



MEETING NOTES

Region 12 Action Council Meeting **Tuesday, February 7, 2023, 3:30pm-5:00pm**

Staff present: Ann Oswalt, Donna Rardin, Sophie Kershaw-Patilla

Council Members present: Courtney Hatcher, Jamia Joyce, Resa Shaner, Tina Staley, Arianna Walker, Samantha Weidner, Liesl Wingert

Council Members absent: Amy Walters, Jennifer Bales, Hope Dennis, Nicole Gardewine, Beth Lindemann, Mary Roy

3:30 Welcome and Introductions (7 minutes)

Notes: All participants were introduced by Ann as they joined the meeting, and each provided any relevant news or updates. Ann asked, in follow-up to the previous meeting, about Newsletter sign-ups. We hit our goal to add 35 or more subscribers, so Ann and Donna will be visiting all Action Council members on Friday to collect the sheets and drop off a thank you treat.

Decisions made: N/A

Next Steps: N/A

3:37 Family Council Update (5 minutes)

Notes: Donna shared that we have all five Region 12 counties represented on the Family Council. We recently added a representative from Jasper County and Clay County. Family Council Interest Forms are now closed. Donna shared that the discussion, responses, and suggestions from the previous meeting when members were asked, "in a perfect world, what would Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) look like?"

Decisions made: One suggestion from the Family Council discussion focused on finding grant or other funding available to cover Illinois Medical Card expenses for local/regional services that would otherwise be denied or referred elsewhere.

Next Steps: N/A

3:42 Regional Scan and Focus Groups Update (13 minutes)

Notes: Ann provided a brief update regarding the Regional Scan for Region 12 and the timeline for our completion and submission to the Birth to Five Illinois state team to prepare for dissemination to elected officials and all stakeholders.



- Council members asked for clarification about the numbers being included in the Regional Scan and how to ensure accuracy/validity in reporting.
- Ann clarified that we recognize not all the reported numbers are fully accurate, so this is where our regional information-gathering process will add subjective background details that would otherwise go unknown.

Decisions made: N/A

Next Steps: Ann will continue providing updates during Council meetings. Once the Regional Scan is further completed, she will share the document with Council members for review discussion.

3:55 ECEC Workforce Discussion (56 minutes)

Notes: Ann shared data from various reports for discussion about professional licenses and credentials for ECEC. Council members discussed the information provided and shared perspectives from their own programs or experiences.

- Gateways Credentials: The Licensed Center Directors, Teaching Staff, and FCC Providers reports show the number of licensed professionals, whether or not they are utilizing those credentials. The majority of Licensed Center Directors hold an Associate Degree, while the majority of Licensed Center Teaching Staff or FCC Providers hold either a High School Diploma/GED or Associate Degree.
 - Council members shared that the credential process is often misunderstood, confusing, or frustrating.
 - Credential counseling/guidance is needed (and is available through INCCRRA) but must be communicated to new/existing professionals.
 - Credentials need to be matched to the specific work of an employee (such as working with a certain age group), and ongoing training is required to sustain the credential.
 - College training may not be available to all prospective employees, so alternative opportunities for training/certification need to be made available and communicated.
 - Community college courses are available to students in our Region, including high school students through a dual credit program.
 - Credentials support the professionalism of the employee and the center/program for which they work.
- Early Intervention (EI): Council member shared that there is a great need for EI providers, specifically therapists.



- EI professionals have full caseloads and no capacity for ongoing additions.
- Children are on wait lists for necessary EI services.
- Professionals are required to hold additional certifications to work in EI, so many work elsewhere where there are fewer initial/ongoing requirements.
- A solid system is necessary to be able to pay providers, because many are independent contractors and payments via EI are often delayed.
- Mental Health: Ann mentioned that mental health is a key recurring theme in all Action Council and Family Council meetings, as well as Interviews, Focus Groups, and other conversations. Ann reached out to various mental health professionals within Region 12 for information regarding Early Childhood mental health services.
 - Every Child Care Resource and Referral (CR&R) office is supposed to have at least one mental health consultant to work with children and families.
 - Staff shortages have left some CCR&Rs and EI programs without full-time consultants. Existing mental health consultants cover large regions and do not have the capacity to serve all families.
 - There is no in-patient psychiatric facility south of Springfield for children.
 - One Council member mentioned the need for mental health support/training for all ECEC service providers.
- Transportation: Another recurring theme in our Regional Scan is the lack of and need for transportation. Ann met with a local transportation representative who underscored the need for employees/drivers to serve our Region.

Decisions made: N/A

Next Steps: Ann will share any resources received from her outreach with Council members.

Follow-up/Next Steps:

- There will not be a second meeting in February, due to Ann's travel to Springfield with members of the Birth to Five Illinois State team.



- Ann will email a Google Form for input from Action Council members in lieu of this meeting.
- The next meeting will be virtual on Tuesday, March 7.