

KLAMATH PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Notes

June 24, 2020 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 AM

Attendance

Rhonda Nyseth	Heidi McGowan	Wendy Brown
Amy Quayle	Jessie DuBose	Kay Ortega
Athena Wikstrom	Jocelyn Amaya	Jill O'Donnell
Charla Oppenlander	Maurita Johnson	Richard Pfeil
Cindy Walsh	Julie Hurley	Cynthia Hurkes
Cliff Jones	Melinda Collier	Renea Wood
Dena Haudenschild	Melinda Gomez	Danielle Walker
Gillian Wesenberg	Rhonda Janecke	
Heather Freilinger	Sue Scheiss	

Please note: the Klamath Professional Advisory Committee was held virtually due to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) concerns and guidance on public meetings from the Governor.

Minutes

Motion to approve minutes as submitted by Dena Haudenschild, seconded by Maurita Johnson. No further discussion.

Early learning hub collective action during COVID-19

Gillian Wesenberg, Director of the South-Central Early Learning Hub, reflected that most of life seems to be on hold right now due to COVID-19. Preschool Promise is waiting for either the legislature or the Governor to approve funding as Preschool Promise funds are tied to the Student Success Act (SSA) funds. No one can move forward until funding decisions are made. There may be a special session of the legislature in July, and programs need to be prepared for when decisions are made.

In both the Douglas and Klamath Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings in May, there was a decision made to generate an equity lens group; members who volunteered to be a part of this committee will be meeting as a region in July – date to be determined. Additionally, the chairs of both of the PACs requested that each group meet in August to help make decisions once schools have had their plans for the upcoming 20-21 school year approved by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE).

Heidi McGowan facilitated a conversation around collective action the group can take during COVID-19. Our goals for our meetings during this time have been to: 1) plan to coordinate partners supporting children/families; 2) conduct planning around a potential second wave of COVID-19; 3) center equity in our planning.

Heather Freilinger and Melinda Collier with Care Connections and Education, the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) for our region, joined the conversation as we identify the needs of children and families as schools open up in the fall. They gave an overview of child care in the region and in Klamath County, and helped the group brainstorm ideas of potential partners to support children needing care.

It was reflected that our child care system was built on a traditional system; K-12 and child care need to work together to align with the needs of children and families. Schools will be submitting their plans to the state by August, and are expecting approval by August 15. The Child Care Division will also release new Emergency Child Care rules by mid-August and the state is pulling together providers to help advise what needs to happen so that children remain safe, especially since we are seeing spikes in new COVID-19 cases. There could potentially be a clash between the decisions the schools make and what will be happening in child care, such as half school days. The child care needs for children and families will vary throughout the county

The child care providers in Klamath County were applauded by Melinda Collier with Care Connections and Education, as they are willing and dedicated to doing what needs to be done for the children in our communities. Child care providers also need to have a support system; these providers typically operate at a break-even point, so with the reduced numbers of children they are able to accept, many providers are now operating at a loss.

Lake County doesn't have any emergency child care right now, and Klamath county has dropped down to 34 providers with only 40 available slots for children. The demand for child care has not diminished and 2-1-1 is receiving the same amount of calls for child care, but Klamath County has lost 1000 child care slots. Oregon Child Development Coalition (OCDC) and Head Start have closed for the summer, putting a large gap in available child care.

Programs and providers may need to consider changing their operating plans due to the needs during COVID-19 and potentially altered school schedules in the fall.

Heidi McGowan asked, what requirements are needed to open child care right now? Melinda and Heather advised:

- The state is no longer allowing much pop-up care and are not currently licensing new providers.
- Exempt providers can watch up to three children at a time without being licensed by the state.
- Registered Family providers can watch up to 10 children, but need to be licensed by the state.
- Certified Family providers can have 12-16 children with additional licensing by the state.
- Child Care Centers need licensing and certified teachers among other requirements.

Heather and Melinda will work on an informational card on "How to become a (child care) provider"

It was mentioned that, historically, many child care clients who were lacking care were also DHS clients, but with school environments changing in the fall, child care will be needed by all. Middle-class and other working parents that depended on school and after school programs will now need daytime care for their children.

The group discussed the importance of reaching out to their networks and building a system of communities caring for each other, such as reaching out to faith-based organizations whose members may have the availability to care for children.

Dena Haudenschild with the Klamath Falls City Schools advised that Klamath Falls City Schools do not yet have a finalized plan but are looking into half days or two full days a week for students in Kindergarten-5th grade (K-5). The City Schools have also put out a survey to teachers asking if they will be able to return to work due to their own child care needs and determined many will not be able to return. Parents were also surveyed and the information gathered from the surveys found that most families want schools to return to normal when they reopen in the fall. Schools will likely not return to a traditional setup, and parents may need to make difficult decisions.

Jill O'Donnell with the Klamath County School District advised that the Klamath County School District does not have any final decisions, but due to the size of the District, each elementary may have a different plan for the fall. Possible schedules include, two full days a week (half of the children would attend on Monday/Tuesday, and the other half of the children would attend on Wednesday/Thursday) in the classroom or students attending in the classroom five half-days a week, a hybrid virtual/ in-person plan, or for small schools, students may be able to attend full-time in-person with additional restrictions. Transportation via busing, however, will be difficult in rural areas. The school district is discussing including a para professional on each bus to do temperature checks on children and help them maintain distancing on the buses. The Superintendent at the County School District is also concerned about child care for teachers with young children; when asked, none of the teachers had a plan for their own needs for child care.

