

## Region 16 Discussion Notes

### DeKalb

#### General Comments

- There was a question about who pulled the data. Some of the numbers were different (total number of children in age range – they had ~6,900) was different from the IECAM data this group obtained during the community-based planning project. Curious what the factors were that generated different numbers.
- Curious about more data: if the focus is on equity, it is important to get more data about who is getting served and who is not, e.g., suspension and expulsion and who qualifies for early childhood special ed services.
- Early Head Start (EHS) offers only home visiting programs (no center-based) in DeKalb County (150 slots: EHS serves two counties in addition to DeKalb County, so fewer slots serve DeKalb).
- In some areas, it's true that there is a lack of capacity.
- One of the needs is sustainable/consistent funding sources. As part of a community foundation, we have provided financial support toward this work, but it's nowhere near enough. This leaves uncertainty for sustainable programs and an amazing amount of time and effort to apply for various grant funding.
- There is no child care center in Hinckley, so I am wondering what they have marked on that map.
- I'm a day care home in the south part of the county. We need more child care facilities in this area.
- There are child care deserts that appear to be where there is a high percentage of children living below the FPL.
- Clear from the data that we have an abundance of children under 6 without an abundance of slots to serve those children. What's not showing up in the data is that it's even more difficult. Those slots don't always work for families, e.g., transportation challenges, non-traditional work schedules. Across the State and in DeKalb County,

we have a shortage of qualified staff even for programs who have the room and willingness to expand.

- The data show we need more slots to serve our children. What is not shown in the data is that families who might not qualify based on income alone are still struggling to access care due to the cost of child care.
- We already know children and families don't have what they need by looking at KIDS data. While that is not the focus of this conversation, we use KIDS data to drive their work. It shows where there are equity gaps between groups of students. We have seen a widening of readiness gaps over the past three years between student groups, and we've been actively working to address these gaps. This gap has to be addressed very intentionally.
- Transportation outside of the central area is an issue; there aren't a lot of resources, so transportation is absolutely an issue. Even in the areas where there are more services (with a higher percentage of children/families at greater FLP), there isn't sufficient transportation.
- Many jobs are in one area, so it can be hard to get children to daycare on one side of town and then get to work on time when it's on the other side of town.
- Regarding special education (as a professional) and Early Intervention (as a parent), many families' needs go unmet due to a lack of choice and preference in these areas, e.g., full or half day programs, navigating two different systems (school district and child care) with different expectations. There is an opportunity for more collaboration between school and community based programs, especially for children with developmental delays or disabilities.
- Collaboratives are interested in seeing what Early Intervention services are available, how many are accessing them, and how many qualify but are not accessing them.

## **Strengths/Assets**

- Having 4-C in the region is a great asset (4-C is the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency for our region). They are here for parents and providers, always available for questions and referrals.
- One of our strengths, and many here tonight are part of it, is we've had our Collaborative for Young Children for some years now. There is already a concerted effort to bring stakeholders, mostly organization leaders, together until recently where we've focused also on creating a family council.
- The Collaborations in Dekalb County: the variety and the home visiting collaboration.
- I think that having members of the CYC and CI be members of the community in DeKalb County is a huge asset.

### **Needs/Challenges**

- Through the community-based planning project, we learned that we have many child care deserts in the county and are not serving nearly enough children who are eligible for publicly-funded care and education programs. Currently serving ~9% of 0-2 y/o and ~40% of eligible 3-5 y/o.
- Sustainable funding for our local early childhood collaborations to continue doing this work.