



## MEETING NOTES

### Region 47 Action Council Meeting

**Location:** Zoom

**Date & Time:** January 25, 2023, 2:00 pm-3:30 pm

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

**Council Members absent:** Andrea Cossey, Liz Buckwalter, Anji Garza Aaqil Khan, Krista Peterson, Beth Smaka

#### **2:00 pm Welcome and Priority Populations Introduction (15 minutes)**

Notes: Priority populations were discussed as people who have been historically underserved and have not had a place at the table when discussing equitable Early Childhood Education and Care. Members were asked to list different priority population groups that they know of. They listed a few populations:

- Individuals with disabilities
- Single parents
- Homelessness
- Low-income families
- Children of teen parents
- Dual language
- Children involved with child protective services

Notes: We also discussed other priority populations as children and families who:

- Have or are experiencing homelessness
- Children of teen parents
- Families in poverty or deep poverty
- Families with child welfare involvement
- Children with disabilities
- Children of migrant workers
- Families with low caregiver education attainment
- Families that face barriers based on culture, language, or religion.
- Children with a parent with a disability
- Refugee families
- Families facing immigration barriers.



- Children who are Impacted by Parental Involvement in the Criminal Justice System

### **2:15 pm Priority Population Data (15 minutes)**

Notes: Members were posed the question “Does the data speak for itself?” Members discussed that data cannot tell its own story, highlighting their importance as Action Council member in telling the story. An example of this shared by a member was that that they believe the data does not always give an accurate picture of what is going on in real time.

A presentation on priority population data was given discussing:

- Illinois School Board of Education data on Kindergarten homelessness, Individualized Education Plan (IEP), & Limited English Proficiency (LEP) 2020
- Head Start data on families experiencing homelessness by county
- Individualized Education Plan (IEP) ages 3-5 by county 2020
- 2020 School Year Kindergarten Data on IEP, LEP, and children experiencing homelessness
- Erickson Risk and Reach report

Notes: A member shared data from Head Start on families experiencing homelessness by county and stated the data is skewed since they were operating during the Pandemic. Narratives from community members can give a better picture of the reality of the needs throughout the Region. More data is needed for immigrant, migrant, and refugee families.

### **2:30 pm Large Group Discussion (55 minutes)**

Notes: Lois Meisenheimer (SAUK Valley Stars Collation Chair) presented a recap on last Year’s Community based Planning with Illinois Action for Children, discussing their work with data on low-income families and the need for additional data on migrant, immigrant, and refugee families.

Notes: Members discussed priority populations breaking it down as: what do we know, what do we think and what do we need? Below is the discussion breakdown:

- What do we know?
  - A member shared that their focus in their child care role is looking at low-income families because that is how they receive funding for their program. They would like additional data on children that have IEPs



because their programs do not have the resources necessary to support those families.

- Another member shared data they found on migrant workers served in the state of Illinois. In the past, there was a program in the region that served migrant families but due to staffing, resources, and the services needed to support those families, unfortunately, the program is no longer available.
- What do we think?
  - A member shared that in their rural community (Paw Paw) there is a preschool program that cannot serve families because of the lack of staffing and support to start up the program. In their community, there are families that fall into the priority populations that need care but do not have support in their town.
  - Staffing is a dire need throughout the Region to ensure programs can run especially in rural areas.
  - The Regional Office of Education (ROE) has data on children experiencing homelessness from the school districts' reports but there is an acknowledgment that the homelessness numbers are hugely underreported.
    - Reports on homelessness throughout the Region may be different depending on the definition of homelessness that school districts/agencies use. Families may be in temporary living situations without a stable place to live but the reporting doesn't give the narrative behind the data. This can affect the types of services and supports offered to those families.
  - The Child Care Resources and Referrals (CCR&R) has started a new program with an intact team that focuses on offering support to families dealing with hardships as they go through the process for applying to the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). This team supports the Region and is going throughout the communities to pass on this information and help support more families.
  - A challenge for families who try to look for information on programs and services is having to navigate numerous amounts of sources. The process is overwhelming for families which causes some to not seek or apply for assistance.
    - There is a need to have a central location for families to go and learn more about what is available to them.



- There is a lack of programming and services available to families who speak more than one language.
- From the employer's and HR representative's perspective, they want to know information to pass on to their prospective hires especially employees with children. A barrier to employment for families is often a lack of child care and services. If employers/HR representatives had a list of resources available for families, they can direct them, and in turn, families are supported and have more choices about where they choose to work.
- The pandemic has impacted many families causing a need for more programs and assistance. Many programs are coming to an end and families who rely on those programs may not know what to do. If families are not informed that those programs are ending, they may not be prepared for that change.
- Some families are choosing to homeschool because of the worry of their children getting sick and the cost of sending a child to preschool is too expensive.
- There is a need for more diversity in the workforce especially when there are multiple languages being spoken and used in the Region. If programs/agencies collaborated on the resources they do have, they can offer support to their families even if that support isn't directly available to them, especially when a family speaks more than one language.
- What do we need?
  - Information that would be useful to know, is what kind of program design do families want.
    - What types of experiences do they want their children to have? What language support do they need? How do we best support the families who want to have their children in programs?
  - Knowing where priority populations are throughout the region and what existing supports are there to support them.
  - Updated and readily available resources child care providers can provide to their families.
  - Families in rural towns like Paw Paw, Amboy, or Compton travel to Mendota for child care and services, causing lack of connection to their own school district.
  - Transportation is a critical need for the Region. There is no public transportation. There is a disconnect at the federal level in



understanding the reality that families cannot simply travel to the next town over for child care and services.

- It's important for the State to know how different the Region is from big cities like Chicago or Rockford. Families have very limited choices for child care and schools especially when there are rules on school district and county boundaries and where families are eligible to send their children.
  - Very limited choices of services. Typically, one program is serving multiple counties.

### **3:25 am Conclusion/Questions**

Notes: The Birth to Five team will start Focus Groups and interviews soon. If any council member knows of anyone that would be interested in sharing their stories on the topics of ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) have them contact our team.

Follow-up/Next Steps: Abby will be reaching out to members for more information on individuals who Action Council members feel would be a good fit for a Focus Group/Interview.

Next Meeting:

Date: February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Time: 10:15 am-11:15 am