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**Valley Early Childhood Regional Council Meeting Agenda**

**December 8, 2022**

**9:00-11:00 am**

**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

***Mission: To support the Valley Community as a leader in early childhood development and family engagement in an effort to ensure all Valley children are prepared socially and developmentally to thrive in school.***

In attendance:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Council Member Name** | **Email** | **Affiliation** |
| Carissa Caserta | ccaserta@nvhd.org | NVHD/Co-Chair |
| Mary Sue Feige | msuefeige@seymourschools.org | Seymour Schools/Co-Chair |
| Ayanna Williams | ayannawilliams127@yahoo.com | Derby/Seymour Shelton SR Liaison |
| Diana Brancato | dbrancato@ansonia.org | Ansonia SR Liaison |
| Dee Kopec | kopecs@att.net | Mayor Designee- Shelton |
| Joseph DiBacco | jdibacco@ansonia.org | Superintendent- Ansonia |
| Alison Conway | aconway@derbyps.org | Superintendent Designee- Derby |
| Courtney Sherman | csherman@bhcare.org | Healthcare Provider |
| Linda Flach | lflach@lnvpcrc.org | Healthcare Provider |
| Reese Morales | amorales@ansonia.org | McKinney-Vento Liaison- Ansonia |
| Barbara Eckner | beckner@cccymca.org | Provider- Ansonia and Derby SR |
| Shannon Bullard | sbullard@juliadaynursery.com | Provider- Ansonia SR |
| Tracy Platt | tplatt@ansonia.org | Provider- Ansonia SR |
| Elizabeth Heon | kidsclub@sbcglobal.net | Provider- Derby and Seymour SR |
| Rebecca Verdicchio | rverdicchio@sheltonpublicschools.org | Provider- Shelton SR |
| Kristen Ezzo | kristenfinocchiaro@gmail.com | Parent |
| Debra Hansen | dhansen@vrae.org | Community Rep. |
| Laura Harris | Laura.harriscc@gmail.com | Community Rep. |
| Alison Brett | abrett@seymourschools.org | Community Rep. |
| Catherine Pomeroy | cpomeroy@derbyps.org | Community Rep. |
| Rebecca Gardner | rgardner@bhcare.org | Healthcare Provider |

**Welcome and Introductions- Carissa Caserta**

Carissa called the meeting to order and introductions were made.

**Regional Budget Discussion- Carissa Caserta/Mary Sue Feige**

The budget as of 11/30/22 is $8643.11. TEAM is the fiduciary for the VECRC.

[**Minutes**](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1H-nDpo4oLiT1QShwji0GjHQiPiPTxB18/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=104577981175663960685&rtpof=true&sd=true) **from October 13, 2022 Meeting**

Mary Sue Feige made a motion and Linda Flach seconded to accept the minutes from the October 13, 2022 meeting. All were in favor with no opposition so the motion carried.

**Naugatuck Valley Health Department- Carissa Caserta**

Carissa reported that Covid cases are going up. Ansonia and Shelton are the highest in the ages of 0-19 years old. NVHD is working on scheduling flu shots for families that are having difficulty getting them at the doctor’s office. The NVHD is reminding everyone of the importance of handwashing and keep your child home if sick. RSV infections are back. We expected this to happen. Check expiration dates of the test kits.

Linda Flach asked if people weren’t getting the flu shot. Carissa said that a lot of people are testing positive. From a parent perspective, hard to get a flu shot for the kids—delay in being able to get an appointment, nice that the NVHD is offering the flu shot.

**OEC/Liaison Updates- Ayanna Williams/Diana Brancato**

The Liaison Report was provided prior to the meeting. In summary, Ayanna and Diana shared the following:

