

Region 33 Discussion Notes Henderson, Knox, Mercer, Warren

General Comments

- There is a big gap between the State and the region's Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The region is higher than the State.
- The number of children younger than age 6 seems low, especially in Henderson county.
- This is not new information. This is work we have been passionate about and working towards. We have been using data to support all four counties. We are serving a lot of these children.
- Maximum capacities of child care centers don't reflect if they are fully staffed. Right now centers, including mine, are having trouble keeping staff because pay is so low. 1,200 slots are not actually available.
- From a Head Start standpoint, our requirements are a lot lower than 200% FPL. There are a lot of kids out there that we are not reaching. Head Start uses 100% FPL.
- There is an early childhood center that is just opening up in Mercer County and we need more data on it.
- We need to continue to gather stories and testimonies from people, especially from a wide range of parents. We need more parent voice.
- It's great that the minimum wage in Illinois is going up, but a lot of people are affected because it takes them out of qualifying for services. It's a catch 22.
- We have a large English as a Second Language (ESL) population, and we are always looking for support with bilingual people/teachers, translation, and interpretation.
- I've been blessed with an amazing licensed in home daycare provider in Warren County- Monmouth. However I know we don't have a lot in our area. In Galesburg. Knox County I know parents talk a lot about struggling to find childcare.

Strengths/Assets

- There are a lot of people who have a desire to do something about all of this, who want to do the work.

Needs/Challenges

- The local collaboration identified child care and is currently sending out surveys to learn more.
- Transportation is a common theme, lack of bus drivers.
- For Henderson County, there is no child care center, just a handful of licensed and unlicensed in-home daycares. There are no licensed after-school care programs. One parent had to drive 20 minutes for child care.
- Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) standards determined a director of 35 years was no longer qualified, which caused a center to close. DCFS standards have made it hard for centers in rural areas. Staffing is also hard.

- We need better wraparound services.
- Early Interventions services are stretched thin. Children are not receiving Early Intervention (EI) services because there aren't enough EI therapists. State requirements for EI therapists are hard to meet for people who want to take on the role. Too many hoops to jump through. Early intervention services struggle to get therapists because therapists have a lot to do, their own scheduling on top of everything they have to do to get credentialed.