



## MEETING NOTES

### Region 12 Action Council Meeting Tuesday, January 3, 2023, 3:30pm-5:00pm

Staff present: Ann Oswalt, Donna Rardin, Sophie Kershaw-Patilla  
Council Members present: Jennifer Bales, Jamia Joyce, Resa Shaner, Tina Staley, Arianna Walker, Samantha Weidner, Liesl Wingert  
Council Members absent: Hope Dennis, Nicole Gardewine, Courtney Hatcher, Beth Lindemann, Lauren McClain, Mary Roy, Amy Walters

#### 3:30 Welcome & Introductions (6 minutes)

Notes: All participants were introduced by Ann as they joined the meeting, and all took part in an interactive word cloud activity responding to the question, “Describe Birth to Five Illinois: Region 12 in 2023.” The word cloud is pictured below, with the larger font representing the most frequently shared words.



Decisions made: The Council discussed the idea of moving the meetings to a different county, as previously decided. Members decide to remain remote, especially during winter and high-illness months.

Next Steps: N/A



### **3:36 Family Council Update (2 minutes)**

Notes: Donna provided an update on the Family Council.

- The meetings reference/follow on the discussions of the Action Council.
- The Council currently has nine members and still needs representation from Clay and Jasper Counties.
- The Family Council will begin holding two meetings per month in February, at noon on the first Monday and at 4:30pm on the third Monday of each month.

Decisions made: N/A

Next Steps: Action Council members are asked to provide any recommendations for additional Family Council members, particularly from Clay and Jasper Counties.

### **3:38 Regional Scan Update (10 minutes)**

Notes: Ann provided an update on the creation of the Regional Scan.

- The document is currently under construction and will be shared with the State team before being made available to the Action Council for feedback.
- Ann is incorporating comments and quotes from Action and Family Council members, as well as other community members from Region 12 who have provided information and experiences.
- Ann is establishing Focus Groups and Interviews with underrepresented or unrepresented members of community, including faith leaders, education leaders (specifically superintendents), health care employees of all levels, home child care providers, small business owners, and elected officials.
  - The goal is to host approximately five Focus Groups.
  - Ann also hopes to hold Interviews (conversations) with a variety of other individual community members to broaden the scope of perspectives included.

Decisions made:

Next Steps:

- Ann mentioned that she may reach out to individual Council members with specific questions, based on their roles and experiences within their communities, in order to fill in gaps within the Regional Scan.
- Any Focus Group or Interview recommendations for community members from the above noted populations may be sent to Ann.



### **3:48 Early Childhood Education and Care Landscape (60 minutes)**

Notes: Ann asked Council members, in their opinions, what the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) landscape currently looks like in Region 12.

- Descriptions shared include scarce, fragmented pieces, and you don't know what you don't know.
  - Scarce for every aspect: for professionals to access resources, for families finding services that suits their needs, for businesses who need workers, and for funding due to lack of financial backing.
  - Connectivity of resources and systems is important to realizing what is or is not available, what needs exist, and how to work together to address those needs.
  - Transportation, even when available, may not be sufficient to serve the entire Region or financially sustainable.
  - Funding has not been adjusted based on wage increases in the State of Illinois, and rates paid by different sources vary widely per child placement.
  - Ratios of children to teacher/provider vary and need to be adjusted. Ratios need to be more flexible to account for the specific dynamics of the children and their needs.
  - Child care is often not approved for any days the parent/guardian is not working, so scheduling appointments or other tasks may be difficult.
- Mental health care is a high priority need, but services or providers are limited in our Region. Council members discussed Illinois laws regarding access to services, as well as opportunities for training and professional development.
- Council members were asked for any positive descriptions of ECEC in Region 12.
  - Communication and connectivity through family engagement.
  - Passionate employees and service providers.
- Ann shared that funding of preschool programs in Region 12 is unique to many other Regions, because the majority are state or federally funded.
  - Council members shared feedback, including the need for more child care centers and schedules that fit the working family. The money and the programs are not necessarily set up to best serve our communities.



- Various opportunities for assistance (funding, transportation, etc.) were discussed, as well as the need for those forms of assistance to be more inclusive or extensive.

Decisions made: N/A

Next Steps: N/A

Follow-up/Next Steps:

- The next meeting will be hybrid on Tuesday, January 17.
- Action Council members are reminded to share Facebook post content.