

Early Childhood Task Force

Retreat Meeting minutes

Donnellson - March 11, 2020

This meeting of the ECTF was held at Pilot Grove Bank Community Room in Donnellson at 9:30 am with the following present:

Ginger Knisley – Children First, Missy Park – LCHD HOPES, Carolyn Baker – community member, Cheryl Flaatten – Community Action of Southeast Iowa, Jolene Dilks – Learning Tree, Liz Fairchild – Sieda Head Start, Melissa Daugherty – VBPAT, Morgan Small – Sieda Head Start, Amy Hayes – LCHD CCNC, Rachael Patterson-Rahn – LCHD I-Smile, Sarah Tweedy – Raisin Em Up

Introductions took place around the table

Today's agenda was accepted as written

Approval of the January minutes was tabled to the next meeting

FY21 Bidder's Conference was called to order. Ginger gave an overview of the current legislative climate and explained that there are no anticipated changes to board philosophy or funding.

Jan Shelman from Young House Family Services was present and asked some questions about the FY21 RFP process. She shared that the programs listed on the Children First website are from FY18 or FY19 and Ginger clarified which were current and thanked Jan for pointing out the oversight. Jan clarified the application deadline of 4:00pm on April 1st. Jan questioned the strategic plan referenced in the RFP. Ginger explained the main reference is to the regional community plan which was created in the fall of 2018. The individual strategic plans and work products of the advisory boards are internal work documents for the area boards. Jan asked about the 8% administrative cost allowance and asked if the board had currently funded programs with higher administrative costs. Ginger stated that the majority of the board's funding is going to programs with lower administrative costs or a higher federally established indirect cost that the board honors. Jan also shared that she knows of a Van Buren County resident currently working as an FSRP worker for Four Oaks who has experience with social work and is community minded. She offered to reach out to that person as a potential Children First board member. Ginger expressed she would appreciate that and would follow up with that person if she expressed interest.

Ginger provided a written **administrative update** including updates on legislative efforts, board membership vacancies, area initiatives and family support requirements. There was some discussion about the family support competencies and Ginger will seek further guidance as to whether or not Head Start family service workers fall under this requirement, whether or not the credential expires, and if VBPAT group coordinator is under this requirement since that position is funded by PCAI and not ECI. An item not listed that recently was released is the May 1st IAEYC Spring Institute. Jolene asked if it was a good conference and Sarah and Liz both expressed it is good but the fall institute is better as it is

multiple days and there are sessions to choose from rather than one speaker who everyone listens to all day. Attached to the administrative update was a report from the president of the ECI area board and advocates association.

Member Updates/Emerging Trends/Issues

Cheryl is seeing a lot of stressed caregivers. She sees them frustrated with changes that never quite happen (IQ4K), and changes that do happen that are not appropriately or widely shared (licensing changes or adjustments to rules). She sees a workforce who is aging, starting to have physical limitations, and who have no retirement plans or health benefits. Their homes are in need of repairs that they cannot afford and they cannot retire due to no savings or benefit plans. She also sees CA/N reports occurring.

Sarah shared that she is worried for the workforce as well from the perspective of personal liability and CA/N reports being made when it is not really a case of abuse. She sees child care providers being held to a higher accountability than public school personnel.

It is believed that training and mentoring for providers needs to be increased. There are children in substandard care due to bad habits being developed especially in in-home 1 man shops. There is no real motivation for change as providers are meeting minimal standards rather than best practices. Head Start has seen former home providers coming to Head Start for employment in order to have stable pay and benefits and they are seeing those bad habits and having to provide training to help them learn best practices.

There are still ongoing instances in all settings of not following Safe Sleep practices. It is necessary to continue to point it out when it is observed and insist on remedies to the problem while consultant is on site. Amy shared she is offering a Safe Sleep training at the LCHD on April 16th at 6:30 pm and it is on the training registry. Amy offered that she will reach out to the OB and pediatric departments to suggest increased education of parents on the topic. Missy suggested printing more Safe Sleep brochures to be distributed to child care sites and to parents as well. Sarah shared they implemented a policy of car seats not being brought into the center to avoid babies coming in asleep in their car seats and being left in them to sleep. Jolene shared they also have a process to address the issue which is a rack to store the car seats on and a practice of babies physically being handed from parent to provider. Jolene shared it has been challenging transitioning babies from non safe-sleep environments at home to safe-sleep practices at the center but the babies get used to it and the parents are able to see it is possible.

Missy has had African American families tell her they want white child care providers as they think they give better care. This is interesting in the current climate of emphasis on diversity and equity discussions. Cheryl feels the black community is fairly close knit and knows a lot about each other and perhaps they want a professional distance in some areas of their lives such as child care.

There is still a great need for substitute child care providers with portable staff files.

Child Care Directors need comprehensive resource guides in order to guide their families to appropriate resources as needs arise. Ginger suggested printing of resource guides, perhaps through Community Action, would be an appropriate use of Early Childhood funds.

Family support programs continue to struggle to get families to participate fully in programming. The data shows a much greater need for services than the number of families choosing to participate. There is a new trend of families seeking in home services in expectation that the FS worker will screen the child and assist in obtaining a disability diagnosis that will then qualify the family for benefits. In some cases it appears as though teen parents are looking more to their parents and friends as resources rather than formal family support programs. Perhaps some families just don't feel they need services or prefer to learn it on their own. There is also a trend of teen moms dating multiple men who are then in and out of the children's lives.

