

***Presentation to the 2021 Health and Human Services
Joint Appropriation Subcommittee***

**Early Childhood and Family Support Division
(ECFSD)**

**Economic Security Services Branch
Department of Public Health and Human Services**

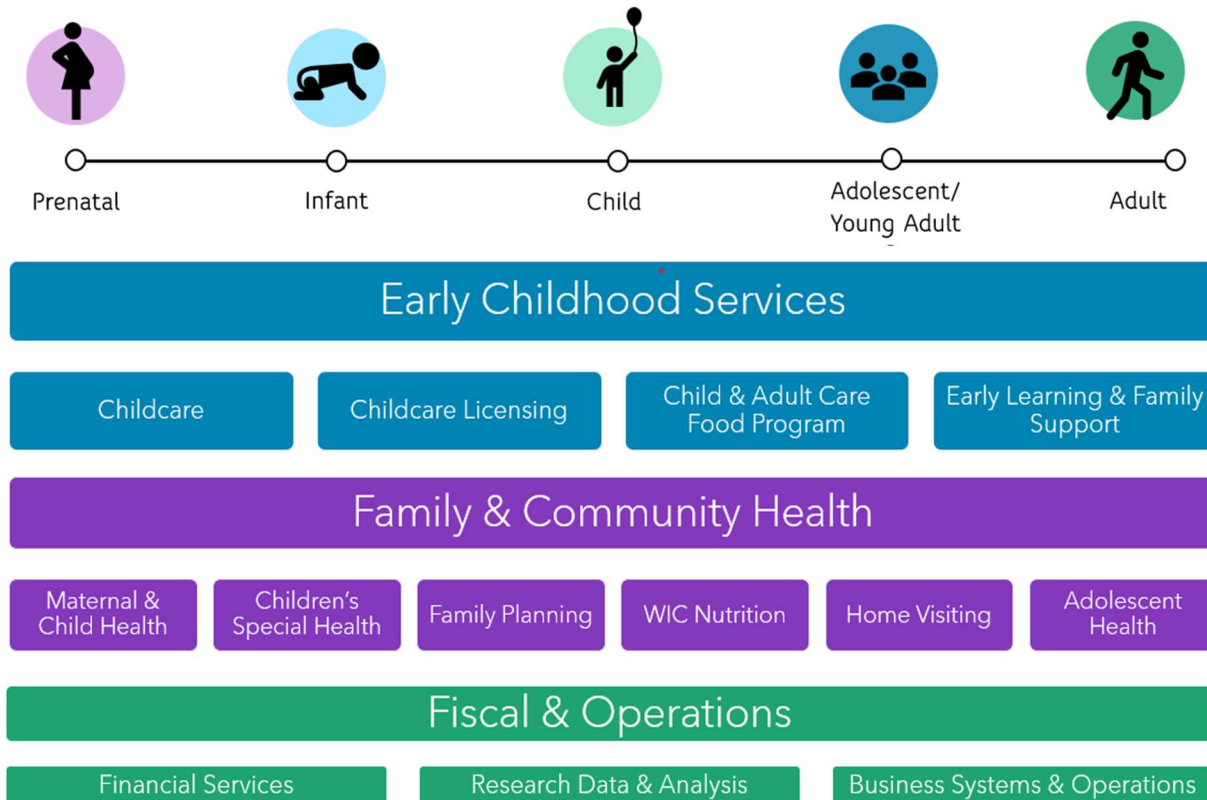
The following topics are covered in this report:

- **Overview**
- **Summary of Major Functions**
- **Highlights and Accomplishments**
- **Funding and FTE Information**
- **Change Packages**

Overview

The Early Childhood and Family Support Division (ECFSD) provides coordinated services and resources to promote the well-being, health, and development of children, individuals, families, and communities. ECFSD’s programs target early care and education, food security and nutrition education, violence and neglect prevention, family support, and preventive health care. ECFSD was implemented in January 2020 to create consistency, efficiency, and better-coordinated services for children and families.

The division is comprised of 3 bureaus and houses over 30 different programs- from prenatal to adult.



