

## **Region 4 Discussion Notes**

### **Boone, Winnebago**

#### **General Comments**

- I'm surprised by the poverty lines.
- I'm surprised 39% is average poverty throughout Illinois.
- The small pockets of poverty outside of Rockford are very concentrated.
- Major lack of Head Start programming.
- Lack of publicly funded preschool in Belvidere.
- Lack of publicly funded preschool in rural areas where poverty is near the state average.
- Lack of publicly funded preschool outside of Rockford.
- Lack of Preventive Initiative in areas of high poverty.
- Rockford is a largely populated area, leading to more centers and a higher concentration of children.
- There is a discrepancy between the number of seats available versus the number of children living in the region.
- Looking at the Rockford area and the poverty level, there appears to be a gap between residential areas and where centers are located, indicating a need for transportation.
- It is hard for parents to find child care spots for children with disabilities.
- Infant/toddler programs have a long waiting list.
- Children with disabilities need child care options and their parents need support to be able to work.
- Transportation is a huge problem. Getting preschoolers from a half day program to a child care program is a struggle for a large majority of parents (especially when the child needs specialized services).
- Finding high-quality child care is difficult, and the limited availability makes long waiting lists and limits choice for parents.

- I'd like to see data on the number of children under age 6 with a disability and how many of those children are currently served in our community. Can programs afford additional staff in classrooms with child(ren) that need extra help due to disabilities or other special needs?

### **Strengths/Assets**

- Strong Early Childhood programs collaborating with Head Start.
- Good connectivity between agencies.
- Local Ready to Learn Movement supporting early learning B-5 using Early Developmental Instrument (EDI) data.
- Good early childhood system within our school district.
- CCR&R in our area is upbeat and helpful.

### **Needs/Challenges**

- Need more mental health support & mental health specialists.
- Disability awareness in early childhood education.
- Not enough providers.
- Workforce issues.
- Lack of transportation for Early Childhood programs.
- Resources for children age 3 and over.