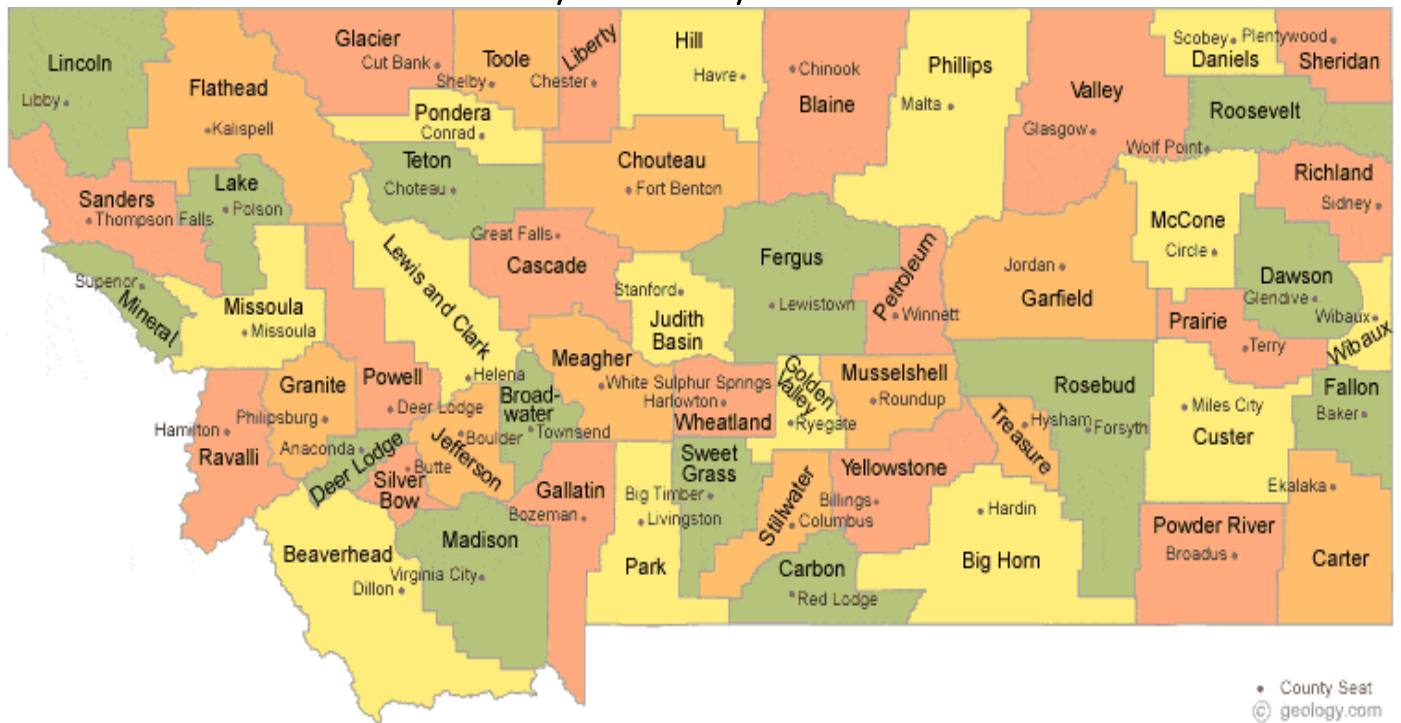


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Rocky Mountain Development Council, Inc. (Rocky) is a 501(C)3 non-profit human resource and development council organization based in Helena, serving Lewis and Clark, Broadwater and Jefferson Counties. Rocky Head Start operates a center-based program in five communities serving 208 children and their families within the tri-county area.

Lewis and Clark County encompasses 3,497.6 square miles in land area. There are four Head Start sites holding eight classrooms in Helena and one site with two classrooms in East Helena. East Helena is six miles from Helena.

Broadwater County encompasses 1,238.0 square miles in land area. There is one site with one classroom in Townsend. Townsend is 32 miles from Helena.

Jefferson County encompasses 1,657.0 square miles in land area. There is one classroom in Boulder and one classroom in Whitehall. Boulder is 27 miles from Helena. Whitehall is 66 miles from Helena.

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**Demographics**

**Lewis & Clark County**

The 2019 Kids Count estimated the total population of Lewis and Clark County at 69,578. There were 14,820 children under age 18 and 4,841 children under age 6. In 2018, there were 13.4 % children living in poverty; up from 10.6% in 2017.

The racial/ethnic composition is 3.1% American Indian/Alaska Native, 0.6% black, 90.5% white, and 5.8% 2+ races or other. English is the primary language spoken.

The population of Helena, Lewis and Clark County Seat, is 32,024. The population of the Helena Valley is 4,465. Rocky Head Start serves 112 children and their families in Helena, and 16 children and their families in the Helena Valley.

The population of East Helena is 2,127. Rocky Head Start serves 32 children and their families.

**Broadwater County**

The 2019 Kids Count estimated the total population of Broadwater County at 6,203. There were 1,224 children under age 18 and 390 children under age 6. In 2018, there were 15.5% of the children living in poverty; up from 13.6% in 2017.

Race/ethnic composition in Broadwater County is 1.8% American Indian/Alaska Native, 1.0% black, 93.3% white, and 3.9% 2+ races or other. English is the primary language spoken.

The population of Townsend, Broadwater County Seat, is 2,104. Rocky Head Start serves 16 children and their families.

**Jefferson County**

The 2019 Kids Count estimated the total population of Jefferson County at 12,211. There were 2,489 children under age 18 and 686 children under age 6. In 2018, there were 10.4% children living in poverty; up from 9.5% in 2017.

The race/ethnic composition in Jefferson County is 2.4% American Indian/Alaska Native, 0.5% black, 92.8% white, and 4.4% 2+ races or other. English is the primary language spoken.

The population of Boulder, Jefferson County Seat, is 1,276. Rocky Head Start serves 16 children and their families.

The population of Whitehall is 1,077. Rocky Head Start serves 16 children and their families.

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Needs Identified**

In order to thrive, families need to have access to safe, stable, and affordable housing, mental and physical health care, quality nutrition, transportation, childcare, education, and employment. Families who are living in poverty face barriers in one or more of these areas. Because of that, they represent some of the most vulnerable of our community's citizens.

Families are eligible for Head Start at 100% or below the federal poverty line. Families are eligible for SNAP and Medicaid at 135% of poverty, energy assistance at 150% of poverty, Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships at 185% and WIC at 185%. The economic and resource barriers become clear when looking at the resources available to people living in poverty as compared to actual costs to meet basic needs.

