

Arkansas Early Childhood Commission

April 15, 2008

10:00 am

Minutes

Members Present: Debbie Malone, Janice Dancer, Debbie Mays, Jerry Hudlow, Suellen Ward, Tammy Cloyes (representing Dee Cox), Eleanor Coleman, Evelyn Bass, Bruce Cohen, Jeff Maneth, Jody Edrington, Dick Nugent, Mary Scott, Glenda Reeding, Missy Duke and Karen Marshall (representing Brian Faulkner).

Members Absent: Paul Human

I. Call to Order/Reading of Mission Statement

The April 2008 meeting of the AECC was called to order by Debbie Malone, Chair. A quorum of members was noted. The mission statement of the Commission was read. Debbie Malone introduced new commissioners who were not able to attend the January meeting; Glenda Redding and Mary Scott are both new to the AECC. Additionally it was noted that Tammy Cloyes was representing Dee Cox and Karen Marshall was representing Brian Faulkner.

II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the January 2008 meeting were reviewed. Mary Scott moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Suellen Ward. The motion carried.

III. New Business

Debbie Mays, Commissioner and Family Child Care/ABC provider shared information that further defined what family child care is all about. Debbie was appointed by Representative Mike Kenney. The presentation gave insight and a personal touch to explain quality care in a family home setting, how quality is evident in family child care and why many parents prefer family child care for their children.

Committee appointments were discussed. As new members have joined the Commission they were given the opportunity to volunteer to serve on the standing committees. The following committees and appointments were made:

- Nominations: Janice Dancer, Missy Duke and Evelyn Bass
- Finance: Suellen Ward, Jerry Hudlow and Barbara Gilkey
- Program: Mary Scott and Brian Faulkner
- Appeal Panel: Jeff Maneth

IV. Old Business

No old business was discussed.

V. Division Reports

A. Staff Introductions

Mike Saxby introduced a new employee in the Compliance Unit, Tanesha Ford. She will be working as a support staff for Compliance.

B. Director's Report

Tonya Russell presented information from the newly released NIEER report. Arkansas has been ranked 9 of 10 for quality indicators by the National Institute for Early Education Research. Arkansas has been ranked 4th in the nation for access to high quality programs for children three years of age and is ranked 15th in the nation for access for children 4 years of age.

Arkansas has been selected to participate in a National Governor's Association Symposium addressing current research and best practices related to children birth to five years. An eight member team will attend the sessions at Harvard in late June. Team members will represent the Governor's staff, legislators and community/economic development.

A preliminary report on the ABC Longitudinal Study will be released in the next two months. It will be available on the Division web site.

Based on the interest voiced by members of the Commission, information on Advocacy efforts related to early care and education issues will be invited to present at the July meeting. Presenters may include representatives from AR Advocates for Children and Families or the Invest Early Coalition.

An Interim Study Committee has been meeting to consider issues surrounding teacher licensure for persons working with children in early care and education. Currently the State Department of Education issues a P-4 teacher license. This Interim Study group has been considering recommendations for a process that would establish a credential or certification for teachers of children birth to five years. Initial discussions will be held with the Senate and House Education committee in May in preparation for the January 2009 Legislative session.

The Division will begin work on annual operating budgets and initial work on developing a biennial budget for July 09 through June of 2011. There have been discussions around the biennial budgets and state funding due to the current economic outlook. Because the Division has very little state general revenue the effect is projected to be minimal. The major issue facing

DCCECE is the continued flat line funding from the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) which directly affects the subsidy and quality initiatives through our Division.

C. Program Support-Kathy Stegall

Information on initiatives with the Program Support/Development unit was shared in the packets. This included an update on the work of the Governor's Task Force on Best Practices for School Age and Summer Programs, Town Hall type meetings being co-sponsored by the Division and the Child Care Referral and Resource agencies, Arkansas Children Week activities including Family Play Days, stats on web site usage and the new enhancement grant application.

A recommendation regarding the Outstanding Early Childhood Professionals of 2008 was presented. Suellen Ward, Missy Duke and Debbie Mays served as reviewers of the nominated OECP. Based on the reviews, the following were recommended: Dr. Belinda Shook, Superintendent of Beebe Public Schools; Kay Calvert, Instructor at Ouachita Baptist University; Kathi Bergman, Child Development Manager with the BRAD Head Start agency and Meredith O'Hara, Child Care Liaison with the United Methodist Church Arkansas Conference. Motion was made and carried to approve the recommendations of the Review committee. Notifications will be made.

D. Family Support-Ivory Daniels

Ivory Daniels reported that staff within the Family Support Unit have been reassigned and trained to serve specific county/areas and will be fully responsible for all types of child care vouchers in their assigned areas. Previously, eligibility staff had specialty areas, but with this adjustment they will be able to handle all vouchers in their assigned areas. There are currently over 5,000 children on the waiting list for services. The Division is reviewing recommendation for Child Care Development Fund funding to ensure that Arkansas is serving as many children /families as possible with limited funding.

E. Special Nutrition—Curtis Curry

Federal Reviews have been completed on the SNP program. The financial and ME reviews were smooth and an excellent report was received. The Summer Feeding Program staff has made over 500 contacts with schools, community based programs and faith based programs in preparation for the summer program. All SNP applications are now available on-line and 125 applications have entered the system and as of April 15, 10 have been approved.

F. Licensing Update—David Griffin

David reported a recent success for the Licensing and Accreditation unit. The joint application data design has taken two years to complete and the process for using tablets to go paperless will be complete by the end of May.

Challenges facing the unit include the process of revising the licensing standards to comply with legislative changes from the 2007 General Assembly. These changes include the Emergency Preparedness Act and the Clean Air Act. Once the revisions to meet law changes are implemented, a full review and revision process will begin.

G. Finance Report—Sam Lamey

Sam reported again the concerns on flat line funding for the CCDF program. The ABC Administration will be able to expend the full 2% administrative costs. Special Language is in place for a 7.5 million transfer from TANF to the Division, but there is no indication that the Division should place this in our July 08 operational budget.

Karen Marshall questioned that \$24-26 million is being spent on TEA/ESS child care subsidy and only 7.5 million was transferred to the Division. Sam responded that our expectation is that 7.5 million will be transferred.

H. Compliance Unit-Mike Saxby

The compliance unit continues to support all areas of the Division by ensuring swift action is taken when payment errors, billing errors and fraudulent activity is noted.

I. Early Childhood Health—Martha Hiett

The Immunization Registry operated by the Department of Health is operational and access is being made available for child care providers. FitKids Activity Kits were developed in a partnership with WIC. The Activity Kits are being used in family child care and child care centers to support fitness and nutrition for children and families. Health initiatives are being focused on system wide changes to include screening, EPSDT expansion, and the mental health needs for young children.

J. Arkansas Better Chance-Jamie Morrison

Jamie reported that currently there are two vacancies for ABC Program Specialists and interviews will begin. During the ABC grant application process, 315 new and existing applications were reviewed. Recommendations will be finalized by May 15, with State Board of Education review at their June meeting. The Rules and Regulations for ABC Program Operation were in a public comment period during March. They were presented to the April State Board of Education for approval with no written opposition during the hearing process. Review by Legislative Committees and Legislative Council will occur prior to final implementation.

VI. Information and Other Business

Karen Marshall asked if the cost of QRS implementation has been determined and what funding would support this program. The Division is working to

analyze necessary costs related to QRS and once an implementation plan is in place, this information will be shared. Even though funding is limited, the Division will continue to plan for improving quality.

The next meeting of the AECC is to be held on Tuesday, July 15, 2008.

VII. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Jody Edrington and seconded by Mary Scott.