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www.aok-nwil.com:

*Find Roles & Responsibilities

*Find List of network partners

*Find full list of work product

Find us on Facebook: *All Our Kids (AOK)*



Stephenson
All Our Kids (AOK) Network Meeting
May 12, 2026
Time: 9:00 AM

In Person
Regional Office of Education
27 S. State Ave. #101
Freeport, IL 61032

ZOOM LINK OPTION:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85300775757>

AGENDA

Attendees: Pamela Williams, Bekah Randecker (AOK), **Renata Dadez-Hepler**, Lin Carter, Danielle Wittig (Mercy Health/FHN), **Lorraina, Alanna, Kari**, (Parents), Layla Walker, Julian Vilchez (Parent Ambassadors), Crystal Garkey, Cecilia Van Heeren (YWCA), April Reed, Rhonda Coleman (Amity), Toni Cummins, **Derek Glover** (Believe in the Children), Gabby Brunner (Child & Family Connections), Marci White (The Family Enrichment Program), Stephanie Brock, Suzanne Schoff, **Lexzabet Alvarez-Torres** (BrightPoint), Sadie Grande (Pretzel City Area Transit), Destiny Jackson (VOICES), Barb Davis (SCHD/HFI), Janelle Nelson (Hope WINS), Ashley McKinney (SCHD), Chelsea Owens (Head Start), Jennifer Rojas (Meridian / Youth Health), Beth Johnson (ROE8), Kaye Nichols (Freeport Park District), Sherry Pearson (Hearts that Care), Amy Pinkston (Moving Beyond Depression), Tashara Grandys (U of I Ext.) (33)

Welcome & Introduction – Pam began the meeting at 9:01 AM and invited the new participants to introduce themselves to the network.

The Family Enrichment Program- Provided bi-annual updates to the network and had 4 parents join the call and give testimonial to the great work that's happening.

The Parents as Teachers Advisory Committee meeting focused on program updates, recruitment efforts, and family success stories within the Family Enrichment Program. Staffing changes were discussed, including an open Parent Educator position in Jo Daviess County and the retirement of the part-time Marketing/Recruitment Specialist. Freeport caseloads are currently full, while Jo Daviess County continues recruiting both English and Spanish-speaking families through community outreach, social media campaigns, and partnerships with local organizations and providers.

The group also reviewed ongoing quality improvement efforts through parent surveys and feedback tools used to guide future programming. Advisory members suggested expanding recruitment through family testimonial videos, outreach to local food pantries, and connections with physicians serving Jo Daviess County families. Success stories highlighted the program's impact on parents and children, including support for new fathers, mental health awareness, and long-term family engagement. The program also partnered with the 2026 AWHONN Illinois Conference, resulting in a donation of 2,600 diapers for local families.

Family Engagement Updates – Bekah shared that The All Our Kids Network supported or sponsored several community-focused events last month, including Hope WINS Rise Family Connection Night, Paint, Pour & Protect, Child Abuse Prevention Week, and the Week of the Young Child Kick-Off Event. These efforts were made possible through strong collaboration with community partners such as Hope Wins, YWCA of Northwest Illinois, NICAA, Head Start, Child and Family Connections, Amity, Boys & Girls Club, Freeport Public Library, Galena Public Library, Meridian/ Youth Health, Family Services, VOICES, The Family Enrichment Program, The Department of Children and Family Services, and RAMP. Together, these partnerships helped strengthen connections, increase family engagement, and support the well-being of children and families throughout the region.

Strategic Planning – Pam guided network partners through a comprehensive review of the entire strategic plan, highlighting the three key initiatives our network will focus on moving forward. During the meeting, she presented proposals, encouraged thoughtful public discussion, and facilitated live voting on each objective and approach using Mentimeter. Partners were able to view responses in real time, creating an engaging and collaborative decision-making process. The network is off to a strong start as we are preparing to submit our plan to the state for final approval. Final decisions will be made after network partners from Carroll and Jo Daviess Counties have an opportunity to provide their input this coming Friday. A huge thank you to everyone who dedicated extra time and energy to this important meeting as we worked together to finalize the direction of our upcoming efforts. A finalized draft will be presented in the August meeting.

Partner Updates

Freeport Park District – Summer programming is in full swing. Program guides are available for pick-up at the Freeport Park District office. You can also click the link to access the digital copy. [Freeport Park District Program Guide, Spring - Summer 2026 by freeportparkdistrict - Issuu](#)

Believe in the children - Believe in the Children support children and families through counseling services, in-home support and community-based programs that promote wellness and family stability. The organization is also launching a new fatherhood initiative called POPS, featuring a 10-week curriculum focused on supporting and empowering fathers. A kick-off event will be held on June 14th, with classes beginning in September. Please share [FLYER](#)

Brightpoint – Happy to introduce Lex Alvarez-Torres to the network as the new supervisor of their home visiting and Doula programs.