The Early Childhood Services Bureau leads and coordinates the state’s childcare programs, including Head Start, childcare small businesses and nonprofits, licensing, quality improvement, and financial assistance for low-income families to enable them to go to work. Additionally, the Montana Milestones and Family Education Support Program provides support for families and children experiencing developmental delays.

The Family and Community Health Bureau provides leadership in the areas of preventive health care, maternal child health, supplemental nutrition assistance through WIC, children's special health services, and offers risk prevention education for adolescents.

The Fiscal and Operations Bureau strengthens program delivery in the areas of fiscal responsibility and accountability through a shared services business model. The bureau is comprised of a team of epidemiologists, fiscal staff, and business and technology staff.

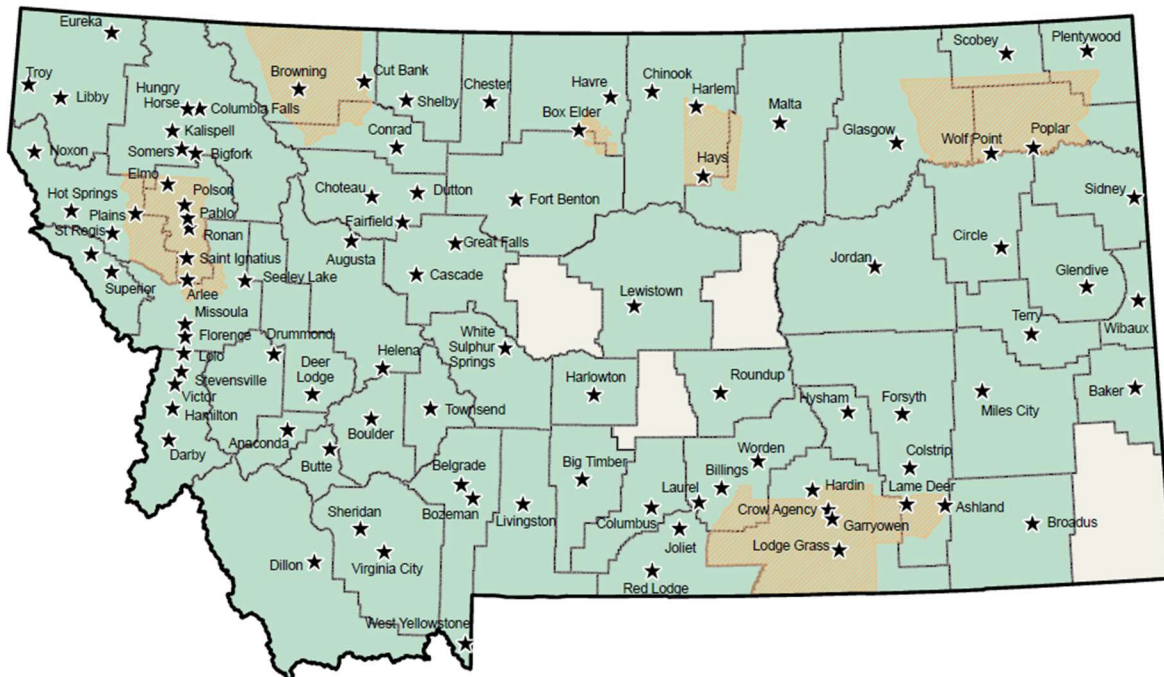
The Montana No Kid Hungry Project and the Children's Trust Fund round out the portfolio of services within the division. Montana No Kid Hungry is part of a public-private partnership with Share our Strength, a nonprofit working to solve problems of hunger and poverty. All funding for Montana No Kid Hungry is privately raised. The Children's Trust Fund is driven by a board and is focused on initiatives to strengthen families and to keep children safe from harm and neglect.

Coordination and collaborative partnerships are at the core of how ECFSD delivers services. This can be seen through the various stakeholder committees, local teams, and coalitions, through the 700 contracts or agreements for service, including universities, health care providers, local government, private nonprofit organizations, and small businesses throughout the state.

Summary of Major Functions

The Early Childhood and Family Support Division provides services throughout nearly all of Montana, in 52 of the 56 counties, through its various programs.

