



## MEETING NOTES

### Region 39 Action Council Meeting

**Location: Virtual (Zoom)**

**Date & Time: 10 am- 12 pm, January 19, 2023.**

Council Members present: Karen House, Michelle Witherspoon, James Keith, Cathy Lucas, Kristine Hansen, Megan Meyrick

Council Members Absent: Jeff Dase, Amy Steck, Tammy Robinson, Maria Goad, Brian Rhoades

#### **10:00 AM Welcome & Introductions**

Notes: Introductions were made by Birth to Five staff and all Council Members.

Decisions made: N/A

Next Steps: N/A

#### **Start Time: 10:10 AM Community Agreements**

Notes: The Council reviewed the agreed-upon Community Agreements and did an icebreaker event.

Decisions made: N/A

Next Steps: N/A

#### **Start Time: 10:15 AM Slot Gap Conversation continued & Regional Scan update**

Notes: The Council reviewed the Regional scan data around child care slot gap, the number of licensed facilities and their capacity, and the publicly funded slot gap and program types. The Council moved forward and reviewed the dreams and potholes activities to prepare for the new Jamboard activity. Breakout rooms were created and tasked with asking more "Why" questions as to the current potholes contributing to



children in Region 39 not being Kindergarten ready. Some of the new ideas and concepts to come out of this activity included: See Appendix A

**Start Time: 11:45 AM Reflection**

Great conversation was had regarding Kindergarten readiness in Region 39.

Statements by council members included:

- Per the State play time is slated and timed in Pre-K but then Kindergarten requirements don't match Pre-K requirements and play time constructs
- In most day care centers 75-90% of screened children using a standardized form score very well and are prepared for Kindergarten.
- The definition of "Kindergarten-ready" needs to be the same across the board and adhered to
- We need to stop cookie-cutting Pre-K and Kindergarten curricula. Pre-K is play-based, and Kindergarten is not. Conversations need to be had between city schools and private schools to bridge the gap to ensure everyone is actually ready and not just "state" ready
- There is a gap in some schools in the screening process as to whether a child has had previous teaching and/or behavioral issues. Some questions are buried deep in registration paperwork. Other schools do a pretty good job at this.
- There are no programs currently available to provide Developmental Screenings for the general public if they are not enrolled in current programs. Also, there are not enough Early Intervention therapists currently available to handle children that would qualify for services.
- We need to get it right. Not just get it done.

Decisions made: N/A

Next Steps: N/A

**Start Time: 11:55 AM Questions & Concerns**

Notes: No questions or concerns currently

Decisions made: N/A



Next Steps: Heather to send meeting invitations for the next meeting and links to this meeting's resources once available.



## Appendix A

### Region 39 Children are not Kindergarten Ready

- **Lack of high-quality care and education for children 5 & under**
  - Surveying County school Kindergarten teachers to see what skills they NEED their children to have for in-class success.
    - For example, Preschool for All uses a play-based curriculum whereas one district kindergarten uses a more structured curriculum. Total systems approach!
    - Need transition planning from pre-k to K
  - What is "quality"? Who determines "quality"? How does "quality" get replicated? How does "quality" get measured? (e.g., feedback cycle that includes parent voice)
    - Parents choosing between quality programs with academics, social-emotional, and cultural awareness vs programs that have openings
  - Lack of support for Family Child Care Providers
    - Lack of awareness for grants
      - Share using mail, email, website & FB posts
      - DCFS Licensing reps sharing grant info with providers
      - possible texting or QR codes for sharing grant information
  - Administrative accountability to quality in their center
  - Time it takes for licensing/quality monitoring has been on hold due to pandemic
- **Lack of opportunity for ECEC programs**
  - Transportation
    - Bus Lines do not reach all centers
    - Bus lines have limited hours
  - Hours of operation do not fit Families' schedules
    - Lack of 2nd & 3rd shift providers
  - Families cannot afford ECEC
    - Lack of slots for CCRS-paid children
    - lack of programs accepting DCFS-paid child care
    - Cost of childcare too high for ALICE (asset limited income constrained employed) families (family is working 1,2, or 3 jobs to survive...not thriving)
  - Decrease in Child Care and Publicly funded programs



- Lack of Staffing
  - Exodus of teachers and therapists from the ECEC workforce
    - Teachers not educated on how to handle the increase in children with social-emotional behaviors
      - Heritage Behavioral Therapist not being utilized
      - No group trainings available
    - No root cause analysis is being done as to why teachers are leaving
  - Lack of people going into the ECEC workforce
    - lack of living wage for ECEC staff
      - Costs of running the program is high
      - State puts mandates on private pay not being more than CCAP pay.
      - State reimbursement program= limited awareness & high requirements
      - Pay does not match inflation.
      - Honest dialogue about whom this is affecting.
    - ECEC not incentivized as a profession
      - \$1 co-pay for ECEC employees
    - lack of Professional Development
      - EDCO no longer provides- CCRS limited training
      - limited education opportunities for staff
        - Lack of support for new teachers (administrative/mentors/coaching)
      - Millikin no longer has ECE degree (includes Developmental Therapist certificate or Special Education credential)
    - Connection and collaboration with High school early childhood program through Heartland Tech Academy
  - Lack of support for Child Care Directors
    - Lack of awareness for ECEC programs of behavioral therapists available in Macon County
    - No Child Care Directors' meetings= nowhere to learn of services in the community including new teacher education program through Richland Community College



- **Parent/ Caregiver knowledge**
  - increase in DCFS referrals
  - lack of awareness for families on resources in the community
    - MACON COUNTY YELLOW PAGES COMING SOON!
    - HOW DO WE SHARE THIS RESOURCE SO AVAILABLE TO ALL?
  - lack of education on child development for parents/ caregivers
  
- **Early Intervention Issues**
  - service coordination shortage
    - Funding short to attract service coordinators
  - not enough therapists to serve all EI children
    - Millikin dropped ECE classes= no developmental therapists certification
    - State slow in payments
  - No program that offers developmental screenings in the community beyond referrals to EI
  
- **Lack of current accurate data**
  - No way of collecting actual numbers of children that need services & would use them if available
  - Lack of numbers to home providers that do 2nd & 3rd shift child care
  - Lack of current data on available physical space for slots (ex: AWHHS has 3 available classrooms)
  - What is the process for tracking previous ECEC programming experience? In what communities? How can a process be developed to collect this data and to what end?
  - A quality kindergarten readiness screener is needed (needs to be implemented).