



**Early Childhood Iowa Area Board
Minutes
Thursday February 20, 2025
Virtual Meeting**

Board Meeting *(Information)*

Board Chairperson Martens convened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Attendance *(Information)*

(x means attendance at the meeting)

Board member	Representation	Attendance
Catherine Reaman-Gerdes	Human Service	x
Christine Lundy	Education	
Colleen Strohmaier	Business	
Deb Hansen	Citizen	x
Jacob Gunn	Parent	x
Jessica Petter	Health	x
Nancy Hopkins	Citizen	x
Nancy Krause	Citizen	x
Rita Martens - Chairperson	Citizen	x
Shelley Flanery	Citizen	x
Wendy Sawyer	Faith	x

4 R Kids Staff Present *(Information)*

Debra Schrader, Executive Director.

Others present *(Information)*

Kristie Vasey, Kelly Phelps, and Lora Patton (Orchard Place/Child Care Resource & Referral)

Distinction of Quorum *(Information)*

Board membership consists of no less than 8 members and no more than 12 members, with 11 positions filled at the beginning of the meeting; 9 board members were present at the meeting representing quorum.

Open Forum *(Information)*

None

Introductions *(Information)*

Introductions were made by Board members and the audience.

Board Professional Development *(Information)*

Ms. Phelps and Ms. Vasey representing Orchard Place/Child Care Resource & Referral provided a presentation on child care incentives and child care consultation.

Agenda *(Action)*

Board member Petter moved to approve the February 20, 2025 agenda. Board member Board member Reaman-Gerdes seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes *(Action)*

Board member Reaman-Gerdes moved to approve the December 19, 2024 minutes. Board member Petter seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Annual Performance Review *(Information)*

The board will be conducting the annual review of the ECI Director in the next few weeks. If you have any questions, contact Board chairperson Martens.

Proposed Legislative Changes *(Information)*

Director Schrader provided an overview of the anticipated changes to Early Childhood Iowa. It was noted that there has been no written communication, only verbal, from the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, ECI office, with the exception of two emails that local ECI area boards will no longer be allowed to fund the child care nurse consultants and services provided by Child Care Resource & Referral. It has been verbally relayed that 34 local ECI boards will no longer exist in FY26 and 7 district boards will be formed for an anticipated start date of July 1, 2025. The new district boards will be responsible to fund home visitation and Governor Reynolds continuum of care for 4-year-olds utilizing existing ECI funds, no new funds will be provided. This proposes a concern that many early childhood services currently funded will no longer be able to be funded. The state ECI office has written job descriptions implementing four positions in each of the 7 districts and ECI Directors have been assigned in each of the districts matching personalities with job descriptions. Director Schrader has been assigned to District 5 that includes 14 counties in which Dallas, Madison, and Warren will be in. Adair County will be in District 4 and includes 14 counties. The Governor's Continuum of Care bill was released in the House and Senate and has passed out of subcommittees and will now go to the full committees for consideration. The bill is expected to pass however amendments are expected.

Letter for Policy Makers *(Action)*

After much discussion about the potential changes to ECI and the loss of early childhood services, Board member Hansen moved to send letters to legislators in the four county areas expressing support of the Governors Continuum of Care project, but not at the expense of losing current services. Board member Reaman-Gerdes seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

ICAP Letter of Support *(Action)*

Board member Krause moved to provide a letter of support to the Dallas County Children's Advocacy Council to support sexual child abuse prevention programming and home visitation. Board member Petter seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Finance Committee *(Action)*

The Finance Committee members reviewed budgets, payment vouchers, bank statements, and fund balance reconciliations prior to the board meeting. Board member Reaman-Gerdes moved to approve the December 2024 and January 2025 expenditures in the amount of \$125,128.98 and \$130,662.84, respectfully. Board member Gunn seconded. Motion carried unanimously. It was noted the rate of spending for FY25 was 48.6% of school ready funding and 49.6% of early childhood funding, and 16.6% of ARPA funding.

Board Program and Service Committee

The committee met February 9, 2024 and Board member Krause was the reporter.

FY25 Preschool Tuition (Information)

There are no changes needed to the preschool tuition scholarship policy.

FY25 Transportation Policy and Contract Amendment (Action)

Board member Krause moved to approve FY26 preschool transportation policy with two changes; and to reduce Lutheran Services in Iowa's contract by \$46,000 due to lack of replacing a staff person. Board member Petter seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2nd Quarterly Report (Information)

The committee reviewed the 2nd quarter progress reports from the contractors. A compilation of data was provided to the board on each contract. The 2nd quarter reports are located on the 4 R Kids website. It was noted that the school ready funds expenditure rate was 41% and the early childhood funds expenditure rate was 38%, on target is 50%.

Criteria for Family Support Programs (Information)

The committee did not recommend any changes to the FY26 family support enrollment criteria and will remain at 80%. Early Childhood Iowa requires enrollment criteria be 75% of families served must met; be at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, have a high school diploma or less, or have a child with IEP or IFSP. It is to be noted that all three funded family support programs are easily meeting the 80% criteria of new family's enrolled in FY25.

Request for Renewal (Information)

Due to the uncertainty of the realignment with ECI, a contract renewal may not be issued. Three, six, and 12 months budgets from Dallas County ISU Extension will be requested to be prepared for different scenarios and/or spend down any carryover that the 4 R Kids ECI Board may have.

Next meeting is May 2, 2025 at 9:30.

Board Process Committee

The committee met January 30, 2025 and Board member Reaman Gerdes was the reporter.

Policy and Procedures (Information)

There is no change needed to the policy and procedure manual.

Board Evaluation and Professional Development Plan (Action)

The Board Process committee reviewed the results of the board performance evaluation that was conducted by the community and the board. It was noted that the community and the board were consistent on a scale of 1-5. The average score from the community was 4.3 and the average score from the board was 4.5. It was noted that the board scored the lowest in areas of representation to the community and involvement in the boards work and diversity of the board. Areas that scored highest are the board receiving regular reports, structural

pattern, and board meeting focus. The committee presented the FY26 board professional development plan and they utilized the scores and comments from the evaluation. The plan is similar to last year. It was noted that a board evaluation and board professional development plan is no longer a requirement of Early Childhood Iowa, but the committee felt it is a best practice to continue with the process. Board member Hansen moved to approve the FY26 board professional development plan. Board member Reaman-Gerdes seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

FY54 Board Meeting Calendar (Information)

The committee has drafted the FY26 board meeting calendar, it mirrors the FY25 calendar.

Administrative Update *(Information)*

Director Schrader disseminated an administrative update.

- Thrive Iowa update;
- Cancelling ECI board designation visits;
- Norwalk special census
- Midyear financial report submitted;
- Contractor meeting;
- Child abuse prevention grant;
- Condition of the state address;
- Changes to CCNC and CCR&R
- Immigration and customs enforcement;
- Onsite visits
- Success story;
- Out of office;
- Early childhood committee updates;
- Professional development;
- Marketing and public awareness update.

Miscellaneous Board Updates *(Information)*

None

Next meeting *(Information)*

Board Chairperson Martens adjourned the meeting at 7:40 p.m. The next meeting is April 17, 2025 and will be virtual.