



MONTANA EARLY CHILDHOOD NETWORK



ZEROTOFIVE
MONTANA

OVERVIEW

Early childhood policies greatly impact the lives of children and families across Montana, and yet Montana's early childhood system often fails to adequately address challenges such as the lack of child care, limited access to early learning, low wages for early care professionals, and supports necessary to strengthen families and communities.

Zero to Five Montana is working across the state to build relationships, foster innovation, and advocate for early childhood policy solutions. Parents, community leaders, coalitions, and organizations are coming together in a commitment to improve the lives of young children and families, yet we lack a central "place" to bring us all together and collaborate on common goals.

To leverage existing and new partnerships for collective change and improvements to the early childhood system, Zero to Five Montana is launching a statewide Montana Early Childhood Network. Our goal is to support a cross-sector group of partners in collaborating together to develop a policy framework we can all align on for years to come. Together, we can ensure programs and policies are rooted in what is best for children, families, our communities, and our state.

WHAT IS A NETWORK?

Networks connect people, organizations, and communities to share information, deepen relationships, coordinate actions, and catalyze systemic change. What defines and binds a network is a *shared purpose*. The Montana Early Childhood Network will gather and galvanize families, providers, local and statewide coalitions, state partners, and public and private sector leaders who have a *shared purpose* to strengthen our early childhood system. States that foster early childhood networks show greater capacity to mobilize and respond quickly to challenges and opportunities, thus creating more robust early childhood systems where more children and families thrive.

CORE COMPONENTS OF THE NETWORK

Shared Ownership, Purpose, and Goals

Strong Local/State Feedback Loop

Actively Engaged Families, Communities, and Providers

Policy and Advocacy Support

Continuously Cultivated Leadership

Effective Coordination and Capacity

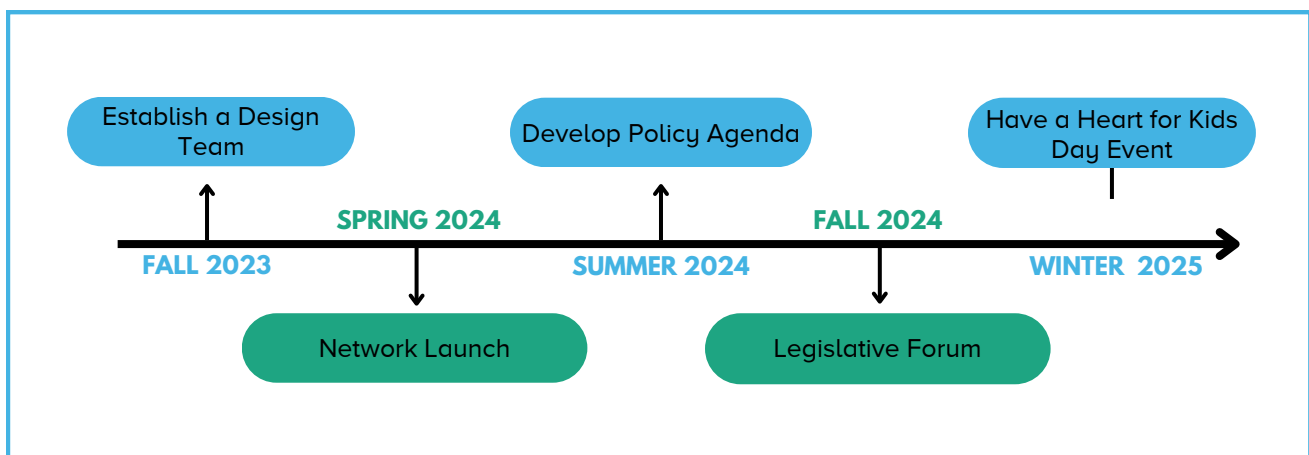


PROCESS MOVING FORWARD

This fall, Zero to Five Montana is establishing a design team to develop core components of the network, prior to an official network launch in Spring 2024. The design team will consist of a small, diverse group of individuals who will work to design the network structure and governance, and who will provide guidance for an Early Childhood Policy Framework. The process will be facilitated, and we will bring in resources and data as needed to support and guide decisions.

The launch of the network will be a broad-based gathering of community and state partners across Montana. Network participants will begin to outline goals and policy priorities for the 2025 policy agenda, based on the Early Childhood Policy Framework. In fall 2024, the network will host a legislative forum to engage policymakers prior to the next legislative session. During the legislative session, Zero to Five Montana will offer ongoing policy/advocacy support and will host its second *Have a Heart for Kids* event at the Montana state capitol in collaboration with the network.

TIMELINE AT A GLANCE



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Zero to Five Montana is committed to innovative solutions that work for children, families, and employers in Montana. Our promise is to stabilize, innovate, and build the early childhood system so Montana families and communities can thrive. For more information about Zero to Five Montana or the Montana Early Childhood Network contact Caitlin Jensen at caitlinj@zerotofive.org or Alex DuBois at alexdu@zerotofive.org.



info@zerotofive.org



(406) 513-1115



www.zerotofive.org