Early Intervention / Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) is also in a holding pattern as they do not have guidance from the state on how to move forward with planning for the 20-21 year.

Supporting children and families with an equity lens during COVID-19

Cliff Jones, with Capacity Building Partnerships, shared his appreciation for the creative conversation the group was engaging in and acknowledged the confusion and uncertainty in these challenging times.

Cliff introduced the PAC to the concept of VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) Leadership "which can assist in shifting mindsets from relying on set outcomes to thinking of all possibilities in a challenging environment. VUCA means that leaders are: Preparing for as many alternative realities, challenges, and issues as possible. Also, we will need to think about and look for solutions and approaches outside of the boxes within which we usually operate."

There is data that families want things to go back to normal, but this will not happen for a while, if ever. This can be overwhelming, but also powerful. Using VUCA Leadership, we can be prepared to build systems and structures that might overcome these challenges. We need to be ready to communicate the possibilities to the community and to decision-makers in this challenging environment. The more people that have a VUCA mindset, the more they are prepared to face and acknowledge ambiguous times and to operate with intention and meaning.

Cliff discussed moving forward with the equity lens in July; an Equity Lens can be simple or complex. The group discussed:

1. What assumptions are we making about children and families during this time?
 - COVID-19 will be over and we can move on

- We're past treating people with prejudice because of an illness they have
 - Child care is going to be needed
 - Families have the ability to assist their students; some parents don't have the skillset to help children with their homework
 - Parents think their role is vital
2. What voices are we missing from our assessment and solution generation?
 - Child care providers
 - Families needing care; working families who relied on school and after school programs as child care
 - Survivors of COVID-19 or their family; to determine the true impact of the virus
 - Rural communities with minimal child care
 - People who don't know the conversations are happening
 3. What social identity groups are most at risk and farthest from opportunities?
 - People who speak a different language, are bilingual, live in remote communities with limited or no access to transportation, child care, or other resources
 - If children speak English but parents may not, translating materials into their family language so parents can help their children is necessary.
 - What kind of supports need to be there for parents - child care providers are trying to help children with their homework during child care time.

Cliff identified the power of reaching out to opinion leaders in the communities that we are trying to reach; these who are trusted members/informal leaders. The group discussed the importance of reaching out to their networks and building a system of communities caring for each other, such as reaching out to opinion leaders in faith-based organizations who can get the word out to their congregations and prepare for what might happen in the fall.

Heidi asked the group to think about who opinion leaders are in Klamath County, how to connect with them, and how best to support them.

Partner Updates

Take Root/KPI – Ready! For Kindergarten is being held virtually and is serving 22 families across the Early Learning Hub region. Take Root will be offering several other workshops and classes virtually in the coming months.

Early Head Start/Head Start – Is waiting to hear from the state and are behind in recruitment efforts. They are working towards getting their applications available on the website. The Early Head Start program is still operating and is dropping off supplies weekly to families at their homes.

EI/ECSE – Children who were referred with a Doctor's statement are becoming eligible for services; all other children must go through an evaluation process. Evaluations are being scheduled, but are following social-distancing and wearing masks. Home Visitors for birth-three are not going into homes, but are hoping to start again in July. EI/ECSE is closed July 4 – July 26 for the summer.

Care Connections and Education – The state is looking for ways to fill child care needs, and Klamath County may be able to have pop-up care approved through the state if the provider can show a need. The Early Learning Division (ELD) released the first grant for emergency providers and are opening a second grant opportunity for child care providers who did not receive the first grant. The second opportunities are available for providers who are opening by September 1. They must provide care through September, and totals will be determined by level of care. Care Connections is still offering professional development to child care providers through a range of webinars as well.

Klamath Community College (KCC) STEPS Program – Funding is ending as of June 20, 2020. STEPS has applied for another grant with Rice Price that is similar to their current funding. They will hear back by July 3, 2020.

DHS – The yearly DHS Symposium will be offered virtually this year; it was slotted to be about sexual abuse but has shifted to the community's response to COVID-19.

Rene Wood – Offered an open invitation to providers wanting to participate in the Integral Youth Services (IYS) Summer Lunch Program Park and Play Kickoff on June 30 from 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm at Mills-Kiwanis Park. Families will drive through to receive meals and program information.

Cascade Health Alliance (CHA) – Reaching out to families to find out what disparities they are facing so that their needs can be addressed. The Community Baby Shower meeting will be held, but not sure if the event will continue this year. It is possible that the group will consider a drive-through Baby Shower if it can't be held at the Klamath County Fairgrounds. Cascade Health Alliance is reporting an uptick in low birth weight babies and very early preemie babies.

WIC – is still offering services via phone.

Klamath County Library – Will be holding a modified summer reading program. Information can be found on the web at: <https://klamathlibrary.org/kids/youth-summer-reading-program-2020>

Next Meeting:

Klamath PAC: August 19, 2020 from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm – hosted virtually.