

Childcare Committee of the Bedford Area Resource Council

Meeting Agenda August 24, 2022

Our Mission: The Early Childhood Committee of the Bedford Area Resource Council serves as a facilitator of conversation and action focusing on identifying and meeting the Early Childhood Care and Education needs of Bedford County's families.

Our Vision: All Bedford County families will have access to quality (Early Childhood) Care and Education for their children ages 0 – 12.

1. Welcome / Introductions.

Today's meeting was in-person, at the Bedford Welcome Center.

Holly Layne (Bright Beginnings Central VA) called the meeting to order

Those attending were:

Andy Crawford, DSS, via Zoom;

Kara Sensenig, United Way of the Roanoke Valley

Mary Buchanan Kirby, Community Engagement Coordinator, Centra Health

Mary Jo Boone, Bedford YMCA

Allison Burns, Bedford County Public Schools

Janet Trent, Early Head Start (Humankind),

Beth Hicks, Main Street UMC

Cindy Perdue, Bedford County Public Schools

Betty Easter, BARC Coordinator

Kim Gregory, CVCC Faculty member

Karen Wesley, United Way Central VA

Shelley Basinger, Bedford County Public Information Officer

Pam Bailey, Economic Development, Bedford County

Jasmine McLaughlin, Lynchburg Community Action Group (LynCag)

Bridget Austin, Lynchburg Community Action Group (LynCag)

Denise Hutton, Virginia Career Works, Region 2000 Workforce Center

Also attending was a WDBJ7 reporter. The segment she filmed and edited were on the 6:00pm news. The reporter who had been invited to attend is Isabella Ladonne: Here are the segments aired by WDBJ 7:

<https://www.wdbj7.com/video/2022/08/24/bedford-county-community-works-address-childcare-shortages/>

<https://www.wdbj7.com/2022/08/25/bedford-area-ymca-helps-address-childcare-shortage-with-new-daycare-center-building/>

<https://www.wdbj7.com/video/2022/08/25/bedford-area-ymca-addresses-childcare-shortage-with-daycare-center/>

2. Updates from committee members

Cindy Perdue advised that she has filled her spots. She has a few more at Thomas Jefferson and Huddleston. But, the number of slots that they were given, are all full. They have a 3-y/o class at Bedford Primary and Moneta, and those are full with a waiting list.

Janet Trent's program centers on 0 to 3 y/o. Sixteen is her maximum capacity, and they are filling those slots. When asked if they could expand their capacity, Janet responded that they've just opened. They are still trying to hire good quality teachers.

Holly responded that getting good quality teachers is why many places can't open more slots. Janet responded that they are at half-capacity for before- and after-school programs, because their teachers cannot spend the entire day.

Pam Bailey spoke about interns who are looking for opportunities for getting experience.

Jasmine McLaughlin said that their program still has some availability.

Beth Hicks. Main Street UMC's Preschool has had a waiting list for years. They are full. This year, a new class for 4 y/o's was started. In 2020, because of the COVID problems, we started an afterschool program, which is growing. Our preschool is starting to bleed into the afterschool program, so we have some daycare available. In the summers, we have full daycare. We're working on growing.

Pam Bailey mentioned that they had surveyed the employers, and one of the results is the flyer (attached) . She mentioned the statistics that are shown on the flyer. Pam mentioned that before any meeting, to determine WHAT would be talked about, for example if employers are interested in having an on-site daycare. Pam said that there are several employers who would allow their employees to use their flex-spending accounts on daycare. The SBDC is giving some seminars on Home Child Care business, in September.

Pam asked for topics for any meeting that could be held with employers. The plan is to find an agenda, and what the mission is. We have employers who are interested. We need to bring in someone, already with childcare, who can speak about the hurdles they faced. One recommendation from Holly: to provide employers with some basic information, such as WHY childcare is so important, and some information about brain development, and the quality outcomes for children of having quality early years

learning. We can tell them why it's important and what the needs are, but also for us to listen, to see what are the employers' needs. Talk about possible options for the employers; and to have a dynamic speaker. Someone like the CEO of Pategonia. Someone added that it would be important to show how childcare in-house, could add to what the company makes, rather than just being an expense for them. Mary Buchanan added that there may be some kind of subsidy that would be available.

Mary Jo Boone from the Bedford YMCA (with someone else saying that she knows all the hurdles of childcare.) Mary Jo advised that the group could look at the model of in-house childcare, or even the multiple models of in-house childcare that are available in different places, to see how they operate, and get information about hurdles/benefits. To get real examples. Janet Trent added to this theme by speaking about her knowledge of places in North Carolina. Some places offer a stipend for childcare, through their HR. Karen Wesley added that there's a way to buy or reserve slots from existing day cares, and get some tax benefit. Holly said it would be good idea to have a committee to look into all these things, to include what's happening in other states, to get some good ideas and become informed about what corporations, employers are doing in the area of childcare.