Mercy Health-FHN – Co- Sponsoring Healthy Kid’s Day on June 5, from 5:30 -7:30 with the YMCA. Those who might be interested in setting up a table can contact Aaron Green for more information - aaron.greene@highland.edu – Please share [FLYER](#)

Boys & Girls Club - the Boys and Girls Club is having a Blast off to Summer event and are looking for community resource agencies that can provide information to parents about resources and opportunities for

youth. Please let them know if you can be a vendor on May 21, 2026 from 5pm-7pm at the Boys and Girls Club. – Contact shaneka.collier@fsd145.org – Please share [FLYER](#)

Moving Beyond Depression – Shared new [FLYER](#), currently offering FREE English and Spanish Post Partum counseling for moms who could use support with their mental health.

WIC & U of I Extension – Partnering to offer “Color Me Healthy”, which is a fun summer session series for families focused on healthy eating, movement, and trying new foods. Sessions will include activities such as learning about colorful foods, taste testing, singing, dancing, and interactive play. Each session includes music, activities, and a snack, and participation counts toward a WIC visit. Sessions will be held at the Stephenson County Health Department at 5:30 PM on June 15th, July 20th, and August 17th. Please share [FLYER](#). They will also be hosting "**WIC Wednesday**" educational sessions at the Stephenson County Health Department titled "Making Half Your Grains Whole". Held on May 27th and June 17th from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm, these sessions provide information on updated WIC benefits, healthy recipes, and food samples for families to try. Attendees will learn about the specific whole grain foods available through the program, and notably, participation in these sessions counts toward a required WIC visit. Please note that these events are open to the public and to anyone who might like to learn about the WIC program offerings and qualifications. Please share [FLYER](#).

Pretzel City Area Transit – They are currently in the final stages of developing a new fixed-route transit system, with plans to officially launch in July 2026. The service is designed to improve transportation access throughout the community and will initially include two fixed routes. Buses are expected to operate Monday through Friday from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM, with Saturday service available from 6:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Additional details, including route maps, stop locations, and rider information, will be shared soon as planning is finalized.

VOICES - Are you looking for a meaningful career where you can truly make a difference in someone's life? Consider applying for one of the immediate Shelter Advocate openings available for all shifts with VOICES of Stephenson County. VOICES is growing its dynamic team dedicated to supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence. They are seeking caring, empathetic, smart, and compassionate individuals who are ready to make a positive impact in the community. If this sounds like you, they would love to hear from you.

To apply, please send your resume to voices@voicesofsc.org

Stephenson County Health Department - Stephenson County Health Department is helping families get ready for the upcoming school year by offering **FREE school physicals and immunizations** for eligible students. This special event will take place on **Tuesday, June 9, 2026, from 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM** and is designed to support children and families in preparing for a healthy and successful start to the academic year.

Appointments are required, as space is limited, and services will be provided on an appointment-only basis. Families interested in scheduling a visit are encouraged to call 815-235-8271 to reserve their spot.

Please share [FLYER](#)

Hope WINS – Hope WINS is hosting a Memorial Day Community Celebration and Children’s Mental Health Awareness & Action Proclamation event to honor the future veterans fought to protect while also supporting the mental health and well-being of children and families in the community. The celebration will take place at the Freeport Art Plaza, across from Union Dairy, immediately following the Memorial Day Parade and continuing until 1:00 PM. The event will feature an official proclamation presented by Mayor Jodi Miller, recognizing Children’s Mental Health Awareness & Action, live music by Lobbin Robbin, food from The Traveling Chef, free family-friendly activities, and resources from local businesses, nonprofits, and community agencies. For more information, attendees can contact Janelle Nelson at 815-990-5928. Please share [FLYER](#)

Reminder, we will meet at Krape Park next month for a combined regional networking celebration on. Huge thanks to the Freeport Park District for offering us shelter at the Gunkle Shelter - [FLYER](#)

You're Invited!

END OF YEAR AOK

Networking Event

Let's come together to celebrate our collective impact and strengthen connections across our network!

DATE: JUNE 16TH
Rain Date: JUNE 23RD

LOCATION: KRAPE PARK
Freeport, IL

TIME: 9 AM - 11 AM

Bring your **LAWN CHAIR!**

ALL OUR KIDS
EARLY CHILDHOOD NETWORKS
Northwest Illinois

As we begin planning for our end-of-year networking event, we are excited to bring together partners from Stephenson, Carroll, and Jo Daviess Counties into one shared, in-person space. This gathering will take the place of our typical June meeting and is intended to provide an opportunity to celebrate our collective work and strengthen connections across the network.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- RECOGNIZE** partner involvement throughout FY26
- PARTICIPATE** in team-building activities
- NETWORK** and build meaningful connections

Stronger TOGETHER. Greater IMPACT.

Meet at Gunkle Shelter near the carousel!

PLEASE RSVP FOR THIS EVENT BY ACCEPTING THE CALENDAR INVITE!