Early Childhood & Family Support Division Across Montana



The stars represent towns in which ECFSD has a physical presence, and the green shading represents counties that receive services through the various programs.

Nutrition Education, Support, and Food Security

ECFSD is home to many federal child nutrition programs, including the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

WIC

The Montana WIC Program strives to assure healthy pregnancies, healthy birth outcomes, and healthy growth and development for women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk. WIC works with 86 clinics throughout Montana, providing services to about 10,000 families per month. Families with incomes below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level qualify for WIC. For example, a family of three with an annual income of \$40,182 is eligible to receive WIC services.

WIC services include:

- Health Screening and Referrals
- Nutrition Education and Breastfeeding Support
- Healthy foods prescribed to meet the unique needs of the mother and children

The average WIC benefit is \$40/month which supports the prescribed food package unique to the family's nutritional needs. Through the federal WIC program, participants spent \$9.7 million at local grocers and farmers' markets last year.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

The CACFP assists childcare business management and provides healthy and nutritious meals for hungry children. In FY 20, 7.3 million meals were provided in 756 facilities.

“CACFP is an amazing asset to early childhood providers. It not only helps us provide nutritious meals...but provides relevant trainings on nutrition, recipes, approved products, cooking classes and more. It sets guidelines to ensure that children are provided healthy nutritious meals no matter what. Many providers would be at a loss without the help and guidelines of the CACFP.”

~Stephanie Brunner, Small Wonders Childcare and Preschool

The CACFP works much like the school lunch program. Families qualify for a free or reduced-price meal based on their income. The federal CACFP reimburses participating programs based on the income category of the families enrolled.

No Kid Hungry (NKH)

Montana No Kid Hungry is dedicated to ending childhood hunger in Montana. NKH raises awareness and improves food access and nutrition education for children across the state to help them grow into healthy and successful adults.

Prior to the pandemic, the number of children living with food insecurity was steadily declining, to a rate of 15.9%. Unfortunately, the pandemic has affected that trend and we are projecting that over 25% of Montana's children are living with food insecurity.

The Montana NKH Program is a public-private partnership, in which funds are raised privately through the national Share Our Strength organization, as well as other national and state-level philanthropic entities.

Initiatives supported by Montana No Kid Hungry include:

- Expanding healthy breakfast opportunities for students in local school districts
- Expansion for summer meal programs, including mobile meal sites
- Increasing the quality of school meals
- Building leadership and supporting community-driven solutions to address hunger and poverty

As a result of NKH and its grants, Montana kids are benefitting from approximately 2 million more breakfasts annually and an additional 100 summer meal sites across the state. Grants range from \$5,000 to \$20,000 in a typical year.

Strengthening Families, Preventing Abuse and Neglect

Many of the programs in ECFSD work throughout the department and with stakeholders across the state to strengthen families and to prevent abuse, injury, and neglect of children. A primary guiding principle for the Early Childhood and Family Support Division is that families are honored and recognized as their child's first and most influential teacher.

Montana Children's Trust Fund (CTF)

The Montana Children's Trust Fund is the state lead agency for federal community-based child abuse prevention funding and strives to strengthen Montana's families and keep children safe from abuse and neglect.

CTF has supported community-based initiatives including:

- Parent education for 1,500 individuals
- Consumer awareness to reduce abusive head trauma in children
- Promotion of the "Not Even For A Minute" campaign to never leave children unattended in or around vehicles

The Nurturing Center in Kalispell, Montana received grant funding to provide parenting classes.

"One couple enrolled in our class because they were having trouble disciplining their 12-year-old son and were expecting a new baby in a few months. They came to the realization that corporal punishment and criticism were not healthy or effective forms of communication. This couple shared that they had been parented this way and reflected on why they had been repeating the cycle. They thanked staff for helping them learn how to apologize to their son and create a stronger relationship with him. They expressed feeling more confident in their skills and felt better bringing their new baby into the world. The couple said that they wished they had known the information, especially around brain/child development, with their first. This beautiful family visited our office after they had graduated to introduce staff to their new baby boy."

