

Bristol Early Childhood Alliance

Zoom Meeting Notes

September 2, 2020 (11:00 – 12:00 p.m.)

In attendance: Maureen Eaton, Cecilia Garay, Kelly Hayden, Lauren Kittle, Donna Koser, Mary Alice Petrucelli-Timek, Karen Lombardi, Shannon Michelson (UW Intern), Donna Osuch, Catherine Plourde, Coral Richardson, Rebecca Rossi, Valerie Toner

Members were invited to introduce themselves and share on the following: **How is your program coping during the pandemic? & What issues, if any, are you seeing for children & families?**

WIC- WIC has moved their offices and are currently working from home. WIC is screening clients over the phone and sending Farmer Market vouchers. Families are self-reporting their concerns over back to school and how to balance work. Others are concerned about sending their children. Most clients are doing well and have enough food. Others are referred to 2-1-1, food pantries and SNAP. The e-WIC card changed a few items that families can access (i.e., string cheese, shredded cheese, etc.).

Child First – Currently using platforms such as Tele Health with some outdoor home visiting with safe guidelines. Families are struggling with back to school or remote learning decisions. They are also reporting that they do not understand or have clear instructions from the school system on what remote learning will look like for their child.

Parent & Child Center – The Caring Closet is still not open in full swing. Families are still able to access the facility for diapers, wipes & formula. However, they are in need of diapers; size 3 and up. Many programs are being held via Zoom and new referrals and appointments are done through Zoom and phone calls. Families reporting financial struggles, with children under the age of 6, are encouraged to use the Sparkler app to receive a grocery store gift card. Storage is difficult at the new location. Lauren is currently working one day a week with a focus on accessing grants and funding. Lauren shared that the Bristol Park and Rec department is offering care for children on days they are required to participate in virtual learning.

Bristol Library; Children's Dept. – It was a very quiet summer at the library. Over 300 children participated in virtual programs. Virtual story times will resume in October. Families are provided a link upon registering. The library is open, with limited capacity, to browse for books. Masks are required and toys and electronics are currently unavailable to patrons. **Lots of new books!**

Bristol/Burlington Health Dept. – The health department has been very busy with COVID response and preparing the Bristol schools for reopening. School Nurses returned to work last week. Currently trying to ensure all entering children have an up to date physical/medical record. Many parents are not understanding that their children still require updated medical records with the public school; even if they have chosen the option to keep their child home for virtual learning. September is National Obesity Awareness month. 1 in 5 kids have an obesity issue.

School Readiness – Early Care and education has many challenges during the pandemic. Guidelines are changing frequently and programs are struggling to keep on top the ever changing rules. Funding requirements are also changing frequently. Many parents have concerns about sending their children to Kindergarten and want to keep them back in preschool. However; it takes the approval of the Board of Education to keep a child back and is difficult to meet the requirements. Some families have changed preschools for their child to avoid sending them to the public school. Programs are not filled to capacity. They have strict guidelines for staff intermingling with other classrooms. This makes it extremely difficult for staff breaks, etc. Staff and children are both required to get a COVID test if they present with any symptoms. Waiting for results can keep a teacher out of work for several days.

United Way – A new intern, Shannon started this week. United Way has been overwhelmed with requests and response to the many needs in the community during the pandemic. United Way is hosting its fourth Farmers to Families event tomorrow (9/3/2020) from 4:00-6:00 p.m. and hopes to offer two more Thursdays in Sept. Approximately 800 backpack requests were filled. The program ran a bit differently due to the pandemic and larger donations of supplies and backpacks helped fill the requests as opposed to matching donors to specific children. The new ALICE report (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed) will be released soon, however; it is already inaccurate as we know many families were impacted by COVID 19 job losses.

Imagination – Currently not holding events. There are many challenges during this pandemic. Many parents are very frustrated and struggle to understand the frequent changes. There is a lot of anxiety, constant policy change, etc. The colder weather will cause new problems with children not able to be outside.

Adult Education – Cecelia is assisting Central Registration and translating parent comments. Many parents are confused with schedules, finding childcare, etc.

Community Outreach – Donna K. has adopted out several “Adopt a Reading Buddies”. This is a new initiative to encourage reading 20 minutes a day. Children will be asked to name their pet, read 20 minutes a day to help their pet grow. Parents are asked to post names, pictures and updates on Making Bristol Better’s Facebook page. Donna K. asked for suggestions on how to adopt the reading buddies out to children with most of BECA’s events having been cancelled. Mary-Alice delivered 115 pets to both of the SR sites and Donna K. provided 20 to the Boys and Girls Club in Cambridge Park.

Collaborating Grants: Donna O. shared that Bristol has applied for an extension of the Sparkler grant; for an interactive ages and stages app. The main goal of this application is to have Sparkler imbedded into the community and make it easier on programs to administer ASQ’s. Donna O. will update the group once we know if Bristol has been approved. The Parent & Child Center noted that the Sparkler app is user friendly (better for tracking and reporting to families) and the app is engaging parents.

Subcommittees:

Infant & Toddler has not met. A new chair is needed.

Health Committee the next meeting will be held virtually on October 6th. The committee will be looking at ways offer emotional support in the “new normal” climate. Cathy suggested everyone look at a Normthedog.org that was released on a webinar with the Department of Public Health and the State Dept. of Education. It’s a great site for parents and teachers.

Transition to K. – It has not been the “normal” summer, but a very busy one. Mary-Alice reported that 456 of the 550 anticipated students are registered for Kindergarten. Books (Every Super Hero has a Bad Day) and hard copies of the Kindergarten Survey were dropped off at all of the elementary schools. Only two parents completed our on-line version. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Sept. 8 at 3:30 on Zoom.

Community Sharing:

United Way: Donna O. reminded everyone about the Thursday Food Distribution. The event will take place on Main Street, the site of the Farmers Market (across from City Hall) from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Next Meeting: *October 7, 2020 (Zoom or in person TBD)*