



Networks Northwest Regional Child Care Coalition | 14 Impactful Solutions

Regional Child Care Plan

“If the region wants to be desirable to young families there has to be a change.”—LEELANAU COUNTY PARENT

Solution
13

[DOWNLOAD THE FULL PLAN HERE](#)

Introduction: 14 Impactful Solutions

The following 14 Solutions arise from more than 100 distinct ideas generated by the Regional Child Care Planning Coalition

The following Child Care Solution module is one of 14 Solutions that comprise the Regional Child Care Plan of the Networks Northwest Regional Child Care Planning Coalition. The 49-member Coalition represents regional and community partners in the northwest-lower Michigan counties of Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee and Wexford.

The work of the Coalition is funded by a Regional Child Care Planning grant awarded and supported by Michigan's Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) Child Care Innovation Fund in order to understand and address the child care crisis and to expand equitable access to high-quality, affordable child care for working families. Grants were issued to 16 regional coalitions covering every part of Michigan.

Regional Child Care Planning grants were issued to ECIC by the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential (MILEAP), utilizing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Each Solution Module:


Meets several criteria:

- **Impactful** – in the opinion of the Coalition, directly addresses one or more of the Root Causes impacting the regional child care system and will improve access, affordability and/or quality.
- **Vetted** – have proven to be successful regionally or elsewhere
- **Sponsored** – one or more regional entities or groups is presently committed to or leading implementation

Consists of five components::

- **Primary Root Cause** addressed
- **An introductory paragraph** summarizing the solution, why it can be beneficial and how it can be implemented
- **Background and Context** – relates why the solution may be needed or beneficial, along with some historical context where applicable
- **Examples and Priorities** – showcases examples of comparable approaches implemented within the region or elsewhere and then highlights implied priorities for implementation
- **Potential Near-Term Actions** – calls out near term actions that different groups of stakeholders can take in order to move toward implementation

The 14 Solutions are:

1. State Investment
2. Local Public Funding
3. Policy Changes
4. Local Planning & Zoning
5. Provider Incubation
6. Community Facility Investments
7. Micro-Centers
8. Credential Pathways
9. Substitute Pools
10. Universal Preschool
11. Home-Based Universal Preschool Option
12. Employer Policies & Actions
13. Enhanced Family Navigation 
14. Peer-to-peer & Community Collaboration

Enhanced Family Navigation

Information resources for families need navigators & coordinators

SOLUTION

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In person and online resources exist to help families find and afford child care and to help families to raise children. However, these resources are often scattered and disconnected. Parents and other caregivers will be better supported if the groups that offer these resources—1) work together to create a more seamless, no-wrong-door experience for families, and; 2) provide experienced navigators with the tools and resources to be able to directly support families of all types.

Background & Context

As shared in Child Care Gaps and Opportunities, families seeking child care face significant challenges. Accessing resources to secure and pay for care is confusing. Even when parents and other caregivers find care for a child during the week, they often need to scramble to cover early and late care, summer care, and care for any other children they may have. Hard choices for families!

PRIMARY ROOT CAUSE
ADDRESSED:

**Few Affordable
& High-Quality
Options
for Families**

Plus the system is confusing. There are a slew of federal, state and local programs and benefits that are designed to help families, but they are literally all over the place. At this time, a family seeking options for child care or family supports would find more than 1,500 categorical listings in at least three regionally-published early childhood family resource guides.¹ Which programs and resources can directly benefit them is murky at any point in time.

Furthermore, programs come and go. Inevitably, shifting state and regional priorities, funding sources and policy initiatives change or retreat leaving families and those who serve them with the task of staying current in a child care system circuitously layered and complex.

Finally, marginalized families—non-English-speaking groups such as migrant and guest workers, newly landed refugees/immigrants, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People Of Color) families, people living in poverty or with economic hardships, families with disabled children or adults—generally face extra layers of multifaceted setbacks when seeking child care or family supports, exacerbating all of the challenges above.

