



POLK COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA BOARD MEETING
United Way of Central Iowa
1111 9th Street, Conference Room F
January 26, 2022

Voting Members Present: Ahmed Agyeman, Kevin Abler, Suzanne Cohrs, Sam Early, Bryan Huggins, Matthew Klemme, Eric Tubbs, Emily Westergaard; Participation via teleconference: Sandy Carter, Tabitha Choquette, Adam Montufar, Eva Morales, Jana Shepherd; Marianka Pille arrived at 8:07 a.m.; Deanna Bennigsdorf joined via teleconference at 8:12 a.m.

Voting Members Absent: Dave Arens, Rob Barron, Jem Gong-Browne, Charles Mercer

Ex-Officio Members Present: None

Ex-Officio Members Absent: Aaron Johnson and Barb Merrill

Staff Present: Barb Bremner, Jody Kanne

Guests Present: Jillian Herink, Executive Director, Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children; Tammy Engebretson, ECQulP Project Manager, Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children; Lora Patton, Regional Director, Child Care Resource & Referral; Jennifer Schreck, Child Care Consultant, Child Care Resource & Referral; Cindy Winn, Healthy Start Director, EveryStep attended via teleconference

Welcome

Board Chair Ahmed Agyeman called the Polk County Early Childhood Iowa Board meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. Quorum was met at this time.

Approval December Minutes

Minutes of the December 15, 2021, meeting were presented. There were no comments or corrections.

A motion to approve the December 2021 minutes was made by Emily Westergaard and seconded by Suzanne Cohrs. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Financial Report December 2021

Bremner presented the Audit Committee report. Both grants are tracking similarly to past fiscal years. Administrative expenses for both grants are within budget at 46% at end of December. School Ready and Early Childhood total expenditures are on track with past years.

Marianka Pille arrived at 8:07 a.m.

Bremner shared Dental Connections has had to do some rescheduling due to the higher COVID numbers but continues to get into the centers as possible.

School Ready

- FY22 Polk County ECI School Ready funding is \$2,865,988.00
- Carry Forward funds total \$337,907.95
- Total School Ready funds in FY22 budget are \$3,203,895.95
- Interest accrued through December 2021 totals \$2,697.21
- Expended School Ready funds at end of December 2021 total \$942,211.43
- At the end of December 2021 29% of School Ready had been expended.

Early Childhood

- FY22 Polk County ECI Early Childhood funding is \$947,808.00
- Carry Forward funds total \$118,891.75
- Total Early Childhood funds in FY22 budget are \$1,066,699.75
- Interest accrued through November 2021 totals \$855.87
- Expended Early Childhood funds at end of December 2021 total \$355,058.49
- At end of December 2021 33% of Early Childhood had been expended.

A motion to approve the December 2021 financials was made by Emily Westergaard and seconded by Kevin Abler. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Program Review: Process and Timeline

Bremner reviewed the Program Reapplication & Review Timeline – Spring 2022 document. Review committee members are listed at the top. Members should let Bremner know if they would like to change review committees. New programs receiving 6-month contracts will be invited to apply for FY23 funding. Programs applying for new funding will be assigned to the Healthy Start & Empowerment review committee. EveryStep Healthy Start & Empowerment will present to the full board at the February meeting.

Deanna Bennigsdorf joined via teleconference at 8:12 a.m.

Program review meetings will be held in-person this year with program staff. Bremner is planning a Community Partner Meeting the first week of May. This will be an opportunity for funded programs to provide a brief description of their program and the clients they serve to board members. There will be some networking time set aside for programs to get to know each other and share resources.

Child Care Challenge Grants

As the board was releasing the new grant application process last fall, DHS announced the Child Care Challenge Grants. Due to coalition centers being eligible for these federal grant dollars, the board decided to put our applications on hold pending the outcome of the Challenge Grants. Tammy Engebretson and Heidi LaBounty with IAEYC worked with the centers to apply for the grants.

Polk County ECI received nine center applications through our application process; seven of those nine applications were awarded Child Care Challenge Grant funding. Bremner shared details of centers which received awards.

Child Care Applications/Recommendations

Bremner reported Grandview Child Care Development Center and Oak Academy did not receive federal funding through the Child Care Challenge Grants. Both centers submitted their denial letters to be considered for the Polk County ECI funding.

The board had budgeted \$75,000 in early childhood funds for the fall grantmaking. Grandview Child Development Center applied for \$15,000 for the replacement of infant/toddler playground surface and the installation of fence on two sides of the playground. Oak Academy submitted an application for \$50,000 for the replacement of playground surface. Bremner recommends funding these two requests. The remaining \$10,000 budgeted for the grant process would be moved to the Capacity Building, Quality Support Pilot Centers line item to be used for future coalition center needs.

A motion to fully fund the Grandview Child Development Center and Oak Academy requests was made by Suzanne Cohrs and seconded by Marianka Pille. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Emily Westergaard abstained from the vote on the Oak Academy application.

Lora Patton shared this influx of funds is really helping the centers move to the next level. The Invest in Iowa dollars CCR&R has been distributing have made an impact on the centers. In February a sustainability grant will be available for centers. The coalition centers will qualify due to the high number of CCA families they serve. If a program serves less than 25% of CCA families, they will be required to demonstrate a revenue loss caused by COVID. The ECQuIP team has dedicated time to help the centers through the application process for these stabilization grants.

Members asked for guests' insight into the potential ratio increase being discussed by the legislature. Herink reported IAIEYC is opposed to this increase. The increase could cause additional stress on the teachers and create an unsafe environment for the children. Bremner shared the Association is watching this legislation and will call members to action if necessary. Herink shared concerns over the legislature wanting to allow 16-year-olds to work unsupervised in center classrooms. IAIEYC's stance is moving towards professionalizing the child care workforce which would increase pay and benefits and draw more individuals into the profession.

Sam Early asked if there are ways for board members to provide more voices to the cause, i.e., email or letter writing campaigns. Bremner encouraged members to attend elected official's meetings in their district. The Association board lobbyists Eide and Walton are providing weekly information to the Association board. The Association board will determine if mobilization is needed on an issue. Bremner will share their weekly legislative updates with members as she receives them.

Administrative Report

Bremner's Administrative Report was included in today's materials.

- Statewide voluntary preschool funding has dropped due to the effects of COVID. Budgets are based on the previous year's enrollment as of October. Due to low enrollment numbers because of COVID, these reduced enrollment numbers continue to mean cuts in the next year's budget. In January the Governor approved the use of funds to be modified for preschool programming. Last session the Iowa General Assembly made funds available to districts experiencing an increase in enrollment in the 2021-22 school year due to lower enrollment in 2020-21 because of COVID. These funds can be used to meet the districts needs for this school year and next.
- Bremner started meeting with the new contracted partners in January. She has been meeting with any new partners in person and existing partners with new programs via Zoom. Members were encouraged to reach out to these new organizations to volunteer and support their work.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Public Comment

None

Adjournment

Cohrs made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Westergaard seconded. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Agyeman adjourned the meeting at 9:00 a.m.