The cost of living is defined as the amount of money needed to sustain a certain standard of living by affording basic needs such as housing, food, healthcare, and more. It is based on a US average of 100. An amount below 100 means a state is cheaper than the US average. A cost of living index above 100 means a state is more expensive. Montana's cost of living is 106.9. Housing is the biggest factor in the cost of living difference. The cost of groceries and health care is also more expensive than the US average.

Montana's minimum wage is \$8.65/hour. The estimated living wage for 1 adult and 1 child in Lewis and Clark County is \$30.78/hour, in Broadwater County it is \$29.74, and in Jefferson County it is \$30.22. That averages out to a \$21.60/hour wage gap between households earning minimum wage and households earning a livable income.

### **Nutrition**

One in seven Montanans struggle with hunger, including 45,000 children living in food in-secure homes. The majority of Head Start families qualify for SNAP and WIC. In Lewis and Clark County 34.0% of children participated in the free or reduced-priced lunch program; Broadwater County has 35.2% of the children participating and Jefferson County has 28.4% participating.

### **Housing and Homelessness**

Affordable, safe and stable housing is a barrier for families living with low or no income in the tri-county area. Homeless and rehousing services have limited resources and waitlists for HUD housing programs are long and depend on the bedroom size needed; average wait times range from 81-162 days. If a family member has a felony record it creates even more barriers to secure affordable housing, as they may not be able to access HUD housing. Another factor that may limit families from seeking housing services is fear of losing their children. Parents reported staying in abusive relationships for fear of losing shelter. Many families double up to share expenses, some couch surf. The insecurity of not having a permanent home puts children at higher risk for witnessing abuse or being abused themselves.

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Other housing options include living with family or friends, renting out of town, or purchasing a “rent to own” mobile home. Each of these living arrangements pose their own set of challenges. If a family is living with others, they are there at someone else’s discretion and may because they own, the family is responsible for all repairs and upkeep. Typically, the mobile have to leave at any time. Housing is more affordable outside of city limits; however, it creates more transportation challenges such as increased fuel expenses and car maintenance. “Rent to own” mobile homes make home ownership accessible to families living in poverty, but now, homes are not in great repair.

In 2020, Rocky Head Start served 11 families experiencing homelessness. According to the 2019 Point in Time survey, there were 116 primary respondents and 21 children experiencing homeless in the tri-county area. Over the last year, homelessness has increased by 16% nationally. Helena completed the 2021 Point in Time Survey on January 27, 2022; the number of people unhoused has increased locally as well.

Resources available for families living homeless are limited. Family Promise began operating in the Helena community again in 2018 after having to end services for a year due to lack of funding. God’s Love also provides services for families experiencing homelessness. Both programs are always full with waiting lists. On February 24, 2020, Rocky Mountain Development Council collaborated with Good Samaritan Ministries to operate an emergency shelter program with specialized supports using CARES funds. The program worked with a few local hotels for shelter. Staff from Good Samaritan worked with the people to meet the person’s health, financial and resource needs while securing stable housing. From 2/24/2020 to 2/15/2022 there were 190 individuals/families served. Of those, 62 secured housing, 36 self-resolved and 23 were asked to leave. The program is no longer able to collaborate with any hotels in town so the community is working toward a solution that involves purchasing a hotel and continuing to run the program as Good Samaritan has.

**Health and Family Wellness**

According to Montana Kids Count 2018 Data, 6.2% of children in Montana were without health insurance. That marks a decrease from 2012 when 11% of Montana children were uninsured. Medicaid expansion continues to allow more adults to access health insurance.

Currently in the state of Montana, there are 3,276 children in foster care and only 900 foster homes. There has been a 115% increase in the number of minors in state foster care between 2010 and 2019. As of 2019, the most recent year for which statistics are available, 16 out of 1,000 Montana kids were in state care, the second-highest rate in the country. Seventy percent of child protection intakes are drug related and 46% of all open Child and Family Services placements have meth indicated as reason for removing the child from his/her home. Only 6% of treatment facilities have services for pregnant or post-partum mothers. Currently, 90% of Montanan’s with a substance abuse disorder are not receiving treatment.

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Accessing mental health supports for children under five is difficult to find and without monetary assistance through insurance, nearly impossible to afford. Access to mental health counseling and addiction treatment is a barrier for families living in poverty. Cost is not the only prohibitive factor in receiving treatment; availability and wait-lists are as well. This has been exacerbated by the current work force shortage.

An emerging body of research underscores the need to support the healthy emotional and social development of families and young children. Experts are increasingly recognizing the role of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as key indicators for future health. There is a clear link between increased exposure to ACEs and numbers of poor health outcomes, including risky health behaviors, chronic health conditions, and early death. The prevention of ACEs is a key public health priority because children raised in safe and nurturing families and neighborhoods, free from maltreatment and other social adversities, are more likely to be healthy and successful adults.

Exposure to ACEs, including poverty, family violence, and substance abuse, are a concern for children. Based on the rates of reported alcohol abuse and mental health concerns among Lewis and Clark County adults, 1 in 10 children is likely to have a parent who is a heavy drinker and 1 in 3 children is likely to have a parent who reports having had a poor mental health day in the past month.

Each year hundreds of cases of domestic violence and thousands of cases of child abuse and neglect are reported in Lewis and Clark County. When children in our community reach high school, more than 1 in 10 report having been physically forced to have sexual intercourse. Our community needs interventions designed to protect children from ACEs and strengthen families to help mitigate the effects of these early childhood trauma.

**Transportation**

Transportation issues are the leading cause of absences and withdraw for Rocky Head Start families. The cost of owning and maintaining a vehicle is prohibitive for many families living in poverty; insurance, driver's license renewals, registration, and fines are not in the budget for people living with little to no income. Functioning in a community without private transportation is a barrier. There are long geographic distances within communities, extreme weather conditions, and limited public transportation for Head Start sites in Lewis and Clark County. Public transportation is non-existent for Head Start sites in Broadwater and Jefferson County. Forty-two percent of people living in Broadwater County commute to Lewis and Clark County and 21% living in Jefferson County commute to Lewis and Clark County.

Even though public transit services have improved in the Helena area over the last couple of years, it does not meet the needs of people who do not have access to private transportation. It does not operate evenings, weekends, or holidays and the fixed routes have limited community coverage. There is no longer a taxi company. Uber continues to operate. The city of

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Helena and Capital Transit is currently exploring an on-demand service beyond the current para-transit transport.

Rocky Head Start has a staff representative that serves on the Capital Transit Advisory Committee (CTAC). CTAC advises the Helena City Commission, current lead agency for Capital Transit, on transportation issues and needs for the Helena area.

