

Community Plan Updates in SFY'FY15

Name of Early Childhood Area: Early Childhood Iowa Lakes Region

Iowa Code chapter 256I requires that local ECIA boards report progress toward and achievement of desired results identified in the Community Plan.

Provide a narrative of the ECIA's progress in the last year towards the priorities and strategies identified in the most recent Community Plan. Success and/or challenges to meeting the ECIA goals may also be included.

Early Childhood Iowa in the Lakes Region (ECI LR) has made good strides during FY15. Our Lakes Area priorities speak to 1) Strengthening the relationships between parents and their children through quality family support services. The Lakes Region supports our KIDS program who served 151 children in FY15 ages 0-5 while our Best Care for Better Babies program served 177 children prenatal through age 6 months. The KIDS program was reaccredited in FY15 and the Best Care program is on the final stretch toward accreditation in June of 2016 – showing their strong foundations of quality services.

A second priority of ECI LR is 2) Improving the quality of early care and learning environments. ECI LR funds the Hand in Hand program which offers higher level social, emotional and developmental professional development for child care centers, home providers and preschools. We believe this program compliments the CCR&R and ISU Extension programs in our area to offer our child care providers high levels of support to enhance the quality of their facilities and staff. In addition to Hand in Hand, ECI LR also funded a grant to CCR&R for 12 Quality Incentive grants to child care centers or home providers to improve the quality of their facilities. ECI LR also provided 46 Preschool Tuition Assistance Scholarships to children ages 3-5. This program requires that the participating preschools have a quality rating or receive one by the end of the year. We had 11 preschools that ended up having children with scholarships, but 15 applied and qualified. 46 children benefitted from the scholarships.

Thirdly our ECI LR sought to improve the health and wellness of infants. Our Best Care for Better Babies program serves young families in all four of our counties: Clay, Dickinson, O'Brien and Osceola. 146 of 156 children were current on their immunizations by the end of FY15, with some of those missing being due to them being unborn babies. Our Best Care program is housed out of the hospitals and public health offices in our four counties and is staffed by registered nurses who offer the best in health and wellness guidance to these families.

Our ECI LR area had several other areas of progress in FY15. We finished the application for re-accreditation for Early Childhood Iowa. This process challenged us to set our goals high and continue to move toward excellence. We made several strides toward marketing our local ECI and our funded programs by having booths at two community events, participating in two poverty simulations and offering Shaken Baby & Drug and Alcohol Affected Baby presentations to prenatal and high school classes.

Professional development was promoted through our annual staff training and co-sponsoring a special training for child care providers with our Hand in Hand program. This in turn launched their new child care support groups that we hope will bring in more provider input as well as offer additional support.

Finally, we continue to make progress on better serving our growing Hispanic population. The Best Care program acquired family curriculum in Spanish and all of these programs have access to a translator for family visits. The KIDS program continues to staff a Hispanic worker with a full caseload and distribute their brochures in English and in Spanish. We have had some good success with this worker referring more Hispanic children to our Preschool scholarship program also.

