

## **Region 53 Discussion Notes**

### **Woodford, Tazewell, Mason Counties**

#### **General Comments**

- Eureka's data is surprising. It is a cute, small town and seems well off to me. However, there is a Head Start program there and it is always full, so maybe there is a need for more classrooms.
- This community has a lot of social service access, and it makes sense that people with that need would reside in that area.
- Mason County – not a big population of children 0-6; however, we have the biggest population of children living in poverty.
- Early Head Start and Head Start numbers may not be correct. Early Head Start programs possibly serve 100 children.

#### **Strengths/Assets**

- Mason County – in Havana, with a large number of children living in poverty, there are a lot of assets (Prevention Initiative (PI), Pre-K, Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) services), and despite being a small rural community, there are more Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) assets than some of the bigger areas in the region.
- Tazewell County – Tazewell AOK network is a cross-sector ECE 0-5 collaboration that leads the Tazewell-Woodford-Peoria integrated referral (IRIS) system through Kansas University. All three counties work together in regards to available slots and grants.
- Tazewell County Health Department has Family Case Management, Better Birth Outcomes, and Health Works that provide home visiting service with a nurse for children from birth to age one.

#### **Needs/Challenges**

- Tazewell and Woodford - limited (or lack of) transportation. For example, the health department is in a very rural community and accessing it can be a challenge.
- Struggle for child care.
- In Metamora, there are more children than child care slots are available. Also, it is a challenge finding child care with extended hours. Staff can only work limited hours, so schools are only open 7:30 – 4:30, which makes it hard for some families to find care.
- In Eureka - all centers have closed.
- Mason County has only one licensed child care provider. Others are unlicensed providers, e.g. parents, and grandparents.
- There is an Early Childhood staff shortage due to the COVID pandemic.
- There is a need for early childhood mental health consultants.
- Mason County - EHS awarded slots for the entire county; however, services are concentrated in the small rural town of Havana. The rest of the community is in need of these services. Also, Havana may be the only town with full-day PFAE.
- We need more infant to age 5 care.
- Having a needs assessment related to the current population would be helpful.