Policy Council Meeting Minutes
Mountain States Early Head Start
CDA Center/Zoom
March 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, Vice Chairperson	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	X		2 (Sept., Jan.)	
Jessica Geiger, NIC Head Start	Community Representative	X		1 (Nov.)	
Nanci Jenkins	Community Representative	X (virtual)		1 (Oct.)	

Staff Present: Aleta Garcia-Clute, Jana Brooks, Mikayla Brown, Karen Dapron, Irene Dreith, Jennifer Hepinstall, Sarah Howell, Sandra Menegas, Teresa Rains, Jayden Todhunter, Melissa Bennett.

Guests: Jess McCafferty, Jannus CFO, and Chloe Collett and Armando Diaz, MSEHS parents.

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

Previous Meeting Minutes: Members reviewed the February meeting minutes.

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

Program Design & Management Report Out

Director's Report & Program Updates – Jana Brooks
Jana presented packet materials and read our mission statement.

- **Focus Area 2 Monitoring Results:**
  Results of our federal review were received earlier than expected and demonstrate that what we built is working. Strengths were outlined and identified and recognized by federal reviewers during the monitoring process completed in December 2025.

We had no findings, no areas of noncompliance, and we met all Head Start standards.

- Strong Systems and Leadership
- Intentional Home Visiting Practice
- Health Safety and Well-being
- Meaningful Family Engagement
- Strong Fiscal Stewardship
- While not a review finding, we received a reminder regarding our process of documentation for enrolling over-income families. We have updated these processes.

- **Grant Updates –** Jana and Teresa Rains
  - Policy Council voted on the continuation grant for submittal and the full handout was in members' packets. PC helps approve the grant each year and looks at services received, how the program is doing and our priorities for the next year. Family voices are an important part of the decision making on how our programs run.
  - Continue to focus on workforce stability (no turnover in past two years.) Sustainable caseloads, 50 professional development hours per staff member, arranging leadership coaching, supervision, succession planning, wages and how they compare in the community.
  - Enrollment and Community Engagement – Fully enrolled (90 works well for our program and we continue to maintain a required healthy waitlist.) See packet for information.
  - Parent Engagement and in-Kind show consistent family participation. Families are actively participating and shape our program direction. One parent received the IHSA continuing education scholarship and another was elected to the Idaho State Head Start Association.
  - Our focus for 2026-2027 – research shows when adults feel supported and accountable, their children benefit.
  - Our new Head Start grants manager and Jannus CEO reviewed our grant, made some recommendations and returned to us for edits. We have made the changes and are reviewing it again today and tomorrow. Once received we will finalize and send to the Jannus Board on Monday, March 9th. Jannus will then review and if approved, we will submit to the OHS website and wait until June to find out if it is approved. As this is a continuation grant, less information is needed for uploading and is mainly budget related.

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

- **OHS Correspondence –**
  - New OHS Director, Lizbeth Casco White, was announced along with updates for FY26 monitoring. No other significant updates or changes were made.
  - Chronic absenteeism was discussed.

- **Childcare Stipends –** these help reduce barriers making it easier for parents to attend meetings and participate in program leadership. They are not intended to cover the full cost, however, it makes participation more accessible and are provided when on-site childcare is unavailable. Requirements state that Head Start programs must support Policy Council members so they can participate fully, including reimbursing reasonable expenses related to participation such as childcare. The process requires that a W9 be filled out by the childcare provider. We are working with Jannus fiscal to help reduce some of the current paperwork and speed up the process. Eight children is the cap for childcare in the center. Can we make the cap larger? Unfortunately, OHS ratios are set for square footage and age of child-to-adult supervision.

- **Financial Report for January 2026**
  - Total spending for 2025-2026 year-to-date is: $1,459,731.
  - Non-Federal Share (In-Kind) must be 20% of total federal dollars awarded, and our current percentage is 20.47%.
  - Administrative expenses can be no more than 15% of total federal dollars, and our current percentage is 12.83%.

- **Credit Card Report for January 2026 –** The report was reviewed and presented by Chantel and members voted to approve:

  Ginger B. motioned to approve the January financials; Ashley M. seconded and the motion for approval carried.

  Ashley M. motioned to approve the January credit cards; Ginger B. seconded and the motion for approval carried.