* ECE Reporter and monthly reports updates. The OEC has transitioned the management of ECE Reporter from Skylight to the OEC.
* Wage Supports for Early Childhood Educators- This is a two-phased initiative for all School Readiness staff in licensed and license exempt programs.
* The OEC released Enrollment Grant applications to School Readiness funded sites late October. Providers completed the application to attest that their enrollment was a minimum of 50% of families at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level.
* Change in weeks of operation- School Readiness programs have been required to be open for at least 50 weeks/year since the grant originated in 1997. OEC has recently changed this requirement to where programs must be open 48 weeks with individual days of closure not being counted.
* Infant and Toddler Expansion spaces- this funding is intended to provide low-income Connecticut families with increased access to high-quality, affordable infant and toddler care in licensed facilities. TEAM applied for 6 CDC slots in phase 1 and were awarded. VECRC School Readiness programs currently do not have capacity to expand within their programs to create new I/T spaces. Ayanna and Diana will be submitting an opt-out application, via Qualtrics.
* Ayanna and Diana will be conducting their second round of FY23 monitoring consisting of the Professional Registry check (Staff qualifications, DQSM compliance, licensing and accreditation status, Registry updates and reporting requirements), in-person Classroom Observations of Large Group Time, review of School Readiness and Parent Fee Budget Expenditure Reports and a review of School Readiness student Attendance Reports. Each program will receive a summary report and action plan if needed-will share with governance committee.
* Diana loves being back into programs and classrooms. It has been a nice opportunity especially with new staff and supporting them. Kudos to our programs! Since it is a state funded grant, our programs are held to a high standard. The program directors are keeping a great job with their plan of study and how their staff is being supported. They are staying on top of that.
* Ayanna mentioned the scheduled provider meetings that were conducted. They met with Ansonia, Derby, Shelton and Seymour providers. Discussed highlights, parent engagement, hearing screenings, professional development, ECE, updates, and challenges.
* Ayanna discussed CES presenter, Suzanne Clemente, to speak with activities and professional development. All programs will get 1:1 coaching and work with lead teachers. Excited that teachers are going to get that support.
* Diana discussed Suzanne’s previous presentations, and how grateful we are for the Enhancement monies for the programs.

**Program/Agency Sharing:**

**School Readiness Providers:**

Tracy- *Ansonia Public Schools* has 50 Full Day/Full Year slots and 10 Part Day/Part Year slots and all 50 FD/FY and 10 PD/PY slots are utilized. Tracy shared on the following Quality Components:

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| ***Quality Components*** | ***Implementation*** |
| *Parent Involvement (Family Engagement)* | *Lisa Perrotti, our Family Support Specialist, arranged a “Male Empowerment Night” which included dinner and a presentation by one of our male preschool teachers from the program. The event encouraged the fathers or father figures of our students to get to know one another and share parenting stories and advice. There were 18 total participants with which provided positive feedback and requested that it be done again!* |
| *Health (record-keeping policies and referrals)* | *We are in the process of collecting proof of flu vaccination from all students. Lisa Perrotti set up an on-site Pre-k flu clinic through NVHD on 11/2 to help families obtain their vaccinations by the deadline of January 1, 2023. WE currently have 20 students who have yet to complete the vaccination.* |
| *Annual Evaluation* | *We received our NAEYC Assessment visit results in July. We passed with very good scores! Individual classroom scores ranged from 90% -98%. The Program Portfolio score was 99.19% and the Program Observation score was 100%. This process of preparing for the visit encouraged me to update and/or create new policies and procedures and as a result, was an improvement of the entire program.* |

Shannon- *Julia Day Nursery* has 23 Full Day/Full Year slots and all 23 FD/FY slots are utilized. Shannon shared on the following Quality Components:

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| ***Quality Components*** | ***Implementation*** |
| *Parent Involvement (Family Engagement)* | *We held a trick or treat event where 35 families attended. We also invited families into the classroom to read or share about their job or hobby. We had parents in for Pie the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. We also conducted a family survey to see what types of events they would like to see. We are planning a Gingerbread House building, a group for Paw Patrol, Harlem Globetrotters, and the Bridgeport Islander, a parent and me paint night at the Giggling Pig, and a slime day at the Vault Virtual Reality.* |
| *Nutrition* | *The SNAP Ed office was at the center sharing information with families about SNAP benefits as well as healthy recipes they can make with their family and some shopping trip tips to promote healthy eating.* |
| *Professional Development* | *We attended 2 school readiness trainings one on making a referral and the other on SRBI. We also held a professional development day for our staff on 11/4. Our education consultant did a training on strategies to support challenging behaviors. We also did our Annual OSHA training, had DCF come in for a training and completed our CPR and First Aid renewal.* |

Diana shared on behalf of Aly Stanisci- *Lower Naugatuck Valley EC Ed (TEAM)* has 18 ANSONIA Full Day/Full Year slots and all 18 FD/FY slots are utilized. SHELTON has 10 Full Day/Full Year slots and all 10 FD/FY slots are utilized. The following Quality Components were shared for Ansonia and Shelton School Readiness:

