

PACT 4 Early Childhood Committee
July 9, 2008
Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar

Present: Wendy Walz (Litchfield ECFE), Chery Johnson (Kandiyohi County Public Health), Diane Winter (Meeker County Public Health), Mary Kay Sinner (Renville County Public Health), Jo Panitzke (Renville County Public Health), Donna Henning (Heartland Headstart), Cindy Louwagie (Countryside Public Health), Donna Brau (Childcare Program Director KCAF YMCA, Willmar), and Rick Loseth (PACT 4)

Recorder: Donna Brau
Reporter: Wendy Walz

Welcome and Introductions

June Minutes Approved: Motion by Wendy Walz, Second by Cindy Louwagie

Addition to Agenda: Type 2, Type 1 Form Information: Sarah Wennerberg

Approval of Agenda with additions: Motion by Chery Johnson, Second by Rick Loseth

Discussion of Home Visiting Models: Clarification of what each group does:

Donna Henning with Heartland Head Start shared their program with the group. They serve mostly families with three- and four-year old children, according to income guidelines and qualifications. They presently serve 154 children per week in Meeker, McCloud, Renville, and Kandiyohi counties. The visits are 1 ½ hours each week. The homes that are visited are mostly in areas that don't have direct connections to their usual services. The family visitation specialists set up a parent/child/family partnership agreement covering a variety of family issues, goal setting, and literacy with children. The home visitations specialists come from a variety of backgrounds including early childhood, psychology, and health and social services backgrounds.

Cindy Louwagie utilizes TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families – Family Support) evaluations at the First Universal Contact (the initial visit shortly after the birth of a child) which establish the need for continuing home visits. The intent of this program in Yellow Medicine County is to “assist families to improve their parenting skills, provide a safe environment for their children, provide for adequate growth and development for their children, and to establish and appropriately use a positive support network.” First Step/Next Step, an intensive two-year program based on risk factors and income levels, will be implemented soon. This new program is a “family home visiting program specifically for MCH (Maternal Child Health) clients that need a longer term support than the universal contacts.” Visitation schedules and length of service are based on a family's individual needs. They have a Spanish translator available to serve the Hispanic population.

Wendy Walz shared that the Litchfield ECFE provides a program called “Childcare Connections”. They do three visits to childcare providers each year with the opportunity to share parenting information and ideas for activities for families. They have a staff that does the ASQ with the childcare center children. (The form is sent home and then information is then gathered and evaluated.) Wendy feels that they have been very successful in connecting with working parents this way. Their budget is very limited when it comes to home visits.

Donna Henning shared that the Willmar area is covering home visits with “Empower” (United Way) and a mobile learning center.

Childcare Choices and Kandiyohi County are working together to work with childcare providers to provide information similar to Litchfield.

Kandiyohi County Public Health home visits program is currently in transition and looking for a new curriculum to replace their current use of “Creative Curriculum”. Their current once per week visits also include health visits and mentoring. The services they provide in the future will be defined by the decision of which resources they will use. Also, Chery noted that the increased population of refugees in the area has had a clear impact on their services.

A short discussion regarding the intent to share information from “Joy in the Journey” followed. The information has been gleaned without reference from a number of resources over the past ten years, therefore, it would be inconsistent to claim any copyright on the written words. As a result, the committee agreed that it should not be posted online by any of the agencies at this time. The information is not necessarily “user friendly” as a whole. Each county is encouraged to keep using the information and, in the future, parts of the whole, which are deemed especially helpful, could be posted after committee discussion.

Diane Winter shared that Meeker County has a Nurse/Family Partnership, which is a referral program that does prenatal visits. Home visiting was established in the mid-90's and as things have changed the program has evolved into a variety of implementations depending on the actual person who provides the service. There are four staff dedicated to Meeker County. They work with a family to set goals as a team, including positive parenting, safe and nurturing home environments, social support and health care needs. They are examining their current program implementation. Project Harmony is a program they utilize that helps families with children up to five years of age and focuses on needs of families dealing with chemical/substance abuse issues.

According to Mary Kay Sinner, all 14 of the Renville County nurses have been trained individually (differently) and are visiting on either monthly or weekly visits. The first visits start prenatally, followed by Universal Contact at Birth, and then services as indicated by evaluation tools. Implementation of "Incredible Years" curriculum is only somewhat successful because home visitors often find themselves dealing with current, pertinent needs of the family. Reflective counseling has been offered for the last 18 months, with only about a third of the families participating. Other services are also offered as needed.

Chery also shared information about "Incredible Years – Infants and Toddlers". Topics that home visiting staff could share with families includes becoming a parent and getting to know your baby, language learning, physical and tactile promotion, parents learning to read baby's minds, getting support, and emerging sense of self. Her presentation included an informational Incredible Years video.

General Summary: Personalities (of the visitor and the family) and relationships really define the individual home visiting programs. However, the committee agreed that the outcomes are ultimately important to the success of home visiting within the text of each family's needs. A program can be very "prescriptive"; however, the actual delivery of services can be very unique. In all home-visiting programs the intent is to keep a family moving forward in positive ways.

Updates:

Books: Grant to Target will be reported at the September meeting

Brain Conference Planning: no report

Newsletter Submissions: Clarification of submission of classes needs to be forwarded to Shawna at PACT 4

Coalition Updates: Litchfield EC Coalition is sponsoring a "Sand Dig" during the Litchfield Watercade.

They will also attend area fairs. Willmar EC Coalition did the Kiddie Parade during Willmar Fests a couple weeks ago. They are also working on "Learning Bags" to be distributed during preschool screening. A collection of donated books is also currently being organized to go into home childcare settings.

Grants: Rick Loseth updated the committee on the progress of grants. The federal grant is out, but the state grant is in discussion. PACT 4 has been asked to be a part of an informational panel. The grant money would be used to provide training, possibly for home visiting programs.

Addition to the Agenda: All counties are reporting Universal Contacts to PACT 4, who then shares the information to the state as required. Sarah Wennerberg updated the committee on the use of "Type" forms, specifically regarding the definition of a successful contact. Sarah defined "What is a successful contact?" The reports have included both unsuccessful and successful visits, and visits that are not completed. The initial contact is not counted. *A face-to-face contact or sharing of information, either verbally or written, (delivery of content) is considered a successful contact.* Sarah will make the necessary clarification to the reporting forms.

There will be no Early Childhood Committee meeting in August to allow opportunities to attend some great trainings during that time period.

Next Meeting will be September 10, 2008, tentatively planned at Rice Dental Clinic.