



## Great Start Collaborative (GSC) Meeting Minutes March 2, 2026

Chris Firestone, LifeWays	Kristy Wood, Child Care Network	Linda Wise, HCISD/GSRP/virtual
Bella Stycos, BHSJ CHA	Myranda Clough, Domestic Harmony	Stefanie Rathburn, Great Start Collaborative
Brooke Rains, Child Care Network	Allison Wirick Hillsdale Comm Schools	Nicole Butler, Community Action Agency
Laura Orłowski, Jonesville District Library	Wendy Playford, Great Start Collaborative	Anna Weide, Community Action Agency
Jessica Schlickemeyer, HCISD	Janel Morse, Calming Breath Doula Services	Abby Alley, HCISD/Early On
Rebekah Dobski, Hillsdale Community Library	Ashley Rechsteiner, MDHHS - Environmental Health Bureau	Bryce Asberg, Helping Hands Pregnancy Resource Center/virtual
Clint Brugger, Community Action Agency	Oliver Bertstein, Child Care Network/virtual	

### 1. Welcome/Introductions

### 2. Community Spotlight: Ashley Rechsteiner

Michigan Department of Health & Human Services

Community Education & Outreach, Environmental Health Bureau

- Fact Sheet for parents regarding Blood Lead Testing in Michigan: [Universal Blood Lead Testing in Michigan Fact Sheet](#)
- Understanding Blood Lead Test Results Fact Sheet: [Fingertip-Factsheet-FINAL-1.pdf](#)
- Flyer for Lead Poisoning Prevention Fund: [LeadFundProgramOverview-Flyer](#)
  - i. This is the program available to those not eligible for the free abatement program.
- Information about free lead abatement program in Hillsdale County: [Help for Homeowners - Community Action Agency](#)
- Additional lead fact sheets and resources for parents and providers: [Lead Education – MICLPPP](#)
- Website for ordering printed materials and lead baby books: [MDHHS Health Promotions](#)
- Information and resources pertaining to the other EHB programs: [Our Programs](#)

#### HCGSC VISION

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- Members of the GSC and those they serve are also always welcome to reach out to Ashley directly, via email ([RechsteinerA1@michigan.gov](mailto:RechsteinerA1@michigan.gov)) or phone (517-582-2877), if they have any questions or would like assistance locating specific resources.
- Additional conversation included Clint sharing that CAA has a liaison who facilitates this work in Hillsdale County. Donna Perry can be reached at [dperry@caajlh.org](mailto:dperry@caajlh.org).
- Bella from the Health Department followed up to the meeting with a link for additional lead resources: <https://bhsj.org/programs/20>

### 3. GSC Office Updates

- Funding
  - i. Budget Updates
    - 1. State Preliminary Budget
      - a. shared slides and information gathered from proposed budget and 2 advocacy webinar calls: [Budgeting for Babies: What's in the Governor's Fiscal Year 2027 Proposal](#)
      - b. Key takeaways:
        - i. Funding is back in the proposed budget for similar work of the GSCs
          - 1. Just as a reminder, GSCs were in the proposed budget last February, and were completely removed in the final budget in October
        - ii. Work is titled “early learning partnerships” - not exactly Great Start Collaborative, but also not identified as Help Me Grow, as anticipated from statewide advocacy efforts
        - iii. If and when doing outreach with legislators, referencing “early learning partnerships in section 32p of the School Aid budget” will be more effective than using terms like Great Start Collaborative or Help Me Grow
        - iv. seems hopeful that a budget will be finalized before July 1st this year, as many legislators will be spending their time campaigning over the summer
        - v. The state of Michigan is in a deficit and will need to have several tax proposals pass in order to cover the additional costs to the State as a result of “the big beautiful bill” passed at the federal level
        - vi. still time for advocacy with representatives over the next several months

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1. There will be template language and/or talking points shared once available
- vii. Brooke recommended a collective thank you to Chuck North, HCISD superintendent, for his commitment to ensuring continuity of programming through June 30, 2026
- viii. Laura shared that Joseph Belliino, state senator, representing our area, will be at the Jonesville District Library for office hours on Monday, March 9th, from 2- 3:30 p.m.
- ix. Clint also made recommendations to advocate at the local level - county commissioners, city council, school boards, as they may have direct connections to legislators we're hoping to reach
2. Hillsdale County Community Foundation
  - a. V.C. & Velma Knight Memorial Fund - waiting to hear whether awarded, submitted proposal for rebranding and launching with new Welcome Baby materials
3. 35i Family Engagement/Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) - Stefanie has presented to county principals and superintendents seeking school district representation at this year's Safety Fair. As a result of this grant, we are able to provide a \$500 stipend to all partner schools that commit to sharing educational information around safety topics at the event
4. Region 9 Perinatal Quality Collaborative - waiting to hear on a grant that will support the swag bag and early registration incentives for this year's Community Baby Shower
5. Other
  - o [February GSC Data Summary](#)
  - o Family Coalition
  - o Other
    - i. Opportunities to support the work of the GSC
      1. As agency partners at events, a reminder that if any GSC members are interested in a table for the Baby Shower or Safety Fair, agency registration is open. Let Stefanie know if you need her to resend the link
      2. as volunteers at/for events [volunteer Sign-Up](#)
      3. during work sessions: [Work Session Sign-Up](#)
    - ii. Shared information about the [Family School Engagement Survey](#) and encouraged partners, as well as themselves, to complete the survey if they have school-aged children in a Hillsdale County school district

#### 4. Community Updates

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- Regional Child Care Coalition -Oliver
  - i. reminded everyone of the purpose of the Coalition: to pull stakeholders together to one table to coordinate efforts to positively impact the child care crisis
  - ii. Full coalition meets quarterly; next meeting is 4/15 from 10 am - 1 pm in Ann Arbor; also available to join virtually
  - iii. There are 5 workgroups that each meet monthly, addressing different areas of the child care crisis
  - iv. Looking at creating a parent advisory board
  - v. partnering with ECIC for some advocacy training
  - vi. Recently held an expo (16 organizations who had tables and shared business support tips); hoping to replicate in other counties
  - vii. Tri-Share was part of a panel at a recent Womens' Executive luncheon - discussing the importance of child care
  - viii. [Regional Childcare Coalition flyer](#)
  - ix. [recently revised Tri-Share flyer](#)
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- Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC) - Abby
  - i. have received 190 referrals to date since July 1st, 2025
  - ii. working on plans for Spring Fling, will still be a drive-through event; agency invites coming out soon
- Agency Updates
  - i. Jesi/HCISD
    1. Joint recruitment for preschool is now open and can be accessed at [greatstarhillsdale.com](http://greatstarhillsdale.com). Children must be 3 or 4 years old by December 1st to apply
    2. A new data dashboard has also been added to the above website, which will show the current openings in the county by location
    3. Allison offered the reminder that there is a Child Plus glitch that won't allow a parent to submit an application using an email that was provided for a previously enrolled child. That said, an error pops up in the process indicating they need to call to move forward in the application process. They are encouraged to reach out to Nadia at [nsalameh@caajlh.org](mailto:nsalameh@caajlh.org) or 517.257.9287.
  - ii. Bella/BHSJ CHA
    1. in process of revamping breastfeeding resources
      - a. shared support and information group flyer
        - i. [Join today flyer](#)
        - ii. [QR Code Breastfeeding Support](#)
      - b. link to the Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/1DDoUqEKbH/>
    2. Lock It Up Campaign will be starting, partnering with several dispensaries to share information and resources

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5. Planning for the Future - tabled for the April GSC meeting

6. Next Meeting: April 13, 2026

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