



## MEETING NOTES

### Region 8 Action Council Meeting

**Date & Time: March 15, 2023, 1 p.m.**

IN PERSON: Ashley, Sarah, Devan, Chandra.

ZOOM: Amanda, Emily, Stephanie L.

Regional Council Manager Lou Ann Hayes called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m.

Lou Ann began the meeting by giving an update on the progress of our regional scan and the general process of the Action Council assigned tasks. Each member was given a copy of what has been completed on the scan so far and was asked to review it and send feedback to us as well as what is missing.

Lou Ann then reviewed the original responses from the Kick-Off Event held in July 2022 to see how they compare to now. Some statements are different and there have been many adjustments. She said after many months of gathering information, we can confirm a lot of what was said back then. Some updates since then are new child care centers in East Dubuque and Scales Mound.

Also, Berner Foods is changing from 12-hour shifts to 8-hour ones which likely will benefit parents with scheduling. Lou Ann and Stephanie L also will be touring empty buildings owned by Freeport Health Network as possible sites Head Start may be able to use. Still, many businesses still do not understand the desperate situation child care is in regarding space and staff.

Even though there may be additional openings in the future, Sarah said that doesn't necessarily fix the problem. She said just having open slots doesn't entirely meet the needs of the child. We need to focus on the family and what the child's needs are more than just creating open slots and filling them with kids on waiting lists. Ashley said it's still huge progress to get in the door at these places and begin conversations.

Sarah said funds are there to open more centers, but need space and staff. Ashley said her agency is looking to expand and could the Regional Office of Education play a part in that? Sarah said funds allocated to the ROE have been frozen at the same amount



for two years. If this continues, ROE will have no additional funds and may have to cut services or people.

Sarah said Universal Preschool likely is coming within 5-10 years starting with 4-year-olds and working down. It's critical to prepare staff for the type of students that will be entering the system at that point, as kids of today are not the same type as years ago due to COVID and other factors.

Lou Ann told the members a grant idea she had sent them that would teach parents how to do things like give a bath or change a diaper likely will not be pursued. It requires yearly funding. Devan said there are similar existing programs that do have some criteria that have to be met to participate. However, there is a lot of staff turnover for many reasons. Ashley said it would be more effective if we support the programs we already have instead of adding more and there is no trained workforce to add other programs anyway.

Lou Ann asked how does our region get that workforce in place and recruit more people to the area to do the child care jobs? Ashley said people need to feel safe in the communities, especially Freeport. Need more businesses open late and night-life options. Lou Ann thought a volunteer committee would be helpful to show candidates for jobs around the community and sell all it has to offer.

Sarah said we also need to ask what we are doing to keep current residents/employees here. Seek out the people who want to be invested here and keep them. There are positive people here but are overshadowed by the negative things. All agreed there are strengths that must be expanded and awareness increased.

There are many needs though such as dental and vision care for low-income families. Services are limited with a visiting dentist twice a month and only two vision centers taking the medical card.

Asked what voices are missing from the scan, members said grandparents raising children is a common situation now. The meeting was adjourned at 2:28.

Todd McKenna  
Administrative Support  
Birth to Five Illinois Region 8

