

OUR VISION: Strong families – Thriving Children

OUR MISSION: Best Beginnings Yellowstone County strengthens early childhood systems of care to ensure that all children prenatally to kindergarten have the language, health, and social-emotional building blocks necessary for healthy brain construction.

Our Structure: Best Beginnings has a leadership team and work groups. We are connected to a network of Best Beginnings coalitions across Montana.

Leadership Project: **ADVOCACY**

- The Best Beginnings Leadership team advocated for the Governor to **save Early Childhood Intervention** from complete elimination in proposed budget cuts, and to **save other programs** critical for early childhood success, such as The Center for Children and Family's *Second Chance Home* and HRDC's *Harmony House*. A toolkit was created for member use, and a letter was drafted from the council to legislators and the governor.
 - We celebrate that ECI was saved from elimination!
 - We are concerned that both Second Chance Homes and Harmony House were eliminated.

Leadership Project: **BED BUGS BE GONE!**

- Two grants from the [Montana Community Foundation](#) enabled the council to pursue a “**Bed Bug Eradication**” dream. Bed Bugs are an extreme nuisance for many young families in our county. Many Best Beginnings partners spend significant time helping families deal with the consequences of Bed Bugs.
- With grant funding, the council purchased two complete Bed Bug Heat Eradication units. The units are housed at The Montana Rescue Mission, who uses them in their Family Shelter.
- Any Best Beginnings partner can use these machines through a check-out procedure.

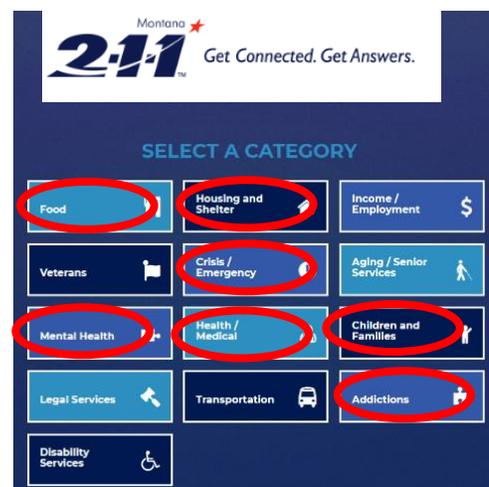


Leadership Project: **ADVISORY**

- Best Beginnings acts as an advisory council to the local [Parents as Teachers](#) and [Nurse Family Partnership](#) home visiting programs.

Montana211.Org

- All Best Beginnings partners helped populate and improve the [Montana211.org](#) online resource directory for our region. DESTRESS grant support from *Healthy By Design* (see page 3 also) was critical to the success of this project. This Directory now has over 900 resources listed for Yellowstone County!! United Way maintains the directory for our region.



READY CHILDREN Work Group

- Designed *Pathways to Kindergarten*: [Skills List](#), [Video](#) starring local Kindergarten teachers, Childcare Training (online and in person), Parent Training



READY FAMILY Work Group

- [Created a vision](#)
- *Began implementation on two components of the vision:*
 - **Referral HUB–**
 - The “referral hub” was created through business associate agreements between six organizations that already serve families with home visiting.
 - A data system was adopted for HIPAA compliant data sharing between referral hub partners.
 - A referral algorithm was developed.
 - Billings Clinic and St. Vincent Healthcare are participating with HUB partners in a pilot project to increase the number of parents in Labor & Delivery who access help through the referral hub.
 - **Virtual Coaching:** *recognizing that many parents will not access traditional “parenting programs,” but that these parents still want access to good information and parenting tools, the vision was to deliver parent coaching messages via technology, including messages on local resources, healthy development, where to go if you have concerns....* [Bright By Text](#) has been identified as the virtual coaching platform we will pursue. A plan is currently being written to get this implemented in our community, along with Hardin and Carbon County Best Beginnings. This will be a big project over the next three years.

Vision

Simplify and increase access to parenting help through the creation of Referral Hub.

Most Yellowstone County parents voluntarily access parent coaching via RN home visits, virtual coaching, and/or visiting a “Gathering Place.”

Via these positive universal avenues, parents can connect or be connected to:

- Peer and/or mentor support
- Resources for parenting (child care guides, playgroup, respite care etc.)
- Other appropriate services (Best Beginnings scholarships, SNAP, targeted home visiting...)

Two Best Beginnings Work Groups were co-convened with [Healthy By Design](#) in the past two years. The scope of these work groups extended beyond early childhood. In the future these groups will continue but will be under different umbrellas than Best Beginnings or Healthy By Design. They will continue to connect to Best Beginnings to develop and implement nutrition, food access, and trauma informed care tools for childcare providers, parent educators and coaches, and the Bright By Text platform.

READY COMMUNITIES Work Group



- **Increased healthy food donations** through the creation and dissemination of **[“The Best Foods to Donate to Your Food Drive,”](#)** and adding 8 new collection sites.
- Organized a “Celebrate & Connect” event for the faith community. Created an ***Inventory of hunger related activities and programs*** conducted in churches and increased connectivity and awareness of hunger needs and services.
- Worked with School District 2 Food Service Staff to increase **reclamation of qualified cafeteria items** for Teen Pantries to increase healthy food options for students in need.
- **Increased the amount of fresh fruits and vegetables available in emergency food boxes** by connecting Sysco Foods with Family Service



The Best Foods To Donate To Your Food Drive

MENTAL HEALTH Work Group



- Acted as **Advisory Council** to the DESTRESS grant. Helped to ensure that:
 - 2,568 people in Yellowstone County completed the Adverse Childhood Experience survey, and gained access to information and tools via the **[“What Do You Carry?”](#)** landing page created on the Healthy By Design website.
 - 62 of 103 identified social service agencies (about 60%) received Trauma Informed Care 101 Training.
 - 90% of Principals in School District 2 received Trauma Informed Care 101 Training.
- Training for staff as well as an organizational assessment toolkit were developed. To see all available resources created during the grant, visit **<http://www.healthybydesignyellowstone.org/wp-content/uploads/DESTRESS.pdf>**
- Many organizations are continuing to apply trauma-informed practices and are working together to build a trauma-informed community. A newly formed Trauma-Informed Community Learning Collaborative has been established and meets monthly to share best practices and tools for implementing a local trauma-informed responses.



