



Great Start Collaborative (GSC) Meeting Minutes January 5, 2026

Attendees:

Linda Beemer, McKinney-Vento	Kristy Wood, Child Care Network	Linda Wise, HCISD/GSRP
Clint Brugger, Community Action Agency	Anna Weide, Community Action Agency	Stefanie Rathburn, Great Start Collaborative
Andrea Bricker, LifeWays	Rebekah Dobski, Hillsdale Community Library	Nicole Butler, Community Action Agency
Laura Orłowski, Jonesville District Library	Wendy Playford, Great Start Collaborative	Kathryn Boring, DHHS
Jessica Schlickemeyer, HCISD	Janell Morse, Calming Breath Doula Services	Sarah Greeley, Community Choice Credit Union
Hillary Zimmerman, Hillsdale Hospital/virtual	Oliver Bernstein, Child Care Network/virtual	

1. Welcome/Introductions

2. GSC Office Updates

o Funding

i. Budget Updates

1. Hillsdale County Community Foundation

a. General Grant (November cycle)

b. YOUTH Grant

- i. Funding received through HCCF to support event/initiative materials, marketing through the school year

c. Great Give

- i. Between donations and incentives, just under \$6,000 was raised, an increase of almost \$1,000 from last year

- ii. 42 donors - 16 of whom were 1st time donors and 8 of whom were GSC members

2. Pizza Hut Slice of Literacy Grant

- a. Applied for funding in late November to support Kids Read and Books for Babies bags

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- b. uncertain as to when grant awards are announced
 - c. Stefanie shared two letters of support received for inclusion in the application packet
 - i. [letter of support from Jonesville Health Care](#)
 - ii. [letter of support from Hillsdale Hospital Alfred K Bediako Birthing Center](#)
- 3. 35i Family Engagement/Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP)
 - a. using some funding to help incentivize local districts to partner for this year's Safety Fair, sharing safety topic education, and promoting family engagement
- 4. State-level possibilities
 - a. The proposed budget should come out in February
 - b. hoping to see 32p funds reinstated OR dollars allocated to Help Me Grow, which could support some of the previous work of GSCs
 - c. have met with the state Help Me Grow Coordinator
 - d. If the proposed budget looks favorable for funding to be allocated towards Help Me Grow, will provide an overview presentation at the March or April GSC meeting
 - e. If no mention of anything 32p or Help Me Grow related in the proposed budget, Stefanie and Wendy will begin moving forward with reassignment and plans for the future of GSC events/initiatives, post June 30th
- 5. Other
 - o [November/December GSC Data Summary](#)
 - o Family Coalition
 - i. No meeting in December to align with the full GSC meeting schedule
 - ii. The plan for January is to kick off work with the Little Free Libraries again
 - o Other
 - i. Jonesville Missions' fresh food distribution has closed down, effective on the first of the year
 - ii. There is an upcoming GSC work session on 1/14 from 8:30 - 10 am at the Dean Jennings building for anyone who has a bit of time to volunteer to do some behind-the-scenes prep work for the GSC.
 - iii. The next Community Baby Shower planning meeting is scheduled for 1/14 from noon - 1:30 at Hayes.
 - iv. The next Safety Fair planning meeting is scheduled for 1/22 from 9 - 10:30 a.m. at Hayes.

- 3. Community Spotlight: Linda Beemer, McKinney-Vento
 - [McKinney Vento PPT presentation](#)
 - [McKinney Vento Tri-Fold](#)
 - [McKinney Vento Hillsdale Liaison Contacts](#)

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McKinney Vento Authorized Activities

4. Subcommittee Reports

- Prenatal & Pediatric Health - Janell Morse
 - i. Bridging the Gap in Postpartum Care: Critical Warning Signs flyer is attached
 - 1. The Better Birth Outcomes stakeholder group has been meeting to identify community needs based on Kids Count data, and Janell also sits on a Region 9 subcommittee that was discussing a training opportunity. Based on the overlap between identified needs, a pilot training opportunity will be offered in Hillsdale on 1/26 from 11 a.m. - 2:00 pm. The goal is to provide education about when to encourage/promote families seeking medical treatment based on warning signs. She highly recommends it and encourages partners to register to attend the training.
- Preschool Leadership & Advocacy - Jesi Schlickemeyer & Linda Wise
 - i. Current openings in GSRP at Lichfield, North Adams, Reading, Waldron, and Hillsdale Prep
 - ii. Beginning to explore a plan for recruitment for the 26-27 school year
 - iii. Fall data dive reviews fall checkpoints, which tells us where students are when they come into preschool; identifies areas of training focus for staff
 - iv. Next PD will be targeted at training around speech and language delays and the impact on the development of literacy skills
 - v. Next Winter Check Points will be held on 3/13
 - vi. One other finding from the fall data dive was related to screentime impacting children's engagement in play, working to identify ways to promote/encourage the reduction of screen time

5. Community Updates

- Regional Child Care Coalition - Oliver Bernstein
 - i. The Region 9 Child Care Coalition is meant to be a collaborative space to bring together all of the voices in the child care space.
 - ii. Plan to implement solutions on a wider, more regional scale
 - iii. Coalition meets as a full group once every other month, alternating between in-person and virtual
 - iv. Workgroups are smaller groups that meet monthly and focus on specific pieces of child care crisis: Child Care Business Support and Development, Workforce Development and Career Pathways, TriShare and Employer Engagement, Policy, Advocacy and Municipality Change, and Navigating Resources and Community Networks - most have met 3-4 times so far
 - v. Upcoming exciting opportunities include a Business Expo for home-based providers in February (still looking for experts/vendors), working with a couple of municipalities to get them to redline ordinances to create more

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- provider-friendly zoning language, and a child care button and brochure campaign to highlight why child care is so essential in our communities
1. Oliver agreed to share the business expo flyer once it's available
- vi. Early Educator Wage Initiative - grant where the state is matching private dollars to help supplement early educator wages; works as a "pilot" to demonstrate to the state and others that investing in early educators leads to higher retention and to ultimately better outcomes for kids; 20-month grant with first payments going out this month. The first round has 35 programs selected.
 - o Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC) - Jessica
 - i. Have begun planning for Spring Fling; tentatively April 8th; may be moving to an in-person opportunity
 - ii. Recently hired a new Early Childhood Special Education Teacher - Stacy Ansel; used to do literacy work here but is now back with the Early On team
 - o Agency Updates
 - i. Janell still has Mommy Meet-Ups taking place on Fridays
 - ii. Janell shared that Theater for Youth has begun meeting this year. Annie will be their production. Costs come to about \$6,000, so donations are being solicited
 - iii. Clint shared that the Point in Time count is coming on 1/28. Requirement to count the homeless people in your community. Looking for volunteers, directly related to community funds, to support the homeless crisis in the community. Daniel Klink is the lead for the organization for this effort.

6. Next Meeting: February 2, 2026

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