



MEETING NOTES

Region 56 Action Council Meeting

Location: 2455 Glenwood Ave, Joliet, IL 60432

Date & Time: January 18, 2023 at 11:00am-1:00pm

Council Members present:

Amy Martin, Sherry Coe, Ellise Boy-Johnson, Elizabeth Kaufman, Sandifer Thomas, Debrah Clark, Amy Loy

Council Members not in attendance:

Stephanie Thompson, Stephanie Budziak, Kathy Fudge-White, Paula Kennedy, Hassan Von Schlegell, Cherita Tousson-Bowens

Welcome, Introductions, Agenda, and Social Event

Notes: Action council members socialized, had snacks and coffee, and new members signed the photo release waiver. Region 56 went over the agenda today for the meeting. Region 56 gave a brief overview of the creation of Birth to Five Illinois, our region, and what we are needing from the council. Region 56 also gave a brief overview of our region's goals, rational aims, regional scan information and needs, experimental aims, and the connection with other council members.

Action council members did their introductions individually. Region 56 team did their introductions individually.

Updates

Notes: Updates were shared with the council.

The shared updates were:

Outreach events

- Winter coat drive, Joliet
- Sensory friendly holiday party, Romeoville
- Holiday drive, Joliet
- Cookies with Santa, Peotone



Elected Officials

- Senator Rachel Ventura
- Senator Meg Loughran Cappel
- Congresswomen Lauren Underwood
- State capitol visit

Focus Groups/Interviews/Family Council

- Spanish Community Center
- Families impacted by homelessness.
- Families involved in Early Intervention services.

Region 56 mentioned that we would like to meet with more elected officials. Region 56 also shared that there was a trip to Springfield state capitol to meet with more elected officials and create a connection and relationship.

Guest Speaker Michelle Westerhoff

Notes: Michelle Westerhoff, District Administrator for Senator Meg Loughran Cappel. Michelle explained that Senator Meg Loughran Cappel has worked in the Special Education field and is very passionate about early childhood education. Michelle would like everyone to know to contact them and keep them informed via email or phone call. Michelle explained that the Senator would like to hear from individuals that are at this table as well.

Decisions made: N/A

Next Steps: N/A

Data Systems

Notes: Region 56 presented information on Data Systems. This information included:

- IECAMs stands for Illinois Early Childhood Asset Maps
- Started in 2006 through University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- Funded by Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and Illinois Department of Health Service (IDHS)
- Link to IECAM



Information was shared to the council on what kind of data is found in IECAM:

- Types of Data
 - Early Childhood Data (programs)
 - Demographics
- Geographic Region for Data
 - State, County, Municipalities, Zip Code, etc
- Formats
 - Tables and Maps (Visuals)
 - Blogs
 - Social Media, news

Information on Illinois Action for Children (IAFC) Asset Maps were presented:

- Similar to IECAM visual maps
- Can layer various data.
 - Such as public transportation, provider location, Federal Poverty Level (FPL), number of children
- Link to Asset Maps
 - [Region 56 - Asset Map \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

Small discussions were had on different funding streams, data systems, and reporting between Region 56 and the Action Council Members.

Regional Data (Demographics)

Notes: Region 56 presented demographic and regional data and requested the council members to provide an answer to the question: What are some things you know about Will County related to service options, language inclusion, accessibility, demographics, etc?

The answers that the council members gave were:

- Need more funding
- Need transportation for families and children
- Need to advocate for transportation vouchers for the families
- Federal Poverty Level needs to be increased once again

Region 56 presented a map for Will County demographic data. There were areas that were highlighted that represented the regions and county borders. A council member mentioned that they did not know that the county was as large as it is.



Region 56 presented the council quick data. The data was pulled from IECAM dated in 2020, therefore acknowledging that there will be changes.

Region 56 presented the race and ethnicity data to the council members and asked to see what stands out the most in the visual. A question was asked if the region has any Hispanic representation. Region 56 explained that we are currently partnered with the Spanish Communities Center as well as we have Family Council Members who are part of the Hispanic community.

Region 56 presented information on Children under 5 years old by race and ethnicity. Some council members explained that it seemed very accurate in their areas, and some said that the numbers did not seem very accurate to them, in their experience and environments. The members are predominantly from the upper most part of Will County with a few members are from the lower most part of Will County.

Public Transportation was presented to the council members and information such as 21 major highways, 4 different Metra commuter rail lines such as Metra Electric Main line, SW Service, Rock Island Dist., Heritage Corridor. All connect Will County to Chicago Loop. A small discussion was held about taking public transportation with small children and the difficulties that it could be. The discussion was held that some families are unable to get to their destinations without proper transportation. Some school districts can provide vans for transportation, and some are able to provide stipends, however, some are not able to provide transportation due to no funds available.

Region 56 presented on the difference between the household size and the family size as well as household languages. Information was shared such as:

- A household consists of one or more persons living in the same house, condominium, or apartment. They may or may not be related
- A family has two or more members who live in the same home and are related by birth, marriage, or adoption
- All families are also households, but not all households are families
- **Working families - 2017 to 2020 Children with two working parents has increased**

The Federal Poverty Level (FPL) was shared with the council members.

