

## **MSU Early Childhood Project**

**Libby Hancock** is Director of the Montana Early Childhood Project (ECP) based at Montana State University. The ECP is funded through the DPHHS, Early Childhood Services Bureau from the federal Child Care and Development Fund. The ECP is dedicated to improving the quality of programs and services for Montana's young children and their families. The ECP is actively involved in The National Registry Alliance and the National Association for the Education of Young Children and works with many state partners to promote a knowledgeable and skilled early childhood workforce.

Activities Relevant to State Plan to Prevent Obesity: Facilitates the creation and implementation of a state plan for early care and education career development. With partner organizations across the state, promotes early childhood professional development, building a comprehensive system that promotes quality care and education and holistically meets children's needs.

Services/Recipients: Assist early care and education personnel in a variety of settings, including Early Head Start, Head Start, state licensed child care centers and homes with professional development and statewide program and policy development.

State Plan Settings: Child care (early care and education programs)

CDC Behaviors:

- Increasing fruit & vegetable consumption by changing child care food offerings;
- Decreasing sugar-sweetened beverage consumption by changing child care food offerings;
- Decreasing consumption of energy dense foods (> 4 calories/gram) by changing child care food offerings;
- Increasing breastfeeding by providing opportunities for feeding expressed milk;
- Increasing physical activity through changes in early childhood environments & schedules;
- Decreasing screen time and increasing play and physical activity through changes in child care environments, policies, and practices.

Gaps and Concerns: Training for early care and education teacher/caregivers to increase physical activity in the early years and get children outdoors. Promote policy changes regarding training related to physical activity, nutrition and screen time through childcare licensing and the new STARS to Quality program. Increase opportunities for early childhood and after school programs to garden with children (promoting physical activity, food security, and safety after school).