Healthy Montana Families

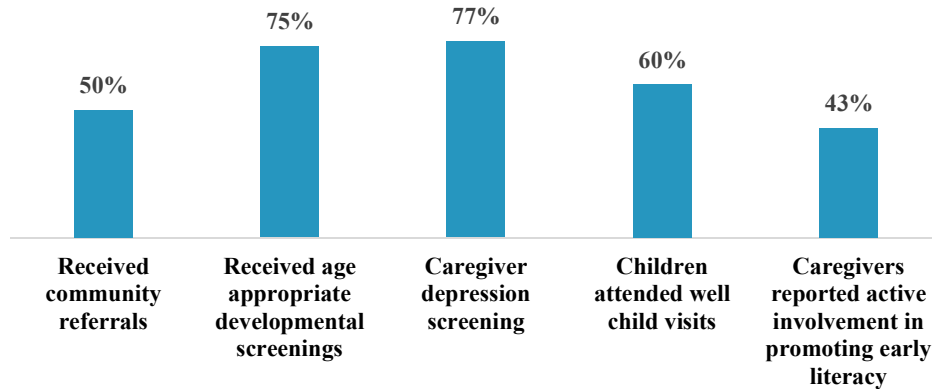
The Healthy Montana Families Home Visiting Program (HMF) provides voluntary, family-centered services in the home to pregnant women and families with new infants and children under the age of six. Home visiting services target at-risk families and support the following:

- Healthy pregnancy outcomes
- Parent education
- Positive child health and development
- Strengthening parent-child relationships
- Referrals to community resources

HMF supports 23 home visiting contracts in 19 counties, including four tribal reservations. Last year, 1,326 families received 1-2 home visits per month.

As a result of home visiting services, families are seeing positive outcomes:

Home Visiting Family Outcomes



Fetal, Infant, Child and Maternal Mortality Review and Prevention (FICMMR)

Accidents, injuries, and illness may result in death for some infants and children. In partnership with 54 county health departments, committees are tasked with reviewing infant/child related deaths to identify community-level trends and/or prevention opportunities.

For example, at the state level, data trends informed the need to promote and educate safe sleep practices due to an increase in sleep-related deaths. Together, ECFSD, the Child and Family Services Division, and Public Health are working to become more efficient and intentional in the use of this data to inform statewide targeted interventions and support.

Serving Families and Children with Special Health and Developmental Needs

ECFSD works with families, health care and community-based providers to provide targeted support for children with special health and developmental needs.

Nearly all infants born in Montana receive universal newborn screenings for genetic and metabolic conditions, hearing impairment, and critical congenital heart disease. More than 34,000 screenings were conducted for babies in Montana last year.

Children's Special Health Services (CSHS)

Children and youth with special health needs are children and youth who have or are at risk for chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional conditions, and who also require additional health or related services. Children served in this program include children in foster care and/or children residing on reservations. ECFSD has a variety of programs designed for children and youth with special health needs.

Programs include:

- Genetics counseling and testing and diagnoses
- Cleft/craniofacial clinics in Billings, Bozeman, Helena, Great Falls, Missoula, and Kalispell, supporting families in one space with multiple specialists. Specialists in these clinics may include nurse care coordination; speech-language pathology; surgery; orthodontia; psychiatric; audiology; dental; primary care; and ear, nose, and throat practices.
- Financial assistance for children with special health needs for costs incurred over and above insurance reimbursement, as the payor of last resort. Examples of support include adaptive equipment, genetic testing, medication and supplies, educational support materials. Assistance is capped at \$2000 per child and is based on available funding.
- Parent Partners is a peer-to-peer program that matches parents of a child with special healthcare needs with another parent who is personally experienced and professionally trained to support them as they navigate the health care system.

Montana Milestones and Family Education/Support

The Montana Milestones Program is Montana’s early intervention program for families who have children ages 0 through three years old who are experiencing significant developmental delays or disabilities. In FY 20, 1,540 infants and toddlers with disabilities received services. The Family Education and Support Program, available to families whose children or teenagers have developmental delays, served 795 individuals last year. Examples of early intervention services include assessment and evaluation, occupational and physical therapy, service coordination, and psychological services. Both the Montana Milestones Program and the Family Education and Support Program are administered through five regional contracted agencies.

