



## MEETING NOTES

### Region 54 Action Council Meeting

**Date & Time: Thursday January 10, 2023 1:00 PM**

Council Members present: Chris Rice, Cynthia Smith, Elizabeth Cannon, Kathy Vines, Lisa Abdelghani, Melissa Hollingsworth, Mia Harrier, Niah Hamilton, Odette Hyatt-Watson, Tamara L Red, and Tamera Forthenberry

Council Members absent: Cindy Montgomery, Kris Kellerhals, Lisa Langellier, Mary Surprenant, Mike Marron, Paige Rogge, and Tim Dudley

#### **Welcome and Icebreaker (15 minutes)**

Notes: With new members on the council meeting, members took a moment to reintroduce themselves and tell what their favorite thing about break was. This meeting was hybrid; Tammy made sure that everybody had the chance to speak via in person or Zoom.

#### **Discuss Local Community Collaborations (65 minutes)**

Notes: To begin the presentation there was a recap on why Birth to Five Illinois was gathering data, and what our goal was to use it for. Tammy took this opportunity to introduce the two guest speakers – Niah Hamilton with iGrow and Chris Johnson with LIC. Both presenters spoke about what their collaborations were about and what type of programs they offer.

Decisions made: Caylynne is going to reach out to the Danville Public Library to ask about holding focus group meetings with targeted audiences including but are not limited to: Fathers, Hispanics, Foster Parents, Young Parents (18 and older), and Faith community.

Next Steps: Tammy is sending out a Google Form Survey for an after meeting follow up (this is referred to in next section). This gives the council members the opportunity to think about what was discussed at the meeting and put together their own thoughts. Along with the survey, the Birth to Five Illinois team will be reaching out to



begin the focus group process. We will be reaching out to decided targeted audience, research places to hold focus group meetings.

### **Review and Recap (30 minutes)**

Notes: Tammy had sent out a Google Form with the questions talked about in the meeting. Council members responded with the following:

1. What organizations and/or initiatives are currently in place in our region to support families as they prepare their children to thrive in kindergarten?
  - iGrow
  - District 118 Preschool for All
  - Head Start
  - Birth to Five of Illinois. Initiatives: Step-up, Head Start Birth to Five Policy Council and Special Education in Schools
  - Dolly Parton Imagination Library - United Way of Danville Area Program
  - WIC education
  - Highly capable kids' classes
  - Women's Care Clinic
  - Love INC
  - Home visiting agencies
  
2. Based on your knowledge and experience, are there areas of the region and/or families that are not being effectively served by ECEC programs or services? Why do you think these areas/families are not effectively served?
  - I believe that families who reside in the rural areas and home school children with special needs may not have easy access to ECEC programs. Why? Personnel shortages and transportation barriers... poverty and lack of knowledge of what may be available.
  - Yes - many people do not know how to connect with the services. They are overwhelmed with the idea of finding help and the many programs- so they often don't get any services
  - Rural towns (Bismarck, Fairmont) do not have access to as many services. I feel they don't have as many options due to the distance away from Danville as Danville serves more people. I also feel transportation and staffing is an issue.



- Middle class families who make too much for help but not enough to pay \$700 plus a month in childcare because we don't qualify for any programs.

3. If areas of the region/families are not effectively served, would establishing an ECEC community collaboration be a reasonable first step in serving children and families? Why or why not?

- Yes. But I believe that we need to begin in the hospitals at the birth of the children and with the pediatricians. Getting those two systems to understand the need and making the referral may be a great asset.
- I think it would be. It shows initiative that has been lacking to this region and families.
- I feel having ECEC could be a new start for our region to look at how we can service our community better. It benefits the entire region where it's accessible to everyone there would be more interest.
- It would as long as the adequate education is given to the families, and they correctly understand the services.

4. If establishing an ECEC community collaboration would help address the lack of ECEC programs and services, what support might be needed to get it going?

- Finding people who are dedicated to helping with it and want to make a difference, fundraising or donations to help with cost, finding people who have the qualifications to teach our kids what they need to know and most of all families who would be interested in it and help support it as well.
- Networking opportunities
- School support, community support
- Coordinated system of referring and tracking
- As discussed during the meeting, funding sources, a local entity to take up the cause, agency, and school buy-in (all stakeholders)

5. If establishing an ECEC community collaboration is not the first step, what needs to happen first?

- Education of the medical community to get referrals moving.
- Sharing up the services that are currently available, improving communication between providers



- I think the focus group is a good first step on at least finding people who want to make a difference and are willing to help and support it along the way.
- Data showing the needs of our region and having those aware at the state level of the limited resources we do have

6. What are the benefits of establishing/not establishing a community collaboration?

- If we don't have a community collaboration it doesn't allow for our families to thrive and it does a complete disservice for the families in our region
- More are educated on the resources available in the community
- Collective impact on the community
- All stakeholders will be familiar /aware of community needs and resources available.
- It's a way to get an inside perspective from people experiencing the disconnect in programming options

7. What questions remain unanswered with respect to community collaborations that we might explore via interviews and focus groups?

- What can we do to help get the funding for it and how can we help get organizations involved to help and bring more people together.
- What do the parents want?
- How to best serve the underserved and what resources are available to do it.

Next Steps: Responses from Google Survey will be used to complete the Regional Scan Document the Birth to Five Illinois team is putting together.