



REGION 8 ACTION COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

1 p.m. Nov 2, 2022, Stewart Centre Freeport

PRESENT: Sarah Kuhlemeier (Staff from ROE); Stephanie Koclanis (CCR&R Staff); Emily Dixon (Business Representative); Chandra Morris (Parents/Family Member); Kenny Lewis (Social Service); Ashley Harms (Local Early Childhood or Education Collaborative Members); Stephanie Lewis (Early Childhood or Education Collaborative Member); Devan Spellman (Local Early Childhood or Education Collaborative Member).

ZOOM: Rep. Tony McCombie (Local or County Elected Official); Amiee Schoenhaar (Business Representative/Chamber Member); Jenine Patty-Anderson (Head Start or Child Care Center Staff).

ABSENT: Deeann Kramer (Community Member Underrepresented Population); Amanda Meyers (Other); Michelle DeHaven (Business Representative).

Regional Council Manager Lou Ann Hayes called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. and began with the introduction of Region 8 staff followed by Council members introducing themselves.

Lou Ann then gave a short PowerPoint presentation explaining the origin of Birth to Five, its mission and values, the area we cover, and data on the population in Region 8 under age 6 that is below the poverty level. She then explained data showing the extreme lack of childcare spots in Region 8.

Lou Ann then explained to the members what the purpose of the Action Council will be, its goals, and the expectations of the members.

Discussion followed with members of the Action Council expressing some of their concerns in Region 8 regarding childcare and the issues they face.



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Those issues mentioned included Covid kids especially those in special education programs who have never been outside of the home for childcare. Several of these kids come to their programs not potty trained when it was mandatory before. Parents have been in “survival mode” during the pandemic and therefore not taken the time to teach their kids the skills and behaviors needed when entering kindergarten.

Also, there is a dire shortage of people wanting to work in childcare centers, and those who do work in the field are not paid enough. Scholarships and more options to get degrees would help. Mandates and new policies continue to be placed on the centers and staff has no way to implement them. The question becomes what comes first for priority – staffing or the kids.

The pandemic completely changed the structure of the homes, and they haven’t recovered. Need to find a way to help the parents who have stayed home for childcare to get back into the workforce.

Lou Ann discussed how the Family Council would interact with the Action Council. She explained the Community Agreement and Self-Permission forms. She talked about some ideas for starting childcare centers in buildings no longer in use in Region 8.

Lou Ann asked members what time/day worked best for meetings and set the next meeting for 1 p.m. on Dec. 7.

Meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Todd McKenna
Administrative Support
Birth to Five Illinois