Outcomes for the Montana Milestones Program are tracked for both children and families.

| Child Outcomes Measured at age 3 or exits the program | Family Outcomes Measured Annually |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58% increased their rate of growth in positive social-emotional skills. • 62% increased their growth in the acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, such as thinking and reasoning, problem-solving, early language skills, and appropriate behaviors. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 94% of families report they know their rights about legal safeguards for their child’s unique needs and can help their children develop and learn. • 96% of families report they can effectively communicate their children’s needs. |

Preventive Health Care and Education

Preventive health care and education provides a strong foundation for an individual’s wellbeing. The Maternal Child Health Block Grant funds many of the division’s health and wellbeing programs, as well as local public health departments, to connect families to needed services. This is especially important for smaller counties because the Maternal Child Health Block Grant funding can ensure a local public health nurse is available, even part time, for Montana families to receive immunizations, basic education, and referrals as needed. Last year, the Maternal Child Health Block Grant supported services for 46,024 Montanans.

Addressing Montana’s oral health care needs

Montana supports dental clinical rotations in rural and frontier counties in collaboration with the University of Washington’s School of Dentistry to not only offer an opportunity for dental students to gain experience, but also to provide dental care in communities throughout Montana. Senior dental students have completed 6,251 dental procedures on Montana residents since 2014.

ECFSD partners with Montana State University’s College of Nursing and Head Start on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. Through this partnership, 239 dental screenings, 311 fluoride varnish applications, 803 sealants, and 112 referrals to a dental provider have occurred since 2018.

DPHHS has also worked with the Caring Foundation of Montana to pilot the integration of preventive dental services in mobile health clinics and non-traditional settings. There are currently partnerships in 42 counties and four reservations in Montana.

Prevention Programs

ECFSD partners with community agencies to provide education to families and teenagers to prevent pregnancies and STIs, to promote personal responsibility, and to increase teen safety through violence prevention. For example, the Power Up, Speak Out program curriculum provides education related to healthy relationships, consent, and bullying. Approximately 2,500 students have received prevention education through these targeted efforts.

Reproductive health and clinical preventative services were provided to 9,087 individuals for FY 2020. Typical family planning services include basic infertility services, pregnancy testing and prevention, cancer screening, STI testing and treatment and referrals to community resources.

Montana Obstetrics and Maternal Support (MOMS)

Montana was one of ten states awarded a \$10 million, 5-year federal grant to address disparities in maternal health and to improve health outcomes for pregnant and postpartum women living in rural Montana.

The MOMS project, coordinated by ECFSD, University of Montana, and the Billings Clinic, responds to Montana’s unique rural healthcare challenges by connecting local providers to obstetric, perinatal, mental health, and substance use specialists. These specialists provide expert consultation, training, and support to help rural providers deliver effective prenatal, delivery, and postpartum care. The first year of the project focused on provider networking and education. Through MOMS, 145 different participants in critical access hospitals across the state have participated in simulation training on various birthing scenarios. In future years, a demonstration project in Eastern Montana will expand access to obstetric care and mental and behavioral healthcare through telemedicine and wrap around services.

Promoting accessible, affordable, safe, quality childcare for working families

The childcare industry is part of a community's infrastructure, supporting not only working families, but also business and the economy. In addition, high quality childcare offers positive child development and school readiness.

Supporting the Workforce through Child Care Assistance

Childcare is fundamental to an engaged workforce and thriving economy. Childcare can be expensive for families and can be a barrier to engaging in the workforce or pursuing educational opportunities. According to a [report](#) issued by the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, businesses face difficulty in recruiting qualified applicants and one reason is due to the affordability of childcare. Montana ranks 17th in the country related to childcare affordability.

Eligible Montana families can receive help paying for childcare costs for their children through the Best Beginnings Scholarship Program. The Best Beginnings Scholarship Program assists working families, students, children served through Child and Family Services, and families served through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Last year, the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship supported more than 5,000 working families.

