



POLK COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA BOARD MEETING

Zoom Meeting Only

September 23, 2020

Meeting conducted electronically pursuant to Iowa Code section 21.8. The current circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governor's proclamation directing that no more than 10 individuals may meet in a public gathering, and CDC guidelines regarding social distancing dictate that conducting this meeting in person is impossible or impracticable.

Voting Members Present: Emily Westergaard, Ahmed Agyeman, Dave Arens, Rob Barron, Deanna Bennigsdorf, Sandy Carter, Tabitha Choquette, Nick Dial, Bryan Huggins, Matt Knoll, Matthew Klemme, Charles Mercer, Marianka Pille, Eric Tubbs, Jana Shepherd, Mee Yang Lee; Jeanie McCarville Kerber joined at 8:17 a.m.; Adam Montufar joined at 8:22 a.m.

Voting Members Absent: Jem Gong-Browne, Eva Morales

Ex-Officio Members Present: None

Ex-Officio Members Absent: Aaron Johnson, Terry Harrmann, Barb Merrill, Brook Rosenberg

Staff Present: Barb Bremner, Jody Kanne

Guests Present: Leann Andre, Child Care Consultant Supervisor, Child Care Resource & Referral; Erin Casey, Child Care Consultant CDHs Polk County, Child Care Resource & Referral; Whitney Fink, Director, Capitol Park Early Learning Center; Jillian Herink, Executive Director, Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children; Traci Honold, Child Care Consultant, Child Care Resource & Referral; Heidi LaBounty, ECQuIP Project Manager, Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children; Lauren Linnenbrink, T.E.A.C.H. & WAGE\$ Program Coordinator, Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children; Jessie Mireles, Regional Quality Initiatives Specialist, Child Care Resource & Referral; Ryan Page, Child Care Regulatory Program Manager (Team Lead), Iowa Department of Human Services; Lora Patton, Regional Director, Child Care Resource & Referral; Lindsey Ritter, Child Care Consultant Polk County, Child Care Resource & Referral; Jenny Schreck, Child Care Consultant Polk County, Child Care Resource & Referral; Roxana Sixtos, Child Care Consultant Child Development Home Latino Providers Polk County, Child Care Resource & Referral; Crystal Smith, C2 In-Home Child Care Provider; Kay Strahorn, Director, Bidwell Riverside Child Development Center; Cindy Winn, Healthy Start Director, EveryStep

Welcome

Board Chair Emily Westergaard called the Polk County Early Childhood Iowa Board meeting to order at 8:08 a.m. Quorum was met at this time.

Approval August Minutes

Minutes of the August 26, 2020 meeting were presented. There were no comments or corrections.

A motion to approve the August 2020 minutes was made by Bryan Huggins and seconded by Marianka Pille. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Financial Statements July/August 2020

Barb Bremner presented the financial statements for July and August 2020. These statements are a cash presentation of financial transactions which took place through August of fiscal year 2020.

School Ready

- FY21 Polk County ECI School Ready funding is \$2,787,342
- Carry Forward funds total \$296,753.93
- Total School Ready funds in FY21 budget are \$2,912,483.88
- Interest accrued through August 2020 totals \$902.69
- Expended School Ready funds at end of August 2020 total \$171,612.05
- Expenditures are 5.56% of FY21 School Ready budget. At end of August 2019 5.53% of budget had been expended

Early Childhood

- FY20 Polk County ECI Early Childhood funding is \$928,174
- Carry Forward funds total \$123,624.28
- Total Early Childhood funds in FY21 budget are \$1,051,798.28
- Interest accrued through August 2020 totals \$376.17
- Expended Early Childhood funds at end of August 2020 total \$25,098.68
- Expenditures are 2.39% of FY21 Early Childhood budget. At end of August 2019 5.22% of budget had been expended

Jeanie McCarville Kerber joined at 8:17 a.m.

Adam Montufar joined at 8:22 a.m.

A motion to approve the July and August 2020 financials was made by Marianka Pille and seconded by Deanna Bennigsdorf. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

FY20 Contract Monitoring Schedule

The FY21 Contract Monitoring Schedule was presented. The focus will be on the impacts to programs and their adaptations in order to continue to serve children and families. Bremner will provide updates to the board mid-year and in prior to contract reviews for next fiscal year. Contract Monitoring Schedule will be uploaded to iowagrants.gov.

Westergaard asked for any comments or changes to the Contract Monitoring Schedule. No comments or changes were presented.

A motion to approve the FY21 Contract Monitoring Schedule was made by Marianka Pille and seconded by Charles Mercer. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Administrative Report

- Bremner has been meeting monthly with the Preschool Programming administrators; pre-COVID-19 were quarterly.
- Bremner continues to convene Child Care Health & Safety Collaborative monthly meetings which include program staff consulting with child care.

