



## MEETING NOTES

### Region 54 Family Council Meeting

**Date & Time: Thursday February 9, 2023, 6:00 PM**

Council Members present: Xandra Anderson, Arian Dodge, Ariana Lawless, Ashley Omlor, Brittany Coleman, Diamond Moss, Haley Rhoades, Jennalynn Wright, Jenn Wright, Jonathan Munoz, Kari Hastings, Kourtney Manno, Kristina Dreher, Mindy Dolan, and Tateana Bailey

Council Members absent: Jerri Whetstone

#### **Welcome and Icebreaker (10 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 reimaged ECEC being pushed to its full potential. Resources would be centrally located. Providers would be fully staffed and not overworked. Not only would the employees be properly trained, but some would also specialize in special needs care. Council Members "would like to also see more (Child Care Center) options so parents (or caregivers) don't have to settle." It would be ideal to have more providers that offer second and third shift child care for the parents and caregivers that need it. "Less waitlisting for families and more affordable" is sought after in our reimaged system. With more centers, there would be more openings for children to help with the waitlists and "better pay and compensation" to make the employees want to stay.



Most importantly, Council Members would like to reimagine the system to be better for the children. “It’s the experience that matters.” The classrooms would have smaller teacher-to-child ratios. There would be a sensory path plan for more active children. “More group activities that fit into any work schedule” so that parents and caregivers don’t have to miss out. Also mentioned was kids need to be more prepared for kindergarten and accustomed to spending time away from families, making the transition to kindergarten easier.

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 (30 minutes)**

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

Vermilion County is “working to maintain, if not improve, what we already have.” Providers in our area are “noticing that all families are not the same and require



different resources”, encouraging them to slowly expand those existing programs into more of what our community wants and needs.

Although we have all these existing programs in our county, there is still a lot of work to be done to reach the reimagined vision. Employers are needing a full and adequately trained staff while also being able to properly compensate their employees. Properly training the staff will not only ensure that they are prepared but will also begin to build trust with parents/caregivers so that they feel comfortable that their child will be safe and provided for while they are away.

“Funding is needed” on many levels for what we are trying to achieve.

- Funding is needed for businesses to expand and provide better compensation for their employees. This would include paying for any training or classes that may be needed to properly do their job.
- Child care assistance is needed for people just starting a job after being out of work. Most of the time they are barely getting by without income let alone extra income to pay for childcare while they work particularly until they get their first paycheck.
- Council Members would also like for eligibility guidelines to be adjusted, “families are told that they make too much for assistance but they are still struggling”.

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