



MEETING NOTES

Region 1-B-C Action Council Meeting

Date & Time: March 23, 2023, 4:30 pm-6:30 pm

Council Members present: Janis Jones, Michelle-Zurita Sharpe, Felicia McBride, Rochelle Golliday, Kelly Burke, Gretchen Bailey, Leatha Asbury, Janice Martin
Council Members absent: Adelicia Brienzo

4:30 pm: Welcomes/Icebreaker (15 mins)

In honor of Women's History Month, please share a woman who has influenced you and why?

Notes: N/A

Decisions Made: N/A

Next Steps: N/A

4:45 pm: Review of Community Agreements and Best Practices (5 mins)

Notes:

- Action Council Members reviewed Community Agreements and Best Practices and decided not to change the current agreements.

Decisions Made: N/A

Next Steps: N/A

4:50 pm: Updates (10 mins)

- **Focus Groups/Interviews**
- **Action Council Recommendations**
- **Family Council Update**

Notes:

- Ashonti Jackson-Regional Council-Manager reviewed Region 1-B-C (Cook County South) Updates on Focus Groups/Interviews, and we are still in the process of hosting focus groups/interviews; explained that we would be emailing "Action Council Recommendations" word doc, and we need them to send back their responses as soon as they can and was updated on the Family Council Meeting dates and times.



Decisions Made: N/A

Next Steps: Leah Armour-Regional Admin Support, will email Action Council with "Action Council Recommendations" Word Doc included.

5:00 pm: ECEC Programs (40 mins)

- **Early Intervention**
 - **Early Intervention with Karen Withgott, Parent Liaison/LIC Coordinator, CFC 12**

Notes:

- Birth to Five Illinois: Region 1-B-C invited Karen Withgott, Parent Liaison, and LIC Coordinator, to join the Action Council meeting to discuss what her program offers and to answer any questions that Action Council Members may have. Below are some things that were discussed during her presentation on Early Intervention:
 - EI Provides support and services for families to help children three or younger meet developmental milestones and a child must have a significant delay in at least one area of development, have a condition known to cause disability or delay or be at high risk for a substantial developmental delay to receive services and the services are typically provided in a child's natural environment.
 - Many children are being referred to EI since Covid.
 - LIC is having trouble recruiting therapists and its very tough staffing issues: the staff is overworked and underpaid.
 - They have 2,050 referrals for Early Intervention as of 03/23/23, CFC Receives 20 referrals daily, and children age out every day.
 - Action Council Members wanted to know why there aren't many Early Intervention programs in the south suburbs and why it takes so long for someone to get back to them:
 - Karen was able to provide resources that can help with some of the delays in someone getting back to them but also made them aware of them being 2-3 weeks behind on referrals, and a lot of this is due to understaffing.
 - Parents shouldn't be uncomfortable contacting their service provider, especially since (if they have questions) regarding their children's case.



Decisions Made: N/A

Next Steps: Leah-Regional Admin Support will email Action Council Members Karen's contact information for any additional questions.

5:40 pm: Breakout Session 1 (20 mins)

- 1. What is the region's current early childhood care and education (ECEC) landscape?**
- 2. What insights about the ECEC landscape stand out?**
- 3. Are there any local or regional programs or funding sources supporting ECEC services?**

Notes:

Action Council Members were placed in Breakout groups where they were asked the two above questions, and they were asked to put their responses in the Zoom chat, and the reactions would be discussed with the whole group. Action Council Members' responses are below:

- 1. What is the region's current early childhood care and education (ECEC) landscape?**
 - We need to change it; our children's needs aren't being met.
 - In areas with service, the funding isn't following more direct funding streams.
- 2. What insights about the ECEC landscape stand out?**
 - Most programs are on the eastern side of the region and not a lot on the western.
 - Lack of supportive services.
 - There is a need for more communication between services - how families can access more with less runaround.
 - Lack of wrap-around services.
 - Need for bilingual EC workforce and services.
 - Need Lots of money.
 - No accountability for collaboration
- 3. Are there any local or regional programs or funding sources supporting ECEC services?**
 - Libraries, Park Districts, **and** Barbershops are funding sources that are helping to support families in region 1-B-C.

Decisions Made: N/A

Next Steps: Action Council Members will receive a Jamboard link in a follow-up email to continue to add their thoughts on ECEC landscapes.



6:00 pm: Questions to Consider (15 mins)

- **The following questions below were shared with Action Council Members during the Action Council Meeting and sent via email:**
 - 1. What data is unavailable or would be helpful to have in this discussion?**
 - 2. Whose voices haven't been heard in the data discussion so far? Who needs to be recruited for focus groups/interviews?**
 - 3. What does the data tell us about what our region might need in the future?**

Notes: N/A

Decisions Made: N/A

Next Steps: N/A

6:15 pm: Recommendations (15 mins)

- **What does the data tell us about what our region might need in the future?**
 - ECEC programs are not identifying all the children in need of services, and many of those identified are refusing services due to waiting lists, lack of transportation, lack of culturally and linguistically diverse staff, virtual vs. in-person services, and scheduling conflicts due to half- vs. full-day ECEC program options.
 - Highly qualified early childhood staff that reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the community is needed, along with instructional coaches and infant-child mental health consultants, are required within these programs to support teachers and prevent burnout.
 - Funding to hire bi- or multilingual family/community liaisons that can share resources and make referrals and connections between families and community organizations/ECEC programs are a must.
 - Families need to be invited into safe spaces to connect, learn about community resources, and be given regular opportunities to share feedback and experiences.
 - Increased funding for interpreters and translation services is required to accomplish this goal.
- **How can the regional Birth to Five Action and Family Councils support local collaboration efforts?**
 - We need an Early Childhood Collaborative led by a diverse representation of board members who are highly knowledgeable in the



field, active community leaders, and ongoing technical support from an agency such as IL Action for Children.

- The collaborative must actively and consistently partner with local healthcare clinics, pediatric offices, hospitals, and other community organizations that would provide family support identified through needs assessments.
- **What are parent preferences for your region's Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programs and services?**
 - Families transitioning out of EI need a smoother transition process in which staff can continue meeting the child's and family's needs in their home environment.
 - Medical care, mental health services, financial support through local WIC offices, food pantries responsive to families' cultural, dietary, and religious needs, and housing assistance are crucial to address systemic inequities.
- **What will the region need in the future to support early education and care? What changes need to be made to support families in 1, 2, or 5 years?**
 - A strong ECEC collaborative that includes the ECEC program and family representation and infant-child mental health consultants, pediatricians/health clinics, family/community liaisons, and outreach coordinators must be established to sustain ECEC programming and services that all families have equitable access. We must continue to train and recruit highly qualified, diverse early childhood professionals and build parent mentor programs that empower families to take an active role in their school communities.

Next Meeting

April 13, 2023, Zoom Meeting