

Arkansas Early Childhood Commission
July 15, 2008
10:00 am
Minutes

Members Present: Debbie Malone, Janice Dancer, Eleanor Coleman, Evelyn Bass, Bruce Cohen, Jeff Maneth, Dick Nugent and Barbara Gilkey.

Members Absent: Paul Human, Dee Cox, Debbie Mays, Jerry Hudlow, Jody Edrington, Missy Duke, Brian Faulkner, Glenda Redding and Mary Scott.

I. Call to Order/Reading of Mission Statement

The July 2008 meeting of the AECC was called to order at 10:30 am by Barbara Gilkey pending arrival of Debbie Malone, Chair. A quorum of members was not present. Ms Gilkey invited all present to read the mission statement together.

II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the April 2008 meeting were reviewed. There were no recommended changes to the minutes and they were accepted by the members present.

III. New Business

Quality Work Group—Kathy Stegall reported that several working groups within the Division are preparing for testing and full implementation of the Quality Rating System (QRS). Work has been completed on the guidelines for the initial three levels and now the planning phase is in process. The final guidelines have been shared with the QRS Task Force and a copy of the guidelines will be sent electronically to all AECC members. Two working groups are currently active: Incentives and an Internal Implementation group. As these groups continue their efforts to test the guidelines and finalize design of a state wide implementation strategy, updates will be brought to the Commission at each regularly scheduled meeting.

Karen Walker with AETN had not arrived due to traffic congestion; her presentation was delayed until her arrival.

Debbie Malone arrived and assumed chair position.

IV. Old Business

No old business was discussed.

V. Division Reports

A. Staff Introductions

Donna Alliston introduced Roshonda Harrison who will assist with Professional Development activities.

B. Director's Report

David Griffin was filling in for Tonya Russell in her absence. There was no report presented. Bruce Cohen asked for an update from the Harvard Symposium at the next meeting and asked if information on Advocacy efforts would be included in the October agenda. Presenters previously suggested included representatives from AR Advocates for Children and Families and the Invest Early Coalition.

C. Compliance – Mike Saxby

Mike reported that the unit continues to upgrade their data collection processes and expand opportunities to share information between units within the Division. These actions are pro-active attempts to identify and resolve compliance issues before they reach the level of needing exclusionary action.

Jeff Maneth questioned the length of time between notification that a program would be required to close and the actual time frame that a child could no longer receive a subsidy. Mike explained that the family support policy requires a 10 day notice to the parent(s) of children served through the child care voucher program. In some instances, this amount of notice is not possible due to emergency closure. Bruce Cohen asked about the percentage of compliance issues from family child care settings and from center based programs. Mike explained that non-compliance was about equally split between homes and centers. Bruce also asked if most violations concerned sloppy administrative actions or did they appear to be intentional errors. Some errors appear to be intentional. For those that are clearly sloppy administrative actions, the Division works with the provider, recoups the overpayment and monitors billing. Some providers claim sloppy bookkeeping or record keeping as the reason for an overpayment, however in most cases the children did not attend the facility ever or they left for another facility. As a standard practice, the unit does not recommend or take action unless there is clear, substantiated documentation to support the action.

D. Early Childhood Health-Martha Hiatt

The current Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems planning grant will be extended through May 2009. The extension will allow time for many of the current projects to be finalized. As the new proposal is developed there will be additional emphasis on behavioral, social/emotional and mental health issues for children.

The ABCD Initiative has partnered with Medicaid to establish use of the same developmental screening tool by physicians through the EPSDT program. Medicaid is making policy changes which will allow the Developmental screen to be a billable service. During the past year, several physicians have piloted this change and it is ready to go statewide.

Work continues on strategies to increase EPSDT screening for ABC and Voucher clients.

E. SNP-Curtis Curry

Curtis reported that in May a CRE review was completed of the National School Lunch Program with only 2 findings. An on-line tracking system is in development phase to correct one of the findings and budgeting will be adjusted to include overnight travel and mileage for SNP staff.

Two additional Federal reviews are scheduled, September for the Summer Food Program and March of 2009 for the National School Lunch SMI review. The Summer Food Program has experienced a large growth in participation this year. There has been an increase in agency participation from 92 to 105 and site participation from 217 to 278 from summer of 2007 to summer of 2008.

F. Family Support-Ivory Daniels

Effective July 1, 2008, there were two changes affecting the voucher program. The income guidelines for eligible families have been reduced from 85% of the State Median Income to 60% of the SMI. The second change will limit lifetime benefits for families to a maximum of 60 months. Notices of these changes have been mailed to all providers and all participant families.

Janice Dancer noted that with these changes numerous Head Start programs have seen an increase in enrollment.

G. Program Support-Kathy Stegall

The briefing packets included several documents concerning the work of the Governor's Task Force on Best Practices for School Age and Summer Programs. A summary of the Demand Study completed by a team of Clinton Public Service students was reviewed.

Upcoming training by High Scope Foundation was discussed. Beginning in August training will be available to School age programs on the High Scope Program Quality Assessment tool. Training will include self-assessment, external evaluator assessment, using data for program improvement and basic quality for school age programs. A group of 20 programs will be involved in this initial training with the possibility of future expansion. Participants include diverse program types to ensure a quality measure for the wide variety of school age programming.

Emergency Preparedness training is being offered to the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. They will be trained as trainers to offer this 3 hour intro course in their regional areas. The material was developed by Cathy Grace, Director of the Center for the Study of Rural Early Education at the University of Mississippi in cooperation with the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA).

H. Licensing—David Griffin

John Finkbeiner from the Office of Chief Council was introduced. John serves as the Division attorney for provider appeals and all hearings for the Division.

David reported that NG continues work on re-design of the child care data system and the inclusion of QRIS with an anticipated completion date of January 2010.

A policy clarification regarding pickup has been issued to all licensed providers to require picture ID if the person is not on the pickup list and to contact parents to confirm pick up by anyone not previously listed due to a recent incident.

I. Finance-Sam Lamey

The end of year fiscal report was shared with AECC members. There remained less than 2% of CCDF funding at the end of the state fiscal year (approximately \$600,000). Sam reported that as of July 14, 25% of the 08-09 CCDF voucher funds have already been committed.

J. New Business (continued from earlier)

AETN Presentation-Karen Walker

Ms. Walker presented information about the many opportunities for children, families and caregivers offered through the Arkansas Educational Television Network.

K. Information and Other Business

No public comment.

The next meeting of the AECC is to be held on Tuesday, October 21, 2008.

L. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Bruce Cohen and seconded by Barbara Gilkey.