

Early Learning Hub of Linn, Benton & Lincoln Counties

Health Care Integration Work Group Meeting Minutes

MEETING COMMENCED	9:30 am, July 14, 2026 Online Via Zoom
MEETING CALLED BY	Ashley Vermillion
PRESENTERS	Chelsea Chytka, Benton County Emergency Management Coordinator
WORKGROUP MEMBERS PRESENT	Amy Bliege, Monica Boylan, Ash Gladstone, Erin Sedlack, Paul Smith
STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT	Matt Grams, Antonia Huerta, Jinguang Lin, Sam Rounsavell, Carmen Santacruz
RECORDED	Yes

Agenda Topics

Discussion Item	Welcome and Introductions
Workgroup members introduced themselves.	

Special Presentation	Chelsea Chytka, Benton County Emergency Management Coordinator
Chelsea Chytka, Emergency Management Coordinator for Benton County Emergency Management (BCEM), gave an overview of the agency's structure and core initiatives. BCEM operates under the Benton County Sheriff's Office, led by Emergency Manager Brian Lee. Under Oregon Statute 401, counties are mandated to maintain emergency management services. Chelsea highlighted the agency's emphasis on building community relationships during "blue sky days" so that partnerships are already established before "dark sky days" (disasters) occur. BCEM focuses heavily on making plans actionable blueprints rather than idle binders, ensuring that roles, equipment, training, and exercises are fully coordinated before an incident. The agency actively plans for diverse local hazards, including wildfires, severe winter storms, floods, and the long-term threat of a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake. To support response operations, BCEM is currently constructing a new Emergency Operations Center (EOC) off Highway 20 to house its Type 3 multi-hazard Incident Management Team. The team coordinates county, city, and partner agency resources during major events and hosts monthly tabletop and full-scale exercises. Chelsea extended an open invitation to community partner organizations to participate in these regular training sessions. She addressed the stark realities of post-disaster recovery, particularly after a major Cascadia event, in which restoring critical services such as electricity, water, and highways could take months. She emphasized the importance of managing public expectations, noting that local government resources must prioritize life-safety emergencies over door-to-door checks or immediate household deliveries. Consequently, individual and community self-sufficiency is vital, particularly during the first 72 hours of an emergency. To help residents prepare, BCEM promotes several resources:	

- Be 2 Weeks Ready: A highly adaptable Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM) program designed to help families incrementally build two weeks of emergency supplies.
- Community Emergency Response Team (CERT): A hybrid training program consisting of 12 hours of online learning and 16 hours of in-person, hands-on disaster simulation, covering basic first aid, triage, light search and rescue, and fire suppression.
- Emergency Management Volunteer Corps (EMVC): A deployable volunteer team trained in mass care, sheltering support, call centers, and pet/livestock coordination.

Residents were also urged to sign up for Linn Benton Alert (and the broader ORAlert system) to receive localized evacuation warnings and safety updates.

The workgroup asked about county-level lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly regarding gaps in communication with community-based organizations (CBOs) and diverse language groups. Chelsea confirmed that while a large, internal After-Action Report (AAR) exists, a dedicated Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) group is the ideal mechanism to bridge these communication gaps. She shared that BCEM is currently exploring the revival of a localized COAD framework to improve future collaborations with non-governmental partners.

It was also suggested that BCEM connect with local Granges as a strategic way to rebuild engagement and distribute emergency preparedness training to rural parts of the county.

Chelsea Chytka noted that multilingual emergency preparedness publications are available for any partner organizations that are interested. Community members and partners are invited to contact her directly to request these materials or to schedule emergency preparedness presentations. She can be reached via email at chelsea.chytka@bentoncountyor.gov or by phone at 541-760-2521.

Discussion Item	Partner Updates
	Monica Boylan gave an update for Linn County Health. Family Connects newborn program is expanding to Lincoln County to absorb their population, with a newly hired nurse having commenced home visits as of July 1. While referral pathways remain the same, other home visiting programs continue as status quo. The Linn County department is pursuing grant opportunities to relaunch the Nurse-Family Partnership, an evidence-based program that supports first-time parents from pregnancy through age 2. Partners are encouraged to refer any pregnant individuals or families in need of support, as they likely qualify for one of the county's various visiting initiatives.
	The Linn County Public Health team continues to operate out of the 7th Street building alongside WIC. While ongoing construction has limited parking, the project is expected to wrap up soon, significantly improving accessibility for visiting families. Regarding staffing, the department's bilingual nurse is currently on maternity leave. Her caseload is being successfully managed by community health workers, with Carol from Benton County providing nursing coverage one day a week.
	The community is invited to the annual World Breastfeeding Week event, to be held in the department's parking lot on Saturday, August 1, from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM.
	Ash Gladstone gave an update for Benton County Health. The Community Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 29, from 12:00 PM to 1:30 PM. The meeting will be held in

a hybrid format, with an in-person option at the Old Mill Center and a virtual option. Partners and community members who are interested in attending but are not currently on the mailing list are encouraged to reach out to Gladstone to be added to receive future updates and access to the link.

Erin Sedlacek gave an update on Samaritan Health & Parenting Education. Samaritan is offering free virtual parenting education classes, including a Spanish-language series launching in August, as well as ongoing weekly prenatal yoga sessions. Additionally, various free health education workshops are underway, such as the upcoming "Living Well with Chronic Conditions" series hosted at the Mennonite Village in Albany.

Discussion Item	Pollywog Update
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Kelly, Family Resource Specialist for the LBL Early Learning Hub and Pollywog, presented a data and resource update covering the period from April through June. During this quarter, Schell connected 198 unique families to essential services across Linn, Benton, and Lincoln counties.

The program has seen a massive surge in Health-Related Social Needs (HSRN) requests, particularly concerning housing, climate, and nutrition assistance. Other highly requested resources during this period included rent and utility support, food and clothing, prenatal and parenting classes, and critical infant supplies. Schell also continues to assist families by coordinating connections to preschool programs, childcare, employment resources, family counseling services, and basic hygiene products.

Sam shared that Pollywog's monthly parent newsletter now reaches over 2,000 families on its mailing list. The July edition, which was sent on July 6th in honor of National Purposeful Parenting Month, focused on practical tips for intentional parenting, including the "six P's" of parenting, essential life skills for children, the "power of repair" (apologizing to children), and local library and parenting resources.

She also outlined the editorial calendar for the remainder of the year:

- August: "Starting School with Confidence" (preschool and kindergarten prep)
- September: Self-care for parents
- Fall/Winter: Seasonal resource guides (Halloween & Harvest Guide, followed by Holiday Resources and Winter Holiday guides)

Additionally, Pollywog has welcomed two new parent bloggers, Corinne from Lincoln County and Lithia from Linn County.

Pollywog is active in summer community outreach and will be tabling at several local events. The team is currently participating in Albany's Fun in the Park, held every Wednesday morning throughout July and August. They will also attend the World Breastfeeding Celebration alongside Linn County partners and have been invited to participate in Newport's National Night Out event in August, sponsored by the Newport Police Department. Other local events continue to be updated on Pollywog's online community calendar. Community Events in Linn, Benton & Lincoln Counties: <https://pollywogfamily.org/communityevents/>

Sam announced that Jessica Morrison has joined the Early Learning Hub team. While Jessica was unable to attend today's meeting, she will be introduced at the next session and will participate in future Hub and Pollywog meetings.

Next Meeting	9:30 am, September 8, 2026 Online Via Zoom
Meeting Adjourned	10:10 am