



POLK COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA BOARD MEETING
United Way of Central Iowa
Leadership Room
December 17, 2025

Voting Members Present: Alicia Chilton, Dave Arens, Suzanne Cohrs, Sam Early, Shay Scholtes; Jessica Bruning arrived at 11:35; Participating via Teams Jake Al-Mazroa, Gabrielle Brooks, Josh Laraby, Crhistian Ramirez, Eric Tubbs

Voting Members Absent: Kevin Abler, Tabitha Choquette, Matthew Klemme, Megan Schultheis, Stephen White

Ex-Officio Members Present: Emily Westergaard

Ex-Officio Members Absent: Aaron Johnson, Brook Rosenberg

Staff Present: Barb Bremner, Jody Kanne

Guests Present: Jonathan Brendemuehl, Director, Broadlawns Medical Center Foundation; Kate Walton, Eide Walton Lobbying and Government Relations; Lanette Nelson, Healthy Start Manager, EveryStep; Ruaa Khaleefa, Child Care Specialist, Lutheran Services in Iowa; via Teams Alyssa Barton, Service Coordinator, Lutheran Services in Iowa

Welcome

Board Chair Alicia Chilton welcomed members and called the meeting to order at 11:33 a.m. Quorum was met at this time. Guest introductions were made.

Jessica Bruning arrived at 11:35 a.m.

Approval November Minutes

Minutes of board meeting November 19, 2025, were presented. There were no comments or corrections.

A motion to approve the November 2025 minutes was made by Dave Arens and seconded by Sam Early. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

November FY26 Financial Report

Barb Bremner presented the November FY26 financial report. Expenditures are tracking as expected. November is 42 percent of the way through the fiscal year. Administrative expenditures are at 37 percent. Program expenditures are at 23 percent.

EveryStep's invoicing has been delayed due to staffing changes in their finance department. Billing on the November expenditure report is through September for both EveryStep contracts. Bremner met with EveryStep CFO Danielle Martin this month to discuss the delays and how to improve the process.

Bremner noted the two Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children contracts approved at last month's meeting have been added to the expenditure report. Non-contracted funds are reflected under Community Planning and Collaboration for \$102,941.00. Under Program Discretionary there are three lines of non-contracted funds for \$60,000, 100,000 and \$185,927.36. These funds can be used for the two funding requests the board will discuss today.

December 2nd current contractors were emailed an application to request additional funding. The application deadline is COB January 2nd. The board will review all requests at the January board meeting.

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

Broadlawns Funding Request

Bremner reviewed the funding request from Broadlawns Medical Center. She met with Jonathan Brendemuehl, Director, Broadlawns Medical Center Foundation in June and September along with their full team to discuss their Pediatric Clothing Closet, First Book program, and Family Birthing Center Car Seats and Pack-and-Plays programs. They have submitted a request for funding of \$30,000 representing \$10,000 for each program:

- Pediatric Clothing Closet – Need is determined by staff during clinic visits and/or children being discharged from the hospital.
- First Book Program – Books are purchased through the First Book organization in multiple languages and distributed at pediatric visits.
- Family Birthing Center Car Seats and Pack-and-Plays – Need is determined by staff upon family discharge conversations. Members requested Broadlawns gather demographic information on this program.

Funding for this request would come from the Midyear Request non-contracted funds currently at \$216,006.61.

A motion to approve funding for the Broadlawns projects totaling \$30,000.00 was made by Dave Arens and seconded by Suzanne Cohrs. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

LSI Child Care Business Development Quality Improvement Funding Request

Bremner reviewed the LSI Childcare Provider Support Project request. Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) issued a grant opportunity Grow Iowa in September for childcare providers for up to \$5,000 for child care centers and \$1000 for in-home providers, in materials and supplies related to IQ4K and compliance.

In-home providers who have completed the LSI program are registered with HHS. Most active providers face language and technology barriers to apply for online grants like the CCRR grant. Bremner has discussed with Ruaa Khaleefa, Child Care Specialist, Lutheran Services in Iowa, how to support active in-home providers. The grant would provide up to \$1,000 per provider for materials tailored to their specific needs.

Khaleefa estimates 60-80 providers would take advantage of the grant. LSI would work with the providers to determine needs, order items, and have them shipped to the providers' home. LSI would provide documentation of expenditures to receive reimbursement.

LSI request is for \$96,000 to support materials purchases for in-home providers. Funding for this request would come from the non-contracted budget line of Quality Improvement Mini grants and Midyear Request line.

A motion to approve funding for the LSI project for \$96,000 was made by Dave Arens and seconded by Suzanne Cohrs. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

2026 Legislative Session and Advocacy for ECI:

Bremner introduced Kate Walton with Eide Walton Lobbying and Government Relations. Eide Walton serves as the lobbyist for the Association of Early Childhood Iowa Areas and Advocates.

Kate Walton provided a legislative update and a presentation of expectations for the 2026 legislative session.

Jake Al-Mazroa departed the meeting at 12:46 p.m.

Walton shared that they work closely with the Association of Early Childhood Area Boards and Advocates. They provide monthly updates during the session to all members of the Association. They meet with the Association Board of Directors monthly to discuss legislative action. Bremner is on the Board. Discussion included the process the firm takes with the Association Board before registering for a bill.

Administrative Report

- The ECI State Board met in November and December. Discussion indicated the Board is not interested in mandating regionalization into districts. Tool U was amended earlier to allow ECI area boards to merge if they would like.
- Emily Westergaard shared the State Board has five vacancies for citizen board members in congressional districts 2 and 4. Members were asked to reach out to individuals in their network in those areas interested in serving on the ECI State Board.
- All contracts will provide program outcomes for their service type (Tool O) through mid-year reporting by January 15th. Bremner will compile outcomes for HHS-required reporting via Qualtrics (due February 26).
- January board meeting will focus on reviewing additional funding requests and discussions on the upcoming investment process.

Old Business

None.

New Business

None.

Public Comment

Lanette Nelson, EveryStep, shared their Dads with a Purpose program will begin in January.

Adjournment

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

Chilton adjourned the meeting at 1:05 p.m.