**Adult Education and Employment**

Education advancement is important because qualifying for degreed positions leads to increased income. According to the 2016 Census 92.8% of Montanans have a High School Equivalency (HiSET), high school degree or higher. In Lewis & Clark County, the number of adults who have a HiSET, high school degree or higher is 94.6, 94.7% in Jefferson County and 92.8% in Broadwater County. Seven percent of adults in Lewis and Clark County lack basic literacy skills, 10% in Broadwater County and 8% in Jefferson County.

The implications of inadequate education are profound. Without a solid educational foundation (including literacy and numeracy), people tend to remain under-employed or unemployed. Consequently, families live at subsistence levels. This means that their children lack opportunity from the beginning. Quality early childhood education, or even high quality childcare, includes consistent interaction and age appropriate activities that stimulate healthy brain development. Families in poverty often cannot find suitable childcare at a price they can afford.

The majority of Head Start families work between the hours of 6am-6pm four to five days a week. The workweeks usually include a weekend day. There are parents working swing and overnight shifts. Shifts that are early morning, weekend, and hours after 6pm are difficult times to find childcare and public transportation.

**Early childhood programs and Disability Services**

Montana is 1 of 5 states that fail to meet even half of the potential need for child care. Families, who do not qualify for Head Start or Special Education Pre-school use private preschools and/or childcare homes and centers for out-of-home child development experiences. Childcare is considered affordable when it takes up 7% or less of a household's income. A typical family in Lewis and Clark County spends over 27% of their income on childcare for one infant and one toddler, in Broadwater County, it is 29%, and in Jefferson County, it is 25%. Licensed childcare in Montana meets only about 47% of demand, leaving over 20,000 children without licensed care.

Rocky Head Start has consistently serves more than the federally mandated minimum of 10% of children identified as having a disability. Rocky Head Start does receive support and services from one local school districts (Helena Public Schools) and one special service cooperative (Prickly Pear) that serves Townsend, East Helena, Boulder and Whitehall.

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Impacts of COVID 19**

On March 13, 2020, COVID 19 changed the world, as we had known it. With the shelter in place order put into effect and remote learning becoming the way of the land, Rocky Head Start worked quickly to meet the needs of the families and their children. Families that were already struggling to meet basic needs found themselves in even more difficult times.

Rocky Head Start ended in person learning due to the shelter in place mandate. Family advocates and teachers delivered meals, created and delivered remote learning packets, met with families outside, on the phone, over face time. Connected families with resources and assisted families who had not filed taxes in accessing their stimulus dollars. Intakes were conducted over the phone.

Class sizes for the 2020-2021 school year were reduced to ten children because of the COVID restrictions placed on childcare settings. Half-day classes were no longer able to share the same space, so Rocky went from 14 classes to 10 and added a remote learning with family support option.

The biggest challenges families reported facing was supporting their children in remote learning and not having childcare in order to continue working. Being isolated has put families who struggled with addiction and abuse at even further risk. Living in conditions of poverty make it difficult if not impossible to maintain social distancing and sheltering in place recommendations.

Families experiencing homelessness faced situations that are even more difficult. The Lewis and Clark County Health Department closed the family shelter at God's Love and moved all the families 30 miles out of town to a summer child's camp. This solution did not work for the families and the community was able to partner with a local hotel and move the families back into town.

Affordable housing, transportation, childcare, and preventing the effects of ACEs continue to be the top identified needs of families. The pandemic has intensified these needs and increased the number of families experiencing poverty and resource shortages.

Beginning the 2021-2022 school year, the program was fully in-person learning. Due to staffing shortage, one classroom did not open at the beginning of the school year. In addition, on February 7, 2022 another classroom will transition from in-person to remote learning.

Family Engagement activities have been a hybrid of in-person and on-line. Policy Council meets in person, with social distancing, as well as on ZOOM. Monthly parent meetings are convene on ZOOM and recorded so families are able to go back and watch if they are unable to attend live. Love and Logic parenting classes meet on ZOOM. Circle of Security parenting classes met in-person with a ZOOM option.

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**Strengths of the community**

Families identify the strengths in their community as being close to nature and having access to outdoor activities such as hiking, camping, and hunting. Families enjoy parks, libraries, youth sports, community events and celebrations.

Being able to count on the help of neighbors and having the small town atmosphere feels supportive to families. Giving generously is a great strength. For example, at Christmas the Helena and East Helena community adopted 101 of 128 families.

As reflected in this assessment, the tri-county area has many agencies, community based organizations and coalitions in operation whose missions and visions are to meet the needs of families living in poverty and to build strong, resilient communities.

**Over Arching Recommendations**

Housing, transportation, childcare, and preventing the effects of ACEs are the top identified needs of families. In order to address these complicated issues communities must work collectively. Connecting providers with one another and families to services is a challenge across the communities Rocky Head Start serves. Working from a collective impact framework, organizations can align efforts and close gaps in services.

Communities need interventions designed to protect children from ACEs and strengthen families to help mitigate the effects of toxic stress and early childhood trauma. Rocky Head Start is a part of Elevate Montana; the work's focus is on building resilient communities and educating on the prevention of exposure to ACEs and treating trauma. Continue work with the Home Visiting Task Force to support home visiting programs for families. Continue to embed trauma informed care into the culture of Rocky Head Start.

A collaborative approach is imperative to address affordable housing and transportation needs. Rocky Head Start will continue work with Helena Resource Advocates, Greater Helena Area Housing First, and Capital Transit Advisory Council.

Rocky Head Start will continue to advocate for access to high quality childcare through participating in STARS to Quality and being a part of the Early Childhood Project. All Rocky Head Start classes are now a Star Level 5, the highest level of quality. We also connect families to the Best Beginning Child Care Scholarship Program so they can access affordable childcare. Another way to ensure more families have the opportunity to provide their children with pre-school is to coordinate enrollment with local school districts who offer a pre-school program.

Rocky Head Start will continue to participate in and advocate for the universal use of the CONNECT system, a web-based referral tool housed within Lewis and Clark Health Department and available in our community that increases connection rates and care coordination for



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families. The Family and Community Partnerships Manager is a part of the CONNECT Advisory Team.

### **Tri-County Community Resources**

**CONNECT** is a secure, web-based system for sending and receiving referrals. Agencies are brought together under a single information sharing agreement Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Release of Information (ROI) that is HIPAA, FERPA, 42CFR and IDEA compliant. The system was created in 2009 with no incentives outside of client advocacy and desire to increase performance. The current version was launched in 2014 and has been continually enhanced since then. Strategic referral tracking via CONNECT aims to improve the referral process in our communities by establishing accountability and improving processes for the exchange of client information. The ultimate goal is to foster collaborative culture among service providers in Montana.