Kim Gregory added that there is an organization, Bright Horizons, that does a lot of corporate work. <https://www.brighthorizons.com/> They have worked with some of the big corporations, such as IBM. Kim wondered if, on their website, there were tips for businesses. Bright Horizons is well known, as is KinderCare, and one in Northern Virginia. Holly asked Kim to be a part of the new committee for this topic. Holly also said any interested person can be part of the new committee.

Mary Jo Boone (YMCA) said that it's possible, too, for several employers to work together, and pool their resources, to address childcare for their employees. When asked if they already have people signing up for their slots. She advised that they're still all in the "dirt moving" stage. But they will have 60 slots.

Mary Buchanan Kirby asked if churches had been asked about their possibilities of having, or expanding, their child care area. Mary Jo advised that they currently are using the facilities of the church next to the Y.

3. Centerfest – Kara

September 24 from 10 – 6.

Kara passed out sign-up sheets to let people sign up for time-slots. She recommended that you can get some other representatives to help out. Someone will have a large slide (at the Main Street Methodist location.) Kara said to tell her what information we want to provide to parents, in order to know how much space we need on tables. Some give-aways and budget is still being talked about.

Holly mentioned UWCV Kids. Parents can call the number and enter the date of birth, and the organization sends out texts weekly, about different ways to check the children's developmental levels. She gave some examples.

Kara will be in touch about time slots and activities on Main Street. Bright-By-Text sends out the texts. Kara read some of the examples of the texts that are sent out, in order to know what parents will see. Each text will have a link that parents can follow, to learn more. Goal is to really to educate the parents / public about the vital need for children's early development.

4. Meeting with Steve Newman and Kathy Byron – Holly Layne

Holly advised that there was a Zoom meeting with Steve Newman and Kathy Byron, and she, Karen Wesley, Pam Bailey, Andy Crawford. The delegates had been hearing about childcare desert, and reached out to Andy Crawford to learn more about it. Holly, Pam, and Andy presented the brochure based on the survey Pam had done with businesses, presenting the economic aspect of childcare and workforce. What the BARC folks learned is that the delegates have their own ideas of what the problem is, from their viewpoint. From the BARC side, we shared that there are multiple children needing childcare for every available slot. Steve Newman was asking if any issues regarding childcare have come about as a result of regulations, i.e., has anything that the government has done created any of these issues. The ratio of children needing childcare to slots available is 1 (slot) for 5 (children). Steve Newman's questions are: What's the government done to make it tough; and What is the private sector's interest? Karen Wesley said it was obvious that we were approaching this this from very different viewpoints of what the issues are. She doesn't think that the data we presented that day changed Steven Newman's mind that day; therefore, what we need to do is find out from childcare providers THEIR viewpoints on what government regulations or standards has impacted their businesses. Such as what has created a barrier. Part of the issue is misinformation, seeing it from a different point of view of those in the trenches.

The topic of family daycare centers, and some of their barriers, came up; such as business zoning, neighbors' complaints. Holly mentioned that she has concerns about home daycare centers operating under the radar. There have been issues with some local under the radar places. In Holly's opinion, regulations address basic safety and health issues.

Other comments added, the older the child, the better the childcare options. And, the more money one has available, the better the childcare options.

Mary Jo Boone asked, "What are the regulations that needs to change that would not impact the quality of the programs.

Holly said that this is the type of information we will hope to get from a survey of childcare providers. What are their barriers? From a religious exempt program, you may get a good idea of the things that regulated childcare doesn't have to deal with, in order to get fully licensed. How to relax regulations without relaxing quality. That may be a good question for some places: What is holding me back from being licensed?

As regards cost/profits, Kim Gregory said that if childcare were a profitable business, we wouldn't be having these conversations. As other comments added, to charge enough to provide a good compensation and have quality workers, or relax standards and have lesser quality childcare,

Andy Crawford added that it is important to gather information; about regulations. (The other things he said, I was not able to hear.)

Mary Jo Boone said she can check with other Y's around, to see what types of regulations have been problematic.

It could have to do with structural issues, such as floor tiles, and where infants are involved, where the nearest ground level exit is located.

Denise Hutton asked: Have you ever thought about having meetings with churches, to discuss childcare issues? Consensus: a focus group for churches. Many churches don't know the value of licensure, and the issues surrounding brain development.

Bedford has a Bedford Ministerial Association. Beth Hicks (Main St. Methodist Church) advised Betty that Dawn Compton, pastor of the church, is one of the board members. The Main St. Methodist Church phone is 540-586-8878.

Kim Gregory was asked about the number of enrollments for childcare. Intro to Early Childhood class has an enrollment of 40; but there's a new phenomenon that there are "fake students." These are folks who enroll in classes that have no prerequisites, and apply for FAFSA. If they are not dropped (properly) by the college, then they get financial aid. So, it's a scam being done now among certain students. So – bottom line, Kim doesn't yet know how many actual students she'll have.

5. Other