



MEETING NOTES

Region 8 Action Council Meeting

Date & Time: April 5, 2023, 1 p.m.

IN PERSON: Stephanie K

ZOOM: Sarah, Jenine, Amanda, Amiee, Ashley, Emily, Stephanie L

Regional Council Manager Lou Ann Hayes called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

Lou Ann told the council members this meeting would focus on identifying our priority areas for the Regional Scan. Once those are decided, it will help direct the content and layout of the document.

Stephanie K first asked for clarification on what a "slot" is defined as according to the numbers included in the draft of our Regional Scan. Dean said the numbers come from IEACAM and census counts. Ashley and Stephanie K said they have different numbers. Dean said he has revised the Scan numbers after editing and are more consistent with what Ashley and Stephanie K have, but will further check them.

As far as what is Region 8's story and what priority needs are here, council members agreed the #1 need is a qualified, fully-trained workforce in the child care universe in our region. Without people willing to staff classrooms, it doesn't matter how many new slots are created.

But the #2 need is increasing the number of openings for child care so kids now on long waiting lists can have a place to go. Sarah added just expanding the slots isn't enough, though, as providers need to be meeting the needs of the families that will fill those slots. Even if kids are attending child care, that doesn't mean their needs or those of the family are being met such as with wrap-around child care before and after school and preschool daycare among others.

The third priority need is space. There needs to be more space for classrooms which then will open up slots to families currently waiting for child care in a center. Space is critical because providers can have all the other things in place, but if there is no space available, it's not going to help get more kids into a child care center with qualified staff.



Council members also cited transportation and appropriate compensation for all child care staff as needing emphasis as well. While there undoubtedly are other needs in our Region 8, solving issues in providing the top three listed will go a long way to help the problem. Stephanie L said while working on the top three issues, there also needs to be parallel efforts to address the mental health of families and help them simply to stabilize their lives where needed. That can be achieved simply by getting them transportation to a doctor's appointment or providing parenting training as well.

Sarah said supporting parents in many ways is a huge priority as there are no programs from the Regional Office of Education to help parents once their kids turn age 3. Head Start is the only agency that offers that. Sarah said parents of 3-5-year-olds may not need much other than to hold their hand and give them reassurance while showing the right direction of what they should be doing at this point.

Stephanie said there still are ways to help parents in those situations if they have an older child in school and another in pre-K. She frequently sees transportation issues in particular for those families because the Pretzel City transit buses are limited with how and when services are available.

Members also said more in-home care is needed for families with kids 0-3. There is a high need for this.

Lou Ann said once the Regional Scan is finished, we will be taking it out into our communities and presenting it as what the child care needs are. We also need them to go along at times to give a first-hand voice of what the problems are. Stephanie L said people need to realize preschools now aren't the same as preschools were 3-5 years ago. They've changed and so have the needs.

Dean then gave an update on the Family Council discussions.

The meeting adjourned at 2:03 p.m. The next meeting is at 1 p.m. on April 19.

Todd McKenna
Administrative Support
Birth to Five Illinois Region 8

