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### Acting Early in Montana: Big Steps Under the Big Sky

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# ACTING EARLY IN MONTANA: Big Steps Under the Big Sky

## STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS

### BIG STEPS

The Best Beginnings Advisory Council (BBAC, est. 2011) serves as the State’s comprehensive early childhood advisory council and as the collaborating entity for Montana’s early childhood system (18 county coalitions and 5 Reservation coalitions). The State “Act Early” Team was recently appointed as a “voting” member of the BBAC.

Head Start and Early Head Start local, regional and statewide meetings have incorporated “Act Early” resources and training information for the past 18 months. Over 60 providers and program administrators participated in ASD-focused training events in summer 2016.

The Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes early childhood program (western Montana) incorporates “Act Early” resources into its provider training activities. The CSKT program director is being mentored by the CDC “Act Early” Ambassador.

State “Act Early” Team meetings (35 members in June and October 2016) focused on increasing awareness and understanding of CDC “Act Early” information resources for families and training resources for early childhood and healthcare providers.

### BABY STEPS

The Women, Infant, Children (WIC) Program is in discussion with the Montana “Act Early” team to replicate the successful use of the developmental milestone checklists as part of periodic clinic site visits between mothers and WIC staff.

Healthy Montana Families (Home Visiting) leadership in 19 counties is determining ways in which the “Act Early” materials will be used to further its mission to support healthy pregnancy outcomes, child health and development, and strong parent-child relationships.

The online Medical Home Portal administered by the Montana Bureau of Community and Family Health is an “Act Early” companion resource to families of children and youth with special health care needs, and those who provide services to them.

Four State “Act Early” team members are in an active mentor relationship with the CDC “Act Early” Ambassador. Each is supported with information resources from the AMCHP State Act Early grant program.



## AWARENESS

### “Act Early” Resource Dissemination

- “Tracking Your Child’s Developmental Milestones” customized brochure was distributed, by request, to 9,360 Montanans.
- “Milestone Moments” customized booklet was shared with 1,325 Montanans.
- The Montana Autism Center website assisted 5,600 unique visitors with 28k page views since January 1.



## EARLY SCREENING

Just over 100 teachers and related services providers in five LEAs in central and western Montana participated in school-based training related to ASD screening, resource awareness, and education-based services.

BBAC local coalition training was provided for 30+ early childhood providers by two individuals being mentored by the Act Early Ambassador. Topics focused on ASD screening (e.g., M-CHAT).

## NEXT STEPS

- Regional “Act Early” team development and ongoing support.
- Targeted information dissemination of Spanish language materials (southcentral and northwest Montana).
- Full-scale partnership with WIC, tribal health centers, and Healthy Montana Families.
- Learn from and respond to invitations from BBAC partners.
- Implement outcome evaluation efforts to measure the impact of current “Act Early” activities on families and providers.



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