

### **Early Childhood Task Force minutes 6-23-2021, 9:30 am**

This meeting was held via zoom with the following present:

Ginger Knisley, Missy Park, Carolyn Baker (part of the time), Kathy Osipowicz, Rachael Patterson-Rahn, Malia Love, Jamie Beskow, Melissa Daugherty, Sarah Maxwell (part of the time), Chad Reckling, and Paula Vandervelde. Morgan Small logged on at the end of the meeting and met with Ginger.

The agenda and previous meeting minutes were accepted as written with a **motion** by Missy and a second by Kathy

Ginger gave an **administrative update** including updates regarding board membership, the regional website, funding, and legislation.

#### **Updates per sector:**

**Family Support:** Ginger shared that ECI has cancelled its guidance regarding COVID-19 for home visiting programs and programs are to follow their own agency and model guidance.

Missy reported that there is still no change for the HOPES program as they are waiting for federal guidance allowing for in-person visits to resume. She does plan to implement a hybrid model of the Family Connections program offering some in-person groups at local parks starting in mid-July. She is in need of referrals for the program as attendance has been very low. It is hoped that some in-person groups will encourage renewed participation.

Melissa shared that VBPAT has been excited to return to in-person visits and have started that according to the comfort level of each family. They are exiting 8-10 children due to kindergarten entry soon and are very much in need of referrals. Missy stated she normally only refers families from Van Buren County birthing at FMCH if they score high on her screening but she will start referring all, although she doesn't see many at that site. Melissa plans to start trying to recruit families through patient lists at the clinics and is going to be increasing her community outreach to promote the program. One hurdle is that Van Buren County once again has no pediatrician and the doctor who was still doing some prenatal visits is leaving. They had an in person group at the park and it was well attended. VBPAT is working on national affiliation.

Both HOPES and VBPAT are hopeful that a return to at least some in-person services will help with enrollment.

**Child Care/Preschool:** Ginger shared that Jolene reports they are having a huge staffing issue with high turnover recently. They have a waiting list of children and have the space to accommodate them but staff retention remains a barrier. She has gotten ideas from the NAC training and is hopeful the Iowa Works program will help as well.

Kathy commented that staffing seems to be an issue everywhere and all industries are offering bonuses and better pay and incentives that child care doesn't have the ability to offer. All agreed with this. It is overwhelmingly felt that child care cannot compete with major industries on pay and benefits (a problem being felt by non-profit organizations as well).

Paula shared that she is working on a marketing kit for CCR&R and is welcoming input on ideas for outreach in our region including appropriate points of contact.

Chad reported that there would be a notice being sent to providers that the monthly stipends and unlimited absent day pay is being extended through August. He also shared that July 1<sup>st</sup> brings many changes including an increase in CCA rates, an increase to 6 children allowed in un regulated care as long as one is school aged, WAGES going statewide, and regulation unit returning to normal operations. He also shared he is a member of the task force for aligning IDPH and DHS and welcomes input. (Missy shared that families have missed out on services due to difficulties in accessing DHS staff during the pandemic). There are 18 members of the primary team and they are due to deliver recommendations to

the Director January of 2022. He also shared Mt Pleasant is opening its new center July 6<sup>th</sup> with 86 slots. The infant room is full and there are a few openings for toddlers. The idea is floating around of using that site as a model or launching point for an effort to convert other Family Video buildings to child care facilities.

Malia shared that last she spoke to Ft Madison school district they were not pursuing DHS licensing any time in the near future and Keokuk schools are not going to pursue it until after they are in a new building which could be a few years down the road.

**Oral Health:** Rachael updated the task force on the collaborative services process and shared that LCHD submitted a response to a request for information from IDPH. Michele Ross is meeting with other agencies about the process and the plan moving forward. Rachael also reported a change to Iowa Medicaid for dental for children which may impact which dentists are accepting public pay children. She also shared the new dental assistant at LCHD is on board and doing care coordination.

**Mental Health:** Ginger reported she has received the shipment of Emotional Growth books for area EC sites and needs an updated list from Malia of the homes and centers in Lee and Van Buren Counties so she can mail or deliver the books. Malia agreed to provide that.

Ginger asked Jamie for her impressions of the impact of the change in funding for mental health services. Jamie shared that neither of our mental health regions is pleased with the change as it may represent a loss in services when the funding is moved from property tax based to a flat rate appropriation across the board. On a bright note, 1<sup>st</sup> Five has exceeded benchmarks despite the pandemic and 72% of referrals had an appropriate screening. Quincy Medical Group in Keokuk has added back in the 30 month visit allowing for an incentive to come in to our area. Jamie is seeing an upward trend in the requests for counseling services by parents.

**Other programs/business:**

Ginger reported the Summit went well and Jamie stated that families were extra appreciative of the event and the resources provided.

Car seats: Kathy has not had much activity although she did a car seat check upon request and it was improperly installed and she was able to make several recommendations. Chad has had a few checks here and there, reported checks were done at the Summit, Burlington Safety Town will have checks available as well as Lee County Fair kid's day. Melissa will look into having another car seat event in Van Buren County and reports they still have a few seats in stock, mostly boosters.

There will be no ECTF meeting in July 2021. The next ECTF meeting will be on Monday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> at 1:00 pm in combination with the Children First Board. It is hoped this will be an in-person meeting with a zoom in option.

Morgan reported to Ginger that Douds is doing well on enrollment but needs a teacher and Harmony is a bit low. There are special needs children at both sites and staffing is an issue everywhere. She will look into why Children First did not receive a funding request from Sieda for FY22. Ginger reminded her that current funding is not a prerequisite to being on the ECTF.

gk