**2-1-1** is a nationwide system to connect people to non-profit services. In Montana, 2-1-1 is both a call center-based operation and a website, [www.Montana211.org](http://www.Montana211.org). If people in the tri-county area dial 2-1-1, they will be connected to Voices of Hope in Great Falls; when they discuss the needs they have, Voices of Hope staff will look up those services in an online database and give the caller information to fill their needs. Info includes services, eligibility, and hours of operation, among other info. This database also populates the website, which anyone can use to look up local resources. Although the database was not updated for two years, the United Way of the Lewis and Clark Area is in the process of updating the information now.

#### **Food/Clothing/Household Supplies/School Supplies:**

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** provides supplemental food and nutrition assistance to low income people. SNAP recipients use EBT cards, which are similar to debit cards, to purchase food in authorized retail stores. 135% of poverty

**SNAP Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Program** goals are to assist SNAP eligible participants in making healthy food choices within a limited budget and adding more physical active throughout their day consistent with the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Montana's SNAP-Ed program is managed by a contract with Montana State University Extension.

**WIC** is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. This public health program is designed to improve health outcomes and influence lifetime nutrition and health behaviors in a targeted, at-risk population. Nutrition education is the cornerstone of

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the WIC Program. WIC participants can receive free breast pumps and benefits for fresh fruits and vegetables at seasonal farmer's markets. Participants can be at up to 185% of the federal poverty guideline. WIC has recently started using debit cards instead of paper benefits. This reduces stigma and allows food benefits to be used as the family needs them.

**Helena Food Share (HFS)** is a local non-profit food bank. In 2019 Helena Food Share distributed 43,889 kids packs to children at risk of going hungry on the weekend, gave 1,956 holiday meals for families between Thanksgiving and Christmas, and 77,910 visits were made to the food pantry. One in three people served by Helena Food Share is a child under the age of 18.

Trinity United Methodist Church operates the community food pantry in Whitehall. Boulder First Baptist Church runs the food pantry in Boulder. Broadwater Food Bank is in Townsend.

**Feed and Fun Summer Feeding Program – Sodexo + School District**

18 and younger can receive free lunch

**The Good Samaritan runs Placer Pantry.** The pantry is stocked with hygiene and personal care products. It is available at no cost to individuals in need. Volunteers from the Greater Federation of Women's Club and the Soroptomists Club support the pantry. The store consists of full size personal hygiene and household cleaning products. People can access the pantry once a month. Donations come from local businesses, Costco, Pad for Paws, and drives. Hours are Tuesdays 4:30-5:30 and Saturdays 10am-11am.

**The Angel Fund** is a nonprofit 501c3 Corporation helping Helena School District children who are in need with school items including clothing, shoes, school supplies, backpacks, classroom materials, field trip fees and other scholastic necessities. The Angel Fund also offers Montana post-secondary scholarships to deserving seniors at Access to Success, Capital High School, Helena High School and PAL based on academic success, financial need and a commitment to give back to their community. The program also provides children that meet income and have good school attendance with support for school appropriate clothing during the winter holiday season.

**Good Samaritan Ministries and Thrift Store** is a private, non-profit that operates a second hand store in order to provide assistance in terms of clothing, furniture and household items, and financial help with housing, transportation, car repairs, court fee payment, rapid rehousing money and utility assistance to people in need. The average number of clients receiving direct financial assistance monthly is 1,500, which translates to helping 3,000 to 5,000 lives. Good Samaritan Ministries works together with other agencies to provide school supplies for children in the larger Helena area each fall.

**Catholic Social Services** provides parenting resources and infant supplies.

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**Homelessness**

**God's Love** is the only homeless shelter in Helena. The shelter provides three meals a day (6am 11:30 and 4:30), clothing, medical assistance, and a warm place to sleep at night. The lower level has 31 beds to shelter men and a room for women made to shelter four people; when there is more need than accommodations people sleep on the couches in the cafeteria area and the floor. The upper level has rooms for families.

**The Salvation Army** can help low-income families with rent, utilities, food, personal care and transitional housing. They also have transitional housing for single women and men, and families.

**Family Promise** is a program for families living homeless. A network of churches volunteers to host families in their churches for two weeks. The families sleep at the churches and spend their days at the Family Promise office. The families work with an advocate who supports the family with gaining employment, child care, and stable housing.

**Housing First** is a community-wide coordinated entry system that aims to connect individuals and families who are homeless, or those who are immediately at risk of becoming homeless, to housing and other necessary resources. Good Samaritan Ministries, Pure View Health Center, Healthcare for the Homeless, Volunteers of America, and The Salvation Army Housing First front doors.

**Housing and Energy Assistance**

**Helena Housing Authority (HHA)** provides 1,065 total housing units in Helena between housing vouchers and HUD housing units,. Of those units, 366 are 1-5 bedroom HUD housing units and 581 are Section 8 housing vouchers. In 2015, HHA served 1,373 household members; 418 of those were children ages 0-12.

HHA offers two programs for residents. The first is a resident stipend, not to exceed \$200 a month, to go towards rent, for performing a service for HHA, on a part time basis, that enhances the quality of life in the development. The second is a Youth Activity Pilot program for any child who resides in a HHA public housing unit may apply for up to \$100 per calendar year in a healthy activity or educational financial assistance program.

**Broadwater Village** is an income based HUD housing complex offering one, two, and three bedroom apartments. Heat, water, garbage and sewer are included in monthly rent.

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**Almanor and Tower Hill Apartments** in Helena use to offer flat rent, affordable housing 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments, rent \$695-\$830. In the beginning of 2021, rent increased. Now at Almanor a 2 bedroom rents for \$1025-\$1400 and a three bedroom goes for \$1200-\$1550. At Tower Hill a 1 bedroom rents for \$947, 2 bedroom \$1,047 and 3 bedroom \$1,247.

**Big Boulder Apartments** is a 36 unit 1 and 2 bedroom HUD housing complex in Boulder ran by Rocky Mountain Development Council.

**Low Income Energy Assistance (LIEAP)** provides energy conservation education and assistance to Lewis and Clark, Jefferson, and Broadwater Counties. LIEAP is designed to assist low-income households meet the expenses of keeping warm during the cold months of the year. Those who qualify for LIEAP receive a credit to their utility account if heat costs are paid directly and a heat rebate if heating costs are included in rent. Those who use wood are usually paid directly for wood purchases. If a household has a heating emergency which poses an imminent threat to the health and safety of the household, LIEAP can help with emergency assistance. Some examples of an emergency are broken furnaces, hazardous conditions in the heating system, loss of primary supply of energy, or other forces outside the control of the household, which cause a severe loss of heat.

