

Children First Board meeting minutes

11-21-19

Donnellson, IA

At 9:33 am this meeting of the Children First board was called to order with the following present:

Board members: Carolyn Baker, Rich Harlow, Amanda Manning-Maras, Mark Meek, Amanda Swan, and electronically via speaker phone Ryan Wilson. Quorum was met with 6 of 9 board members present.

Board members not present: Mike Linnenbrink, Kayla Schwartz, and Meagan Vogel

Director: Ginger Knisley

Guests: n/a

There was a **motion** by Rich with a second by Carolyn to approve today's agenda. All voted aye.

There was a **motion** by Amanda S with a second by Amanda M to approve the minutes from the last meeting as written. All voted aye.

Financial Report

Financial reports were reviewed for FY20 October payments. There was a **motion** by Carolyn and a second by Rich to accept the financial reports for October 2019 expenditures. All voted aye.

There was a **motion** by Amanda S with a second by Carolyn to adjourn the business portion of the meeting at 9:35 am. All voted aye. Ryan was thanked for his time and left the meeting.

The next Children First board meeting will be held in January at a date, time and location to be announced.

Gk

Date approved _____ Board officer signature _____

Transition to retreat portion of the day including a short break

Director Report

Ginger gave a Director report including updates on board business, legislation (including a handout shared with Senator Ernst regarding the child care crisis), and board membership. Updates were also provided on a number of initiatives in the process of development including the IWF work around child care, the PDG Integrated Data System, and children's mental health efforts. Ginger provided information from the State ECI Board and Director meetings.

First quarter summary of funded programs

Ginger provided a written summary of the first quarter reporting of the required performance measures for each program. Ginger shared she is keeping a close eye on budgets and will do a more in-depth review of the finances at mid-year. She shared the results of the time-study for VBPAT and good discussion took place around what "other" tasks are being done and how they are performing compared to the national model. The board was concerned for the high rate of obesity reported for Head Start children in Keokuk and wondered if the LCHD could assist with making a change with families. Overall, programs are performing as expected.

2020 Board Calendar

It was discussed that the board has had increasing difficulty with board member recruiting and meeting quorum in the past year. Ginger proposed that she already has a schedule of being at the community room in Donnellson for evening provider forums the first Tuesday of each month and it could work well to hold the board meetings that same day. After much discussion and comparing of schedules it was proposed that the meetings be held in Donnellson the first Tuesday of the month around 12:30 pm. The month of not having a meeting will move from December to November as the first Tuesday of November is an election day. It was determined the fall retreat topics could be spread out across other months and only have a retreat in the spring for budgeting. Ginger will poll board members about this proposed new schedule as well as review bylaws and policies to ensure no conflict exists.

Discussion of Indicators

Board members reviewed the list of currently tracked indicators and heard input from the EC Advisory. It was agreed that 3rd grade literacy rates and graduation rates were not particularly enlightening in regards to the work of this board. Also reviewed was CCR&R trend data, Needs Assessment Brief from ISU, Data for Decision Makers for each county, Profile of Infants and Toddlers in Iowa from Food Research and Action Center, and Not Earning Enough to Get By from The Iowa Policy Project.

Community Plan, Strategic Plans and area input

Board members reviewed documents from the ECI State Strategic Plan as well as their own 2018 strategic plan, guiding principles and goals. It was encouraging that much of the goals and strategies aligned well even though the local plan was created months prior to the state document.

Rich Harlow left the retreat at 11:30 am

Fund history, formulas, and guidance and FY21 initial plans

Ginger shared charts and documents outlining the formulas used to distribute each of the ECI funding streams and the history of those funds. It was noted that depending on current year spending and upcoming expected retirements, there could be a surplus of funds in the EC category for FY21. One thought explored is how to support or subsidize child care businesses currently operating in our area. Perhaps paying for a part time person in each center could support centers remaining within the required adult/child ratio without further straining center budgets. There is concern that local child care centers are struggling to meet payroll and there is no room for having a center close when we are already short on child care slots available. This type of support would be temporary in nature (a few years), advocacy would continue for building support from the business and legislative sectors for long term solutions, and research would be needed into how child care homes can be similarly supported.

