



POLK COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA BOARD MEETING
United Way of Central Iowa
Leadership Room
April 30, 2025

Voting Members Present: Dave Arens, Jessica Bruning, Alicia Chilton, Suzanne Cohrs, Sam Early, Christian Ramirez, Shay Scholtes, Megan Schultheis, Eric Tubbs, Emily Westergaard; Josh Laraby joined via Zoom at 11:32 a.m.; Stephen White arrived at 11:35 a.m.; Stephanie Giusto joined via Zoom at 11:44 a.m.; Rob Barron arrived at 11.44 a.m.

Voting Members Absent: Kevin Abler, Tabitha Choquette, Matthew Klemme, Eva Morales

Ex-Officio Members Present: Brook Rosenberg

Ex-Officio Members Absent: Aaron Johnson

Staff Present: Barb Bremner, Jody Kanne

Guests Present: Leann Andre, Child Care Consultant Supervisor & ChildNet Certification Region 4, Child Care Resource & Referral; Brianne Emunah, Healthy Start & Empowerment Manager, EveryStep; Cindy Winn, Healthy Start & Empowerment Director, EveryStep

Welcome

Board Chair Suzanne Cohrs welcomed members and called the Polk County Early Childhood Iowa Board meeting to order at 11:30 a.m. Quorum was met at this time. Guest introductions were made.

Approval March Minutes

Minutes of March 26, 2025, board meeting were presented. There were no comments or corrections.

A motion to approve the March 2025 minutes was made by Emily Westergaard and seconded by Alicia Chilton. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Audit Committee: March Financials

Christian Ramierz presented the March FY25 financial report. Expenditures are tracking with past year financials at end of March which is 75 percent through the fiscal year.

Josh Laraby joined via Zoom at 11:32 a.m.

Ramirez reviewed the School Ready and Early Childhood expenditures and reported Bremner has been in contact with organizations with expenditures lower than the expected percentage.

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 March 2025 totals \$25,631.98
- Expended School Ready funds end of March 2025 total \$1,868,571.92
- At the end of March 2025 57% of School Ready had been expended. End of previous March 2024 51% 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 March 2025 totals \$8,933.32
- Expended Early Childhood funds at end of March 2025 total \$650,034.97
- At end of March 2025 58% of Early Childhood had been expended. End of previous March 2024 53% of funds had been expended.

A motion to approve the March FY25 Financial Report was made by Eric Tubbs and seconded by Shay Scholtes. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Jacob Al-Mazroa – application ECI State Board

Jacob Al-Mazroa would like to apply for an open seat on the ECI State Board. Applicants are required to include a letter of recommendation from their area board along with their application. Al-Mazroa previously served on the 4RKids Early Childhood Iowa Area Board. Their Executive Director, Debra Schrader, has written a letter of recommendation for Al-Mazroa. He now lives and works in Polk County and contacted Bremner to request a letter from the board.

Stephen White arrived at 11:35 a.m.

Bremner met with Al-Mazroa and has spoken with 4RKids' Executive Director Schrader regarding his participation on the 4RKids board. Bremner has the letter written by Schrader. An indication of his interest in early childhood issues is that he met with several legislators to discuss the current bills impacting ECI.

Members requested additional time to gather more information before writing a letter of recommendation.

A motion to table submitting a letter of recommendation for Al-Mazroa until the May meeting was made by Sam Early and seconded by Eric Tubbs. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Stephanie Giusto joined via Zoom at 11:44 a.m.

Rob Barron arrived at 11:44 a.m.

Board Membership Update

Bremner reviewed the matrix of board member terms. Three members will be ending their second terms June 30, 2025: Emily Westergaard, Rob Barron, and Eva Morales. Sandy Carter and Adam Montufar resigned midyear.

Without recruitment of new members there will be 15 members on July 1, 2025. Board bylaws require 15-20 members.

The uncertainty of the role of current ECI boards over the past four months put new member recruitment on hold. Jacob Al-Mazroa could be a possible new member for our local board. Bremner has other potential members in mind.

New board members are normally approved at the annual meeting in June. Board Policy 2.4 states:

At the annual meeting, the nominating committee will present a slate of individuals for nomination to membership for the Board to vote on, ensuring that Iowa code and Polk County ECI Bylaw requirements are met.

Bremner suggested having new member discussions at the May meeting.

Members were asked to contact Bremner to share ideas for candidates for consideration.

Executive Director Performance Review and Compensation Committee Update

Cohrs reported the Executive Director Performance Review and Compensation Committee will meet Friday, May 2nd, to review member survey results regarding Bremner's performance and additional local compensation data to determine the Executive Director compensation package for FY26. Members were asked to complete the performance survey emailed by Cohrs by end of day today, April 30th.

Health & Human Services/Legislative Updates

Bremner provided a Health & Human Services update. The only communication directors have had with HHS since April 11 was this Monday requesting directors complete a survey requesting fiscal agent and board chair information. Members reviewed and discussed Senate File 445. Bremner noted the Association agreed to support the amendment due to extending the implementation deadline to July 1, 2026. The House has not taken any action on the bill. Bremner has met with some programs asking for updated budgets in the event the bill is passed. This would require a quick turnaround to issue contracts July 1, 2025.

FY26 Budget Scenarios

Bremner reviewed funding scenarios which included status quo and also a new allocation based on a new formula approved at the last ECI State Board meeting. The new formula would increase funding for Polk County. One scenario presented would hold slightly less than 20 percent as non-contracted with intent of rolling this as carry forward into the new district.

Members discussed using any additional funds to support programs being impact by a loss federal funds. Bremner is communicating with United Way Community Impact staff to understand ways to best support currently co-funded programs.

Stephanie Giusto departed the meeting at 12:39 p.m.

Rob Barron departed the meeting at 12:44 p.m.

The lack of specific information regarding the allocation and any new guidelines regarding the service types which can be funding may require an additional meeting.

It is possible HHS will require submission of a budget June 1st. A budget could be submitted then to meet compliance and could be amended after the June meeting. Bremner will share information as it is released to ECI areas by HHS.

Administrative Report

Bremner's administrative report was included in today's packet.

Old Business

- None

New Business

- None

Public Comment

- Leann Andre shared CCR&R will continue all services. Funding will be provided by the state.
- Cindy Winn with EveryStep invited members to the Baby Bloom event Saturday, May 10. The event will be held at the DMACC Urban Campus. A flyer was provided in today's packet. Members were asked to share event information with their networks.

Adjournment

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

Cohrs adjourned the meeting at 12:56 p.m.