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| ***Quality Components*** | ***Implementation*** |
| *Pre-Literacy (teacher training)* | *Teachers participated in a literacy training focused on connecting the development of literacy and social-emotional skills.* |
| *Nutrition* | *We have partnered with a new catering company who is providing more variety and better quality menu items.* |
| *Admission policies that promote diversity* | *While TEAM’s admission policies have remained, we dedicated a day of professional development to focus on diversity, equity and inclusion in the classroom.* |

Barbara- *Valley YMCA Child Care Center* has 22 ANSONIA Full Day/Full Year slots and all 22 FD/FY slots are utilized. DERBY has 7 Full Day/Full Year slots and 7 slots are utilized. Barbara shared on the following Quality Components:

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| ***Quality Components*** | ***Implementation*** |
| *Parent Involvement (Family Engagement)* | *Staff are using the CT DOTS Family Pages to gain family input to inform staff what families see their children doing at home. These pages also give families information regarding how they can help their children grow in specific areas of development.* |
| *Professional Development* | *Staff completed two trainings related to Serving Children with Special Needs. These trainings were focused around referrals and supporting the needs of ALL learners through an SRBI process.* |
| *Sliding Fee Scale* | *The new sliding fee scale has been implemented with new families who recently enrolled in the program.* |

Liz- *Kids Club* has 13 SEYMOUR Full Day/Full Year slots and 9 slots are utilized. DERBY 6 Full Day/Full Year slots and 1 slot is utilized. Liz shared on the following Quality Components:

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| ***Quality Components*** | ***Implementation*** |
| Family Literacy | *We are continuing to invite families in to read to the children during story time. We have had a great response. The children love having their mom, dad… in the classroom.* |
| Professional Development | *We are working with GEER with the online DOTS system.* |
| Annual Evaluation | *We did one last program evaluation with staff and families as we enter into candidacy for NAEYC, to see if we are meeting the expectations from the previous survey.* |

Rebecca- *Shelton Public Schools* *Mohegan* has 22 Part Day/Part Year slots and 22 slots are utilized. Shelton Public Schools Long Hill has 23 Part Day/Part Year slots and 23 PD/PY slots are utilized. Rebecca shared on the following Quality Components:

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| ***Quality Components*** | ***Implementation*** |
| Transition to Kindergarten | *Once a month Preschool teachers and Kindergarten teachers have a building* *wide meeting where they are given an opportunity to collaborate and exchange resources and materials.* |
| Professional Development | *We have planned for all teachers to attend an entire day of required PD in February. They have also had 3 Pd’s on Ct SEDS and Ct DOTS.* |
| Sliding Fee Scale | *We have been working on collecting and verifying income for all families in our program.* |

**Valley Regional Adult Education (VRAE):**

The VRAE Report was shared prior to the meeting. Debra Hansen discussed how they are getting their students into programs, scholarships, and employment. They did a bus trip to Gateway. They continue to grow. Once they become English proficient or graduate, they move on to next steps.

Diana asked if there are larger groups from different countries? Deb said there are more Ukrainians. There is a variety, ESL program is very diverse. Families are bringing over families. The VRAE biggest section is beginners with no English or computer skills. Ayanna asked about staffing. Deb mentioned they are good with staffing.

**Child First:**

The Child First Report was shared prior to the meeting. Courtney Sherman shared they are recruiting for a clinician. She discussed the role of the care coordinator and the clinician, behavior, trauma, and work with parents on their own history and impact on the child. They are serving 12 families, with a waitlist of 15 families. Funding comes from DCF. If there is active DCF involvement, you can bring it to Courtney. Courtney discussed they have not had any applicants in the area.

**Other:**

* Diana discussed the in-person Kindergarten registration Ansonia is planning to bring back this coming year at the end of March.
* Reese Morales asked everyone on the council to let him know about sharing clinicians or if they can help in anyway. He also reported that a Dr. Martin Luther King celebration will be held at Ansonia High School. Tickets are $20 with student performances. There will be baskets and raffles. It will be an amazing event!
* Ayanna promised to share the Shelton Plumb Library calendar of activities with the council on behalf of Maura Gualtiere.

**Adjournment**

**Next VECRC Meeting: February 9, 2023 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**

\*\*\*Please feel free to share the VECRC website link with Valley families \*\*\*

[www.vecrc.org](http://www.vecrc.org/)