



Mission: To assure a coordinated system of community resources and supports to help all Kent County families provide a great start for their children from birth to age five.

Great Start Collaborative of Kent County Meeting Minutes

Date: August 22, 2024, 1:30-3:00 p.m.

Location: Kent County Health Department – Lakes Room | 700 Fuller Ave. NE | Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Attendance

- General Members: Jessica Gallardo, Wendy Wheeler, Clay Roberts, Kathie Hoffman, Monique Vasquez, Renee Dunwell, Pam Shoemaker, Kayla Johns, Marian Russell, Chris Romero, Chess Van Wyk, Karrie Roy, Jaime Mueller, Amari Fuller, Lindsey VanDyke, Ashley Sturgis, Betsy Zandstra, Madison Perian, Becca Boot, Marcy Steenstra, Molly Berry, Brittany Price
- Executive Team Members: Mauren Hale, Kristen Gietzen, Joann Hoganson, Kelly Gerlinger,
- Staff Members: Paula Brown, Tomarra Richardson, Shanequa Mosley, Jourdan DeRidder

1. Welcome & Introductions

Participants introduced themselves, their role and connection to the work of the Great Start Collaborative.

2. Diversity Equity, Inclusion & Belonging Activity

Led by Kristin Gietzen, Arbor Circle, members were encouraged to share feedback they would like to hear. The notes were read, and members were encouraged to say “me too” if the feedback resonated with them.

3. Review Past Meeting Minutes

The past meeting minutes were approved.

4. Great Start Family Coalition Report

- Summer Celebration
 - June 27, 2024
 - PNC Mobile Learning Adventure provided activities for families, including 8*10 photographs of the child dressed up in various occupations with a green screen.
 - Grand Rapids Public Library provided summer reading sources.
 - Grand Rapids Children’s Museum provided activities and swag bags.
- Books, Blocks & Balls
 - Grand Rapids event was held August 10th
 - 171 Adults & 243 Children



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- The Sparta event will be held on Sept. 21st at the Sparta Early Childhood Center from 10am – 1pm. [Sparta Books, Blocks & Balls Flyer](#)
- Survey results indicated that 60% of families were aware of a developmental screening compared to 50% last year. Knowledge and awareness of developmental screenings is increasing.
- For the first time we had an ASQ play zone where families were able to observe their children playing and complete an ASQ onsite.
- There were food trucks, a bounce house, face painting, fire truck, police officer and 30 partner organizations sharing resources with families.
- Grants
 - The GSFC was awarded \$2,500 for the Fall into The Love of Reading Harvest Fest Event that will be held at First Community Reformed Church on Thursday October 3rd, 6pm – 8pm. Please share the flyer with the families that you serve [Fall Into The Love of Reading Harvest Fest Flyer](#).
- Upcoming GSFC Meetings
 - 09.12.24 Healthy Outcomes for Positive Experiences (HOPE) [HOPE GSFC Meeting Flyer](#)
 - 10.03.24 Fall into The Love of Reading Harvest Fest¹
- Diaper Drive
 - 1,900 Diapers were collected at the Allendale & Kentwood Apple Tree Locations.
 - Meijer will be hosting a diaper drive in September.
 - **Great Start Collaborative** members are asked to host a diaper drive
 - **WHEN:** During the month of September.
 - **PRIZE:** There will be a traveling trophy for the organization that collects the most diapers.
 - **HOW:** The family liaison will provide flyers and boxes for diaper collection. Contact Shanequa at smosley@successstartsearly.org if your organization is interested in participating. [GSC Partner Diaper Drive Informational Flyer](#)

5. Community Health Needs Assessment

- Presentation of the key findings by Maris Brummel, Public Health Epidemiologist at the Kent County Health Department.

¹ Please note the date change. This is one week before (and will replace) our regularly scheduled coalition meeting.



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- The assessment noted that the top five prioritization results were housing, health insurance, access to medical care, access to healthy food and mental health.
- Additional details can be found in the [Community Health Needs Assessment Key Findings](#) presentation.

