



## MEETING NOTES

### Region 47 Family Council Meeting

**Location: Zoom**

**Date & Time: February 2, 2023, 6:00 pm-7:30 pm**

Council Members present: Candace Antczak, Sasha Gomes, Jessica Higgins, Shayla Johnston, Maggie LaFever

Council Members absent: Angie Danielson, Brittany Howard, Carly Rodriguez

#### **6:00 pm Welcome, Icebreaker, Facilitator Introductions & Community Agreements (20 minutes)**

Notes: Members did an icebreaker answering what they would do if they had a free day where their children are taken care of for the day. We introduced two new members to our Family Council, Sasha Gomes & Maggie LaFever. We reviewed our community agreements noting changes can be made at any time.

#### **6:20 pm Data Walk (20 minutes)**

Notes: Presentation of child care programs, funding, and federal poverty levels (FPL).

- Members watched four videos from Illinois Action for Children that discussed:
  - Early Head Start/ Head Start programs
  - Home visiting programs
  - Preschool For All
  - Child Care Assistance Program
- Illinois Publicly funded Early Childhood Programs funding chart with a discussion of eligibility requirements and what programs are available in Region 47 which are: Head Start, Early Head Start, Prevention Initiative, and Preschool For All.
- Licensed child care centers, licensed family child care homes, and licensed exempt are different types of child care settings with different requirements.

#### **6:40 pm Slot Gap Discussion (40 minutes)**

Notes: Discussion of Slot Gap and data.

- Slot gap is when there are more children eligible for enrollment in early childhood education and care than actual enrollment slots available.
- Members looked at data on:



- Early Childhood Education Publicly Funded Slot Gap 2020 of eligible 0-2 and 3-5 year old children.
- Number of Child Care sites by their type and capacity.
- Lee, Ogle, and Whiteside counties Publicly funded Early Childhood Education and Care Slot Gap 2020
  - Noting the data for Whiteside County is under review because of a census reporting error.
- 2020 Child Care Slot Gap Data

Notes: Members had a large group discussion answering the following questions:

- What does the data mean to you?
- Do you feel this data is a good representation of what you have experienced in your community?
- Have you had a child who has had to sit on a waitlist or know someone who has?
- How limited are the slots and what are the guidelines for these slots?
- Why is it important that we include this information in the scan?

Notes: Members shared their responses discussing:

- Lack of services and support for new mothers. One member knows a new mother who is struggling to find support and resources within her own community. There is a need for more resources and awareness of what is available.
  - OBGYN and doctor visits for new mothers do not provide the best information and support leaving mothers/ new families unaware of resources within their own communities.
- The data does accurately represent the lack of program slots available especially when small rural towns often do not have centers or programs which forces families to go to different towns for care, often in the opposite direction of where they live/work.
  - Many families have had to make the decision whether or not it is beneficial to them to send their children to a child care program after they consider the high cost of child care, gas for transportation, and the time it takes to travel across many towns and/or counties.
- One member tried to start the process of finding child care while she was pregnant but was told by programs that they would be put on a waitlist for as long as nine months or more.



- Some child care centers in Dixon are turning people away from joining their waitlist because of the large number of families currently waiting for a spot to open.
  - Dixon is considered to have more resources and child care options than other smaller towns such as Amboy but even those larger towns are struggling to provide more slots.
- Maternal health care and Early Childhood Education are critical to any community, but the struggle is receiving the funding to support the different programs.
- Families who do not qualify for federally funded programs even if they are at the cut-off to qualify struggle to navigate the ECEC system with the high costs of child care and lack of resources.
- One member shared their decision to be a stay-at-home mom because of the lack of care for infants in their community.
- Another member shared they had to send their child to a private pay child care center because all other child care programs in the area were operating on waitlists.
- Some families have had the collective experience of going through the evaluation process for their children because of their concerns and their children are often not properly evaluated leaving families to struggle to receive support. Some children have to wait until they are in a public school program before they are properly evaluated and start receiving services. Without a diagnosis, families cannot receive the supports they need.
  - Many towns are severely lacking in available services such as occupational therapy (OT), speech therapy, physical therapy (PT), and other services for children and their families.
    - Waiting lists to get into a program or receive a diagnosis can be up to six months or more.
    - Often times families need to drive long distances to receive those services several times a week.
  - It's difficult for families to get the process started for receiving services when there is a disconnect between the health care system and school system (ex. Health care providers not referring families to the school districts) to evaluate a child and find the right program or school that can support their needs.
    - Pediatricians don't always offer screenings for young children.



- The system of Early Child Care and Education is complicated for families even if parents are working in the early childhood field or pediatrics.

**7:20 pm Wrap up/Conclusion (10 minutes)**

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 Early Childhood Education and Care, have them contact our team or we welcome you to share resources.

Next Meeting:

Date: February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023

Time: 6:00 pm-7:30 pm