If your entire household receives benefits from the SNAP Program, your LIEAP Application process may be drastically simplified.

**Energy Share** helps people with heating bill assistance once every 10 years up to a maximum of \$700. The primary way that Energy Share helps individuals and families through energy emergencies is by paying all or a portion of past due heating bills. Families who live paycheck-to-paycheck often face a financial emergency when an unexpected expense occurs, such as a vehicle breaking down, loss of employment, or medical expenses. In certain circumstances, Energy Share can also help with replacing inefficient, older refrigerators and water heaters, and with some furnace repairs.

**Weatherization** is an energy conservation program designed to reduce the home heating costs for families on limited incomes.

**Homebuyer Education Classes** are available to teach potential homeowners about the process of purchasing a home. Homebuyer Education classes provide in-depth information on many aspects of homeownership including budgeting, finding a home, choosing a lender/closing on a loan, homeowner's insurance, home inspection & maintenance, and energy savings. Registration requires completing the Homebuyer Education Class intake form, pay a non-refundable class fee of \$35.00 (plus \$20 for each additional family member attending) and sign up for a 45-minute intake appointment at least two weeks prior to the class date.

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**Energy Corps (AMERICORPS)** provides service to communities and individuals in one of four mission areas: Energy education and outreach, community energy Planning, Hands on energy assistance, and Green-collar Professional Development.

**Habitat for Humanity** is part of a global, nonprofit housing organization dedicated to eliminating substandard housing locally and worldwide through constructing, rehabilitating and preserving homes; by advocating for fair and just housing policies; and by providing training and access to resources to help families improve their shelter conditions. Habitat for Humanity operates in Jefferson, Broadwater, and Lewis and Clark County.

### **Financial Assistance**

**Montana Free Income Tax Return Preparation Program** helped low-income families file taxes returns at no cost. In 2017 there were 3,524 earned income tax credit returns filed bringing \$4,810,186 back to families; 724 child tax credit returns were filed bringing \$711,581 back to families; and 1,036 additional child tax credit return filed bringing \$1,177,390 back to families.

**Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED)** of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services pursues financial and medical support of children by establishing, enforcing, and increasing public awareness of parental obligations. The division provides federally mandated child support enforcement services that includes locating absent parents, establishing paternity, establishing financial and medical support orders, enforcing current and past-due child support, offering medical and spousal support, and modifying child support orders.

**TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)** is a federal program that provides temporary financial assistance to impoverished families with dependent children for no more than 60 months. Those who may be eligible for TANF benefits make application at their local Office of Public Assistance.

In 2014, DPHHS conducted an in depth needs assessment and strategic planning process, which showed that the systems set up at the state level, weren't necessarily helping meet goals of family unity or self-sufficiency. Clients, contractors, and community stakeholders reported that the program's rigid structure did not allow families to address barriers in child care, health, mental health, substance use, transportation, education, and housing. The system created to address the barriers is the Montana TANF Family Bridge Model and is the framework of Montana's TANF program. The design of the Bridge Model aligns with the program goals of family stability, employability, and financial security. The Bridge is an assessment tool used at intake and throughout participation in TANF to help families identify strengths and barriers, to determine short and long-term goal setting and barrier reduction approaches. The Bridge

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Model allows for more flexibility surrounding eligibility and program requirements so families in crisis receive supports that are more effective. DPHHS contracts with Career Training Institute. Families on the TANF program work with the CTI Pathways Program.

**Medical and mental Health/Home Visiting**

**Healthy Montana Kids Plus (Medicaid) and Healthy Montana Kids (BC/BS)** helps insure the majority of Montana's children have health insurance. Access to health insurance for adults is more difficult. Both **Helena Indian Alliance and Pureview Health Center** have **ACA navigators** to assist people to apply for health insurance

**St. Peter's Hospital** is a 123-bed facility, provides healthcare services to an estimated 97,000 residents of Lewis and Clark, Broadwater, Jefferson, Meagher, and Powell counties. Offers several Health Education Classes including: Prepared Parenting, Safe Sitter, Health insurance 101, CPR, First Aid, along with several other classes and education. St. Peter's also offers Cancer, Alzheimer's, Diabetes, Grief, Pregnancy loss and Suicide Support groups.

**PureView Health Clinic** is located with the Lewis and Clark County City-County Health Department. Medical and dental services are provided on a sliding fee scale for low and moderate-income individuals.

**Leo Pocha Health Clinic**, which is housed at the Helena Indian Alliance, provides the services of a medical doctor or nurse practitioner and the fee is based on one's ability to pay. The Clinic

also provides other health-based services (substance abuse, nutrition for seniors, mental health, etc.). No one, regardless of race, is refused services.

**Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department** provides an array of health services to city and county residents. Immunization clinics, sexually transmitted diseases testing and support, parenting classes and parenting education including the Parents as Teachers program, breastfeeding support, the WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) nutritional program, and intensive home-visiting programs.

**Broadwater County Health Department and WIC**, located in Townsend, provides immunization services, health referrals, health education, and communicable disease surveillance and investigation. The health department also administer the Homemaker Program for Townsend and WIC Program for Townsend, White Sulphur Springs, Whitehall, and Boulder.

**Jefferson County Public Health** located in Boulder provides vaccines, WIC, Immunizations/Screening tests, and planning and preparing for Emergency Situations.

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**Lewis and Clark County Healthy Families Home Visiting Programs** offer family support through the Nurse Family Partnerships and Parents as Teachers programs, nurse advisors and family support specialists, known as home visitors, provide free support and education on many topics of interest to pregnant women and families with children through age 5. These Family services are provided in the home or other comfortable setting, and include healthy pregnancy and preparation for a healthy baby, wellness and child development, breastfeeding, nutrition, safety, attachment and bonding, and parent skill building. Home visitors can also assist families in learning how to access community resources for food, housing, Medicaid, employment, child care, and health care.

**Child Health and Developmental Screenings**

Registered nurses and family support specialists offer free screenings for children from 2 months through 5 years old. They can suggest fun activities you can use to help your child meet his or her full potential. They will make referrals if your child needs more specialized help. Home visitors also can perform free vision and hearing tests. The sooner a child's health or developmental problems are identified the more likely he or she is to reach their fullest potential.

**Asthma Home Visiting**

The health department's asthma project helps families of children with asthma control the disease rather than let it control them.

