



MEETING NOTES

Region 47 Action Council Meeting

Location: Zoom

Date & Time: January 10, 2023, 10:15 am-11:15 am

Council Members present: Kimberly Crump, Rachael DeSpain, Maggie Fern, Aaqil Khan, Lisa Lilja, Diane Lynn Ott, Diana Merdian, Lois Meisenheimer, Kris Noble, Krista Peterson, Lauren Stafford, Monica Wolfley

Council Members absent: Andrea Cossey, Liz Buckwalter, Anji Garza, Dr. Joe Mullikin, Beth Smaka

10:15 am Welcome (5 minutes)

Notes: Members partook in a brief ice breaker where they shared their “resolutions” as Action Council members and what they wanted to achieve for early childhood in Region 47. Members also share what topics they are most excited to discuss next.

10:20 am Slot Gap (10 minutes)

Notes: Definition of slot gap and recap of previous Community Based Planning.

- Slot gap is when there are more children eligible for enrollment in early childhood education and care than actual enrollment slots available.
- Lois Meisenheimer (SAUK Valley Stars Collation Chair) presented a recap on last Year’s Community based Planning with Illinois Action for Children, highlighting:
 - Families with children qualify for federally funded early childhood programs being at or below 185% Federal Poverty Line.
 - Further analysis of the slot gap based on school districts showed that rural districts hardly serve any of their eligible children.
 - A higher concentration of children who are served are in areas such as Dixon, Sterling, Rock Falls, and Rochelle, but even Sterling is only serving 25% of eligible children.
 - There is a definite need for more programs and there was discussion of creating new programs in areas that are service deserts (no available early childhood services)
 - 12% of eligible 0-3-year-olds are being served.
 - 52% of eligible 3-5-year-olds are being served.



10:30 am Data Walk Breakout Groups (30 minutes)

Notes: Two separate breakout groups were made to go through the data and gather members' input. Data discussed was from Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map-University of Illinois (IECAM, 2020) and was compared to the 2019 data used previously in Community Based Planning. Each group reviewed and discussed their thoughts on:

- Illinois Publicly Funded Early Childhood Programs
- Early Childhood Education Publicly Funded Slot Gap
- Publicly Funded Programs Numbers and Capacity
- Lee, Ogle, and Whiteside County Publicly Funded Early Child Care and Education Slot Gap
- Child Care Slot Gap Data

Decisions made: More time is needed for continued discussion.

11:00 am Slot Gap Large Group Discussion (10 minutes)

Notes: As a large group members discussed thoughts and findings from the breakout groups and asked questions. Some questions and discussion points were:

- Whiteside County showed a drastic change in the number of children who were eligible for programs. This changes the percentage of eligible children served from 56% to 97%, appearing to have very little slot gap and a drastic change from the previous year.
 - Members did not find this data to be correct and questioned the accuracy. It was discussed that the drastic change could be that:
 - The 2019 numbers are estimates from the previous Census that are based on historical growth numbers and some other data. Since it's an estimate, it's possible that the estimates were off, and it looks like a big jump from 2019 to 2020.
 - The Federal Poverty Level is updated every year and because thresholds were raised, it captured more children in that age group.
 - Members questioned these points and would like to look further into additional data sources. The consensus felt that there is still a significant gap in Whiteside county and have concerns on how this data could impact programing.
- The region has a higher slot gap for children 0-2 versus 3-5 in all counties.



- It was discussed that the Pandemic has slowed down expansion efforts. A member highlighted that they had worked to expand prior to the start of the Pandemic, and just recently received approval to expand and open another classroom.
- Not much growth in the number of slots available but the programs in our region will be working on expansion grants in the spring.
- Many programs/centers do not accept Child Care Assistance Program funding, making it difficult for parents to afford the cost even if they qualify.
- Migrant or seasonal Head Start programs were offered in the past for families but no longer running, creating a gap for those families.

Decisions made: Additional method of sharing thoughts on slot gap and child care needed & members looking into current Whiteside county data.

11:10 am Conclusion/Questions

Notes: Members would like to discuss slot gap further and look more into current data or additional sources

Follow-up/Next Steps: A follow-up email was sent to members with a Google document link. This document will work as a conversation thread where members can give their input and ask any questions members may have.

Next Meeting:

Date: January 25th, 2023

Time: 2:00 pm-3:30 pm