



Great Start Collaborative (GSC) Meeting Minutes February 2, 2026

Nikki Maynard, CAPA	Kristy Wood, Child Care Network	Linda Wise, HCISD/GSRP
Bella Stycos, BHSJ CHA	Myranda Clough, Domestic Harmony	Stefanie Rathburn, Great Start Collaborative
Andrea Bricker, LifeWays	Allison Wirick Hillsdale Comm Schools	Nicole Butler, Community Action Agency
Laura Orłowski, Jonesville District Library	Wendy Playford, Great Start Collaborative	Mindy Eggleston, HCCF
Kati Hukill, LlifeWays	Janell Morse, Calming Breath Doula Services	Sarah Greeley, Community Choice Credit Union
Rillie Thilo, DHHS	Todd Barrus, DHHS	

1. Welcome/Introductions
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2. Community Spotlight: Department of Health & Human Services
Rillie Thilo and Todd Barrus

- Provided copies of the [Mandated Reporter Resource Guide](#), revised in September 2025
- Currently, 7 investigators and 2 ongoing workers
- Make referrals to community services with all investigations
- Currently 17 foster care homes in Hillsdale County, and all are full; takes about 3-6 months to get licensed
- payment side of DHHS has seen lots of changes including shift to universal case loads - have been operating this way for about a year; families don't have an assigned worker; one phone number for the state that operates from 9 - 3; reported benefits but not without challenges for both families and staff; operate on appointments being set in a 2-hour window with a 2 call approach, also have a texting feature
- new requirements for food assistance benefits; there are deferrals available

HCGSC VISION

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HCGSC MISSION

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- Cash assistance has a Michigan Works requirement (tons of great resources for gaining employment and other supports)
- “active” lobby - staff who are willing to provide support if families need assistance
- state emergency relief; fiscal year starts October 1st; clients can be helped once per category every year
- DHHS has access to the following to support families: gun locks, contraceptives, Plan B, and diapers - some question during the meeting as to whether the diaper program was still available. Todd followed up afterwards and indicated that they do still have diapers. The process includes clients coming to the office, completing a form, and having eligibility verified. If eligible, they can receive 2 packs of diapers, a pack of wipes, and a tube of ointment (for each child) monthly for 4 consecutive months
- handouts shared:
 - [Resource Guide](#)
 - [Time-Limited Food Assistance \(TFLA\) for Able-Bodies Adults Without Dependents \(ABAWDs\)](#)
 - [Universal Caseload System/MDHHS](#)
 - [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services visual](#)

3. GSC Office Updates - Stefanie and Wendy

- Funding

- i. Budget Updates

- 1. Hillsdale County Community Foundation

- a. V.C. & Velma Knight Memorial Fund

- i. Report submission

- 1. indicated a successful campaign promoting prenatal care through Go Media who supported content development, design, uploading to social media, tracking analytics, and providing reports

- ii. New application

- 1. Due 2.13; making some decisions about what makes most sense to apply for with this grant, given the uncertainty of our future

- 2. Pizza Hut Slice of Literacy Grant - we were not selected to receive this funding

- 3. 35i Family Engagement/Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP)

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- a. using funds to support partnerships with local school districts for this year's Safety Fair
 - i. initial conversation this morning with superintendents from 6 districts; speaking with principals in 2 weeks
 - 4. State-level possibilities; preliminary State budget
 - a. The preliminary budget should be released in February; the outcome of this budget proposal will determine the next steps for GSC efforts
 - 5. Other
 - [January GSC Data Summary](#)
 - Family Coalition
 - i. No meeting in December
 - ii. The weather forced a cancellation in January
 - iii. hoping to meet in February
 - iv. HCCF Youth Advisory will be stocking Little Free Libraries in March with their favorite books from their childhood; they will be creating some social media posts via selfies when dropping off and stocking libraries
 - Other
 - i. Next work session scheduled for 3.19 from 12:30 - 2:30 p.m.; let Stefanie know if you'd like a calendar invite
4. Subcommittee Reports
 - Community Resources - Andrea Bricker
 - i. will be visiting a variety of food banks and fresh food distribution sites in partnership with the Literacy subcommittee; focus is on book distribution, event information sharing, and Resource Guide QR code promotion
 - ii. The main emphasis is on thoroughly updating the Resource Guide
 - iii. Will be engaging in conversations following the preliminary budget release and message about the future of the Guide
 - 1. Can it be saved?
 - 2. Who will take it over?
 - 3. How to transfer the QR code to link to someone else's website?
 - 4. Nikki is willing to help support this effort, as she has experience with this type of effort
 - Literacy - Laura Orłowski
 - i. Currently distributing this round of Kids Read books to local businesses/agencies; just added Camden Laundromat to the list and have 2 more possibilities to explore
 - ii. StoryWalk will be June 6th or June 13th as a rain date from 9:30 - Noon; date has been moved up from July/August to ensure ability to hold one this year; book selected this year is It Looked Like Spilt Milk; exploring activity ideas around clouds, imagination, and/or dairy
 - Prenatal & Pediatric Health - Janell Morse

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- i. Better Birth Outcomes stakeholder meetings are going well; the next meeting will likely lead to a completed plan of action
 - ii. Bridging the Gap - training coming up next week on advanced maternal warning signs; rescheduled from the weather, so there is still an opportunity to sign up for the new date
 - iii. Community Baby Shower planning is underway
- Preschool Leadership & Advocacy - Linda Wise
 - i. Recruitment and online interest form for the fall will open this week
 - 1. Income restrictions for GSRP have been removed; however, they still exist for Head Start
 - 2. will be releasing the calendar for 26-27 year soon
 - 3. Currently, 13 straight GSRP programs, 5 Head Start/GSRP blends, with 1 additional program expressing interest in becoming a community-based organization partner
 - ii. Social media posts are being scheduled to showcase classrooms and programs

5. Community Updates

- Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC) - no report
- Agency Updates
 - i. Allison/Hillsdale Community Schools
 - 1. Received a grant from MiLEAP Out of School Time
 - 2. Opening a before and after school program this week that will run from 6:45 - 7:45 am and from 3 - 5:30 p.m.
 - 3. starting with 23 kids
 - 4. working on the availability of transportation
 - ii. Nikki/CAPA
 - 1. Has CAPA Ball tickets available
 - iii. Bella/BHSJ CHA
 - 1. still operating mobile clinics in Waldron and Litchfield
 - 2. New food package starting in March for WIC
 - 3. submitting proposal through the opiate committee as a follow-up to The Elephant in the Room training; grant would allow asset mapping for substance use services, identifying and addressing gaps in the community, focus groups, and a dedicated resource guide for substance use needs
 - iv. Mindy/HCCF
 - 1. scholarship applications close March 1st -wide array of opportunities
 - 2. YOUTH Mini Grants, for youth by youth, \$500 cap
 - 3. General Grant Cycle grants are due May 1st

6. Next Meeting: March 2, 2026

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