6. Great Start Collaborative Updates

- School Readiness Advisory Committee (SRA)
 - Meets 2-3 times per year. This workgroup is mandated by MiLeap.
 - SRA discussed Pre-K For All and incorporating that within the county.
 - There are **3,606** Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) seats available in Kent County. **2,588** children have been placed in classrooms. There are **200** pending placements in the system. Pending placements are due to information that is still required from the caregiver to complete the registration.
 - There are marketing initiatives in place, including social media posts, flyers and yard signs advertising free preschool for the remaining **818** available seats.
 - There is a teacher shortage, which is impacting the preschool seats available, but hiring initiatives are in place.
- MiLEAP Update
 - Technical Assistance
 - The Regional Early Childhood Support Network (ECSN) structure will end as of 9.30.24 after a 5 year period. The ECSNs provide technical assistance to the GSCs and GSFCs. This technical assistance was previously provided by the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC).
 - MiLEAP released an RFP for one entity to provide Technical Assistance to the Collaboratives and Coalitions for 5 years. The RFP is due 8.31.24.
 - New appointments
 - Dr. Sophia Lafayette-Lause, Director of Great Start Readiness Program, Birth to 5 Early Childhood Special ED, and Family Services
- FY25 Work Plan Guidance & Tentative Allocations
 - Home Visiting Allocation
 - \$383,673
 - Initially funded Early Head Start, Baby Scholars and Bright Beginnings. Baby Scholars declined funding for FY24 from this allocation, but now with expanded funding the GSC may be able to fund a 3rd program for FY25.
 - Target Population
 - Families at 200% FPL or lower.
 - Living in Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Cedar Springs.
 - Enrolling children 12 months of age or older.



- African American and Hispanic families must be prioritized for enrollment.
- Risk Factors Addressed
 - School Readiness – increase 3rd grade literacy rates.
 - Reduce the need for early childhood special education services.
 - Family Economic Self-Sufficiency.
 - Positive Parenting Practices – Reduce Child Maltreatment.
- 32P Allocation
 - \$506,153
 - No longer have to fund local programs with these funds, however if that is decided as a community funding can take place.
 - Currently utilizing \$80k of 32P funds to support Bright Beginnings and Baby Scholars at \$40k each.
- 32P6 Allocation
 - \$162,710
 - Literacy (0-5).
 - 10% carryover of funds is available.
 - Must prioritize enrollment to those families with the highest levels of economic need

7. Partner Announcements

- Literacy Center
 - Free English Classes for Parents. Please share the [Flyer](#) with your networks.
- Kent County Health Department
 - Secure Storage of Firearms education. This training is for agency's that have contact with individual clients to equip them with knowledge of the importance of firearm storage. The training can be presented to a small group or large group. Most presentations last 30 minutes. Firearm locks will be provided that can be distributed to clients. There are a total of 25 trainings that need to be done by end of September 30th, there have been 16 trainings to date. There is an option to have a virtual or in person presentation. Contact Joann Hoganson @ joann.hoganson@kentcountymi.gov to set up a training for your agency.
- Grand Rapids Public Library (GRPL)
 - Storytime is starting up at GRPL. Check out the schedule here [GRPL Storytime Schedule](#).
 - Social Justice Begins with Me GRPL book club. Each month, the Social Justice Begins with ME book club examines a different social justice topic. Children ages 4–8 listen to a book read by a volunteer and discuss the month's social justice topics in small groups. Children ages 9–11 will read



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a book in advance and discuss the book as a group. All participants will enjoy a snack and themed craft activity. [Book Club Schedule](#)

- Grand Rapids Children’s Museum (GRCM)
 - GRCM has approximately 60 memberships remaining. GRCM will be at the September family coalition meeting and the Sparta Books, Blocks & Balls event to give out the remaining free memberships before 9/30.
- Michigan League For Public Policy
 - MLPP released a [budget analysis](#) on their website.

8. Call to Action

- No calls to action were given.

9. Adjourn

Upcoming Meetings:

GSC Executive Team: September 10th, 2:30pm-4pm (Zoom)

GSC General Membership Meeting: October 24th, 1:30–3:00pm

MSU Extension | 775 Ball Ave. NE | Grand Rapids, MI 49503