

Proposal for Board Policy on Regional Council Attendance

BACKGROUND:

There are 31 Regional Partnership Councils, each with eleven volunteer members, operating as part of the First Things First organization. A Regional Partnership Council's ability to operate effectively is dependent upon the full participation of all of its members. Each Regional Council member is appointed as a representative of a specific sector (i.e. education, child care, health, etc) with expertise about a specific component of the early childhood system. Each member's individual contribution serves to inform the entire Regional Partnership Council and ensures that decisions of the Regional Council respect the diverse perspectives of these important community sectors. Therefore, when a Regional Council member misses a meeting the quality of input and decision making is diminished. Additionally, the absent member misses important information and updates about the work of the Regional Partnership Council, therefore, making it more difficult for them to contribute effectively in the future.

A.R.S. §8-1162(D), the state law governing First Things First, recognizes the importance of consistent attendance by Regional Council members with the following statement:

Members of the Regional Partnership Council who miss more than three meetings without excuse or resign their membership shall be replaced by the Board after a public application process and with the input of the Regional Partnership Council.

CHALLENGES:

A number of Regional Partnership Councils have experienced problems as a result of poor attendance by Regional Council members. Often this leads to meetings being cancelled due to lack of quorum.

The statute addressing Regional Council member attendance lacks specificity. There is no definition for what constitutes an absence "without excuse" or of the process for removing a Regional Council member who has problem attendance.

Four Regional Coordinators provided copies of Attendance Policies that have been adopted by their Regional Council as part of their governance policies. The majority of Regional Partnership Councils are operating without an Attendance Policy. There is no consistency in how Regional Partnership Councils are handling attendance concerns.

RECOMMENDATION:

In order to have some level of consistency definitions for excused absences and acceptable attendance should be adopted. The goal should be that personal intervention with Regional Council members exhibiting problem attendance will result in either improved attendance or a voluntary resignation. If attendance does not improve and a member fails to resign voluntarily the Board should be requested by the Regional Council to take appropriate action. The attendance policy shall go into effect upon approval of the Board.

Regional Council Member Attendance

Attendance Expectations: Regional Council members are expected to attend all Regional Council meetings. It is understood, that there will be times when Regional Council members will need to miss a meeting. The Region Coordinator will maintain an attendance roster that documents each Regional Council member's attendance at scheduled meetings. The attendance policy shall be in effect for all regularly scheduled Regional Council meetings and shall not apply to special meetings.

Excused Absence: An excused absence occurs when a Regional Council member is unable to attend a meeting due to an emergency, illness, injury, or previously scheduled travel, work, tribal ceremony, or family obligation which prevents participation at a meeting either in person or by phone.

Notification of a previously planned obligation should be provided to the Regional Coordinator at least 2 weeks in advance of the scheduled meeting. A Regional Council member who misses a meeting other than for a previously planned obligation shall contact the Regional Coordinator as soon as possible providing an explanation for missing a meeting. An emergency is a situation that cannot reasonably be planned for in advance, e.g. car trouble, weather conditions, family illness and obligation to tribal ceremonies.

Unexcused Absence: An unexcused absence occurs when a Regional Council member is absent from a scheduled meeting without providing sufficient notice or without providing an explanation of the reasons for the member's absence, consistent with excused absence definition above.

Determination of Excused Absence: The Regional Coordinator or staff will assist the Chair in keeping track of absences. If there is a question about whether an absence meets the definition of an excused absence, the Regional Council Chair or Vice Chair may consult with the Regional Coordinator for a determination.

Problem Attendance: An attendance problem will be defined as:

- a. 2 consecutive unexcused absences
- b. 3 consecutive absences, excused or unexcused
- c. more than 3 unexcused absences in a 12-month period
- d. more than 5 excused and unexcused absences in a 12 month period

Addressing an Attendance Problem: Upon identification of an attendance problem the Regional Council Chair will call the Regional Partnership Council member to discuss his/her attendance record and remind him/her of the attendance expectations. If the Regional Council member's difficulties are resolvable, then the Chair or Vice chair will attempt to help resolve them with assistance of staff.

If after conversations the Regional Council members attendance reaches a level of non-attendance as identified in "c" above and no mutually satisfactory resolution is possible, the Regional Council Chair or Vice Chair will ask that the member resign his/her position on the Regional Partnership Council. If, upon request, the member does not resign, the matter shall be forwarded to the Board for appropriate action.

If a member reaches a level of non-attendance under "d" above, of which no more than 3 are unexcused, the Regional Council Chair may ask the member to resign his/her position in order to ensure

the Regional Council has sufficient participation to timely and appropriately complete its work. If the member wishes to continue on the Regional Council, the matter shall be put to the Regional Partnership Council at its next meeting. The Regional Council member shall be entitled to speak to this item. The Regional Council will then decide to allow the member to continue to participate or to refer the member to the Board for possible removal from the Regional Council.