



MEETING NOTES

Region 54 Action Council Meeting

Date & Time: Tuesday, February 7, 2023, 1:00 PM

Council Members Present: Chris Rice, Kathy Vines, Niah Hamilton, Odette Hyatt-Watson, and Tamara L Red.

Council Members Absent: Cindy Montgomery, Cynthia Smith, Elizabeth Cannon, Lisa Abdelghani, Lisa Langellier, Mary Surprenant, Melissa Hallingsworth, Mia Harrier, Michael Marron, Tamera Forthenberry, and Tim Dudley.

Welcome and Icebreaker (5 minutes)

Notes: This meeting was a virtual meeting and council members attended via Zoom. A couple of fun Icebreaker questions were visually presented, and council members answered them as they logged on.

Reimagine ECEC in Vermilion County (60 minutes)

Notes: Council Members were asked to imagine Early Childhood Education and care in Region 54, ten years from now, in the year 2033. Not only as an overall system but also as it would be experienced by five unique stakeholders as they navigate the ECEC reimaged system. These stakeholders include a parent/caregiver, a provider, state/regional/local community organization, a young child, and a kindergarten teacher.

Council Members had a pretty good idea of what they would like the future outcome to be. They imagined a program that functions with “seamless transitions” for children from prenatal to the age of five when they begin kindergarten. They would like a program that allows caregivers to easily navigate a “worry-free” system as they attempt to identify resources for their children. In a perfect world “it (child care) wouldn’t be income based...simply just a program that offers equal opportunities and quality services for all children.”



“A centralized system that allows for great networking for providers instead of everyone operating their own little systems.” This would be a process that starts when an individual becomes pregnant, which would allow them to easily access the necessary resources and/or when a caregiver begins caring for a young child. All providers/social workers/teachers and anybody else who encounters the child would be able to talk to the caregiver and offer a personalized developmental plan that fits each child. Again, this is a seamless transition for caregivers and providers alike.

This imagined process would not only make it easier on parents and caregivers, but it would also give everybody, the child included, an opportunity to build trust between each other. There would be one starting point no matter the family situation while also being a great starting point for providers. The child would have the same providers to follow them throughout the process. Their caregivers would work with the child during this time to prepare them for kindergarten so they would be ready to transition.

Next Steps: Use the ECEC vision to help answer the parting questions.

Our Programs in Vermilion County (10 minutes)

Notes: Council members discussed the different types of programs offered in Vermilion County along with the definition of each program. Two different program types were discussed, Publicly Funded and Licensed Child Care:

- Publicly Funded Programs
 - Head start / Early Head Start
 - Preschool for All / Preschool for All – Expansion
 - Prevention Initiative
 - IL Department of Health Services Home visiting programs

- Licensed Child Care
 - Homes
 - Centers
 - Exempt Child Care Centers

Next Steps: Use this information to answer the Parting Questions



Parting Questions (40 minutes)

Notes: Council Members were asked to think about everything discussed thus far. To achieve our reimagined vision for ECEC, what is already being done, what still needs to be done, and what is stopping us from doing it?

- Vermilion County's iGrow and Early Child Care Agency are doing well with placing the correct referrals for a family's given situation. We have a lot of work ahead of us to create the vision we want.
- To achieve this goal Council Members mentioned some things that they think would help us get there. "We need a Birth to Five building to make things easier." This would be a building where all referral services would be located so parents/caregivers are not on a wild goose chase to find the resources they qualify for. Having everybody housed in one location would also be less intimidating and the child has a better chance of getting the help they deserve.
- Along with having a central location, it is important to hire and adequately train staff. Not only would staff be properly trained to care for each child, it will also build a relationship based on trust between staff and the parent/caregiver. More staff means we can fill more slots and serve more children at a time which benefits the provider and families.

To achieve the reimagined ECEC vision Vermilion County much work through existing barriers including the following:

- Trust issues – Parents have a hard time trusting improperly trained providers when it comes to their children.
- No Labor and delivery unit in the Danville hospital due to insufficient staffing. All births have to take place at a hospital outside of town.
- Funding and making sure providers get paid on time.
 - Publicly funded providers are often not paid in a timely manner.



- Providers need to ensure they are charging enough to run their business or take care of expenses on their end while also not charging too much that parents/caregivers are not able to afford the care.
- “Staffing and background checks are becoming a hassle.”
 - Ex: Employees sometimes find another job before their background checks come back for “this” job.

Next Steps: All the questions from today will be compiled into one document and sent to Council Members, not in attendance. This way they have the opportunity to provide input that will update the regional scan.