



POLK COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA BOARD MEETING
United Way of Central Iowa
Leadership Room
December 18, 2024

Voting Members Present: Suzanne Cohrs, Kevin Abler, Dave Arens, Alicia Chilton, Sam Early, Stephanie Giusto, Matthew Klemme, Christian Ramirez, Shay Scholtes, Megan Schultheis; Rob Barron arrived at 11:35 a.m.; participating via Zoom: Jessica Bruning, Tabitha Choquette, Eric Tubbs, and Stephen White

Voting Members Absent: Josh Laraby, Adam Montufar, Eva Morales, Emily Westergaard

Ex-Officio Members Present: Brooke Rosenberg

Ex-Officio Members Absent: Aaron Johnson

Staff Present: Barb Bremner, Jody Kanne

Guests Present: Tammy Engebretson, Director of Quality Initiatives, Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children; Whitney Fink, Executive Director, Capitol Park Early Learning Center; Lanette Nelson, Healthy Start & Empowerment Outreach Manager, EveryStep; Lora Patton, Region 4 Director, Child Care Resource & Referral

Welcome

Board Chair Suzanne Cohrs welcomed members and called the Polk County Early Childhood Iowa Board meeting to order at 11:31 a.m. Quorum was met at this time. Guest introductions were made.

Approval November Minutes

Minutes of board meeting November 20, 2024, were presented. There were no comments or corrections.

A motion to approve the November 2024 minutes was made by Dave Arens and seconded by Alicia Chilton. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

October FY25 Financial Report

Christian Ramirez presented the October FY25 financial report. Expenditures are tracking with historical data. Ramirez noted three centers have fully expended their Early Childhood Operational Grant funding. Others, like Capitol Park are itemizing invoices to reflect monthly payroll increases. Bremner shared Families Forward will be implementing pay increases through the Operational Grants Des Moines Public School District has started reporting on both of their School Ready grants and these will appear on the December statements.

Rob Barron arrived at 11:35 a.m.

Stephen White departed the meeting at 11:38 a.m.

Bremner met with each center or agency to discuss the operational grant and wage scales. Children & Families of Iowa (CFI CDC) and Oakridge Neighborhood (Oak Academy) both feel wages and benefits offered to their childcare staff are strong. Both organizations submitted invoices for salary/benefits costs through the operational grant.

School Ready

- FY25 School Ready funding is \$2,975,693
- Carry Forward funds total \$289,442.42
- FY25 Total School Ready funds \$3,265,135.42
- Interest accrued through October 2024 totals \$6,309.66
- Expended School Ready funds end of October 2024 total \$482,360.91
- At the end of October 2024 15% of School Ready had been expended. End of previous October 2023 17% of funds had been expended.

Early Childhood

- FY25 Early Childhood funding is \$973,992
- Carry Forward funds total \$154,722.63
- FY25 Total Early Childhood funds \$1,128,714.63
- Interest accrued through October 2024 totals \$2,705.86
- Expended Early Childhood funds at end of October 2024 total \$235,428.86
- At end of October 2024 21% of Early Childhood had been expended. End of previous October 2023 18% of funds had been expended.

A motion to approve the October FY25 Financial Report was made by Alicia Chilton and seconded by Dave Arens. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Program Review: process, timeline, committees, RFP

Bremner reported program annual review process is being moved up a month. This is to meet new HHS deadline for submission of budget by June 1. She reviewed the FY25 Committees, Program Renewal Funding and New Application Timeline – Spring 2025, Program Application for New Funding for Fiscal year 2026, and New Applications Program review Rubric Spring 2025. Members were asked to contact Bremner if they would like to be appointed to a different committee. Cohrs shared the board may hold a board luncheon social on June 25, 2025, in place of the normal meeting due to all board business being completed at the May 28th meeting.

A motion to approve the FY26 Program Review Process was made by Sam Early and seconded by Christian Ramirez. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Governance Document Updates: Bylaws; Policies and Procedures

Eric Tubbs shared suggested updates to the board's Bylaws and Policies and Procedures. Updates reflect Iowa Code changes to open meeting polices and removing the board gender

balance guidelines. There is an addition to the Bylaws of the Limitations of Liability; Indemnification section in new language. The board currently has an insurance policy with ICAP (Iowa Communities Assurance Pool) in place to cover members (D&O) and is reviewed at renewal. Rosenberg asked if \$2 million was annual limit or per incidence. He also asked what the deductible is. Bremner will provide details via email to members

Bylaws and Policies and Procedures with marked edits are in today's meeting Google Drive folder. Members are asked to contact Bremner with questions or suggested additions or edits. These two governance documents will be reviewed, with action for approval at the January meeting.

Advocacy Committee

Alicia Chilton asked members to email their legislators to introduce themselves and Polk County ECI and to offer themselves as a resource for legislators on childcare and early childhood issues that arise throughout session. Bremner will send an email with legislators' email addresses and example content for members to use when emailing legislators.

The Association lobbyists, Eide-Walton, will provide weekly updates after legislative session begins January 13th. Bremner will forward the weekly newsletters to members.

Coalition Child Care Center Updates

Tammy Engebretsen, Director of Quality Initiatives, Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children, presented current information on all childcare centers participating in consultation services through the ECQuIP team at IAIEYC. Center enrollment has been impacted by DMPS offering more full day 4-year-old preschool. Enrollment has also been impacted by the requirement for parents to work a minimum of 32 hours to qualify for Child Care Assistance.

Stephanie Giusto departed the meeting at 12:15 p.m.

Whitney Fink, Executive Director of Capitol Park Early Learning Center, provided an overview of center staffing and enrollment, how they are utilizing the Operational Grant funding, and stressed the importance of the quarterly thank you bonus program for staff. She thanked the board for their continued support of the center.

Kevin Ablor departed the meeting at 12:37 p.m.

Tabitha Choquette departed the meeting at 12:45 p.m.

Administrative Report

- HHS ECI staff continue to hold biweekly meetings for updates.
- ISU Qualtrics is a new system for ECI areas to report program outcomes. This will go live January 6th and the reporting deadline will be February 17th.
- Mid-year financial reports will be submitted through lowagrants.gov with a February 22nd deadline.
- HHS ECI will be sending one contract template for all ECI areas to use for FY26..

Old Business

- The next board social will be January 15th from 4:30 – 6 p.m. Location TBD.

New Business

None

Public Comment

None

Adjournment

Early made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Chilton seconded. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Cohrs adjourned the meeting at 1:00 p.m.