



MEETING NOTES

Region 1-B-C Action Council Meeting

Location: Zoom Meeting

Date & Time: May 11, 2023, 4:30-6:30 PM

Council Members present: Michelle Zurita-Sharpe, Gretchen Bailey, Adelia Brienzo, Felicia McBride, Leatha Asbury, Janis Jones

Council Members absent: Kelly Burke, Janice Martin, Rochelle Golliday

4:30 PM: Welcomes/Icebreaker (10 mins)

What is one piece of advice you would give your younger self?

Notes:

- Ashonti, our Regional Council Manager, asked Council Members Icebreaker Questions, and Council Members discussed Icebreaker Questions.

Decisions made: N/A

Next Steps: Review of Community Agreements

4:40 PM: Review of Community Agreements & Best Practices (5 mins)

Notes:

- Action Council Members reviewed Community Agreements and decided not to make any changes.

Decisions made: Community Agreements are still the same, and no changes were made.

Next Steps: Regional Strengths & Needs

4:45 PM: Regional Strengths & Needs (15 mins)

Strength Questions:

- 1. What strengths can we identify from the regional data?**
- 2. What strengths can you share from your own ECEC experiences?**

Notes:

- Action Council Members discussed the Regional Strengths of the community.

Providers:

- **Great Quality Childcare Programs.**
- **Lots of support around families; parents as leaders are on advisor boards.**



- **Newly established Birth to Five Forum of South Cook County Collaborative.**
- **Mental health providers are available, but more money is needed.**
- **Networking with providers.**
- **Beginning to build awareness.**
- **Workforce members are committed to the work and compassionate.**
- **Strong connections between providers/building relationships.**
- **Social media/networking opportunities.**
- **Early Intervention referrals are high (building awareness).**

Families/Caregivers:

- **Home/School connections and positive relationships with school staff.**
- **Faith Based organizations.**
- **Word of mouth-family friendly establishments in the region (e.g., amusement parks, malls, and stadiums).**
- **Strong work ethic.**
- **Family-oriented, strong family support.**
- **Loving, nurturing, and well-intentioned.**
- **Strong and resilient.**
- **Rich cultural and linguistic diversity.**
- **Networking with families.**
- **Enrolled families in ECEC programs are supported.**

Decisions made: Action Council Members have access to google drive, where they can access the table to add more thoughts on strengths.

Next Steps: Breakout Session 1

5:00 PM: Breakout Session 1 (20 mins)

Barrier Questions:

- 1. What barriers do parents/families/caregivers face with accessing Early Childhood Care and Education in the Region?**
- 2. Are there quality ECEC programs in our Region?**
- 3. Are programs and services affordable?**

Notes:

Providers:

- Quality training for staff.
- Low staff.



- No Spanish-speaking staff.
- Funding-not knowing what is available.
- Parent engagement.
- Limited seats available due to funding.
- Community Partnership.
- DCFS Licensing requirements.
- Program requirements (grants, CCAP).
- Funding educators not knowing how money is received and spent.
- Funding providers cannot afford to pay their educators better wages.
- Travel reimbursement (needed for home visits).
- Bias (explicit/implicit), lack of cultural responsiveness.
- Competition between programs/organizations (enrollment, resources).
- Lack of trained administrators/leaders in ECEC.
- Lack of facilities/accessibility (ramps, elevators).

Families/caregivers:

- Finding quality, affordable child care.
- Access to technology or lack of knowledge (internet, computers, smartphones).
- Lack of Spanish-speaking teachers.
- Long applications/intake process.
- Going to several places to get services.
- Lack of knowledge of services in the area.
- Language Barriers (Arabic, Polish, Spanish).
- Below federal poverty levels.
- Literacy skills/educational background.
- Lack of trust.
- Political, religious, and racial tensions.
- Secure/stable/consistent housing.
- Lack of social capital/skills to navigate systems and resources.
- Stigmas around bilingual education and special education services.
- Not enough time in school (lack of before and after school/extended care).
- Stigmas/stereotyping (around race/geographical locations/communities).
- Crime/violence/trauma.
- Immigration status.
- Mental Health awareness/resources.



Decisions made: Action Council Members have access to google drive, where they can access the table to add more thoughts on barriers.

Next Steps: Break out Session 2

5:20 PM: Breakout Session 2 (20 mins)

Needs Question:

- 1. Where are the other needs/opportunities for growth based on the data?**
- 2. What gaps still exist in the data?**
- 3. Do families have access to the ECEC services and programs they need and want in this Region? If not, why?**
- 4. Are our ECEC programs equitable?**

Notes:

Providers:

- Better Pay and Benefits/Time-off.
- More classroom support (assistants).
- Flexibility and funding to pursue additional education.
- Better training for staff (culturally responsive training, trauma-informed training, diverse learner training, family engagement).
- ECEC workforce recruitment and retention.
- Professional Development for Admin roles.
- Reduced/Discounted Child Care fees for the ECEC workforce.
- Need for reflective/safe spaces for workforce members.
- Racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity of staff (to reflect).
- Mental health consultation.
- Need for distributed leadership.
- Accountability.
- Male involvement/perspective.
- Quality controlled and maintained facilities.
- Translation/interpretation services.

Families/Caregivers:

- Additional transportation services.
- Extended Care/Nontraditional hours.
- Affordable child care.
- More seamless process for applying for services.
- More information on available programs.
- Additional services for homeless families.



- Parenting support/home visiting.
- Full-day PreK.
- In-person, high-quality EI services (including bilingual evaluations).
- Bilingual support/services for English learners.
- Community Navigators (assistance to connect with resources).
- Opportunities for higher education/building leadership capacity.
- Respite services for families with children with disabilities.
- Accessible medical/dental care.
- Housing support.
- Training (parenting skills, technology skills, literacy skills/GED, ESL classes, etc.).
- Technology support (training, devices, Wi-Fi).
- Child care and high-quality ECE programs within geographical locations/communities.
- Need for generational support-engage and support for grandparents or older caretakers.

Decisions made: Action Council Members have access to google drive, where they can access the table to add more thoughts on needs.

Next Steps: Breakout Session 3

6:00 PM: Next Steps (15 mins)

- 1. Regional Needs Assessment**
- 2. Council Member Survey**

Notes:

Decisions made:

Next Steps: Closing

6:15 PM: Closing (15 mins)

Notes:

Decisions made:

Next Steps: Upcoming Council Meeting

Follow-up/Next Steps:

Next Meeting: May 16, 2023, Regional Recommendations