



REGION 8 FAMILY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

6:30 p.m. Jan 26, 2023, Stewart Centre Freeport

ATTENDING ON ZOOM DUE TO WEATHER: Casey, Brooke, Becky, Ashley, Brittany, Lauren, Brianna, Jane, Samantha.

Family and Community Engagement Specialist Dean Wright called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and introduced new members.

Regional Council Manager Lou Ann Hayes updated council members on what was discussed in the Action Council meetings. She asked members how they found out about pre-school screenings. Most said there was no coordinated information from school districts, instead they relied on friends, Facebook and word of mouth. They discussed better ways the information could get out.

Dean showed a power point beginning with the population of children in Region 8 and then where the Early Childhood Education and Care centers are located. Discussion followed on if the information is accurate and why there are so many children 0-5 in the region and so few ECEC slots available for them for pre-school.

With nine members present, Dean asked them to share what problems they encountered when trying to get their kids into ECEC programs. Answers covered a wide range of experiences. Brittany said her daughter was an at-risk kid due to medical issues, while Jane said her small town has only two licensed providers which is down from five a couple years ago.

Other issues mentioned were lack of wrap-around care before and after school and also the lack of initiative from school districts to contact parents of newborns and those that do not qualify for pre-school and follow up with them to give them the information the kids need to be prepared for kindergarten.

A huge issue members complained about was the lack of information about pre-school screenings as far as when and where they would be held. Also when parents did attend screenings and if their kids were turned down for enrollment, there was no information given to them with other options for ECEC.



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Casey and Jane said the timing of the screenings was difficult to manage and Jane even had to take the day off work to go. Because their kids couldn't get into the school pre-school programs, Ashley and Lauren had to drive to nearby towns to get their kids into ECEC. Brooke's mom helps with her kids, but sometimes she has to take them to her hair salon and try to watch them and work.

Members then talked about cost of ECEC but agreed the staff at the providers is not paid enough. Samantha asked why districts weren't adding more classrooms that would be free to parents also. Lou Ann said she learned there still are openings in Freeport pre-school classrooms and also in Head Start. There needs to be more emphasis on publicizing screening dates to get kids enrolled. Another problem is parents will sign up for a screening time and then not show up, so need to figure out why.

Overall Council members felt there needs to be more communication from the school districts on when screenings are held, follow up after those screenings and information given on other options if the kids do not get enrolled. Otherwise, kids could fall behind in learning the skills necessary for when they start kindergarten.

Dean and Lou Ann said we will continue to speak with school officials to try and find solutions for these issues.

Next Family Council meeting was scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Feb 23, 2023 in the Stewart Centre.

Meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Todd McKenna
Administrative Support
Birth to Five Illinois

