



**Early Childhood Iowa Area Board  
Minutes  
Thursday November 20, 2026  
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	
Jacob Gunn	Parent	
Jessica Petter	Health	
Nancy Krause	Citizen	X
Rita Martens - Chairperson	Citizen	X
Shelley Flanery	Citizen	X
Wendy Sawyer	Faith	X
Ricki Hall	Citizen	X
Jovanka Westbrook	Citizen	X

**4 R Kids Staff Present (Information)**

Debra Schrader, Executive Director.

**Others present (Information)**

Jackie Giles (Dallas County ISU Extension,), Joyce Westphal (Therapist), Kristie Nixon, and Nina Utterback (SWCC).

**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; 7 or 64% of board members 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. Nixon and Ms. Utterback from Southwestern Community College provided a presentation about Adair County Parents as Teachers.

**Agenda (Action)**

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

**Minutes (Action)**

Board member Sawyer moved to approve the September 11, 2025 minutes with correction of the date. Board member Westbrook seconded. Motion carried unanimously

**State ECI Board Outcome (Information)**

The State ECI Board had a special board meeting October 17, 2025 from 9:00-12:00 to continue conversations regarding pros and cons of ECI following the 7 behavioral health boundaries or creating different boundaries. There was no action taken at the meeting.

The State ECI Board met in regular session November 7, 2025 from 9:00-12:00. Board member Martens read a prepared statement at public comment time; there were 17 people that provided public comment. The state ECI board took action to disband the Clay, Dickinson, O'Brien

and Osceola ECI board, even though they had completed all tasks required in the corrective action plan. They also acted on changes to Tool FF – family support and parent education. HHS proposed a change to the funding allocations for FY27 to be delivered by the 7 districts that follow the behavioral health districts; the board did not take action. Much of the time was devoted to discussions around ECI areas being forced into seven districts, no action was taken.

#### **Association 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference** *(Information)*

Director Schrader attended the Associations annual conference November 12-13<sup>th</sup> in Des Moines. The 2025 annual report was shared, 93 of 99 counties were members of the Association of Early Childhood Iowa Area Boards and Advocates, 6 open ended guidance sessions were provided to local ECI directors, 7 legislative briefings were provided by Eide and Walton Advocacy group and two legislative opportunities were conducted along with a plethora of member only online resources. The legislative agenda was approved and is similar to years past; sustain and strengthen early childhood Iowa as Iowa's local early childhood system and requesting \$1.15 million increase of ECI area boards through the early childhood Iowa fund.

#### **Funding Requests** *(Action)*

Dallas County Agricultural Extension District submitted a funding request for \$58,500 to support infant and early childhood mental health, consultation incentives that will serve up to 83 unduplicated child care providers and serve safe expenses that will serve up to 10 child care provides. Short Years Partnership submitted a funding request for \$60,500 for family support services that will serve a total of 1,240 home visits for the fiscal year. Director Schrader was notified today, that \$30,000 from a Mercer Health & Benefits LLC fundraiser will be dedicated to infant and early childhood mental health and the money will be sent to the fiscal agent, then sent to Dallas County Agriculture Extension District, the funding has no time limit. After much discussion Board member Reaman-Gerdes moved to allocated \$28,500 to Dallas County Agricultural Extension District and \$60,500 to Short Years Partnership. 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 August, September, and October 2026 expenditures in the amount of \$101,665.47, \$86,905.72, and \$106,226.04 respectfully. Board member Krause seconded. Motion carried unanimously. It was noted the rate of spending for FY26 is 27.8% and 23.7% of ARPA funding.

#### **Board Program and Service Committee**

##### *1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Report Review (Information)*

The Committee met October 24, 2025 at 9:00 by Zoom. The committee reviewed the 1st quarter progress reports from the contractors. Overview of the data and reports were in the Program and Service Committee Minutes.

##### *Corrective Action Plan (Action)*

Lutheran Services in Iowa continues to struggled with filling 1.8 FTE positions and the vacancies have been more than 12 months. Additionally, due to vacant positions, the agency will have \$22,000 unexpended. Due to the challenges, it was recommended to put Lutheran Services in Iowa on a corrective action plan and reduce the contract by \$22,000. Board member Sawyer moved to approve a corrective action plan that will include a staff retention plan, weekly updates, revision of benchmarks, provide a budget update in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of unexpended funds and reduce the contract by \$22,000. Board member Westbrook seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

##### *Thrive update (Information)*

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services will contract directly with Warren County Health Services starting in January 1, 2026 and Thrive will no longer exist and a new model called Restore Hope will be implemented. Warren County Health Services will receive a total of \$969,500 for a 3 ½ year contract directly from HHS. Funds can only be used to support 3 FTE and mileage and is required to serve up to 3 counties during the term of the contract. No funding is allowed for housing or essential needs. The 4 R Kids ECI board will no longer be responsible for contract oversight. Iowa HHS made no attempt to inform the ECI director of the changes.

#### **Board Process Committee**

The committee did not meet.

#### **Miscellaneous Board Update**

Members of the 4 R Kids ECI board and their significant others will meet for a holiday Dutch treat lunch December 19, 2025 at 12:00 at the Urban Tap in Winterset.

Board member Krause will be applying to the state ECI board for membership. A letter of support from the 4 R Kids board was provided.

#### **Administrative Update** *(Information)*

Director Schrader disseminated an administrative update.

- LSI staffing
- Thrive Iowa;
- Legislation, structure, etc;

- Funding history;
- State board meetings
- SWCC blue ribbon certification;
- Success story;
- Out of office dates.

**Miscellaneous Board Updates** *(Information)*

None

**Next meeting** *(Information)*

Board Chairperson Martens adjourned the meeting at 7:59 p.m. The next meeting is December 18, 2025 and will be virtual.