



## Minutes

### Region I-B-D Cook North Action Council Meeting

**Location:** Virtual or in person

**Date & Time:** February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 3:00 pm-5:00 pm

#### Attendance

**Action Council members present:** Agnieszka Moroni, Bettye Cohns, Clare Giuffrida, Amy Cocorikis, Susan Cerza, Lisa Merdinger, Carrie Rafalski, Vikki Podlipni, Tina Vanderwarker, Casche Knox, Chris Tokarski

**Action Council members absent:** Kristen Ford, Natalie Wood, Olga Khamichonak, Kate Warach, John Ranieri, Edward Russell, Michele Ramsey, Peter J. Smith, Cori Mohr, Nancy Mendez

#### **3:00 pm: Welcome/ Review of Community Agreements/ Regional Updates (25 minutes)**

**Notes:** Ilinca welcomed Action Council members. Ilinca shared updates on Focus Groups in partnership with Illinois Action for Children (IAFC).

Icebreaking activity: video: [How are the children?](#)

Action Council members shared reflections from the video.

**Decision made:** Ilinca will share flyers for the provider focus groups.

**Next Steps:** Flyers will be sent by email.

#### **3:25 pm: Update from the Family Council (25 minutes)**

Irene shared the Family Council's response to the question: "Are there any cultural values, beliefs, and upbringing you hold regarding early childhood education (prenatal through five years)?"

Notes: Reflections from the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programs discussions was shared. Irene asked council members "What is your definition of early childhood education, birth to five?" Responses from Family Council members were shared. Part of the dialogue that was elevated strongly was the need for a longer maternity leave, that it should be paid and that paternity leave should be supported. There was a recommendation shared that this should be a legislative change.

Question from Action Council member to Family Council: How do parents want to be educated on early education without sounding like I'm telling them what to do?



**Decision made:** Bring the Action Council question to the Family Council

**Next Steps:** Will discuss the Action Council question at the next Family council meeting, 2/27

### **3:50 pm: Small Group Program Gallery Walk (26 minutes)**

**Notes:** What are the benefits and barriers for each of the ECEC programs?  
Preschool for All (PFA), Preschool for All Expansion (PFAE), Prevention Initiative (PI)  
Early Intervention (EI), Early Childhood Education Special Services, ExceleRate, Child  
Care Assistance program (CCAP)

\*Use ECEC Programs and Services Programs Document from Illinois Action for  
Children (found in the google drive folder) and your experience for the discussion

\*Add benefits and barriers in Google Doc based on group number\*

Discussion highlights:

#### **Preschool For All**

- *Benefits*– open to all children between the age range and despite their abilities, wide eligibility for children at-risk for academic failure, significantly higher income guidelines (400% of FPL) than either Head Start or CCAP and the use of established curriculum, researched based.
- *Barriers* - half day program model, amount of reporting and oversight, application process, and complexities of braided funding classrooms for program requirements.

#### **Preschool for All Expansion**

- *Benefits*– promotes education and learning techniques that can be difficult to provide at home. It offers a full day program model and all the benefits shared above for Preschool For All.
- *Barriers* - parents don't have the knowledge about all of the options available to them in both the school district as well as privately run programs.

#### **Prevention Initiative:**

- *Benefits*– serving families of children birth to three and pregnant women in a home setting, providing a continuum if family transitions into a half day program model for preschool, and the connection and relationships built between the families and educators.
- *Barriers* -lack of knowledge about the program. Some ideas included to have better public service announcements and better relationships with the pediatricians in the communities we serve.

#### **Early Intervention:**



- *Benefits* – takes place in child’s natural environment where multiple family members, childcare providers (“push in” the classroom) and other important people in the child’s life can participate and learn. Based in a coaching model.
- *Barrier* – Pediatricians → lack or have outdated information about EI and can be “gate keepers” by telling families to wait or not accept therapy via telehealth. Shortage of therapists, month long waitlists. Childcare providers can be reluctant/resistant to services in their classroom as it’s perceived as a disruption to the classroom routine.

**Decision made:** N/A

**Next Steps:** N/A

#### **4:16 pm: Break (5 minutes)**

#### **4:21 pm: Housekeeping, Discussions, Focus Groups (14 minutes)**

Asked Council members for help with Focus Group recruitment for Business owners and health care professionals. Birth to Five Illinois is offering a \$25 gift card. Illinois Action For Children is supporting Cook North with Focus Groups

#### **4:35 pm: Slot Gap Discussion**

**Decision made:** To move to the next meeting as there wasn’t enough time for a thorough discussion.

**Next Steps:** N/A

#### **4:35 pm: Individual Reflection via Jamboard on ECEC programs (20 minutes)**

##### **Notes:**

*What is the region’s current early childhood care and education (ECEC) landscape?*

- Great programs AND there's always room for improvement! Half-day versus full-day for working parents, kids missing enrollment/registration paperwork, families unaware of programs.
- Fortunate to have many types of programs that serve young children from Family Childcare Centers, Preschools, Head Start, PFA, etc.
- No central location for information where parents can compare the programs.

*What insights about the ECEC landscape stand out?*

- Every school district has an ECEC program, but some are funded better than others. Different challenges with different demographics / income levels.
- Need more programs to serve children living in poverty/at risk.



- Families that need the most support are finding grant based program deserts in our region.

*Are there any local or regional programs or funding sources supporting ECEC services?* Local grants, state grants, federal grants.

*What data is unavailable or would be helpful to have in this discussion?*

- How many children with disabilities are not getting support services because they haven't been screened/identified? How many are home because they can't do a half-day program?
- Family child care licensed sites
- How many children are being serviced in EI, how many of them are then receiving services as 3 - 5 year olds & where they are receiving those services (private, SD, CBOs)

*Whose voices haven't been heard in the data discussion so far?*

- How many kids are being cared for in a VERY FULL unlicensed home daycare? I see this often in low-income neighborhoods - families doing what they can to survive.
- Immigrant families with no family support.
- Families whose care needs are outside the normal 9-5 workday.

*What does the data tell us about what our Region might need in the future?*

- Better support in low-income pockets of the region, which are at the receiving end of all the shortcomings of the current system.
- Our regions (& State!) need a centralized location for all ECEC information for families to access information. Publicity to educate the public and medical communities.

*Why should we include this in our regional scan?*

- Underserved, undervalued, and underrepresented populations matter!
- It's a large population of children that are in need of high quality care.
- Information about the needs and access to services are key in getting more funding and more ECEC services for our children and families.

**Decision made:** N/A

**Next Steps:** N/A

#### **4:55 pm: Questions/Comments/Reflections (5 minutes)**

Next Meeting: Monday, March 6<sup>th</sup>,

3:00 pm- 5:00 pm

Date: March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Time: 3:00- 5:00

Location: Virtual or in-person