



MEETING NOTES

Region 54 Action Council Meeting

Date & Time: Tuesday December 13, 2022 11:30 AM

Council Members present: Chris Rice, Cindy Montgomery, Cynthia Smith, Elizabeth Cannon, Mary Surprenant, Melissa Hollingsworth, Mia Harrier, Michael Marron, Niah Hamilton, Odette Hyatt-Watson, Tamara L Red, and Tim Dudley

Council Members absent: Kathy Vines, Kris Kellerhals, Lisa Abdelghani, Lisa Langellier, Paige Rogge, and Tamera Forthenberry

Welcome & Introductions & Icebreaker (20 minutes)

Notes: Council Members and staff took turns introducing themselves for new members.

Discuss Slot Gap (20 Minutes)

Notes: A PowerPoint was put together with graphs and information about different levels of poverty for families (information shared was from 2019-2020-most recent reported). Included in the Slot Gap report was the number Child Care centers and licensed home childcare providers. We shared the comparison between spots available and the number of children under the age of five within Vermilion County. While reviewing this information, Council members were asked to think about the questions listed below to discuss after the PowerPoint.

Review and Recap (70 Minutes)

Notes: Council members were given a list of questions to discuss:

- What is the gap between the total number of children and early care and education programs and total services in the region?
- What is the gap between publicly funded programs and children eligible for publicly funded programs in the region?
- What are the possible drivers of the gap in care in the region?
- What data is missing that would be helpful to have to make a better analysis of the slot gap?



- What other indicators should be considered alongside the slot gap?
- Is there anything from the demographic discussion that can contribute to our understanding of the slot gap in the region?

With these questions, Council members brought up a lot of great points and their own questions including:

- I know a lot of daycares closed in 2020 so some of these numbers (on the website) may be wrong.
- What about homeschooling? (Not being reported so we can't account for them)
- Families on Welfare "don't want to work". The government made it easy for them not to by offering free programs with the nonworking families.
- A lot of children that are not a daycare setting before kindergarten are not being prepared for them to start kindergarten.
- Transportation is a big issue, especially in smaller communities. Children are missing out simply because the parents cannot get them there.
- Sometimes there is just an overall lack of knowledge of what programs are available for children.
- Based on statistics, you only know, quiet often, about what you are brought up with in your home. Some people may not know about overcoming poverty.
- People may believe that since they do not qualify for one program then they won't qualify for another program.
- We need to get the word out, campaign, on the different opportunities for children.
- The love for the children by the parent/caregiver will bring the children to the programs, it's the lack of knowledge about the programs that is stopping the children from getting the opportunity.
- Knowing more about each family's situation would be helpful. Are the children staying with birth parents, one parent, foster parents, grandparents, ect.
- We have the spots in the center, I don't have the staff. Staff are leaving for better paying positions.
- College students are not completing the Early Childhood Program because you must work unpaid for 400 hours without pay to get the qualifications needed for the Degree. That is hard to do when you have small children.
- Working with children is not for everybody. It is a field that you must WANT to work in. The Early Childhood field is hard both financially and mentally.



- Students go out and a crew all this college debt and leave for jobs when we have places here in our county that will pay for schooling, and you would have a job in the field when you got done.
- Background checks take forever, people end up looking elsewhere for a job so that they can start working ASAP.

Decisions made:

Parting Questions (5 Minutes)

Notes: Council members were asked to think about all the information shared with this thus far and what else would they like to see regarding the reginal scan.

- Is there a higher percentage of families in poverty after age five? With the cost of diapers and formula, things of that sort, what is the pull for families after age five?