

DHLW+M Early Childhood Area

Des Moines, Henry, Louisa, Washington, Muscatine

September 16th 2025

5pm

Mt Pleasant Public Library

307 E Monroe, Mt Pleasant IA. 52641

Zoom option: Meeting ID: 813 4962 4904 Passcode: 857602

Minutes

Members Present: Jim Cary, Tricia Lipski, Shawn Maine, Cyndi Mears, Melody Raub, Mike Steele, Unity Stevens, Stan Stoops, Paris White

Members Absent: Matt Latcham

Advisory members and guests present: Tasha Beghtol, Toni Krana, Linda Cavazos, Amber Brown, Amy McLaughlin, Missy Park, Jojo Greene, Jen Craft, Dawn Lero, Jacki McCracken,

Meeting was called to order by Vice Chair, Cyndi Mears, at 5:00pm with a quorum present

Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the consent agenda, August 19th 2025 minutes, and Admin update as presented.

Moved: Mike Steele **Seconded:** Stan Stoops

Motion carried unanimously

Tricia Lipski arrived at 5:03

Financial Report

Melody Raub reviewed the financial summaries and the monthly postings report from Central Iowa Juvenile Detention Center. Programs are just getting started as spending as expected. 1st QTR payments have been received by the state.

Motion to accept the financial summary as presented

Moved: Mike Steele **Seconded:** Jim Cary

Motion carried unanimously

Program Presentations

The Family Connection

Amy McLaughlin from Henry County ISU Extension shared an update about the programs progress toward becoming an affiliate through PAT. Currently the program meets 17/21 criteria. All staff are doing reflective consultation with Dawn Lero. The program is looking into going paperless, but it will take some time to be fully implemented.

Early Childhood Home Visitation

Linda Cavazos and Amber Brown from Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) shared a power point presentation about home visitation services provided in Des Moines, Louisa, and Muscatine counties. LSI provides both PAT and HFA services, helping match families with the best program fit. Des Moines is a new service area for LSI and have confirmed a candidate for the position. The program has a strong referral process through the Coordinated Intake program out of Trinity Muscatine Public Health.

Shawn Maine arrived at 5:43

HOPES Des Moines County

Missy Park from Lee County Health Department shared updates about the home visitation services provided in Des Moines county. The program uses HFA model and has a capacity to serve 9 families. Missy noted an increase in families wishing to begin services in a location other than their own home. The program works to establish a relationship and trust with off site visits until the parent is comfortable to have visits in the home. Missy continues to partner with the hospital for referrals and started giving welcome bags to new moms as an introduction to the program.

Paris White left at 5:56pm

Unity Stevens left at 6:05pm

Administrative Update

A written report was provided. Additional discussion was held regarding the use of Tool U as approved by the state ECI board at the September 5th meeting. ECI District 6 is planning to submit a letter of intent to the state board and formalize the process for changing boundaries. Tasha noted that transition activities have not taken place in District 7 which includes Des Moines, Louisa, and Muscatine counties. Minutes from the ECI District 6 Board meeting held on September 3rd 2025 were included in the Administrative Update.

Meeting adjourned at 6:20pm. Motion by Stan Stoops, seconded by Shawn Maine

Minutes submitted by Tasha Beghtol, Director

Approved on ____ October 21st 2025_____

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Administrative Update

SEPTEMBER 2025

ECI Updates

ECI State Board

The ECI State Board met on September 5th 2025. ECI meeting information can be found on the [Iowa HHS website under 'public meetings'](#) and members from the public are welcome to attend. Agenda items included:

- Ideal State of Early Intervention and Support (EIS) – Shelley Horak, Director of EIS, gave a presentation about the work that EIS is doing to design pathways for family stability.
- Early Childhood Action Planning – Amanda Winsow provided a background and timeline of discussions about changing ECI boundaries. Discussion was held by board members about the reasons for and concerns about district alignment. Unity Stevens and Melissa Miller shared comments on why a realignment could be positive for the system. Individuals from the District 6 area were identified for additional comments on transitions being done. District 6 members included Tasha Beghtol, Ginger Knisley, Pat McReynolds, and Garrett Ross. State board members agreed to hold a special meeting in October to continue the discussion about district alignment.
- Tool U revisions were approved by the board. Tool U provides a procedure for ECI Areas to change their current boundaries. Revisions included the removal of specific due dates and the requirement to submit a full community plan as part of the request.

Association of ECI Area Boards and Advocates

- The Association board of directors met on September 2nd and 9th 2025.
- Elizabeth Stanek, Association President, provided comment at the state ECI meeting on September 5th. Ms. Stanek shared concerns about the lack of communication regarding the transition to districts and the need for more clarification.
- Planning for the Annual Meeting is currently underway. The meeting will take place in November 2025.

District update

- The ECI District 6 Board Elect met on September 3rd in Richland Iowa. 10 out of the identified 14 members attended the in-person meeting along with 6 ECI area directors. Notes from the meeting start on page 2 of this update.
- District 6 Team continues to meet regularly and is currently gathering indicator and demographic data for future work with D6 Board elect.
- The next ECI District 6 Board Elect meeting will be held virtually on October 15th 2025 at 5:00pm.

