



Rural Child Care Innovation Program

Kandiyohi, MN

Final Update – July 15, 2020

The Kandiyohi County community joined the Rural Child Care Innovation Program in 2019. At this point, the community has completed the program which has included deep community investigation, a town hall meeting, and development of a Community Solution Action Plan to help guide the local area on solutions to the local challenges.

Even though the program officially wrapped up June 30, 2020 the committee are planning to continue to meet and continue to find ways to support existing and create new child care programs. Below are some of the successes the committee would like to highlight.

- The launch of a pilot course with Ridgewater College in October 2019 has jump-started the offering of Early Childhood Education Courses offered on the Willmar Campus. Enrollment has increased from nine students Spring 2020 to 19 for Fall Semester 2020, as of July. The partnership with Loving Arms Child Care Center will allow students to have “lab experiences” in real classrooms from their first year in the program. *Covid-19 may prevent this from happening during fall semester.
- A scholarship fund has been developed through Ridgewater for students entering their courses
 - Initial investment
 - \$10,000 – SWIF
 - \$2,500 – Willmar Community Foundation
 - \$900 – Economic Develop Corp
 - \$1,000 – Bethesda (Nursing Home)
 - Ridgewater is holding 4 workforce scholarships for students entering their child development classes
 - Fall 2020 there were eleven applications that met the requirements. Five student’s scholarships for each academically completed semester in their studies that meet the grade point requirement. They will be awarded 1/3 of the current scholarship funds.
 - They plan to continue offering scholarships till the funds are depleted and hope to raise more money to keep the scholarship program ongoing.

- Prior to Covid-19, the professional development team was in the planning stages of a regional early childhood conference, “Thriving in a Changing World.” Postponement of this event to September 2021; it will feature two excellent keynote speakers and fifteen workshop sessions over two days.
- Since this process has started DHS licensing shows that 12 new family child care providers completed their license within the county.
- Early Head Start have expanded and will be serving 24 additional infants and toddlers in Willmar
 - They found new space to co-locate all head start programs and the hope is to provide wrap around care for children
- YMCA expanded and now open in the Spicer.
 - They have raised over \$500,000.
 - For the first year they will have 24 infants, 20 toddlers, and 30 preschoolers. In year two they will reduce the infants to 12 and increase their preschool program.
- The Willmar Child Care Center is continuing to move forward and in the process of opening
 - Location is near the industrial park where most of the targeted families are employed and hope to offer a second shift
- Resource library is being developed
 - Will have supplies and equipment both new and used for providers to access
 - When a provider closes it is a place they can bring their stuff for other providers to access
- The FCC networking group for support continues to grow and expand within the county