Jolene has experienced a lot of staff turnover – 5 since the end of January. Those present had a rich conversation about possible issues and suggested solutions. The overwhelming opinion was the need to put a stop to the drama culture that seems to be happening. It was expressed that Jolene and Shawna need to nip it in the bud and have an all staff meeting to address staff culture issues. Morgan is also seeing turnover at Head Start. Jolene also shared they have a 5 year goal as a center to earn accreditation in order to be a partner to the school district in the SVPP.

DHS still is having issues with reimbursements for care in protective custody cases. Approval for reimbursement has taken as long as 9 weeks, local workers are not responding to issues of children in protective care not being in attendance, etc.

Provider Appreciation Planning

It was discussed what has been done for Provider Appreciation the past few years. It was expressed that there is a direct link between lifting providers up as professionals and increasing the quality of care in the area. Many great ideas were brought up and will be saved for future events such as hosting at a bowling alley, at a park, bringing in a food truck etc. to foster a sense of community and goodwill among providers. These will be discussed for a fall or back to school type event.

It was suggested that providers could be encouraged to bring their spouses/significant others in order for them to see how the providers are recognized and appreciated as professionals. This could be beneficial to the providers personally as well as fostering a sense of community among the providers.

Since the event is happening on May 5th it was decided to have a cinco de mayo atmosphere with Self-Care and Stress relief being the topic for training.

Food – walking tacos, sundae bar (Carolyn will make a list of supplies for sundaes), virgin margaritas possibly. ECTF members will research supplies available through Oriental Trading Company and similar outlets.

Activities/Games – children’s board games set up around the room, perhaps some old fashioned games, (Jolene, Rachael and Amy will see what they have or can acquire), also perhaps stretching or yoga demonstration/practice, photo booth props available (Amy may have)

Training – Missy will ask Tiffany Siefken if she can do one hour of training on self-care and stress relief

Prizes/Gifts – salt lamps, adult coloring books, tea, sage, daily inspiration calendar or book or cards, one book suggested was “Girl Wash Your Face” or other products by that author. Ginger will gather data on previous year’s participation numbers and available budgets and report out to the ECTF for planning.

Other relevant/emerging topics

I-Power – there are ongoing issues with the I-Power system which has replaced the Training Registry. Center directors are having trouble with batch enrolling staff for trainings. It appears as though it is working but then the individuals are not actually enrolled. In order to register for the Summit providers have to go to the Conference tab, it will not come up by date. Cheryl spent 7+ hours just getting the Summit listed on the registry. She did report that IT for the system has been very helpful. Sarah had issues with the system and was told by Jodi Norton that it was “down”. Some issues seem to be people forgetting their passwords but others have recent proof of registering for something only to have the exact same, verified password coming up as invalid. Overall concern is that providers will get frustrated and just give up. Head Start directors had an entire day of training just about I-Power in February and still find it to be not user friendly and many cycles of the system being up and then down and then up again. Many feel there should be a local person able to provide IT on the system.

Coronavirus – daily increases in cases are being reported. State colleges are limiting classes after spring break. Events are being cancelled. It is feared there will be an impact to child care sites through loss of revenue and increased requirements for sanitation. There has already been quite a bit of strep, RSV and flu. At this time the recommendation is to continue to follow established emergency preparedness, health and safety guidelines.

Area Initiatives updates were discussed on a number of area initiatives. Under the topic of Families First legislation, Head Start has been having issues with clarifying who does or does not fall under the automatic eligibility qualifiers in the case of proof of status when children are in kith and kin care rather than traditional foster care.

Final Thoughts

Melissa is looking for a new group meeting coordinator/job coach for VBPAT and Job Opps. She also shared they have done Reach Out and Read for many years and are now running low on books and do not currently have a funding source to buy more.

Carolyn is attending the Mental Health First Aid course coming up in the area

Cheryl cautions any job seekers to question the training provided by the prospective employer to ensure a good fit. Cheryl is also stressed about the number of providers we currently have. At the moment we

have only one home and one center regulated in Van Buren County, and only 3 unregistered in both counties.

Morgan shared that they would be doing Van Buren County registration at the school in Keosauqua March 17th 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Jolene shared she has been attending a number of trainings including best business practices and Director Forums. They have had visits from Jodi and Amy and have been working on continuous improvement plans with both of them.

Amy has completed the CCNC coursework and is also now certified to teach CPR. She has 3 classes scheduled and will be conducting them differently than has been done in the past. She will have providers take the online course at their leisure and then come to her for an in person training to cover first aid and the testing out of the CPR. The total cost to providers will be \$43. She is working on folders with various program brochures to use as an introduction gift when she visits providers for the first time. She has also been busy with immunizations, TB and now COVID-19 work.

This meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm.

The next meeting of the ECTF is scheduled for Wednesday, April 22nd at 9:30 am at The Palms in Ft Madison. Neither Ginger nor Missy will be attending that day. Rachael tentatively expressed the ability to facilitate the meeting that day. Ginger will follow up with coordinating a Chair and Secretary for that meeting and determine if it is necessary to reschedule.

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