

## **Region 3 Discussion Notes**

### **Bond, Christian, Effingham, Fayette, Montgomery**

#### **General Comments**

- The data is from 2019 and 2020, so perhaps more updated data would be good to understand the current context of the community.
- It appears we lack services in some rural areas.
- Child care appears to be concentrated only in certain areas of the region.
- So many “desert” regions.
- The region is a low socio-economic area in general, yet those slightly over the poverty level do not qualify for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).
- Poverty level is extremely low, making it hard for families to qualify for Head Start programs.
- Children need more access to quality child care.
- Families with means can still find care. Most of my low income families are using family members and friends to piece together care, which can cause chaos in kids' lives.
- Families do not all have what they need. Parent-centered, high-quality care is needed.
- Transportation is a HUGE issue.
- We do not have enough slots for families, which is sending them to unlicensed care, moving children from place to place. The waiting lists at centers are a mile long.

#### **Strengths/Assets**

- It appears that we are providing high-quality, free 0-3 and pre-k services to a large majority of our at-risk families.
- Region 3 communities are very tight knit, which leads to great collaboration.
- Great collaboration between early childhood programs and schools.

#### **Needs/Challenges**

- Lack of capacity.
- Meeting the needs of rural areas that have limited to no services.
- Staff turnover.
- Access is a challenge—access to child care, basic necessities (groceries).
- Workforce shortages.
- Lack of qualified staff.
- Parent collaboration and addressing families' needs.
- Providing Preschool For All children regardless of eligibility criteria.
- Getting families to participate in available programs.
- Minimum wage increases result in families no longer being able to afford care or qualify for necessary services.