- District 7 directors have held networking meetings (virtually) with all the Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation programs currently funded in the region. There is no plan to have a District 7 board elect meeting currently.

Other Office Updates

- A joint childcare meeting was held on August 18th with the Wayland and Richland childcare center board members and staff. ECI Directors Pat McReynolds, Tammy Wetjen-Kesterson, and Tasha Beghtol were in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to network and identify ways that the centers might collaborate. Both centers are experiencing similar challenges with staff recruitment and retention. Members considered options for sharing services and working together on events to attract individuals to the profession.
- The RFP for Tool O services was released on August 22nd. Currently, the DHLW+M office has provided guidance by phone and email to 4 potential applicants.
- The SEI EC Project (Mental health Consultation program) held a Steering Committee meeting on August 28th. The program has been working with a center experiencing several challenges related to system regulations and procedures. The center Director has agreed to share her story with local area boards. The SEI EC Project staff will use their presentation time on the DHLW+M November meeting to include this story.
- Regional Director meetings – August 22nd and September 11th 2025

9/3/25

ECI District 6 Board Elect meeting notes, Richland, IA

Staff present: Tasha Beghtol, Ginger Knisley, Pat McReynolds, Erin Monaghan, Tammy Wetjen-Kesterson, Gaylyn Mercer

Board elect present: Kecia Appelby (Benton), Dave Henderson (Davis), Unity Stevens (Henry), Seth Meyer (Iowa), Sue Kientz (Jefferson), Kris Rankin (Lee), Garrett Ross (Mahaska), Patricia Hinrichs (Poweshiek), Dr. Amanda Gerber (Van Buren), Blaire Siems (Wapello)

Board elect not present: Debbie Miller (Appanoose), Tami Gilliland (Keokuk), Jared Lawrence (Monroe), Matt Latcham (Washington)

Tasha opened the meeting with a welcome and an expression of appreciation for the commitment and dedication of the board elect members. She shared that moving forward most meetings would likely be virtual or some type of hybrid to ease the burden of travel for everyone. Board elect members were asked to share all thoughts, ideas, concerns, etc. as we move through the process.

Staff introduced themselves

Board elect members introduced themselves. Some highlights included:

Kris facilitates 3 substance abuse prevention coalitions, assists with 2 CAPCs, and is the chair of the Children First ECI board. She has 3 adult children whom she home-schooled.

Patty retired from Grinnell hospital just before COVID and was involved with Decat and ECI from their inception. She has 2 grown children who live in Denver.

Garrett is the CEO of 2 YMCA organizations and has 4 children aged 7 to 20. He has background as a childcare director.

Blaire works for the University of Iowa center for advancement and has a 6-year-old son.

Seth is a newly elected Iowa County supervisor, a farmer, and a father to 5 kids under the age of 7.

Kecia is from Vinton where she lives on a farm, she works at Collins Aerospace childcare and has 3 children.

Dave is in his first term as a Davis County supervisor, was formerly an electric lineman, and is a farmer. He has 3 children and 7 grandchildren.

Dr. Amanda Gerber is a family physician primarily working in ER settings and has seen grave needs in the course of that work. She has 2 children aged 17 and 20. One of whom is autistic.

Sue is a retired teacher and librarian with a background in family and consumer science with 1 daughter and she lives on a heritage farm.

Unity is from Mt. Pleasant and is currently a lead for the behavioral health navigators. Her background is in legal and forensic psychology. Unity also sits on the state ECI board. She has two children aged 6 and 10 who are neurodivergent as she herself is, which she discovered after her children's diagnoses.

Current ECI area highlights were shared by the staff present and handouts were shared. Themes that came through across all areas included:

Collaboration, Cooperation, Connections, Filling gaps to answer local needs, Pooling of resources, Creative problem-solving

Networking and reflection took place over a meal

A trivia activity was played by all to introduce unique information about the 14-county area

District 6 future planning:

The proposed calendar of activities was introduced/reviewed

The proposed bylaws were introduced/reviewed (Tasha will follow up with an email asking for volunteers to form a bylaws committee)

Rich discussion was had on the topic of the transition to the district model. Members reflected on the district map, history of action from the state level, and the likely path forward. It is believed that the district model could lead to greater connectivity for rural counties and added assurances that the funds are being used appropriately across the state. It was noted that the southeast area has a long history of working collaboratively across ECI borders and this will greatly assist in the transition process.

Garrett expressed initial concern for the lack of requirements in the bylaws to have equal representation from each county in a district. He proposed that perhaps the bylaws could at least state a certain percentage (80%) of counties need to be represented at any given time. Unity shared that the workgroup did not have the opportunity to complete their work and that the intention was to keep the bylaws template open for local determination of some of the details.

Unity offered that her contact information could be shared as she is willing to have conversations with people who have thoughts or concerns about the process.

Board elect members were urged to complete a survey regarding meeting style, days, times, and locations.

It is the goal of the staff to host the next meeting in October.

gk