



MEETING NOTES

Region 13 Action Council Meeting

Date & Time: March 9, 2023, 12:30pm-2:30pm

Council Members present: Kara Boozer, Crystal Donoho, April Higgins, Maria Koehler, Jessica Palazzolo, BreeAnna Pelcynski, Jill Wardlow

Council Members absent: Tranae Brockhouse, Jennifer Clark, Emma Conway, Shirley Gordon, Ashley Griffin, Makyla Hargrave, Mary Hart, Christy Jean, Deborah Lewis

12:30 Welcome, Introductions, Ice Breaker & Community Agreements (9 mins)

Notes:

- Birth to Five Staff: Heather Pruettt – Regional Council Manager, Brittany Lemons – Family & Community Engagement Specialist, Jessica Chin – Administrative Support
- Members: Kara Boozer – Youth development educator at the University of Illinois Extension, Crystal Donoho – Director of Children’s Learning Center at Kaskaskia College, April Higgins – Quality Compliance Manager at Heat Start, Maria Koehler – Director at Head Start, Jessica Palazzolo – Manager at Lincoln Prairie Behavioral Health Center, BreeAnna Pelcynski – Special Education Teacher in Nashville, Jill Wardlow – Program Director for the Regional Office of Education Preschool for All
- Members introduced themselves and talked about their favorite way to reduce stress in their life.
- Community Agreements for an effective meeting space were reviewed.

12:39 Family Council Updates & Regional Scan Review (8 mins)

Notes:

- Brittany reviewed updates from the Family Council and Focus Groups.
- Heather shared what was captured from our previous Early Childhood Education and Care Programs discussion.

Decisions made:

- The Action Council can continue to pose questions or request information from the Family Council and vice versa to continue working side by side.

Next Steps:

- Email Heather if any additional information should be added to the Regional Scan.

2:47 ECEC Programs Continued (Child Care) (13 mins)

Notes:

- Presented Region 13's Early Childhood Education and Care Program data and asset map.
- Reviewed Region 13's Child Care Site and Capacity by License Type data.
- "We are not full. Not anywhere close to full. We are currently licensed for 69 and we have 21 children enrolled. We do have a huge waitlist, but we don't have enough staff even being on the community college campus which has an early childhood education program."
- "Not having infant care up to this point has been a huge barrier. I get calls every day for infant care. We called every center within a 20-mile radius of the college and every single one was full with a waitlist with infants."

Decisions made:

- There are not many licensed centers or homes in the region. Those that do exist are full or nearly full or are unable to provide care during the hours families need.

1:00 Workforce – Data Presentation and Discussion (1 hour)

Notes:

- Evaluated Licensed Center and Family Child Care Workforce data and statistics.
- "My sister teaches in District 80 in Mount Vernon and they have a Grow Your Own Program. My sister's aide is going back to school and the district is helping her so she can advance to become a teacher instead of just an assistant. I thought it was neat that there is an initiative."
- "We are trying to meet standards that are above the DCFS minimum. It is so hard day by day to do that when I don't know if I will have enough teachers to staff my classrooms. We are unable to provide the quality of care that we want to and that we should every single day because of a lack of workforce."
- "Teachers have voiced that being understaffed, not having resources or supports, and unqualified people in the building causes them to take on a larger load which causes more stress and is pushing people out of the industry. On a good day, it is mentally exhausting. When we have to do the extra work and load it is even harder."

Decisions Made:

- Region 13 is not very diverse in the Early Childhood Education and Care workforce. This is not very shocking considering our demographics.
- Many high schools in Region 13 offer early childhood education classes as dual credits.

- Workforce is a huge part of quality in child care. Programs barely have enough staff to stay open at this point which affects the quality.
- Programs want to offer supports, incentives, and benefits for their staff, but the main barrier is funding.
- Reasons why employees are leaving the workforce:
 - Pay: ECEC can not compete with school districts
 - Stress Level
 - Benefits
 - Resources
 - Mental Health
 - Work-Life Balance

Next Steps:

- If there is anything that we missed in the workforce discussion, please reach out to us so we can add it.
- Council Members who were not in attendance are encouraged to contribute to the discussion via questions sent by email.

2:00 Meeting 8 Preview, Review Training Opportunities, Closing Comments (10 mins)

Notes:

- The next Action Council meeting will include Workforce and Parents/Caregivers and Families.
- On-demand foundational trainings were shared.
- Discussed focus groups and interviews and requested members to send the consent form to anyone they believe would like to share their experiences.
- Shared when Region 13 will be hosting Town Halls in April.

Decisions made:

- The Action Council decided that using a case study would be helpful during our Parents/Caregivers and Families discussion.

Next Steps:

- If you would like to participate in the Town Hall Meetings, please fill out the form to tell us what Early Childhood Education and Care topics you would like to hear about or discuss.
- Our next meeting will be March 30th at 12:30pm.