Jannus Board Report/Updates – Karen Schmidt and Jana Brooks

Karen reviewed the grant and remarked that it looks great. It will be presented to the Jannus Board next month.

Report Outs

Program Services Report: Health and Safety Services Update – Sarah Howell

Sarah shared information from the recent Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee (HMHSAC) meeting and shared general updates and input.

Data: with rolling enrollment our data doesn't change much. In Feb. 2026, 96% of participants had health insurance. 88% have a medical home and 33% have a dental home which is consistent with last year. Chronic conditions are 29%, up from 18% last year. What is causing this increase? Possibly well-child health documentation is becoming more consistent within our database. Sarah plans to research this further.

HMHSAC Meeting held February 6th – ten community members participate in in-person meetings and nametags were mentioned as things that help make a meeting feel more comfortable. Post-meeting reflection form? Share out meeting minutes following.

Updates: initial faxing of documents to providers, implementing walk-throughs at all four centers and addressing any potential safety concerns. We are considering getting cameras for our front doors.

LUNCH BREAK: 11:00 – 11:15am

Enrollment, Community Outreach & Engagement Reports:

- **February 2026 Enrollment Report and Infographic –** Sandra Menegas
  - Enrollment ending 2/28/26 was 90 with eight enrollments completed in February.
  - We had seven exits in February; six children aged out of the program and one family was too busy to participate.

- February referral sources leading to enrollments included one from Family Promise CDA, one referred by a family member, two taken from CP waitlist, and three were previously enrolled families.
- 19 enrolled children currently have active IFSP's.
- Waitlist information: Four families currently meet eligibility, and 14 families are over income.
- We have five pregnancies enrolled with two in the 4th trimester.
- Three exits are forecast for March.

- **Eligibility Percentages:**
  - SNAP / SSI / TANF – 36
  - Over Income – 3
  - Income Below 100% - 17
  - Income 100-130% - 8
  - Foster Care – 9
  - No Permanent Housing – 16

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

Community Outreach & Engagement Update – Mikayla Brown
Mikayla presented outreach information and shared a handout with members (see packet). She also asked members who are on Facebook or Instagram and feel comfortable, to please think about posting your thoughts about participating in MSEHS.

- Recent Referral sources
- Future planning
- Focus and Recent
- Prioritizing-
- Fostering Idaho

The next Bubble Palooza meeting will be held via Zoom next Monday, March 9th – Mikayla has an agenda, be sure to pick one up on the way out today.

MSEHS Center Updates: Karen Dapron
Upcoming opportunities and center happenings:
Karen shared center information and Jennifer shared we will celebrate Strengthening Families Month in April with details to come soon.
Jennifer shared information about the upcoming Integrative Parenting Class beginning March 18th.

- March 5th – Policy Council meeting at CDA/Zoom.
- March 9th – Bubble Palooza Planning Meeting on Zoom from 12:30-1:30pm.
- March 11th – Circle of Security classes wrap up in CDA.
- March 12th – Parent Connect, CDA from 10am to noon.
- March 18-April 15th - Integrative Parenting on Zoom from 11am to noon.
- April 2nd – Policy Council meeting at CDA/Zoom, 10am to noon.
- April 30th – Strengthening Family event

One Policy Council member today shared the desire for a monthly parent support group opportunity.

Jana and Aleta stated they are very open to talk about what this would look like and will continue the conversation. Our current Parent Connect events also provide this type of support for parents who attend.

Old Business: N/A

Policy Council Parent Project Planning and Updates – Aleta
Notes from the recent parent project meeting were provided in today's packet. Ideas discussed included doing something like the Kindness Project where Policy Council parents would write notes of gratitude, encouragement and inspiration to MSEHS families including a small, practical gift. We have a $1,500 budget and 90 enrolled participants. Aleta will schedule the April Policy Council meeting to devote time to writing these positive message cards. Jennifer and Aleta will generate the list of families and personalize the messages a bit.

Send Aleta a few ideas for small gifts and she will send surveys to families with three choices based on suggested ideas.

Meeting Wrap-Up – Aleta
Reviewed plan for next meeting.

- ***The meeting was adjourned by Mandy at 12:02 pm***
- Our next Policy Council Meeting will be April 2nd from 10:00 am to Noon in CDA/Zoom.