

Enrollment Forward: Lakes and Prairies Community Action Partnership

Kristin Phillips: Hi. I'm Kristin Phillips, and I'm the Head Start director at CAPLP Head Start. I've been with CAPLP for 21 years and have enjoyed every minute of it. And I would like to introduce Tiffany.

Tiffany McKinnon: Hi. I'm Tiffany McKinnon, and I'm the ERSEA manager, and I have been with CAPLP for the past 23 years.

Kristin: We'd like to share with you about some enrollment strategies today. The first one we're going to visit about is about our prescription pad. You can see it there with all the checkboxes. Last May, as we were coming out of COVID and knowing that we wanted things to be as normal as possible for families in this current program year, when we looked at our re-enrollees and our wait list, we realized we were going to have some making up to do with finding families. And doing that creatively in ways that we haven't done before because of the pandemic.

And one of the ideas that we had was to create a prescription pad. And it was just sent out to all the physicians, OBGYNs, and pediatricians in the community with a letter talking about Head Start services, and "Did you know we have these in your communities?" And "You should refer families." That has been a strategy that we've used for the last year. And we're just getting ready to start that off again, where we'll be sending those out to more physicians this year and hoping that they send families our way because we know families are connected to them. I will let Tiffany talk about the QR code.

Tiffany: All right. The QR code is something new that we just started this year. Just trying to get families that are on their phones, they are using technology, and just trying to get them an easier way to apply for our services. We came up with this ... We came up and put the QR code on almost all of our recruitment materials. And if you click on this QR code, it'll take us right to our CAPLP website, where they're able to give a little information about the parent-and-child address, phone number. And then that just gives me a little bit of information about the family, and it also sends me an e-mail through ChildPlus that tells me that the family applied. I'm able to just print that out, give the parent a call, and we can kind of talk about setting up an intake at that time.

It's a great, great added experience for them to just click on their phone and apply for Head Start. One thing that we also send out to our community partners and other places is our at-risk referral. That is just sent out to our community partners to help us prioritize who would need our services. This is just something that we send out, and they are able to fill this out and e-mail it back to me. And we do give priority points of our selection criteria with this. Again, it's just for community partnerships to help us prioritize those most at need.

Kristin: Community partners are a huge part of our program's success in having a full enrollment and a lengthy waiting list. We've been at full enrollment for many years, most of them, I would think, most of my 21 years. And we also have not used any over-income slot in at

least 10 years. And part of that is because of our connections with community partners. Tiffany, tell us about those.

Tiffany: Yes. We very closely with our mental health consultants and providers, with public health, social services, early intervention, the Moorhead Schools. We also work food drops, where people can come and receive food. Public transportation advertising. We have grocery stores where we send our postcards, and they put them in the bags. We scroll our information on signs at the local public schools and the fire department. And then our Energy Assistance program in our area also gives information out to each of the families around this area. And they put a little plug in, in asking if they want information about Head Start. We get all of that information, and we're able to give families a call and go from there as an intake.

We do a lot of door-to-door in the summer. We like to get together and go out and about find the pockets of families that could possibly want our services. We also ask a lot of past parents and current parents, "Hey! Do you have any family and friends that would like Head Start?" We get a lot of referrals that way as well.

Kristin: Our full enrollment really is a team effort. All of our staff are responsible for helping us recruit. And we certainly lean heavily on community partners. And we also look for areas where we can find families. Like Tiffany said, a food drop that's happening in our community. We ask, "Can we go and help with that?" and then we'll hand out those little postcards with the QR codes. Or we might head to a park in the summer and visit with families that are there playing. Really, it's just about getting out and about in the community and finding your partners that will really be your champions and refer families to you.