

## Region 51 Discussion Notes Sangamon and Menard Counties

### General Comments

- High level of poverty that exists in our capital; there's a lot of work to be done there.
- I don't think I was surprised by the data; not the exact numbers, but from 20 years of experience and home visits in the area, it doesn't feel surprising at all.
- There is a statewide program trying to address this problem: Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity that will provide scholarships for those wanting to get education for early childhood education - [www.ecace.org](http://www.ecace.org)
- Services are concentrated in Springfield vs the rural areas.
- This is something I am already familiar with, but as you move away from Springfield, there are fewer and fewer options for child care. It is very spread out. In the more rural areas, you will find more family child care than centers.
- There are child care deserts in areas that need to serve our poorest children.
- Very hard to find high-quality infant care.
- Families have to make difficult decisions about quality child care when they live in remote areas.
- The majority of the available range of services/programs seems to match the majority of the population. Wondering what the need is compared to the lack of services in these other communities.
- When it comes to different collaborations and programs, there are collaborations or partnerships with Head Start, but in Springfield when it comes to family child care, there are not the same types of programs or shared services.
- Programs operate in silos.
- When it comes to Latino population, are there Latino providers, or bilingual services? I see them north but not in Springfield.
- Within the city, there is also a wait list for openings (daycare centers, child care centers across birth to five). Child care is also extremely expensive. And expanding on waitlists, they can sometimes get one child in, but not another, so they are having to split siblings up among different daycares.
- I have heard from numerous parents that finding child care for infants is difficult right now.
- No spaces, I have a tremendous wait list.
- We have lengthy wait list for all ages, but infants are by far our longest wait. 12-15 months.
- We need more quality child care facilities in the area. We rarely have families leave our centers.
- We need to find a way to get more child care providers interested in the field. Also, we need to find ways to retain employees.
- A sub pool for family and center child care might be an idea. Everybody needs this back up.
- There are so few openings in programs for speech, occupational therapy programs, etc.; those professionals may want to work in a hospital setting where they get other benefits.

- Providers are passionate about their programs. Developmental therapists are awesome. There is a conflict between wanting to show the value of our program and to be strict and have high expectations for the providers that come in. I'm concerned about the lack of providers. It's hard to recruit more.
- Want to make sure we hear the parents, engage them in something that is helpful. Teach them to fish.

### **Strengths/Assets**

- We're so small, so we can serve more people; we don't have a waiting list.
- There is a desire to be better.
- We live in/near the capital and there are many resources to families, especially in the Sangamon County area.
- I feel the larger number of early childhood programs available in this area to serve the varying needs of families is great!

### **Needs/Challenges**

- The lack of child care makes it very difficult for families to find a provider, especially a provider that they deem qualified.
- It's getting better, but funding is needed for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programs.
- There are several rural areas where it may be harder to get to the services than in the larger cities/towns.
- Lack of programs that can serve our infants and toddlers.
- We don't have enough Early Intervention (EI) providers to meet the needs of the children being identified.
- The lack of community based Pre-K programs that serve working families full day.
- There are not enough college graduates, or people in general wanting to go into the field of child care, for numerous reasons at this time.
- The EI system has some great connections to higher education programs but the limits of the number of students in some of the programs, such as on tracts to become a Speech Therapist, limits the number of those professionals who are available to work in Early Childhood or medical programs in general.