Children's Mental Health

Ginger shared a written report from Jamie Beskow giving an update on the SEIL region children's mental health work as well as the SEIA Children's Mental Health and Well being collaborative.

Amanda Manning-Maras left the retreat at 11:45 am

Transition to retreat luncheon for Transitions discussion with schools and Early Childhood providers

See page 4 for notes from the transition luncheon

Children First Retreat Lunch with Educators
11/21/19
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Children First Director, Ginger Knisley and Children First board members, Mark Meek, Carolyn Baker, and Amanda Swan welcomed area educators to a noon meal for the purpose of discussing how to improve the experience of transitioning from early childhood to k-12

Guests were: Cheryl Flaatten – Community Action of Southeast Iowa, Sarah Tweedy – Raisin Em Up, Janet Haeffner and Jessica McGlasson – Miss Janet’s Preschool, Matt Mitchell – Van Buren County Schools, Heather Fuger – Central Lee Schools, and Ft Madison School District staff – Kim Harmon, Tracy King, and Adrian McKay.

Ginger welcomed everyone and gave an overview of Children First and shared copies of the current Regional Early Childhood Community Plan

Overarching barriers to children thriving:

Poverty

Lack of solid parenting skills – perhaps technology has increased so rapidly it is not commonly understood there is a need for purposeful face – to – face communication and engagement between parents and children in order to develop social/communication skills

Students increasingly displaying skills deficits that should have triggered a referral to Early Access and interventions prior to kindergarten entry (pediatricians not seeing/screening all children)

Students are increasingly displaying attention seeking behaviors

Families are struggling with basic knowledge and skills, working multiple jobs, difficulty making time for meaningful interpersonal experiences

Cyclical poverty, lack of industry, declining property values all leading to lower funds being available to programs, schools, initiatives, etc. to address any of these issues

Grandparents raising children, children being shuffled around, lack of stable routine

Substance abuse issues including children exposed to drugs

Need for family support programming

Transportation is an issue for families across the area.

Current School District conditions

Ft Madison is really focused on family and community engagement. They intend to improve outreach to early childhood sites moving forward but also report some sites are more willing to share than others. Ft Madison preschools are not full this year. They currently have 7 sections of kindergarten which is down from 8-10 in past years. They are looking for a systemic way to provide information to parents, perhaps via social media, to let parents know what the schools need parents to know and provide for their children.

Central Lee preschools are full for the first time this year. They provide transportation one way for preschoolers. They have 5 sections of kindergarten for the second year in a row.

Van Buren schools are serving 60 preschoolers at three sites in full day care. They host a literacy night in the fall and a math night in the spring for children and families and they are well attended.

All schools are interested in strategies to improve family engagement.

All schools note a difference in the skill levels of children who have had a preschool experience versus those who have not as well as across different preschool settings.

Next steps

Children First will work to facilitate meetings in each school district to bring kindergarten and preschool/child care teachers together in order to develop strategies to ease the process of children entering kindergarten ready to succeed. These will be held with a purposeful agenda to move the work forward.

Children First will initiate communication with child abuse prevention councils in each county to explore the possibilities of partnering with the schools to host family events to increase engagement between parents and their children as well as between families and the schools. Some initial ideas include board game nights, lego building, simple craft activities, light meals provided, cell phone free time, etc.

All interested parties will brainstorm a new name for the combined meetings with kindergarten and early childhood teachers (formerly known as Transition Teams)

Children First will work with 1st Five and other community partners to determine strategies to increase the number of children being screened and referred to Early Access as is appropriate

Children First will inquire if Decat has training funds available which can be used to bring in dynamic speakers to address family engagement at all levels and perhaps include a parent session. Children First will notify the schools of any opportunities scheduled in the region.

gk