Parents are mostly on their own to research, navigate and assess the many stand-alone, informally organized resources currently offered to them. For the most part, families are solo navigators in a system of many fractured parts.

Families of all types and backgrounds need a more seamless, no-wrong-door experience for finding options. They also need direct support from experienced navigators who can direct them to the specific resources that best fit with their individual family needs.

¹ One example: <https://greatstart.hflip.co/familyresourceguide.html>

The region does have a number of state-level and regional programs and entities with staff available to help families navigate available resources. Some navigation is provided through:

- Public health departments (home visiting, Healthy Futures and Community Connections)
- Great Start Collaboratives (GSC) and Great Start Family Coalitions (GSFC)
- Head Start/Early Head Start and the Head Start Parent Council
- The emerging Help Me Grow framework including the newly launched Family Engagement protocols
- Northwest Michigan 211 Call Line

The existence of these programs does not mean the system works perfectly today. Regional parents report² that the navigators they work with are often deprived of the scope and resources they need to truly be effective.

Examples & Priorities

Place-based web-based hubs or universal-intake methods of connecting families with resources and navigation supports are optimal. The best hubs aspire to a “no wrong door” approach so that a family is never told to contact another organization for a related service.



Some examples of hub models are:

Great Britain: Community Family Hubs³

The U.K. Family Hub model involves multi-agency networks that provide integrated early help services for families with children aged 0-19 (or up to 25 for those with special educational needs and disabilities). They aim to make it easier for families to access a wide range of support services in one place. Family Hubs make use of existing programs, virtual spaces and facilities wherever possible and as necessary to reduce duplication and redundancy. Many of the professionals and partners are co-located in buildings, which act as delivery sites.

South Carolina: First 5⁴

First 5 is a website/portal with one intake form that allows families to get the supports their children (birth through age five) may need across 40 services

and a range of categories. Parents and other caregivers can answer just a few questions to see everything they might qualify for and then can apply online.

Utah: Family Support Centers⁵

The mission of the FSCU is to strengthen Utah families one community at a time by supporting parents, protecting children, and preserving families. To accomplish this mission, each Family Support Center provides its clients with a 24-hour crisis and respite nursery, a 24-hour information and referral service, and a parenting and youth education program.

Based on the needs of the particular community it serves, each center likewise offers additional services, ranging from on-site therapists, lending libraries, and in-home parenting support.

² Parent Interviews and Focus Groups

³ <https://familyhubsnetwork.com/>

⁴ <https://first5sc.org>

⁵ <https://utahfamilies.org>

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Michigan, 5toONE Neighborhood Centers⁶

5toONE is a system covering Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau Counties with three components: (1) local Neighborhood Centers in existing community centers, libraries and other family-friendly destinations that host playgroups and serve as points of connection to services and supports; (2) a regional network connecting parents, early childhood professionals, service providers, and community stakeholders through social media and a dedicated website; (3) a core support team of early childhood professionals and parent leaders.

Summary

What does success look like? Agencies, non-profits and community partners working together to:

- Enhance the role of navigators regionally and provide them the resources (time, compensation, training) to be effective in their roles
- Create more ways for families and navigators to connect with each other
- Bring navigator peers together for more consistent/timely information sharing
- Build more comprehensive resource guides using shared databases of family and child care supports
- Ramp-up distribution and promotion of resource guides both online and in print

- Shift from “information access” to proactive program/s of ongoing, timely communication about how to access the vital interdependent supports and resources that families say they need.
- Empower parents and other caregivers to be navigators within their own communities through training and support

Potential Near-Term Actions

Agencies and organizations seeking to provide information and support to families should provide navigators with the resources they need to be effective in their roles. They should consider collaborating regionally such that all available applications and services can be accessed through a single seamless point of entry or hub. If that is not practical, they should cooperatively develop digital and printed information resources (e.g. web sites, flyers) so the information is presented in a consistent manner from organization to organization.



⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/5toONEneighborhoodnetwork/>

Networks Northwest Coalition

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