Not only do families benefit from the Best Beginnings Scholarship Program, so do childcare businesses. ECFSD uses validated market survey data to determine competitive reimbursement rates for licensed childcare providers. Additionally, policies are designed to encourage continuity of care and staffing for the childcare provider and the child to assure consistency.

Safe, Quality Child Care is Good Business

Throughout the state, 16,000 children attend one of 1,000 childcare programs ranging from in home relative care to licensed child care centers. These programs also employ more than 5,000 early childhood professionals.

The Child Care Licensing Program monitors childcare facilities so that parents can have peace of mind knowing their childcare program is licensed and meets required standards related to safe, stable, and nurturing environments. Childcare businesses also have peace of mind knowing they are meeting industry standards. Standards address areas such as:

- Background checks, education, and qualifications of staff
- Health and Safety including sanitation and environmental standards as well as training in First Aid and CPR
- Number of children and adults in the facility
- Supervision of classrooms
- Age appropriate learning experiences

All new licensed and registered programs receive a pre-inspection. In 2019, DPHHS conducted 91 pre-inspections, 756 routine inspections, and 90 complaint investigations.

Continuous Quality Improvement in Child Care

The Early Childhood and Family Support Division encourages quality improvement for all childcare programs. In partnership with the Montana State University Early Childhood Project (MSU ECP) and local Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, just under 6,000 professionals obtained over 140,000 hours of professional development last year. In addition, more than 250 individuals have participated since the beginning of the Montana Child Care Apprenticeship Program, which is a partnership between DPHHS, Department of Labor and Industry, and MSU ECP.

A recent addition is the Pre-Apprenticeship pilot program, including high schools as another partner in 2019, with intent to recruit future early childhood teachers.

Through the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program, 26% of licensed childcare providers are currently committed to continuous program and educational quality improvement by participating in a voluntary quality rating and improvement system. Research based criteria must be achieved and validated at each level within the five-star system. Environment rating scales are used to measure the quality of the early childhood classroom and the interactions and experiences children receive. Administration scales are used to measure business effectiveness and operations.

Highlights and Accomplishments During the 2019 Biennium

Bringing Services Together

In 2019, DPHHS conducted a statewide needs assessment specific to strengthening Montana's early childhood system. The needs assessment was informed by multiple stakeholders and focus groups across the state and indicated challenges related to coordination and fragmented services. In January 2020, DPHHS consolidated early childhood and family support programs into the Early Childhood and Family Support Division to strengthen coordination, to better align the early childhood and family support infrastructure throughout the state, and to increase efficiency.

The ECFSD team focused its first year on division development and infrastructure to create coordinated programs and services and to assure strong fiscal management and internal controls.

Evidence of early success includes:

- Cost neutral reorganization
- Analysis and maximization of staff and functions
- Development of a five-year strategic plan
- Feedback from providers that they are already seeing benefits of the new division, evident by transparent communication and contract support
- Centralized fiscal, business processes and contract management
- Increased cross program collaboration
- Coordination with CFSD related to safety in childcare

COVID-19 Rapid Response and Relief

At the onset of the pandemic, ECFSD quickly pivoted to address staffing needs and to assure continuity of core services for Montanans in safe ways, such as shifting from face-to-face appointments to virtual appointments, providing for grab and go meals for children, and offering virtual site visits and contract monitoring. Several federally approved waivers allowed ECFSD programs to operate with flexibilities to ease the burden on families, providers, and businesses.

Through more than \$70 million in federal coronavirus relief funding, ECFSD supported working families, childcare nonprofit and small businesses, and school age programs with COVID-19 Relief Programs:

- 888 licensed and registered childcare providers received supplemental funding to mitigate the impacts of COVID including increasing health and safety precautions, maintaining operations and staffing, and purchasing PPE.
- 3,500 families continued to receive their Best Beginnings Scholarship Assistance, even if temporarily out of work due to COVID-19. This effort also ensured families could maintain childcare and help childcare providers remain open.
- 15 temporary and short-term programs responded to the immediate childcare need for essential and emergency personnel through a special grant. Examples include:
 - In Billings, hospitals and health centers collaborated on a temporary childcare facility, using the public library to assure that staff could continue to work during the onset of the pandemic.
 - In Missoula, the YMCA established special sites for medical workers and first responders to ensure access to childcare.
- 4,000 families received special circumstance scholarships to offset costs related to in home childcare and remote learning support.
 - To qualify for special circumstance scholarships, families had a unique need that could not be addressed under the school or regular childcare model during COVID-19.
 - Special circumstance includes compromised health of the child and/or family, unique work schedules, children with developmental, physical, or serious emotional disturbances who need additional support at home due to remote learning, foster/kinship families needing respite or extra in-home remote learning support.
- 327 providers were funded to guarantee childcare availability for school age children, due to variable school schedules and closures.

