



Memo

To: Breckenridge Town Council Members
From: Austyn Dineen
Date: January 11, 2022
Subject: January 5, 2022 Child Care Advisory Meeting Report

The Child Care Advisory Committee held a regular meeting on January 5, 2022. Committee members present via GoToMeeting: Greta Shackelford, Laura Amedro, Scott Perlow, Leslie Davis, Jay Homola, Johanna Gibbs, and Kelly Owens. Staff from the Town of Breckenridge included Austyn Dineen, Mark Truckey, Laurie Best, and Corrie Burr. Britton Fossett joined as a guest.

Center Update

With the most recent surge of covid cases, especially after holiday travel, TLC currently has multiple classes closed and, due to lack of staffing in relation to covid cases, they are faced with potentially closing a wing of the school. LRSB has nine confirmed covid cases and may need to close later this week due to staffing (currently being discussed with their board). Both TLC and LRSB are serial testing among staff as much as testing supplies are available. Breckenridge Montessori just reopened after a two week break (not covid related) and one teacher (out of three) out with a confirmed positive case. Public Health has limited resources and is not able to offer as much assistance as they once could to the centers.

Covid Surge Support

The committee further discussed what the centers needed during this challenging time. Both TLC and LRSB said that the families are really struggling this time around – there are rooms that have been closed nearly the entire month and families are still expected to pay full tuition. The centers would like to help the families by applying a blanket 25% discount on the February invoice so families find some relief. Staff informed the committee that Early Childhood Options (ECO) is having the same conversation on a county-wide level which could result in additional support to families / centers.

The committee recommends that Town Council issue a one-time assistance from the child care tuition assistance budget to the centers for them to pass on to families that are currently hit hard. Due to compounding of reasons, that budget is currently down nearly 30% in 2021. The total ask is estimated at \$60,000 and reflects 25% of total invoicing for the four centers for January to be reflected in February. Open Arms is not included in this figure as they currently don't have any families on tuition assistance and/or have not completed on-boarding. The committee also expressed the importance of communicating to families through the centers why this is happening

so they understand how much they mean to our community. Staff will work on some communication that can go out to all families through the centers.

Corrie reminded the committee of the emergency funds still available for families. In November, 2020, Town Council allocated \$25,000 to family relief during closures / quarantines and \$50,000 for centers to ensure all staff continue to get paid through closures / quarantines. We have used approximately \$20,000 of this fund, all for family relief. Corrie and Austyn will remind all centers of this fund to continue to support families and staff.

Revisiting Potential Child Care Tuition Assistance Parameters

Staff led the committee in a discussion about the parameters of the tuition assistance program. With conversations around tuition assistance going county-wide, staff wanted the temperature from the committee on what parameters of tuition assistance are the most important to the program. Staff presented survey results from families on in 2020/2021 that was collected in December, economic indicators (own and rent home prices, AMI, cost of living data) from when the program was created in 2007 compared to 2021, and family out of pocket expenses. The committee discussed lowering the target of 13-16% of gross income spent on child care expense to get closer the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recommendation of 7% of their income. The committee also discussed a tiered approach where, if a family makes over 150% AMI, they would qualify for 13-16%, but if a family made less than 150% AMI, they would qualify for 10-13%. This will be discussed in further detail in the March meeting for potentially 2022/2023 cycle that starts in September 2022.

With the child care tuition assistance budget being approximately down by 35% YOY due to many commanding reasons (centers being only able to enroll families at less days, families moving away, etc.), the committee is recommending dropping the tuition assistance from 13-16% of gross income spent on child care expenses to 10-13% for the remainder of the 2021/2022 tuition cycle to help more families now to ensure we don't lose more of our workforce due to covid closures at ECE centers. This would be considered a covid-related, temporary change in the program and does not have a huge financial implication to the budget (estimated around \$50,000).

Early Childhood Options Enrollment and Waitlist Data

The committee didn't have enough time to review Early Childhood Options (ECO) waitlist data and will review at the next meeting. It's it included for your review.

Next meeting is on March 2, at 10:30 am via GoToMeeting.

Adjourned at 12:07 p.m

Staff will be available at the Town Council meeting for questions.