- Bremner continues to participate in Polk County Disaster Relief Partnership: Basic Needs Subcommittee. Bremner contributes issues affecting child care.
- Westergaard shared DMPS has significantly lower pre-school enrollment this fall and asked if this was true of other districts. Bremner shared West Des Moines enrollment is full due to their hybrid and 100% on-line options, however other district enrollments are low. Department of Education enrollment is taken October 1st to determine the following year funding level. If this occurs it will have dramatic impact on all district preschool programs. This could be a statewide lobbying point this session.
- McCarville Kerber asked regarding positive cases and closures across district preschool programs. Bremner reported that administrators were pleased with the roll out of their hybrid and in-person programs.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Bremner will email a link to a 21-Day Equity Challenge hosted by United Way of Central Iowa. Registrants will receive a daily email with content focused on how inequity and racism affect our lives and community. Members are encouraged to register for this self-guided challenge.

Public Comment

None reported.

Adjourn

Westergaard adjourned the meeting at 8:30 a.m. Meeting was followed by a panel discussion focused on child care and the impacts of COVID-19 on providers, children, and families.

Panel Discussion Notes:

- Lora Patton, Regional Director CCR&R, supervises a team which serves 21 counties in central Iowa, including Polk County.
- Crystal Smith, C2 in-home provider with over 20 years' experience in child care, runs an in-home daycare in Des Moines. C2 providers are licensed to care for up to 16 children with another co-provider on staff. Smith had to close in June after she contracted COVID-19. She will be losing her co-provider because this individual lives with an elderly relative. She continues to have lower enrollment due to parents working from home. Cleaning and disinfecting supplies have been hard to find; parents bring her supplies when they can find them. Food costs have risen by three to four times pre-COVID costs. She has been adjusting her schedule to accommodate school age children on hybrid school schedules. She serves many low income families and their needs have increased. She provides clothing and food for the weekend when she can. She praised CCR&R consultants for their expertise and up-to-date CDC information.
- Erin Casey, Child Care Consultant Polk County CCR&R, shared Smith received Polk County ECI-funded Reach for the Stars grant for cots and a larger table to accommodate her kids during meal times. Casey noted Smith is always thinking about how she can better

serve her kids. The impacts Smith noted are common across Polk County child care. DHS COVID-19 payments for Child Care Assistance children regardless of absences has been critical. Providers have worked with private pay families on contract amendments.

- Roxana Sixtos, Child Care Consultant Serving Latino Providers in Polk County CCR&R, shared the Latino providers are afraid of the uncertainty and the possibility of exposure and having to close. She works to connect them with the nurse consultants to determine next steps when exposures occur. With Return 2 Learn public school district plans her providers feel a responsibility to bring help school age children in their care learn, however they are often challenged with the technology. Providers are anxious for children to succeed academically.
- Heidi LaBounty, ECQuIP Project Manager, IAEYC praised EveryStep Nurse Consultants. She is impressed with the resiliency of center directors, facing new challenges daily.
- Kay Strahorn, Director, Bidwell Riverside CDC shared her center serves 2-5 year olds with a capacity of 62. Currently they have capped enrollment at 42 with a current enrollment of 36. They had three teachers on unemployment through August due to family situations. Currently 78-80% of their families are enrolled through Child Care Assistance. DHS CARES funds have been paying family co-pays which has helped Strahorn administer these enrollments. DHS co-pay reimbursements end October 4th. Parents have not been allowed in the facility since March. Temperature checks are taken when staff and children enter. In August the center experienced a positive COVID-19 test and closed for 14 days. Strahorn implemented changes and now enrolled children and staff are organized in two groups separated by the two floors of the facility and do not interact.
- Whitney Fink, Director, Capitol Park Early Learning Center reported her board chose to close the center from April 4 through May 26th because of increasing positive cases in Polk County. All staff was laid off, she remained on staff and worked with IAEYC on guidelines and procedures for reopening the center. Her center is licensed for 100 children with enrollment currently at 44. They have opened one classroom to serve school age children because that was what the community and families needed. This classroom has 15 students and has three teachers to assist the kids with their virtual learning work. This is not something they will continue after kids return to school. The DHS sustainability funding has been critical for their ability to stay open but has not met sustainable cash flow.
- Ryan Page, Child Care Regulatory Program Manager (Team Lead), Iowa Department of Human Services reported at one point 65% of centers in Iowa had closed due to COVID-19; currently 7% remain closed. DHS worked with CCR&R to get supplies out to providers; the National Guard helped with deliveries. Many child development homes have remained open during this time due to their smaller numbers. The \$32 million CARES funding received by DHS in April is nearly expended, and CCA family co-pay reimbursements will end October 4th. Page anticipates payment to providers for CCA unlimited absent days to remain in effect until the end of October. DHS continues to work with community partners updating guidance for centers, listening to their needs to better support their work.
- Lora Patton, CCR&R, stressed the impact this pandemic is having on children. This is a traumatic event for children and their mental health, especially for those who do not have a stable home environment and are not attending school.