

**Service Delivery Area 5
Regional Advisory Council
Meeting Summary April 20, 2021**

View the recording of this meeting here: <https://youtu.be/1Fqs1IWGcKI>

1. Call to Order and Meeting Overview

- a. SDA 5 Chair, Ann Feldhaus, made welcoming remarks orienting attendees to the purpose of the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) meeting, called the meeting to order, provided an overview of the agenda items and meeting goals, and discussed meeting systems and procedures.

2. Introductions

- a. Members introduced themselves by sharing their name and professional role.
- b. Members who were present included: Ann Feldhaus, April Pagel, Della Micco, Jamie Madigan, Michelle Roberts-Schneider, and Terry Green.

3. Reviewed Old Business

- a. At the beginning of each Regional Advisory Council (RAC) meeting, the Council reviews action items and recommendations from the previous meeting and discusses progress made.
 - i. Ann and SPARK Project Director, Mike Bachman, summarized the feedback/recommendations made by the Council in March related to Groups, I-LEAD, professional development and program needs. Mike shared updates related to the action plan identified for each recommendation.
 - ii. You can view past meeting minutes, recommendations and their related action plan for each Service Delivery Area (SDA) on the SPARK website:
<http://indianaspark.com/regional-advisory-councils/>.
 - iii. While discussing old business, members brought up concerns with completing consents within I-LEAD. They wondered if SPARK might be able to help programs figure out how to track when they need to do consents for each staff.
 1. SPARK expressed that they would look into this concern. The Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning (OECOSL) is sending out some messaging about consents. SPARK would like to ensure they are not duplicating existing efforts. Mike also suggested that users sign up for the I-LEAD Connect Newsletter to stay up to date on changes.
 2. Mike suggested that programs with I-LEAD issues could connect with 4C of Southern Indiana, the CCR&R for SDA 5, who can help programs get an account set up. Early Learning Indiana can help with any technical issues with I-LEAD.
 3. Programs can also reach out to OECOSL with questions at qualification.review@fssa.gov.

4. New Business

- a. SPARK Annual Report
 - i. Mike provided an update on SPARK's Annual Report. The overall goal for the last year was to exceed expectations in supporting Indiana's identified early childhood education and care programs to become safer and higher quality.
 - ii. SPARK set seven objectives to help them track progress towards this goal. Mike provided an update on SPARK's performance on each objective to date.
 1. Objective 1: Maintain PTQ Enrollment (% of eligible)
 - a. SPARK's goal is to maintain the percent of eligible facilities enrolled in PTQ higher than 74.14%. SPARK is currently exceeding the goal, at 75%.

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- b. Indiana has seen a slight decline in the percent of enrolled homes and centers, so SPARK is watching that very closely to understand what is contributing to the decline.
 - 2. Objective 2: Increase # of programs advancing in PTQ by 5%
 - a. SPARK is aiming for 177 programs to increase their PTQ level, which would be a 5% increase from the 169 programs that advanced in 2019-2020.
 - b. As of the beginning of quarter 3, SPARK has exceeded their quarter 3 target of getting 133 programs to advance. They are on track to meet the overall target as early as July.
 - 3. Objective 3: Support 90% of non-compliant programs with Quality Improvement Plan
 - a. For this objective, SPARK is aiming for 90% of Critical Referrals, who accept SPARK services, to complete their Quality Improvement Plan within the agreed upon time frame.
 - b. SPARK is meeting this objective at 100%. However, it has been a struggle for SPARK to get referred programs with violations to accept their services. SPARK is continuing to look at how they are positioning their services to ensure they are seen as supportive rather than punitive.
 - 4. Objective 4a: Refer 90% of those interested in increasing their education to IN AEYC
 - a. SPARK is working to refer 90% of those needing TEACH/Non-Formal CDA to INAEYC. SPARK is exceeding this benchmark at 100%.
 - 5. Objective 4b: Deploy 12 resources or events that support degrees, credentials, and certificates
 - a. SPARK planned to deploy 12 unique promotion events and/or resources this year to support scholarship and credential models.
 - b. SPARK had already deployed 12 resources as of March of 2021, which was approximately six months earlier than the set timeline.
 - c. SPARK is working with INAEYC and plans to deploy additional webinars and resources about what is offered with the TEACH/Non-Formal CDA.
 - 6. Objective 5a: Support programs with prior safe sleep violations, ensuring that 80% do not have a recurrence
 - a. The goal for this objective is to ensure 80% of providers with safe sleep violations do not have a recurring violation. Support was provided through safe sleep cohorts.
 - b. Currently, 97% of programs have not had recurring violations. SPARK is still considering how to support the 3% who have had recurrences.
 - 7. Objective 5b: Deploy six resources or events that support best practices in safe sleep
 - a. SPARK planned to deploy six unique promotion events and/or resources targeting safe sleep knowledge and practice. All six of these resources have been deployed.
 - b. Examples can be found here: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)
 - c. These resources are available in English & Spanish.
- iii. Questions and comments from RAC members and the public:
 - 1. Question: Where can the safe sleep resources be found?
 - 2. Answer from Mike: They are all in My SPARK Learning Lab.

