



**Steve Bullock, Governor**

**Sheila Hogan, Director**

**TO:** Montana Child Care Providers and Other Interested Parties

**FROM:** The Quality Assurance Division and the Human and Community Services Division

**SUBJECT:** Program Updates and New Staff Introductions

**DATE:** February 1, 2017

The Human and Community Services Division (HCSD) and Quality Assurance Division (QAD) are pleased to provide you with several updates that have happened in 2016. QAD has had a change in leadership, and we would like to introduce you to the new Administrator, Licensure Bureau Chief, and Child Care Licensing Program Manager. We have also included updates about the Child Care Licensing Program and the Early Childhood Services Bureau (ECSB). Finally, the federal Child Care and Development Fund Rules have been published, and we have attached an overview with this letter.

### **Quality Assurance Division Leadership Changes**

Brian Watson, QAD Administrator, holds a Master's in Healthcare Administration as well as a Master's in Public Health. He has most recently been doing clinic management for the Air Force at Patrick Air Force Base, Florida. He is originally from Montana and is happy to be back (snow and cold weather included).

Leigh Ann Holmes is the Licensure Bureau Chief. Leigh Ann holds a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. She has worked for the State of Montana for over 25 years, most recently in the Health Care Facility Licensing Program. She is excited to work with everyone in helping move the Child Care Licensing Program forward.

Penny Job is the new Child Care Licensing Program Manager. Penny has a Bachelor's degree in Resource Management. She has been a licenser in the program for over 6 years and was a licensed childcare provider for several years. Penny looks forward to working with the people that provide such great services to the community.

### **Quality Assurance Division Updates**

The new leadership in the QAD Child Care Licensing program looks forward to working on the following goals:

- Systematically and thoughtfully updating the rules;
- Implementing the Key Indicator System for monitoring and inspections of child care providers;
- Improving efficiency and transparency;
- Creating an online application process in order to decrease the burden for providers and state staff; and
- Working collaboratively with ECSB and other stakeholders.

After careful consideration, the decision has been made not to introduce legislative change to the Montana Child Care Act (MCA) during the 2017 legislative session. It was determined that the federal Child Care and Development Fund published rules work in concert with the Montana Child Care Act at this time. QAD will be

focusing on several administrative rule changes in the upcoming year. Please watch for notice and take advantage of the public comment periods. We want to hear from you.

### **Early Childhood Services Bureau Updates**

Some great changes have happened regarding policy to support children, families, and providers served by the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program:

- Twelve month eligibility: Families are eligible for a minimum of 12 months before eligibility is re-determined
- Grace Period: Scholarship will continue for 90 calendar days following a job loss
- Absent Days: 24 days of care are covered for a twelve-month period
- College Students: Families may receive assistance while one or both parents are full-time students without having to meet a work activity requirement.
- Graduated Eligibility: eligibility up to 185% of the federal poverty level for an extended 6 month period (to be increased to 12 month period)
- Families without a Home: 90 days of presumptive eligibility to aid in the establishment of care for their children
- Market Rate Survey: MT has conducted a new market rate survey. The goal is to identify market rates geographically, and to determine provider reimbursement rates. The study was published in January 2017.

ECSB recently renovated Early Childhood Services Bureau homepage to find information for families, providers, and early childhood stakeholders more easily. Visit <http://dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/ChildCare.aspx> to view these updates.

A webinar recording about these updates is available at [www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov](http://www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov)

We look forward to continuing to build the relationship between QAD and ECSB in order to improve the quality, affordability and accessibility of early care and education in Montana.

Sincerely,

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