



REGION 8 ACTION COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

1 p.m. Dec 7, 2022, Stewart Centre Freeport

PRESENT: Sarah Kuhlemeier, Stephanie Koclanis, Kenny Lewis, Ashley Harms, Stephanie Lewis, Jenine Patty-Anderson, Amanda Meyers.

ZOOM: State Rep. Tony McCombie, Amiee Schoenhaar, Emily Dixon, Devan Spellman, Deeann Kramer, Chandra Morris.

ABSENT: Michelle DeHaven.

Regional Council Manager Lou Ann Hayes called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. and began with Council members introducing themselves.

Lou Ann then gave a short PowerPoint presentation to start the discussion on topics targeted for the meeting. The first referred to Meaningful Family Engagement and what the Council thought that meant. Answers included personalized approach, paperwork assistance, tours, meeting families where they are, and not pushing agendas.

The next discussion topic focused on what do we do well regarding childcare in our region. Council members responded our region excels at hosting family events that are well-attended and that agencies partner well in Stephenson County with a team approach. We are good at referrals to the proper agencies.

Council members then were asked what can be done differently. Answers included expanding services in Carroll and Jo Daviess Counties. Others said coordinating intake, reducing paperwork and familiarizing families with all services available since some don't understand the difference between programs.

Members added they must communicate so they are understood in talking with families. Often, it's easy to slip into industry jargon that could overwhelm people. Another suggestion for improvement was in a family crisis, handle their immediate needs first and not have seven different agencies come at once to get them for every service they will use at some point. Still another idea was simply to have a three-county event for all childcare workers to meet each other and learn what they do. Many do not know their counterparts in other counties.



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Lou Ann then presented some slides with demographic information, region poverty levels, and kindergarten readiness. Members pointed out the numbers don't include Covid babies and the number of non-working parents in families at the poverty level seemed low.

Members offered thoughts on the trend of high percentages not ready for kindergarten that included a switch on how kids are evaluated from previous years. They requested a graph with the numbers instead and Lou Ann will try to find that from IECAM. They also want to know where IECAM is getting its data because they know there are gaps of kids missing. Members said data needs to be more current as well. All agreed more work needs to be done to get the kids ready.

Lou Ann told council members the Illinois State Board of Education is asking our Action Councils what the region's needs are. Members said priorities are space with many agencies having long wait lists, and staff shortage, although there are more people in certification programs now.

Another need they mentioned is someone to act as an "educational navigator" to help families get access to programs and then help guide them through the process of completing paperwork for those programs. Members gave examples of families they've encountered where the parents can't read or have no reliable transportation to get to the agencies to fill out the paperwork.

The next meeting was scheduled for 1 p.m. on Jan 4 as a Zoom only at the request of members.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Todd McKenna
Administrative Support
Birth to Five Illinois Region 8

