

Region 17 Discussion Notes

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General Comments

- There is a significant amount of rural poverty, concentrated in certain areas.
- There are child care deserts in areas outside of Bloomington-Normal and in Pontiac where the need is great.
- There is a discrepancy in the number of slots compared to the number of children who may need care.
- Question raised: Are there informal child care options that we don't know about?
- Livingston county has had a decrease in child care facilities.
- People use family/neighbor care because they cannot afford care or the waitlist is very long.
- Private child care centers can be very cost prohibitive to families.
- License-exempt care tends to be a preferred option in some of the rural areas.
- Businesses are generally located in east Bloomington, creating food and child care deserts in the west areas.
- Transportation is a huge issue.
- A majority of the Preschool For All (PFA) slots are half-day programs, but families need full-day programming.
- There is a lack of irregular/nontraditional hour child care available, which is increasingly what is needed for many families.
- Families are not able to afford child care.
- It would be helpful to track families experiencing homelessness.
- I wonder if the loss of family child care is due to the increasing precarity of housing in general.
- We have a lot of openings in center-based programs. Is it oversaturated?

- I wonder what the early childhood workforce looks like in this region?

Strengths/Assets

- The community values education.
- Strong organizations exist to support the early childhood community (INCCRRA, ROE, United Way, ISU, Heartland Community College).
- There is a history of working together and is coming together more in recent years.

Needs/Challenges

- Families need more access to early childhood care and preschool (especially in rural areas).
- There needs to be a system for keeping all the ECE organizations organized.