Meeting Minutes

Thursday, November 5, 2015

9-11 a.m.

Illinois State Board of Education, Springfield

Attendance: In-person: Kate Maehr, Janice Glenn, Mike Miller, Tara Horn (State Sen. Sue Rezin), Betsy Creamer, Leann Dolan (IL Department on Aging), Terri Nally (Feeding Illinois), Tom Browning (Illinois Action for Children), Roxanne Ramage (IL State Board of Education), Brian Colgan. Non-Commissioners: Bob Dolgan (Greater Chicago Food Depository).


I. Welcome – meeting called to order at 9:06 by Kate Maehr

II. Minutes from last meeting

Brian Colgan motioned to approve and seconded by all.

III. Commission Listening Tour – Janice Glenn reflected on the three recent Commission “Listening Tour” visits to Pembroke Township, Peoria and Glenview. The tour was held in partnership with the Commission on the Elimination of Poverty. Janice highlighted the themes of Access, Coordination and Partnering. The challenges in Pembroke Township (Hopkins Park) included isolation – lack of Internet, housing and educational opportunities. Pembroke is a community of farmers and yet is a food desert. The gas station serves as a grocery store. In Peoria, a press conference was held with Easter Seals Central Illinois to address the state budget. Jim Runyon of Easter Seals spoke, and Janice reflected on his comment that “Even if we had a budget, we would still not be able to serve everyone.” The tour also visited PCCEO (workforce development focus) and Neighborhood House (health and wellness among children). The final tour stop in Glenview led to a rich, diverse conversation in an affluent community that had limited access to programs for those in need. The tour provided a lot of background that we can bring to lawmakers. We now know what the issues are and can report on them. Amy Rynell added that in both Pembroke and Peoria, we quickly became aware from providers that distributing food has infrastructure challenges, as well as the choices between paying for food and paying for heat or gas. There is concern about the senior food program in the state budget. Home-delivered meals are beyond the meal – there is social contact and the intersection of hunger and poverty. Providers are dealing with senior meals by cutting the number of meals per week. There is a concern about what is happening behind closed doors. Mike Miller added that he was at a
senior center recently and there is a lot of paranoia about the budget. River Bend Food Bank lets seniors know of other ways to get help and of the resources available. Kate thanked Amy and the team at Heartland for coordination of the Commissions and for bringing the experiences together.

IV. Work Group Annual Plans

a. No Kid Hungry Work Group – Tom Browning of Illinois Action for Children, co-chair of the No Kid Hungry Work Group, reported on the accomplishments of the group as well as the plan for the next year. Tom highlighted the launch of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) after-school meals initiative in partnership with No Kid Hungry, that provides grants to programs that serve at-risk, after-school meals. The Work Group also helped release the Illinois School Breakfast Report last February and has been monitoring the federal Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR). A great success from the May 2015 Hunger Summit came with the passage of a school breakfast resolution by the Illinois General Assembly. Thanks to Barb Karacic, the Work Group became aware of the challenges of serving meals to children during school strikes and will continue to focus on the issue this year. The Work Group also is finishing a breakfast financial sustainability report that could lead to legislation encouraging schools above 70 percent free/reduced eligibility to serve breakfast. Another goal is transitioning more summer meals sites from “members only” closed sites to open to the public. CACFP expansion will continue to be a focus nationally and locally, as well as streamlining CACFP and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) into one program. The Work Group is developing a year-round meals brochure toward that goal. The state budget will continue to be a focus, with the goal of opposing any policies that would restrict the provision of meals. Last, the Work Group will aim to help Cooking Matters expand statewide. A question was raised about the potential for children to take home brown bags of food from sites. Tom stated that is an issue in the current CNR. Kate added that the current CNR is progressing slowly, but there are proposals that would allow for flexibility at summer sites. Mike stated that some other methods have been piloted but are not yet legal.

Roxanne Ramage, Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), was in attendance on behalf of ISBE designee Mark Haller. Roxanne was asked to comment on the challenges of expansion. Roxanne highlighted the 2010 CNR and the new nutrition standards that have required education of foodservice operators. ISBE has been working to educate operators and build rapport among colleagues and peers and fostering collaboration. Building up nutrition (breakfast) and financial management are two of the key topics. There are so many great things happening – it’s really the wellness of a child and helping them make the right choices down the road. The No Kid Hungry Work Group and the marketing campaigns have been great to increase meals as well. Kate commented that the peer-to-peer education model could be an opportunity to educate professionals about food insecurity, as is done in the healthcare sector in connecting families with meals, programs and the Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC). Perhaps there could be an objective in the NKH Work Group to collaborate with ISBE on food insecurity education and awareness as part of Best Practices training. Mary Ellen added that she has been assisting the Southern Illinois Health Advisory Board and that physicians are not aware of food insecurity.
Mike commented that schools are putting out “no thank you” tables so that children can leave fruit they do not want. Roxanne stated that children must take a fruit or vegetable and that has been somewhat challenging to implement. ISBE continues to provide technical assistance and strategies to help children eat fruit and vegetables. Brian Colgan added that the Lieutenant Governor wants to help and is a product of the safety net in Florida. How do we provide her with action items? Bob Dolgan stated that we have 30 counties in Illinois without a summer meals site. We also need help with outreach to school districts. Brian stated that there may be an opportunity to coordinate with the Illinois Rural Affairs Council. Also, that the Lieutenant Governor could draft a letter to the Illinois Congressional delegation supporting CNR. Kate suggested with Breakfast Week in March perhaps there could be an event or series of events in schools and a chance to talk about School Breakfast Report. Perhaps Mary Ellen and Tri-State Food Bank could be involved. Mary Ellen added that there are opportunities to strategize and make a dent in hunger in southern Illinois. Follow-up is needed to maintain credibility in the region. There has been frustration with summer sites that have shut down. Resources are needed to ensure viability and commitments need to be made ahead of time. Mary Ellen added that she will do anything she can to help. Kate and Janice thanked Mary Ellen for her comments and stated that the Commission would follow up.