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3. Question: Can licensing consultants have more training on what to look for and prioritize when assessing safe sleep? Members shared instances where a program was written up for staff finishing giving a bottle to a child before picking up a child who had fallen asleep on the floor.
 4. Answer from Mike: We can follow up with OECOSL to see what that might look like.
- b. Networking and Learning
- i. During the last quarter, RAC members raised the concern that many in-person conferences and networking opportunities have been cancelled over the past year due to COVID.
 - ii. SPARK is currently working with partners to plan in-person or hybrid learning and networking opportunities. SPARK requested feedback from the RAC about how they can fill the current learning and networking gap.
 1. What does networking look like in this “in-between” stage of COVID?
 2. What are your program’s and your personal needs for networking and learning?
 3. Are we ready to come together in-person? What conditions would need to be present for you to feel safe?
 4. Would it be beneficial to add 30 minutes of networking time to the beginning or end of in-person learning opportunities?
 - iii. Attendees provided the following feedback:
 1. Some attendees expressed that they are ready to get back together in person for learning and networking events.
 2. Many shared that they like virtual meetings/events because they can access them at any time. Virtual options also allow people to attend meetings across the SDA (and state) without requiring travel time.
 3. Members suggested that a hybrid option may be best at this time, as it gives people choices based on their preferences and comfort level.
 4. Members shared that there is a need for networking and time for informal conversations during learning opportunities.
- c. New Discussion Board Feature (Groups)
- i. At the last RAC meeting, SPARK introduced the new Groups feature in My SPARK Learning Lab, which will provide peer-to-peer discussion board opportunities. SPARK invited RAC members to participate in the user testing process in March.
 - ii. Kim Hodge, Deputy Director of Operations & Strategic Initiatives, summarized the feedback SPARK received during user testing.
 1. Twenty total RAC members from across the state participated in testing, in addition to SPARK staff members.
 2. All RAC members and SPARK staff reported that Groups is easy and user-friendly.
 3. 60% of RAC members indicated that they were likely to use it over a similar tool, like Facebook, for connecting professionally with peers.
 4. The overall satisfaction rate of participants was 78%, with 100% from RAC members.
 5. When asked if they would recommend Groups to friends/colleagues, there was a net promoter score of 67. SPARK typically aims for anything over 40 or 50.
 6. One of the questions SPARK asked during testing was how they should set up Groups access at initial rollout to users. The majority (71%) indicated that

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- some Groups should be open to all, and some should require users to be invited or meet specific criteria to participate.
7. Participants also provided feedback on how Groups should be used (i.e. peer mentoring, general updates from SPARK, continued collaboration after professional development etc.)
- iii. Kim provided an update on the timeline for rolling out Groups:
 1. During the first half of April, SPARK determined the best use of Groups.
 2. During the second half of April, SPARK will design Groups and load them into My SPARK Learning Lab.
 3. Groups will be visible to participants in My SPARK Learning Lab in May.
 - iv. Kim encouraged RAC members to participate in Groups and promote the feature within their networks.
 - v. Questions and comments from RAC members and the public:
 1. Members who tested Groups shared that they found it to be a helpful platform to ask questions. They appreciated getting an email at the end of the week with an updates on the Groups and discussions. Members also liked that the Groups are more private than similar platforms like Facebook.
- d. PTQ Cohorts
- i. Leslie Kerner, SPARK Coaching Manager, shared an update on the recent PTQ Cohorts, which started in January and wrapped up in March. These Cohorts are run by SPARK Tier 2 coaches, with support from Tier 3 coaches.
 1. 83 programs completed the PTQ Cohorts in January-March 2021.
 2. 128 programs expressed interest in participating in a PTQ Cohort in April-June of 2021, with 98 currently enrolled.
 3. Current Cohorts include: PTQ Advancement, PTQ Maintenance, Making the Accreditation Decision, Accreditation Self-Study, and VCP (for Registered Ministries).
 - ii. Leslie also shared testimonials of participants from recent cohorts.
 - iii. There were no questions or comments from RAC members or the public.
- e. COVID-19
- i. On March 25th, OECOSL presented on Indiana's plan for the use of Coronavirus Response and Relieve Supplemental Appropriations (CCRRSA) Funds. The [recording](#) of this presentation includes information on increased CACFP reimbursements, waived family co-pays, Child Care Closure Grants worth up to \$40,000 per closure, a workforce recruitment campaign, waived background check fees and hiring stipends for new employees, a timeline for all of these initiatives and so much more!
 - ii. More information and FAQs can be found at brighterfuturesindiana.org/recovery.
 - iii. Emergency Relief Grants
 1. Provides a 20% increase for active CCDF vouchers through August 27th.
 2. Tracking of attendance began March 28th, so the first tracking period was March 28th-April 11th. Payments are made two weeks after the tracking period, so the first payment will be made April 28th.
 3. All active CCDF vouchers, both birth to five and school-age, will begin receiving payments, but as a requirement to receive those payments programs must complete *SPARK! Fundamentals to Business Sustainability Collection* by August 27th.
 4. Once a program registers and begins, there is a checklist of items they need to complete the training. The training is worth seven clock hours and attendees

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will receive a certificate after completion. It includes some on demand training, recorded webinars, and tools. Programs can find this training by searching for the title in Indiana Learning Paths.