The No Kid Hungry Program worked with local schools and community food programs to mitigate hunger during the pandemic. No Kid Hungry has awarded \$1 million in national and Montana private funds for Emergency Relief grants since the start of COVID and connected local communities in Montana with national funding. Over 60% of the funding was awarded to tribal communities.

Funding was used for:

- Mobile Meals where summer meal programs transport and serve meals directly at apartment complexes, parks, and other locations where children already spend their summer days.
- Extending meal distribution from one larger community into rural surrounding areas
- Local food banks
- School meal service adaptations

Additionally, home visiting sites received \$150,000 to provide technology for virtual home visits with families which ensured at-risk families continued to receive parenting support from their home visitor during the pandemic. Local sites purchased supportive technology including laptops, tablets, hotspots, headphones, microphones, and web cameras to support virtual home visits.

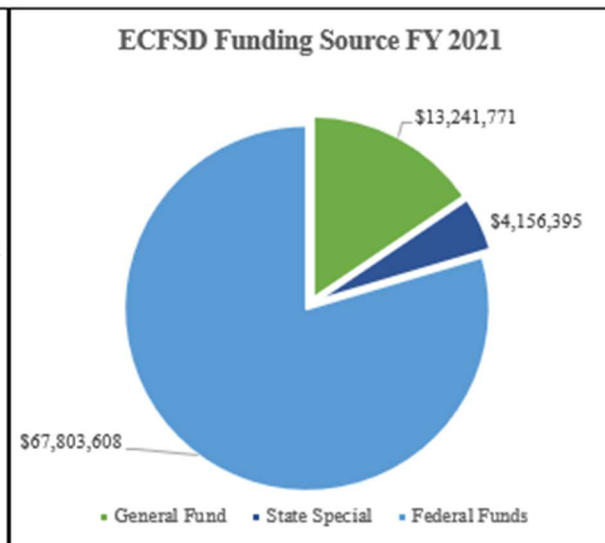
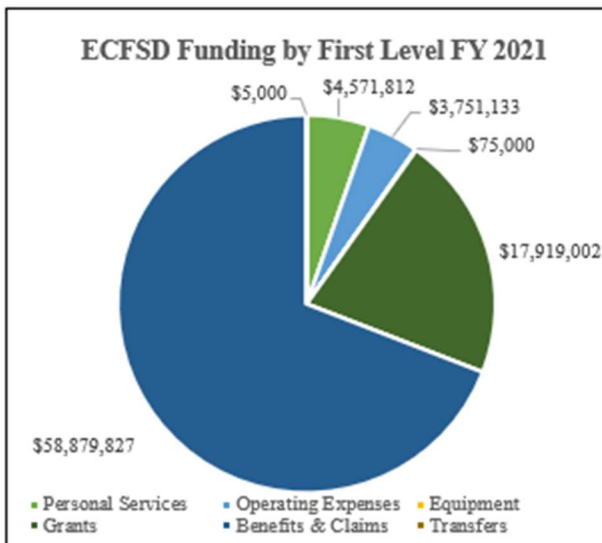
Engaging Stakeholders to Inform Home Visiting Program

The Healthy Montana Families program provides home visiting services throughout Montana. Home visiting services are voluntary and serve pregnant and newly parenting women and families/caregivers with infants and young children. The Healthy Montana Families home visiting program also works with families referred by the Child and Family Services Division. ECFSD engaged stakeholders in a transparent and collaborative process to provide public input and guidance for ongoing home visiting services. The committee included home visiting providers, legislators, state and tribal partners, and advocates to provide guidance and strategic direction for ongoing home visiting services in Montana. The committee collaborated to provide ECFSD direction in a variety of areas, including:

- The creation of a dashboard for transparent data sharing
- Creating a transparent funding allocation model for home visiting sites
- Targeting priority populations to best serve Montanans and use existing funds to prioritize distribution in a way that makes the most sense for Montana
- Exploring how to set federal funding priorities for communities that cannot access other funding sources
- Exploring public insurance options as an additional funding option to expand home visiting
- Strengthening referrals and referral processes locally
- Continuing state-level partnership between Early Childhood and Family Support Division and Child and Families Services Division
- Continuing to seek additional funding sources to expand home visiting
- Emphasizing social and emotional health as a priority in additional funding

Funding & FTE Information

| Early Childhood & Family Support | | | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--|
| FTE | FY 2021 Budget | FY 2022 Request | FY 2023 Request | |
| FTE | 59.24 | 59.24 | 59.24 | |
| Personal Services | \$ 4,571,812 | \$ 4,747,218 | \$ 4,777,075 | |
| Operating Expenses | \$ 3,751,133 | \$ 3,750,354 | \$ 3,750,644 | |
| Equipment | \$ 75,000 | \$ 75,000 | \$ 75,000 | |
| Grants | \$ 17,919,002 | \$ 17,919,002 | \$ 17,919,002 | |
| Local Assistance | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | |
| Benefits & Claims | \$ 58,879,827 | \$ 58,879,827 | \$ 58,879,827 | |
| Transfers | \$ 5,000 | \$ 5,000 | \$ 5,000 | |
| TOTAL COSTS | \$ 85,201,774 | \$ 85,376,401 | \$ 85,406,548 | |
| | FY 2021 Budget | FY 2022 Request | FY 2023 Request | |
| General Fund | \$ 13,241,771 | \$ 13,238,326 | \$ 13,249,130 | |
| State Special | \$ 4,156,395 | \$ 4,308,288 | \$ 4,308,633 | |
| Federal Funds | \$ 67,803,608 | \$ 67,829,787 | \$ 67,848,785 | |
| TOTAL FUNDS | \$ 85,201,774 | \$ 85,376,401 | \$ 85,406,548 | |



Change Packages

Present Law Adjustments:

SWPL 1 – Personal Services

The budget includes an increase of \$195,136 total funds in FY 2022 and \$214,888 total funds in FY 2023 to annualize various personal services costs including FY 2021 statewide pay plan, benefit rate adjustments, longevity adjustments related to incumbents in each position at the time of the snapshot, and vacancy savings.

| | General Fund | State Special | Federal Funds | Total Request |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| FY 2022 | \$7,377 | \$151,893 | \$35,866 | \$195,136 |
| FY 2023 | \$7,359 | \$152,238 | \$55,291 | \$214,888 |
| Biennium Total | \$14,736 | \$304,131 | \$91,157 | \$410,024 |

SWPL 3 – Inflation Deflation

The executive requests adjustments to reflect budgetary changes generated from the application of inflation and deflation factors to specific expenditure accounts. Affected accounts include food, postage, gasoline, and others.

| | General Fund | State Special | Federal Funds | Total Request |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| FY 2022 | \$0 | \$0 | (\$2,589) | (\$2,589) |
| FY 2023 | \$0 | \$0 | (\$1,624) | (\$1,624) |
| Biennium Total | \$0 | \$0 | (\$4,213) | (\$4,213) |

New Adjustments:

NP – 5555 - Reduce GF Budget for State Share Holiday

Governor Gianforte has proposed legislation to impose a two-month state share holiday for employer contributions into the state health insurance fund. This change package removes the general fund portion of the savings generated by the contribution holiday. Savings from other funding sources will remain in the agency to be able to address ongoing functions of the agency. This change package is contingent on passage and approval of the proposed legislation.

| | General Fund | State Special | Federal Funds | Total Request |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| FY 2022 | (\$10,822) | \$0 | \$0 | (\$10,822) |
| FY 2023 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Biennium Total | (\$10,822) | \$0 | \$0 | (\$10,822) |