b. Benefits Access Work Group – Kathy Chan of Cook County Health and Hospitals, co-chair of the Benefits Access Work Group, reported on the accomplishments of the group as well as the plan for the next year. Kathy highlighted the passage of SB1847 in 2015, which expanded the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility for those living within 130% federal poverty level to 165%. Thank you to all who supported the efforts, including Dan Lesser, Kim Drew and Rep. Hernandez. The Work Group also is celebrating Illinois’ re-application for the Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) waiver. Thank you to Illinois Hunger Coalition for opportunity to move this forward. The Work Group also has been focused on opportunities to bridge the gap between healthcare providers and the anti-hunger community, having a dialog about work that can be done and opportunities to connect. By addressing issues of food insecurity, we can improve path to health and pilot opportunities as Cook County is with the Greater Chicago Food Depository in screening pediatric patients and connect families to SNAP, WIC, local pantries and the hunger hotline. Families then take through visit with provider diagnosis and voucher to access fresh produce as in Logan Square health clinic, where the first food truck visited in September (next visit in November). Also, the Work Group would like to recognize one of its members, Access Community Health, which also connects patients to existing benefits. Kathy acknowledged the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recent announcement that all pediatricians should screen for food insecurity. Rep. Hernandez asked about how the screenings are starting and how many children are involved. Kathy stated there is a two-question validated screening tool but that it varies across clinics. The Work Group will chat with the local chapter of AAP and report back to Commission progress in this area. The Work Group also has looked at posting a repository of information, a one-stop shop available to find community resources on the Commission website or other platform. Another focus is the state’s “ABE” system and encouraging people to apply for full range of benefits programs. Also, the Work Group is helping manage the rollout of the integrated eligibility system with Illinois Department of Human Services and making easier to streamline process for those newly eligible for SNAP. Another goal is
minimizing the impact of the end of ABAWDS. The Work Group also is looking at the sustainability of funding streams. Layla Suleiman-Gonzalez added that access is a key issue for Latino families and they are overrepresented in food insecurity and underrepresented in SNAP participation. IDHS Director Dimas is data driven and looking at a dashboard for high priority performance items. There also is a digital divide, Layla said, and Latinos are less likely to own a computer so mobile apps are really important. Terri Nally added that there is a voter registration option – making sure people know they have that option. Mike Miller added that River Bend Food Bank is taking phone applications and will share a phone number that covers 17 counties. Mike added that other states have a phone signature and that clearly increases applications. Data on application success rate gets aggregated and tracked and cannot distinguish which route (food bank, etc.) applications are coming in [to IDHS]. There’s an opportunity to replicate what is being done at River Bend Food Bank. Kathy and Mike will follow up regarding next BA meeting.

c. Emergency Food System Work Group – Mike Miller, co-chair of the Emergency Food System Work Group, reported on the accomplishments of the group as well as the plan for the next year. The Work Group has developed an agricultural surplus concept to purchase surplus product for hunger relief. The past year has focused on feasibility work – FARM Illinois and IL Specialty Growers Conference. The ISGA Conference survey affirmed interest in the project. The Work Group also researched other states. The challenge is a search for funds. Additionally, the Work Group worked with Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Illinois Sportsmen Against Hunger to identify funds available to process venison from deer hunters, for distribution to food banks. It was suggested that ag surplus could be an opportunity to have Gov. Kasich to share with Gov. Rauner the benefits of the program. Karen Lehman added that the Governor came to FARM Illinois Leadership Council meeting and is looking for victories. Karen will mention on a call with FARM Illinois 11/6. Sportsmen Against Hunger is looking to pilot additional processing in River Bend Food Bank service area. The work plan includes items on food waste and transportation. In Iowa, food makes up 8 percent of landfills and emits methane gas. There is potential motivation for a food goal with an environmental mindset. The group also has discussed pooling purchasing efforts.

V. Other updates
a. Hunger Summit save the date – A committee has come together to plan for the next Hunger Summit, which is slated for Tuesday, May 10, 2016. The goal of the Summit is to “Bring the Work Plan to Life” for the Commission and to generate interest and attendees from all over the state. Last year, 300 people attended the Summit. Commissioners are encouraged to invite their networks to attend. Mary Ellen stated she would be more involved in assisting the Hunger Summit this year.

b. Statewide dashboard – Building from an idea of the Governor’s Office, Bob Dolgan spoke about the opportunity to have a one-page dashboard to gauge our progress on Commission goals. He will develop a concept in time for the next Commission Steering Committee meeting in December.

c. Next full Commission meeting – The next Commission meeting will take place the morning of the Hunger Summit, May 10, at the Hilton in Springfield. Meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.