



MEETING NOTES

Region 41 Action Council and Family Council Joint Virtual Meeting

Date & Time: 01/25/2023, 6:00pm-8:00pm

Action Council Members present: Terri Mussatto, Barbara Corby, Amy Knackstedt, Aimee Villet, Kyra Lakin, Wendy Phillips, Esther Beard

Action Council absent: Sister M. Kateri, Donna Dixon, Lauren Jacobs, Kristy Smiley, Christine Coleman, Veneta Wadlow, Timothy Rhymer, Michelle Wright, Amber Mezo, Heidi Elliott

Family Council Members present: Chelsea Ferguson, Dawna Miller, Shawn Foles, Erica Hanke-Young, Megan Prueter

Family Council absent: Teri Mustain, Krystle Huelsman, Kelly Martin, Jessica Lewey, Alecia Peacock

Birth to Five Illinois Guest: Dena Chapman- Family & Community Engagement Manager

Joint Councils' Community Agreements: Active Listening, confidentiality, seeking clarification when needed, using positive body language, being respectful of different viewpoints, being open to different opinions, and willingness to share opinions without judgment.

6:00pm Welcome & Get to Know You (15 min)

Notes:

- Council members introduced themselves.
- Ice Breaker: What is your favorite childhood game?

Decisions Made: N/A

Next Steps: N/A

6:15pm Community Agreements, Meeting Roles (10 min)

Notes:

- Council members discussed the importance of having shared community agreements for this new group. Volunteers were asked to serve two meeting roles.



Decisions Made: Joint Council created community agreements. Meeting roles were established.

Next Steps: N/A

6:25pm Early Childhood Education and Care Programs (15 min)

Notes:

- Council members participated in a reimagining activity and were asked to do some small group work. Small group members were invited to imagine Madison County's Early Childhood Education and Care system ten years from now and engage in conversation. Council members discussed the following:
 - What is it like to be a parent or caregiver who accesses the early care and education system,
 - What is it like to be a provider,
 - What is it like to be a state, regional, local, or community organization, and
 - What is it like to be a young child participating?

Decisions Made: N/A

Next Steps: N/A

6:40pm Share Out (15 min)

Notes:

- Council members shared some of each small group's discussion. Members shared the following:
 - A variety of programs that offered enrollment eligibility for all children,
 - No waiting lists with many choices,
 - Supports in each education setting/room that included specialists that could help meet sensory and behavioral needs. Ex OT in every classroom.
 - Bilingual teachers to support all languages,
 - Sensory-safe places in all education settings/rooms,
 - Early identification and options for the youngest learners beginning at birth,
 - Affordable care for all families,
 - Equitable practices being used by everyone,
 - Accessible programming for all families
 - Effective teaming so providers can support all families throughout the time that the child is enrolled in a program,



- Qualified staff,
- Equitable pay and benefits, and
- Resources available for all families, regardless of location.
- Access to help for disabilities and identification being streamlined and FAST.
- More training is offered to parents/caregiver.
- Resources and information freely shared versus feeling like you are on an island.
- Increased funding especially for children with special needs.
- Streamlined support for parents, caregivers, & providers.
- All children feel accepted and included.
- All children have a home and one site to receive care.
- All children are freely accepting of one another.

Decisions Made: N/A

Next Steps: N/A

6:55pm Break (5 minutes)

7:00pm Early Childhood Education and Care Landscape (30 min)

Notes:

- Council members worked in small groups to discuss some targeting questions about the early care and education landscape in Madison County. Questions posed were the following:
 - What do we currently have in place that supports your vision,
 - How do those items support your vision,
 - What about our systems are preventing you from achieving your vision, and
 - What needs to happen to achieve your vision?

7:30pm Share Out (20 min)

Notes: Each small group shared with the joint Council.

