

Report of the Early Childhood Work Group and Coordinator

November 2, 2009

Caring Connections Program Highlights

This fall, the group began integrating meetings with the west side Interagency Early Intervention Committee (IEIC). At the recommendation of the Planning and Evaluation Work Group to try and coordinate efforts with other groups that have a similar focus, the group decided that this merger made sense because the membership of the two groups as well as the overarching focus were very consistent. The group will continue to meet throughout the year and make a decision at the end of the school year about whether or not the merger is meeting the needs of both groups.

Due to budget constraints and the increased demand on the nurses' time this fall due to H1N1 responsibilities, Public Health determined that they would no longer be able to provide on-going visits to the border districts of Rothsay and Frazee-Vergas. As a result, the group brainstormed how they would continue to offer visits to those first time families that reside in Otter Tail County, but attend school in these outside districts. The group approached each of the districts to get feedback on how they would like these visits handled in order to ensure that families were connected to the resources within their own school districts. The group was pleased when the Rothsay District responded by indicating that they would like one of their own early childhood staff to offer home visits to their families, and also agreed to commit staff time for their teacher to attend trainings. In the Frazee-Vergas district, a decision was made to have one of the existing Caring Connections home visitors from a neighboring district serve families and share information about Frazee district's programs and services.

Child Care Provider Visits

Home-based visits continue to be made through Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) to 17 newly licensed child care providers throughout Otter Tail County. This is the fifth year for the program which consists of a series of seven visits to each of these new providers. As reported last month and as a result of the Early Childhood Initiative work throughout the County, CCR & R is also offering one additional visit to providers served in FY09 which will focus exclusively on oral health. To date, three of the 12 visits have been completed and three more are scheduled for next week. These additional visits are going very well for the providers, however, only two parents have been able to attend. Providers are very thankful for the in-home training and have said that they would recommend the training to other providers. The plan is to have all of these additional visits completed by mid-November.

Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP)

This program has experienced a pleasant upward trend in acceptance rates since the start of their fourth year in January 2009. Since this time, the program has had referrals for 37 families in need of additional support, with 24 (65%) of families accepting services. Currently, there are 18 active families being served by six home visitors from five different agencies. State data continues to demonstrate the high statistical value of this program. Individual home visitor reports also indicate the program's significant value in terms of emotional support which has been delivered to families in need.

Otter Tail County Human Services received a formal letter in September indicating that additional funding in the amount of \$24,000 will be available during 2010.