Trained nurses will visit the homes of children ages 0-17 to help them and their families find ways to reduce exposure to the things that trigger asthma attacks. The free program also can

supply special mattress and pillow covers, medication advice, asthma educational materials, and referrals to community resources.

**Breastfeeding Support**

Registered nurses who are specially trained as certified lactation counselors or internationally board certified lactation counselors can answer questions about breastfeeding and help solve breastfeeding problems. Visits can be by phone, at the health department, or in the home, whichever is most comfortable. Free weight checks for breastfeeding infants are available.

**Parenting Support Group:** Meets on Thursday evenings from 6:30 to 8 PM, under the guidance of a professionally trained facilitator. Free child care is provided.

**Circle of Security Parenting Classes:** 8-10 week courses are regularly scheduled. The goal of the classes is to improve a child's sense of security within a family, which research has shown leads to better self-esteem, better relationships, enhanced school readiness, and improved ability to cope with emotions.

Both the classes and the support group are free and open to all parents in the Helena area. The focus is on families with children under age 8, but parents of older children are also welcome.

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**The First Breath Program** is available to pregnant women through their baby's 3rd month of life. It assists women who wish to reduce or quit tobacco use. Participants can receive free diapers.

**AWARE** offers Early Childhood Services to families and prenatal children through age five. These services are available to families of all socio-economic status, and children with disabilities are welcome. Programs includes Early Head Start and Successful Starts a behavioral health services for children and families.

**Intermountain** offers Child and family, Neurofeedback, and Co-occurring Substance use and emotional distress Therapy. Youth Case management, Child and adolescent Psychiatry, Occupational Therapy, Psychological services, School bases services, Home support services, Intensive day treatment, Therapeutic After-school and Summer Support, and Therapeutic Foster Care and Adoption services.

**Shodair** is 68 Child and Adolescent residential treatment beds and 20 acute psychiatric treatment beds. Shodair offers Acute Psychiatric Inpatient Programs, Child and Adolescence Residential Treatment Programs, Education Services, and Medical Genetic Services.

The Helena community also has private therapists, Montana Youth Homes Crisis Bed, Center for Mental Health, Journey Home, Our Place (day center), Helena Indian Alliance (Leo Pocha) provides MH/BH services, and Pureview Health Center provides MH/BH services.

### **Addiction Services**

**Boyd Andrew Community Services (BACS)** provides outpatient services to adults for chemical dependency treatment in the Helena area. They also provide prevention, intervention, and treatment to adolescents as well as adults in Lewis & Clark and Jefferson counties. Services include residential services to adult offenders in the correctional system.

**Montana Chemical Dependency Center (MCDC)**, located in Butte, provides intensive in-patient treatment that cares for the disease of addiction including withdrawal management for substance use disorders and treatment for co-occurring mental health disease.

**Montana Tobacco Quit Line** provides free help quitting all commercial tobacco products, including smokeless tobacco and electronic cigarettes. All Montanans are eligible.

**The First Judicial District Treatment Court** is a court-supervised, comprehensive treatment program for non-violent offenders. The court is a voluntary program that includes regular court appearances before the treatment court judge. Treatment includes individual and group



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counseling and regular attendance at self help meetings, provided through community based treatment providers. The treatment staff will also assist with obtaining education and skills assessments and will provide referrals for vocational training, education and/or job placement services. The program length, determined by each participant's progress, will be no less than one year.

**Florence Crittenton (FCH)** provides innovative, comprehensive services and nurturing programs that engage and empower children, young adults and young families to thrive and build productive lives. Florence Crittenton is a trauma responsive, relationship based organization that provides family-centered support during critical times. Through a comprehensive continuum of services, our programs include mental health services, substance use recovery, parenting education, childcare, preschool, and access to community supports. They believe that children should accompany their parents to treatment and that a family centered treatment approach is most effective in building a lasting foundation for young families.

FCH also offers prenatal & childbirth education, Circle of Security © and Love & Logic parenting classes, Lactation support services, Group, individual and family therapy, Substance abuse recovery support services, Educational support, Onsite Child Enrichment Center, Recreational activities, Adoption education, and Independent living skills.

The Community Outreach Program through FCH aims to provide education and support to families with young children. These services include support groups for teen moms, such as prenatal education, a variety of classes for parents of all ages, in-home visitation, a STARS certified Child Enrichment Center, and Helena Parent Connections. Class fees are based on a sliding scale and cover all class materials. FCH maintains its strong commitment to community with no family being turned away due to inability to pay.

**YWCA- WINGS** Provides transitional housing services for up to 24 women and their children (when applicable) at any given time. Each woman has a furnished bedroom with shared bathrooms a full kitchen, and common area. For women experiencing homelessness, transitioning into permanent housing. WINGS is an intensive research based program requiring the residents to participate in: working with a case manager and managing mental health, engaging in educational growth and obtaining employment, searching for safe and sustainable housing, learning financial budgeting skills and initiating self-care activities

**Caterpillars Parenting Center** - Circle of Security Parenting Classes, Supervised Parenting time, and Safe Exchange.

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**Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Services**

**The Friendship Center** is the only shelter in Lewis and Clark, Jefferson, and Broadwater Counties that provides a broad range of support services at no charge for anyone who has experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence or stalking. They provide safe shelter, counseling, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Survivor Groups, Sexual Assault Outreach Program, Crime Victim Advocate Program, 24 Hour Crisis Line, Order of Protection Assistance, Community Education, and Legal Advocacy

**CASA** (Court Appointed Special Advocates) provides volunteer guardians to work on behalf of abused and neglected children to promote their best interests in the pursuit of safe, permanent homes. CASAs interview parents, teachers, foster families, counselors, and the child. With this information, they submit reports to the court. Judges are then able to make more informed decisions about what is in the best interests of the child.

**Department of Family Services** mission is to protect children who have been or are at substantial risk of abuse, neglect or abandonment. The department strives to assure that all children have a family who will protect them from harm. They recognize the protective capacities of families and incorporate them in assessments, decision making and actions with the goal of improving safety, permanency and well-being for children.

**The Montana Foster Care Independence Program (MFCIP)** is a part of the Child and Family Services Division of the Department of Public Health and Human Services. Youth in foster care face unique and difficult challenges as they turn eighteen and leave the foster care system. Studies indicate that they are less likely to finish high school and become self-supporting. They are also more likely to be homeless or to become parents at a young age. The MFCIP strives to assist youth in the foster care system by offering benefits to eligible youth in order to avoid these circumstances. The services offered are intended to help Montana foster youth get the life skills they need to make a successful transition into adulthood. By assisting youth in achieving self-sufficiency and obtaining future goals, the MFCIP enables youth in the foster care system create a healthy lifestyle and a successful future.