- *What do we have in place that supports your vision?*
 - Quality early childhood education and care programs such as Early Intervention, Head Start, Prevention Initiative, Stronger Beginnings
 - Mental health supports available
 - Bilingual programs in select schools
 - Sensory spaces in classrooms



- Library support
- Many options are available for people that can access them.
- Collaboration with Head Start and Collinsville School District
- Quite a few community groups
- *How do those items support your vision?*
 - We have enough providers in Madison County to serve the families in Early Intervention.
 - Libraries collaborate and offer free resources and services.
 - We have programs that offer care at an affordable rate or no charge.
 - Some schools offer in classroom supports for children with disabilities.
- *What about our current systems are preventing you from achieving your vision?*
 - Myriad mandates
 - Redundancy within community groups
 - Waiting lists (some families are on a list for many years)
 - Licensing standards for teachers are not comparable to nearby states.
 - Families do not know their options.
 - Credentialing for early interventionists is difficult and not comparable to nearby states.
 - Existing programs are not accessible to everyone.
 - Staff are not equipped to support children. Covid prevented students from experiencing the classroom before they graduated.
 - Policies do not reflect adequate amounts of support that children and families need in the earliest of years.
 - Lack of staffing
 - Lack of mental health training and behavioral training
 - Services, such as mental health, are difficult to find and most do not accept public assistance.
 - Staff not equipped to understand how to support children that are not regulated.
 - Programs need more funding and training for staff and parents.
 - We have areas of the County where there are no to little early care and education options.
 - Transportation not accessible to all
 - Montessori (AMI) does not align with the DCFS requirements for licensing.



- Most programs do not work together.
- *What needs to happen to achieve your vision?*
 - Make teaching a notable profession again
 - Self-care for everyone. Manage staff stress levels so they can continue the work
 - Adequate funding and resources for families and providers.
 - More training for staff, especially around topics that target challenging behaviors.
 - Support all staff with becoming trauma informed.
 - Higher pay, benefits, and insurance for childcare providers
 - Simplify the process so that children receive specialized services faster.
 - Faster payments to providers
 - Ongoing grants to support sustainability.
 - Examine the current programs and systems to make them more equitable and accessible.
 - Streamline the process for parents from prenatal through the transition to Kindergarten.
 - Programs collaborating with one another.
 - Educate decision-makers.
 - Grants to support competitive pay for paraprofessionals and other support staff.
 - Need more employee advantages so that people want to work in early childhood.
 - Reliable screenings in all doctor offices that see children ages birth through five years of age (no parent filling out a questionnaire in isolation) so that intervention can occur earlier.
 - Service providers in all classrooms to help children learn to regulate.
 - County-wide collaboration including all early childhood education and care programs.
 - Provide more bilingual classrooms.
 - Affordable care
 - Streamline paperwork for reimbursement.
 - DCFS standards that align with curriculum (AMI)

Decisions Made: Send another invite to legislatures.

Next Steps: Representative Amy Elik will be attending our April 2023 Council meeting.



7:50pm Take Away (5 min)

Notes:

- Council member(s) shared that this process is overwhelming, but at the same time it is great to know that stakeholders are coming together to amplify family VOICE.
- There are many possibilities, and this process is a positive one.
- Members remain curious about what the decision-makers will do with the information in the Regional Scan.
- Invest early to see the benefits and impact; investment now means less support for adults and a much-needed workforce. Members would like to see the data that supports this investment.
- Every dollar spent in early intervention saves seventeen dollars later.
- We have data regarding the outcome differences when a child with a disability is fully included and when the child is not.
- Even though our current landscape and offerings aren't the best they can be, there is a lot of action and hope for the future through this work.
- Decisions Made: We need to collect some additional data regarding the cost analysis.

Next Steps: Research from James Heckman will be shared around the ROI in early learning with council members. According to Heckman "High-quality, birth-to-five programs for disadvantaged children deliver a 13% per year return on investment— substantially higher than the 7- 10% return previously established for preschool programs." as found in [ABC/CARE Cost-Benefit Analysis Advocate Webinar Briefing](#).

7:55pm Upcoming Events (5 min)

Notes:

- Region 41 is hosting focus groups and interviews. A survey will be ready to be sent soon. Council members were asked to recommend people or groups that we have not heard from yet so that all voices are represented in this scan.

Decisions Made: We need to continue to recruit stakeholders for focus groups and interviews.

Next Steps: Members to help recommend groups and individuals who can participate.

8:00pm Adjourn