniversary with MSEHS is approaching next month. Her role is to provide a consistent, available presence and affirm the value of our home visitors' ability to hold space for families. She offers referrals for services, visits homes, asks what's feeling heavy and what current coping strategies families are utilizing. Krista provides families with resources they can access (podcasts, videos, etc.) and helps identify goals before referring to therapy. MSEHS staff are highly capable and carry the weight of the quieter moments of their work, providing emotional support and emotional well-being.

Enrollment, Community Outreach & Engagement Reports:

- **January 2026 Enrollment Report and Infographic –** Sandra Menegas
    - Enrollment ending 1/31/26 was 89 with one open slot within 30 days. Four enrollments were completed in January.
    - We had five exits in January; one family did not respond, one moved out of state, two families moved back to our waitlist, and one exit was anonymous.
    - January referral sources leading to enrollments included one from WIC, one from Child and Family Services, one from Bonner County Child Find, and one previously enrolled family.
    - 20 enrolled children currently have active IFSP's.
    - Waitlist information: Eight families currently meet eligibility, 15 families are over income.
    - We have four enrolled pregnancies: three in the 4th trimester.
    - Six exits are forecast for February.

- **Eligibility Percentages:**
    - SNAP / SSI / TANF – 37
    - Over Income – 3
    - Income Below 100% - 15
    - Income 100-130% - 8
    - Foster Care – 10
    - No Permanent Housing – 15

    County Snapshot:
    - Bonner – 26
    - Kootenai – 51
    - Shoshone – 12

Enrollment, Community Outreach & Engagement Reports: Mikayla Brown and Sandra Menegas

Mikayla explained how we receive referrals, where our total referrals are coming from, who we partner with and other informational data. Fewer referrals are being generated through HubSpot, but those that do come through are leading to qualified waitlist families.
We updated our MSEHS website which details our program clearly and in an engaging manner and this has been very helpful.

Bubble Palooza Update: Our hope is to have four Bubble Palooza events this summer with two in Bonner County, one in Kootenai and one in Shoshone. Volunteers are asked to join our planning committee. Please reach out to Mikayla if you are interested. A calendar invite will be sent by Aleta.

LUNCH BREAK: 11:00 am - 11:15 am

MSEHS Center Updates: Karen Dapron

IHSA Conference – Karen shared highlights from the recent IHSA Conference in Boise. Three of our Policy Council members attended the IHSA conference and a program parent, Danielle, was awarded the parent scholarship award. Chantel was voted onto the IHSA Board. It was an inspirational and great trip and reminds us why we are here. Aleta shared a slideshow of the event.

Upcoming opportunities and center happenings:
Jennifer is working on a parenting class coming up in March; in April we will celebrate Strengthening Families Month. More details coming soon.

- February 5th – Policy Council meeting at CDA.
- February 4th-March 11th – Circle of Security classes continue in CDA.
- February 6th – Health & Mental Health Services Advisory Committee meeting CDA
- February 12th – Parent Connect in Sandpoint
- February 16th – Presidents Day, all MSEHS centers closed.

Old Business:

MSEHS Eligibility and Selection Criteria Review for Approval for 2026-2027 PY:

List of recommendations requiring a vote include:

- Criteria #16: add food insecurity (food and resources to feed my family are limited)
- Criteria #7: add "specialized needs"
- Criteria #12: "No access to affordable housing" – increase to 3 points.

Chantel P. motioned to approve the updated eligibility selection criteria for 2026-27; Ashley M. seconded and the motion for approval carried.

Policy Council Parent Project Planning and Updates – Aleta
We would like to incorporate our parent project into the upcoming Strengthening Families event in April. Aleta will send out a virtual meeting date with more information soon.

Meeting Wrap-Up – Aleta
Reviewed plan for next meeting--an MSEHS family will be joining us for our March meeting.

- ***The meeting was adjourned by Mandy at 11:55 am***
- Our next Policy Council Meeting will be March 5th from 10:00 am to Noon in CDA/Zoom.