**Recreational and Family Activity Services**

**Exploration Works** is a children's museum located in Helena that offers reduced cost membership for families receiving social services, science kits to be checked out by schools and home schoolers, and have developed a partnership with library to check out a pass for the day.

**YMCA** offers reduced membership fees and scholarships for gym membership and YMCA sport activities.

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**Kay's Kids** is a free youth summer recreation program for children 6-13 (children that are younger than 6 can still attend as long as accompanied by an adult. Participate in the Feed and fun

### **Transportation**

**Capital Transit** serves Helena and East Helena. As of March 21, 2022 the two fixed routes in Helena will no longer operate. Capital Transit will operate as a curb-to-curb ride scheduling within city limits. Riders can download [a new Capital Transit app](#) to schedule rides and pay fares. With the new ride-scheduling model, riders can choose custom pick-up and drop-off locations within Helena city limits. The City's transit system will still operate its East Valley and East Helena fixed routes. Riders can use the East Valley / East Helena service to get to the Transit Center and schedule additional rides within City limits using the app.

### **Legal Assistance**

**Montana Legal Services Association (MLSA)** is a legal aid that empowers low-income people by providing civil legal information, advice, and other services free of charge. MLSA works both on individual cases and under a systemic approach to help low-income people. MLSA and Lewis and Clark Library have collaborated to offer pro-bono services on Fridays from 10-2 to connect people seeking civil legal services to lawyers who can help them with their claims. Montanalawhelp.org is an on-line legal resource that provides forms and direction to help people who are representing themselves with civil legal issues.

### **Adult Education and Employment**

**Career Training Institute (CTI)** in Helena focuses on employment and training programs for low-income individuals. CTI provides employment training, case management, business resources, and referral and outreach services in the tri-county area including Lewis and Clark, north Jefferson, and Broadwater counties. Target populations include income eligible teens and adults, SNAP and TANF recipients, programs for Helena Housing Authority residents, as well as offering services to the business community. CTI also provides on-site computer classes.

**The Helena Adult Learning Center** is located on the Helena College University of Montana Campus. The purpose of the Adult Learning Center is to provide for the literacy needs of adults in the community. Literacy is defined as the individual's ability to apply reading, writing, and computational skills to a career and to everyday life. Furthermore, all staff are committed to recognizing individual needs, assisting each student in achieving his or her highest potential, and promoting the desire for lifelong learning. Helena Adult Learning Center focuses on preparing students for employment and or college readiness. This includes preparation for the HiSET (High School Equivalency Test) and administering the HiSET. Families living in Jefferson County and Broadwater County access adult education services in Butte and Bozeman.

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**The Helena School District** offers an alternative high school, **Project for Alternative Learning (PAL)** for grades 10-12 to earn their high school diploma. **Access to Success** is a high school diploma completion program with an emphasis on earning a professional certificate or degree in a high wage, high skill, and high demand career area while completing high school requirements concurrently. All coursework is provided in an adult learning environment. The program is housed on the Helena College campus. Eligibility is limited to those between the ages of 16-21 who meet minimum reading levels, and who are not currently enrolled in school and do not have a high school diploma

**L&C Literacy Council** provides trained tutor/mentors who work with adults and young adults who want to improve basic reading writing spelling and math skills. Help with preparing for HiSet, improve employability skills obtain driver's license and more.

**Job Service Montana** offices are part of a statewide network of workforce development centers that collaborate with community partners to provide customer focused employment and training opportunities. These centers assist in preparing, training, and connecting a highly skilled workforce to local businesses. This assistance enhances long term employment outcomes for both businesses and workers. There are offices in Helena, Butte and Bozeman.

**Institutions of Higher Learning:** Helena is the home of Carroll College, a private Catholic college, and Helena College. Montana State University is in Bozeman and Montana Tech is in Butte.

### **Early childhood programs and Disability Services**

**Montana Empowerment Center has taken over the services PLUK (Parents Lets Unite for Kids) provided until 2019 in the state of Montana.** Montana Empowerment Center is a family centered non-profit that enables families to realize possibilities and make informed decisions on family issues, this could include a child of any age that may experience a disability special health care need, or sex/gender or other issues that affect their education work or life but is not required. They are based out of Kalispell, Helena, and Billings.

**The Early Childhood Services Bureau** offers the **Best Beginnings Childcare Scholarships** for low-income families whose child receives care from a licensed childcare center, registered group or family childcare home, or legally certified childcare provider. Each family participates in the cost of that care by making a copayment based on a sliding fee scale. Scholarships are available to working families whose income is at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines and families who get cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

**The Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program** is a voluntary quality rating and improvement system in Montana that aligns quality indicators with support and incentives for

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early childhood programs and early childhood professionals. **Regional Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (R&R's)** support families in finding quality child care as well as assist providers with professional development to become quality childcare providers. **The Early Childhood Project** supports R&R's and child care providers with professional development and quality improvement.

**Child Care Connections** is the Resource and Referral Program for Lewis and Clark, Broadwater and Jefferson County. They provide a variety of child care services in local communities, such as assisting families in locating child care through their referral services, providing STARS to Quality professional development classes for childcare providers, helping families in applying for the Best Beginnings Childcare Scholarship, determining eligibility and processing payments for providers for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship.

**AWARE's Early Head Start Childcare Partnership program** collaborates with local child care agencies in Billings, Belgrade, Bozeman, Butte, East Helena and Helena to provide Early Head Start services. AWARE contracts with these local child care facilities to reserve Early Head Start slots in their centers. AWARE serves 80 children and families through the Childcare Partnership program grant. Families must be eligible for state childcare subsidies and meet the same income guidelines for all Early Head Start families. AWARE received the Early Head Start grant to serve 40 children. The center will be opening in the Helena community within the year.

**Kinder Cubs and the STARS grant preschool** is located at Eastgate Elementary. Both classrooms have 18 students. The Kinder Cubs has an age acceptance for 4 year olds. In addition, they have to meet approval of requirements set by the School Board. Requirements include qualifying for the free and reduced lunch program, registered Native Americans, English as a 2<sup>nd</sup> language or qualify for Special Education. Families only need to meet one of the qualifications to be eligible.

**Whitehall School District** opened a pre-K preschool class the 2020-2021 school year. Head Start and the Whitehall Elementary partnered with enrollment; families that qualified for Head Start the school referred to Rocky and families that were over-income Rocky referred to the School District.