- Federal Poverty Level (FPL): Current levels found here:
<https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/4b515876c4674466423975826ac57583/Guidelines-2022.pdf>



- The Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is the minimum amount of annual income that is needed for individuals and families to pay for essentials, such as room and board, clothes, and transportation. The FPL takes into account the number of people in a household, their income, and the state in which they live (Hawaii and Alaska have different measures due to their location, but the lower 48 states typically share the same levels).
- How FPL is calculated: <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>

Small Groups

Notes: Each council member was broken into small groups to answer the following questions:

1. Based on your professional experiences in the Region, what does this information tell us?
Location, location, location! Diversity and services are centered around metro areas.
Rural areas (Beecher, Peotone, etc.) travel to Joliet area for services.
There are service gaps in the county.
Transportation is greatly lacking in majority of the county.
We need transportation.
We need a common definition of quality.
Restrictions on before and after school care.
We need to get the information from private pay centers, so our data is more accurate.
We need common definition of quality.
Some of these centers are no longer in the county because since 2020 we have lost centers.



2. What do you notice about the location of different racial/ethnic families, location of early childcare providers, etc.? (Compare maps and list observations you notice)
Metro areas centers of public transport options.
Maps show predominantly white non-Hispanic areas.
Limited resources for enrollment support in rural areas and with lack of transportation support for birth to 5 children.
They are broad and some spaces have nothing.
Lowest income areas do have the most childcare centers with the exception of lower Bolingbrook and Wilmington Braidwood.
3. Are there any early childcare providers missing from the list/map (slide 18)? (i.e. unlicensed home daycare, full day versus part time, family?)
In home license exempt, or unlicensed daycare provider.
Relative care for 0–5-year-olds
Unlicensed providers are missing and so are the before and after school care programs that are through YMCA and park districts.
Yes. Kith and Kin Care.
I did not see part time, unlicensed. How would we find unlicensed?
4. Are there early childcare providers that are listed but no longer open? (List your professional experience navigating COVID changes)
Definitely possible, enrollment has dropped substantially overall.
Yes, there are at least 25 in our county.
5. Are the early childcare providers near areas of high poverty, close to public transportation (if available), close to where children live, etc.? (use maps on slides 14-21)
Not enough, there are options but not enough (ex: transportation, cost, rural location, etc.)
Some, but only Joliet part of Bolingbrook and Plainfield.
6. What impact did COVID have on your professional entities? (Get personal here)
Staff shortages.
Lack of enrollment.
Rural communities have experience tremendous decrease in EI providers (long wait list).
Impact of mental health on caregivers, providers, and children.



Change in Wages, cost of living increases.
Exodus of providers, educators from the field entirely.
Lack of new professionals entering the profession.
Joliet Junior College closed their center in 2021.

7. What information is missing, or would be helpful to better understand this data?
Common reporting system for data and tracking of funds/distribution of funds for accurate service count.
Length of time families must wait for services.
Intensity of service provided.
Up to date information.
Center Closures.
Quality ratings of centers.
8. What is the current FPL, FPL 100%, FPL 200%? Can families within those FPLs afford childcare in our Region?
Not without financial support and possibly even transportation support.
No, 17,000 for children in child care for 20 weeks. That is \$42,200 a year for child care. For a family of four whom makes 40,000 which disqualifies them for all state funding this means someone must stay home or they work opposite shifts.
9. Why is it important to understand the demographics of our Region?
Understanding demographics will make sure that all inclusive practices to make sure all the needs are considered and met.
To serve the population.

Action Council Members answered all the small group questions and posted them into the Google slides for Region 56 to present in the larger group discussion.

Group Discussion

Notes: Action Council members came back to the large group table to share some of their answers from the questions. The members shared some of the “hot topics” to the large group.

Some of the “hot topics” were:

- Location: what is available and where.



- The knowledge of what is available in their areas.
- Many of the centers are nonexistent since 2020.
- Waitlists have been a constant issue for the past few years.
- There has been a significant drop in staff.
- There are a lot of education stipulations to be an educator.
- Lost a large amount of child care workers after the pandemic.
- There is a lack of respect for the educators and the interest to go into the field of education has decreased.
- Some individuals may be afraid to go into the field of education due to the school violence.

Next Meeting Schedule Discussion

Notes: Region 56 announced the next Action Council Meeting, guest speakers, and what to expect.

Next Meeting:

Thursday, January 26th, 2023 – 11:00am-12:30pm (via Zoom)

- Guest speaker Rebecca from All Our Kids (AOK)

Wednesday, February 15th, 2023– 11:00am-1:00pm

Location: 2455 Glenwood, Joliet, IL 60435

Thursday, February 23rd, 2023 – 11am-12:30pm (via Zoom)

- Guest speaker Cindy from Early Intervention

Follow-up/Next Steps: A follow up email will be sent out to each council member on questions asked, links requested, and next meeting dates, and Zoom links.