

ECTF retreat notes

5-23-22

The ECTF held a retreat at the Donnellson Community Room with the following present:

Ginger Knisley – Children First Director, Missy Park – HOPES program manager, Malia Love – CCR&R consultant, Melissa Daugherty – VBPAT program manager, Amy Hayes – CCNC, Breanna Kramer – Empowering Families Coordinator, Carolyn Baker – Board liaison, and Jolene Dilks – The Learning Tree Director

Meeting options for the year were reviewed and those present agreed to the following:

Conduct the majority of meetings in person with zoom option

Keep the ECTF meetings on the county meeting day

Continue to meet jointly with the board twice per year

In reviewing the demographic and indicator data the following was noted:

The number of child care sites is relatively steady with some closing and new opening

I/J/K ECI area conducted a Facebook survey to draw out unregistered providers

Van Buren County only has one registered home provider at this time

In regards to QRS participation, providers do not want to jump through all the hoops, there is not enough reward/motivation, staff turnover rates have a big impact on ability to meet the training requirements, CCA rates are still based on levels 3, 4, and 5 under IQ4K which is harder to achieve than in the original QRS system, IPower is not user friendly, etc.

Also noted – we need to look at not only the number of sites but the number of slots that are in quality sites.

Other items to keep in mind:

housing is still a huge issue

Many people operate on a cash basis and do not have bank accounts or the ability to track expenses

There is still some resistance to immunizations due to COVID conflict but improving

Lead poisoning is still prevalent

Dental caries rates are up significantly and access to care is down

Transportation seems to be less of a concern for young families

Helpful side note- Facebook groups show up in news feeds better than pages

Community Plan progress

Goal One: Promote professional quality child care business

- + increased attention to and support of child care at all levels
- + increased business interest in child care
- + More preschool and after school options
- + Discussions and attempts to address the issue of child care wraparound care
- Cost and regulations around child care are prohibitive
- STAFF TURNOVER

Goal Two: Cultivate a local mental health system that is clear and accessible

- + New EC-PBIS system
- Increased behavioral concerns in young children
- Increased suicide rates (and thoughts of suicide)

Goal Three: Enhance safe and healthy environments for young children AND

Goal Four: Ensure ongoing early childhood advocacy and education for parents, caregivers, and communities.

Discussion took place around how to gain young family participation in events as well as programs. We must find ways to convince families of the value of participation. Some don't think they need it and some fear outside judgement either like the fear of DHS taking their kids or from the community viewing them as "those people". Events and programs need to be presented as community not charity. Free stuff = judgement. Families are busy and tired and more likely to self-isolate than pre COVID.

Also discussed was how to engage families in community pride. Community gardens, little free pantries, and other projects that would allow community wide involvement were brought up. Another idea is to create a Facebook page just for good news and praise for successful projects.

AEA was discussed at length. Some sites are experiencing increased cooperation from the AEA but it appears to be a result of aggressive networking and communication on the part of the child care center to engage the AEA. Most interactions with AEA are still resulting in a lack of knowledge that the resource even exists and how to access it as well as services only being available within regular school day hours and months.