**Local Education Associations (LEAs)** are the major source of services and resources to children with disabilities in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) once the child turns three years old. Services can be provided to children either in a classroom setting (where available) or through "outpatient" services at the child's neighborhood public school. There are 14 LEA's in the tri-county area: Helena Public Schools, Lincoln K-12 Schools, Trinity Elementary (Canyon Creek), Auchard Creek Elementary (Wolf Creek), Augusta Public Schools, East Helena Public Schools, Wolf Creek Elementary, Basin Elementary, Boulder Elementary, Cardwell Elementary, Clancy Elementary, Montana City Elementary, Whitehall Public Schools, and Townsend K-12 Schools.

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**Prickly Pear Special Services Cooperative** serves children with disabilities for the above LEA's with the exception of Helena Public Schools. Prickly Pear provides support, in-service and technical assistance to administrators, regular and special educators, and para-professionals, to meet the needs of students eligible for special education under federal and state guidelines. Prickly Pear Special Cooperative members from East Helena, Montana City and Clancy operate a self-contained special services classroom two days per week at the Montana City School.

**School District #9, East Helena Public Schools** also provides a para-professional in the Head Start classroom to assist the Head Start staff in providing services to children on Individual Education Plans (IEP).

**School District #1, Helena Public Schools (HPS)** provides services to children three to five years old with disabilities in the Helena area. All children who qualify through an Individual Education Plan (IEP) are eligible regardless of income. Helena Public School offers a continuum of services for preschool-aged children with disabilities from children needing therapies who go to sites within the District for those services, to services provided in the Head Start classrooms, the Ray Bjork Learning Center's self-contained classrooms, or a Head Start/School District collaboration classroom. A collaboration classroom is a classroom made up of children who may be enrolled in Head Start only, School District only, or Head Start and School District.

**Family Outreach** is a private, non-profit agency that provides home-based education and support services to individuals who have disabilities. One program (Part C) administers the Infant and Toddler (ages 0-3) portion of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA is a federal entitlement program and services are implemented as soon as a child is determined to be eligible. There are two categories of eligibility under Part C – Type I and Type II. Type I includes established medical conditions, such as chromosomal or genetic disorders, infectious diseases, neurological disorders, congenital malformation, sensory disorders, severe attachment, and toxic exposure. Services under Type I require a physician's signature. Type II includes children with a 25% delay in 2 developmental areas or a 50% delay in 1 area, including physical, cognitive, communication, social/emotional, or adaptive. Family Outreach works with the family to gather information and to conduct assessments that help determine eligibility. Once a child is determined eligible, family support staff works with the family to assist in identifying needs and family priorities. Through collaborative efforts, services are developed to "wrap around" the child. Part C can also pay for other entitlement services such as diagnostic medical services, physical/occupational therapy, speech therapy and audiology services. Rocky Head Start and Family Outreach maintain a Transition Protocol that provides information each spring about the number of children with disabilities who will be turning three and their specific type of disability.

**The Montana Milestones Part C Early Intervention Program** ran by Family Outreach, is a summer class to help children with disabilities going into kindergarten work on school readiness and self-help skills. The Program supports 19 children.

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**Rocky Head Start Tri-County Community Partners**

**Lewis & Clark County**

- Access to Success
- Adult Learning Center
- Alliance Church
- AWARE, Inc.
- Big Brothers and Sisters
- Boy Scouts
- Boyd Andrew Chemical Dependency Services and Care Center
- Broadwater Village
- Capital Transit
- Career Training Institute
- Carroll College
- Catholic Social Services of Montana
- Center for Mental Health
- Child Care Connections (Tri-County area)
- Child Protective Services (Tri-County area)
- Child Support Enforcement
- Children's Summer Feeding Program
- Consumer Credit Counseling Services
- Early Care and Education Task Force
- Early Childhood Coalition of the Greater Helena Area
- Early Head Start
- East Helena Public Schools
- Educational Opportunity Center
- Family Outreach
- Florence Crittenton
- Foster Grandparent Program
- Friendship Center
- Friends of Head Start
- God's Love
- Good Samaritan Ministries and Thrift Store
- Habitat for Humanity
- Helena Community Gardens
- Helena Food Share
- Helena Housing Authority
- Helena Indian Alliance
- Helena Job Service
- Helena Public Schools

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- Home Visiting Partnerships
  - Safe Care
  - Parents as Teachers
  - Nurse Family Partnerships
  - Asthma Home Visiting
- Home Visiting Task Force
- Intermountain
- Joining Community Forces
- Lead Education and Abatement Program
- Leo Pocha Health Clinic
- Lewis & Clark Health Department
- Lewis and Clark Public Library
- LIEAP (Low Income Energy Assistance Program for the tri-county area)
- Maternal Mental Health Task Force
- Montana Legal Services Association
- Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program (MTUPP)
- Office of Public Assistance
- Options Clinic
- Planned Parenthood
- Prickly Pear Special Services Cooperative
- Rocky Mountain Development Council
- Salvation Army
- St. Peter's Community Hospital
- United Way
- University of Montana-Helena
- WIC (Women, Infants, and Children)
- YMCA
- YWCA

**Broadwater County**

- Broadwater County Health Department
- Broadwater County Social Services Committee (UWLCA partner organization)
  - Helping Hands Thrift
  - Food Pantry
  - Mental Health Services
  - Farmers Market
  - Community Gardens (including at high school)
  - Youth Leadership
  - BECA (Broadwater Early Childhood Advocates)
  - Public Health



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- Townsend School District
- Broadwater Christmas Connection
- Broadwater Community Foundation
- Broadwater Community Library
- Rotary Club
- Lions Club
- Forest Service
- Broadwater Mental Health Local Advisory Council
- Bulldog Pups Preschool
- Infinite Hope Counseling
- Rocky Senior Center
- Lodge of Townsend
- Townsend Ministerial Association
- Townsend United Methodist Church LIEAP (Low Income Energy Assistance Program for the tri-county area)
- Boulder Community Library

**Jefferson County**

- AWARE, Inc.
- Big Boulder Apartments
- Boulder Elementary School
- Jefferson County Public Assistance
- New Horizons Program
- Whitehall School District
- Whitehall Public Library
- Prickly Pear Cooperative
- Butte 4-C's
- Sincerely Paul – Food Bank
- Whitehall Medical Center
- Steve Sacry – movie theater, Whitehall site
- Carole Cogdill – Toys for Tots
- Kristi's Kiddie Korner
- Montana PBS
- Rocky Senior Center
- LIEAP (Low Income Energy Assistance Program for the tri-county area)

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