



POLK COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA BOARD MEETING
United Way of Central Iowa
Leadership Room
October 22, 2025

Voting Members Present: Alicia Chilton, Kevin Abler, Jake Al-Mazroa, Tabitha Choquette, Suzanne Cohrs, Sam Early, Josh Laraby, Shay Scholtes, Megan Schultheis, Eric Tubbs; Gabrielle Brooks arrived at 12:18 p.m.; Participating via Teams Jessica Bruning; Stephen White joined via Teams at 11.36 a.m.

Voting Members Absent: Dave Arens, Stephanie Giusto, Matthew Klemme, Christian Ramirez

Ex-Officio Members Present: Brook Rosenberg

Ex-Officio Members Absent: Aaron Johnson, Emily Westergaard

Staff Present: Barb Bremner, Jody Kanne

Guests Present: Cindy Winn, Healthy Start Director, EveryStep; Bergetta Beardsley, Vice President of Philanthropy and Marie Peterson, Senior Manager of Partners and Programs, both Food Bank of Iowa; Kate Pauly, Board President, FosterSquad; Zuli Garcia, Executive Director, Knock and Drop Iowa; Alyssa Barton, Service Coordinator, and Liz Crane, Director Early Childhood Services, both Lutheran Services in Iowa; Tonia Martin, Director of Operations and Jill Kinnison, Inventory Manager, both Mary's Helping Hands.

Welcome

Board Chair Alicia Chilton welcomed members and called the meeting to order at 11:31 a.m. Quorum was met at this time. Guest introductions were made.

Approval September Minutes

Minutes of board meeting September 24, 2025, were presented. There were no comments or corrections.

A motion to approve September 2025 minutes was made by Sam Early and seconded by Kevin Abler. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

September FY26 Financial Report

Josh Laraby presented the September FY26 financial report. Expenditures are tracking as expected.

Bremner reported the contract for Capitol Park will be terminated as of October 31, 2025. The First quarter Wage Enhancement payments will be paid, and all remaining contract funds will be moved to the non-contracted line in the budget.

A motion to approve the September FY26 financials was made by Suzanne Cohrs and seconded by Shay Scholtes. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Budget Update – non-contracted funds

Bremner reported that HHS has requested all ECI areas submit a plan for non-contracted funds by October 31st.

Stephen White joined via Teams at 11:36 a.m.

Bremner reviewed the Polk County ECI funding history document. Current non-contracted funds total \$504,681.36 (including quality improvement line of \$60,000) which is approximately 11% of the total budget. Every fiscal year there are non-contracted funds in the budget as a planning strategy to have flexibility during the year for unforeseen requests and circumstances. Bremner presented five ideas to spend approximately 50% of non-contracted funds. Bremner recommends holding approximately \$200,000 non-contracted for carry forward funds into FY27 due to the uncertainty of being regionalized into districts.

Laraby recommended reaching out to Tammy Wetjen-Kesterson (Iowa Jefferson Keokuk ECI). When he was a board member in that area they administered similar quality improvement grants. Early recommended working with CCR&R to see if they might help with the administration of grants.

Bremner will submit the plan for non-contracted funds to HHS by the October 31st deadline.

Essential Needs Program Presentations

Zuli Garcia, Executive Director, Knock and Drop Iowa, presented on the history of the non-profit and the needs of the Latino community. Board funding allows them to provide baby formula, diapers, wipes, winter coats, and other essential needs for children.

Tonia Martin, Director of Operations and Jill Kinnison, Inventory Manager, with Mary's Helping Hands program presented on the organization's history, vision, and supports provided.

Stephen White departed the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

Martin shared volunteers are donating time to create a client database. They are purchasing translation devices to communicate with clients in multiple languages.

Kate Pauly, Board President, FosterSquad, presented on the history of the program and the care kits for children. The agency recently created an eEquip Hub to connect donors with foster families to address their needs.

Gabrielle Brooks arrived at 12:18 p.m.

Due to the increase in numbers of families being served and donations through the eEquip Hub, the organization will be moving to a larger building with more office space and space for donated items.

Bergetta Beardsley, Vice President of Philanthropy, and Marie Peterson, Senior Manager of Partners and Programs, Food Bank of Iowa presented on food insecurity in central Iowa, across the state, and their support of child care centers supported by Polk County ECI and the Des Moines Public Schools early childhood program. The agency currently supports the food pantries in all the DMPS buildings and expects that collaboration to continue with the Reimaging Education plan.

Members discussed convening all funded partners so they can gain a better understanding of each agency's work.

Administrative Report

Bremner's full administrative report was included with meeting materials.

- Bremner attended the October 17th State Board Meeting which focused on redistricting. Three directors stated they will submit a letter requesting a wavier to merge ECI areas into districts (3, 4, and 6) at the next ECI state board meeting on November 7th. It is unclear what will happen if one or more ECI areas in a district do not sign the letter. Some ECI area boards have stated they will not sign letters requesting merger.
- HHS released a THRIVE RFP on October 15th. Organizations in three districts (3, 4, and 6) are eligible to apply.
- Bremner submitted for Quarter 2 payment on September 8th. To date we have not received payment; the state has 60 days to issue payment. The delay in payment affects the interest we receive from our fiscal agent.
- Bremner will file the plan discussed for non-contracted funds through Iowa Grants by the October 31 deadline.

Josh Laraby departed the meeting at 1:02 p.m.

- The next State Board meeting is November 5th. Bremner will share meeting details when available.

Old Business

None.

New Business

None.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Suzanne Cohrs made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Eric Tubbs seconded. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chilton adjourned the meeting at 1:06 p.m.