5. Question: When we receive our certificate do we need to do anything with it or turn it in?
 6. Answer from Mike: No. SPARK is regularly downloading the list of programs who have completed the training and sharing that information with licensing.
- iv. Essential Frontline Families Scholarships
1. Beginning in May 2021, scholarships will be available to pay for up to 80% of tuition for families of frontline workers, with family responsibility at 20%, based on program policy. The income eligibility requirement is between 128%-250% of the federal poverty line.
 2. *Frontline* is defined by the Governor's Executive Order. Mike noted that child care workers are considered frontline workers. If program staff who have children enrolled fall within the income requirements, they would be eligible for a scholarship.
 3. The scholarships will be available through at least October 2021.
 4. SPARK, in partnership with Early Learning Indiana, Indiana Afterschool Network, and OECOSL will offer a pre-requisite information session about the scholarship and requirements. All programs who want to accept this scholarship need to watch the information session in Indiana Learning Paths and complete a consent. The information session is not yet available, but SPARK will share communication with it is.
 5. Question: Is this for new families, or would existing families in a program be eligible as well?
 6. Answer from Mike: Any family that meets the eligibility criteria could qualify.
 7. Question: Do programs need to currently accept CCDF to accept this scholarship?
 8. Answer from Mike: No. We are working with OECOSL to find a way to fast-track programs to help them through the process of becoming CCDF eligible.
- f. Stories of Success During COVID
- i. Ann invited attendees to share stories of success they had experienced during COVID. Examples shared included:
 1. Multiple members have not had to close their program at all during COVID.
 2. Members also shared that they had received NAEYC accreditation recently.

5. Public Comment

- a. RAC members would like to look at who is attending the meetings, and specifically look at program types. Members acknowledged that family child care homes have not been able to attend recently.
- b. Ashley Hansen with 4C of Southern Indiana asked how they can help with safe sleep. They are excited to see the workgroup and efforts SPARK is working on. They would like to support in any way they can.
 - i. Mike encouraged her to share the safe sleep resources that have been developed and that he would like to connect with her after the meeting.
- c. Attendees shared that they were excited to use the safe sleep resources to better prepare and support teachers working with infants.
 - i. Mike suggested that programs interested in safe sleep could go into the I-SAT in My SPARK Learning Lab and complete the quality item related to safe sleep (under

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Health, Safety, and Nutrition). This would allow SPARK to provide them tailored services related to safe sleep.

- d. Question: Where can I find if there is a child care need in my county?
- e. Answer from Mike/Kelly Schmelzle with 4C of Southern Indiana: Kelly shared that 4C had a recent meeting with their program engagement specialists and they are working on a report that emerging providers can look at how many programs are in their area, the types of programs, and other information (rates, Spanish speaking, etc.) about the programs available. There will also be data for people interested in starting child cares to learn what is available in their area. 4C is also looking to develop more dashboards about access and availability in various areas. If programs are full and have questions about where to refer families, they can send them to 4C for more information. 4C also have an online referral form on their website.

6. Agreements and Action Items

- a. Based on what was presented, RAC discussion, and public comment, the RAC brought forth the following recommendations/agreements for SPARK Learning Lab and/or partners to consider:
 - i. RAC members suggested that SPARK follow up on the possibility for licensing consultants to receive more training on what to look for when assessing safe sleep.
 - ii. Members suggested that a hybrid option may be best for networking and learning at this time. A hybrid format gives people choices based on their preferences and comfort level.

7. Future Meeting Schedule

- a. August 31, 4:00-6:00pm EST
 - i. SPARK will send a poll to RAC members in July to assess their preference and comfort level in meeting in-person or virtually.

8. Agenda Items for Next Meeting

- a. RAC members would like to discuss the **decline in attendance** they have seen at RAC meetings, especially from Family Child Care Homes.
- b. RAC members would like to discuss **offering sick child care** and what that looks like.
- c. RAC members would like an update on any efforts to establish a **substitute teacher pool**.
 - i. OECOSL is working with INAEYC to define a teacher certification that will help programs ensure substitutes have everything they need to keep the program in compliance, etc. This is a long-term project which will go into 2022.
 - ii. Stronger Together grants from Early Learning Indiana: Many communities submitted proposals that involved local substitution pools. SPARK is working with OECOSL to think about how they can support these initiatives.

9. Adjournment