

**Arkansas Early Childhood Commission**  
**April 20, 2010**  
**10:00 am**  
**Minutes**

*Members Present:* Barbara Gilkey, Janice Dancer, Nickie Hammontree, Jody Edrington, Dee Cox, Debbie Malone, Suellen Ward, Ann Patterson, Dr. Rachel Bowman, Amy Denton, Kim Qualls, Martha McAnally, Shirley Pulliam, and Dr. Chadwick Rogers.

*Members Absent:* Evelyn Bass, Debbie Mays, Jeff Maneth, Dr. Joseph R. West, Eleanor Coleman, Marilyn Chambers, Gene Gregory, and Missy Duke.

**I. Call to Order/Reading of Mission Statement**

The April 2010 meeting of the AECC was called to order at 10:00 am by Barbara Gilkey, Chair. A quorum of members was present. Suellen Ward read the mission statement.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the January 2010 meeting were reviewed. Ann Patterson made a motion to accept the minutes. Shirley Pulliam seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**III. Old Business**

Tonya Russell welcomed Dr. Rachel Bowman, a psychologist at UAMS, as a new commissioner. All in attendance introduced themselves.

**Qualls Early Learning Inventory Data (Goal 5)**

Dee Cox presented the data for the Qualls Early Learning Inventory. She provided a handout for reference. The data goes back to the 2004-2005 school year and is pulled by county. The trend is that more children are coming in developed and the numbers for those developing and not developing are going down.

Debbie Malone asked about the trend and it was noted that the trends look good.

Barbara Gilkey asked if all school districts were required to participate and it was stated that the law mandates that all school districts participate.

Tonya Russell noted the direct correlation between the Qualls and the Work Sampling data.

## **Better Beginnings Update (Goal 4)**

Tonya Russell informed the Commission that the proposed changes in the rules and regulations have not passed legislation. The committee met last Tuesday and the Providers' Association hired an attorney to speak on their behalf. The rules and regulations were pulled down. Tonya noted that another public meeting will be held at the Division on April 28, 2010 from 1pm – 4pm in conference room B.

Tonya passed around a handout highlighting the problems that are being discussed around Better Beginnings. She noted that it is voluntary to participate. She estimated it would cost about \$800 to get to level one and that incentive grants would be available at level one. The Providers' Association has estimated a much higher cost to reach level one. There will be a meeting with private providers on April 21, 2010. Tonya noted that the mandate for 9800 participants had been taken out; however, it is possible that the federal government will make that mandatory. Tonya noted that cost and training are the biggest concerns but again stated that it is voluntary to participate.

Barbara Gilkey asked if the Commission wanted to write a letter in support of the Better Beginnings to be read at the public hearing. Commissioners were in favor of this with Shirley Pulliam making a motion and Kim Qualls seconding the motion. Ann Patterson and Nickie Hammontree agreed to write the letter. All commissioners were encouraged to attend the public hearing.

Amy Denton stated that her program was not listed as quality; however an assessment was conducted and it was found that her program was already up to quality standards. She mentioned that many programs may already meet the standards of level one.

Tonya Russell stated that we have made many compromises including staff/child ratio. She stated that 20 states have already developed a QRIS and 26 states are in the developing process of a QRIS.

Ann Patterson stated that some members of the Providers' Association were not aware the Association was fighting the rules and regulations of Better Beginnings. She asked for clarification on where Arkansas falls in the licensing standards. Tonya explained that we are one of the lowest in the country with our standards but one of the highest in monitoring. David Griffin stated that our health and safety standards are great; but the staff/child ratio is the critical piece in improving our ranking.

Shirley Pulliam stated that she had contacted almost all providers in her area and most all were interested in Better Beginnings.

Debbie Malone asked if the incentive grants would be available to everyone or just those participating in Better Beginnings. Tonya stated that the incentive grant

would be available only to Better Beginnings participants but that the professional development grant she wasn't sure about and would have to get clarification.

**IV. New Business**  
**Wellness Center Grantees (Goal 2, 5)**  
**Joint Use Agreement (Goal 5)**

Dee Cox presented a report on the Arkansas Wellness Center Initiative and also the Joint Use Agreement. The purpose of the Wellness Center is to focus on the whole child by bringing together the family, school and community. It is a requirement that each Wellness Center be located on a public school campus. All children would be included not just those children who are Medicaid eligible and focus on those high risk students. A handout was provided of the PowerPoint.

Martha Hiatt asked if the Child Care Centers could be involved and yes they can.

The Joint Use Agreement provide small grants to help increase after school care and summer care by extending use of school buildings to community based programs. A requirement is that the school must be involved.

**Presentation of I Early Childhood Asset Map (Goal 1, 4, 5)**

Tonya Russell presented information on the IECAM. IECAM is the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map. She would like to use their information format for our state and to expand on it. The map is a needs assessment and the investment would be well worth it. Commissioners were shown the website and a few of the things the map can show.

**V. Division Reports**

**Staff Introductions**

No new staff introductions were made. All present introduced themselves earlier in the meeting.

**Federal Updates**

Tonya Russell talked about the passage of Health Care Reform. This reform will increase opportunities for children. Home visitation will increase and states will be able to access money for this. Foster care children are also covered in the new Health Care Reform. Infants and toddlers need more of a health/wellness focus.

**Early Learning Challenge**

Tonya Russell reported that the Early Learning Challenge grant was pulled out of the student aid bill. All information from DC points towards the ELC being

included in future legislation as it has wide support. It is just a matter of where to put it; however tied to the ELC states will have to have a QRIS.

### **Race to the Top**

Tonya Russell reported that AR did not get funded for this. Delaware and Tennessee were the two states that were funded.

### **National Institute for Early Education Reform (NIEER)**

This organization has asked if Governor Beebe would be available to speak at the conference in Washington. They put out an annual report on state funded prek. Arkansas has always fared well in funding and standards.

### **SNP Grant Application**

#### **Reauthorization of Child Nutrition**

Tonya Russell noted that lots of changes are being proposed. The goal is to encourage better meals.

Beverly Snell, SNP, reported that the Special Nutrition Program is working with the TANF office on how to use the emergency contingency funds. The goal is to increase participation in the Summer Feeding Program. SNP has teamed with Rhonda Sanders of the Hunger Relief Alliance and Phil Harris, assistant director of TANF. They are looking at providing transportation costs along with meals for eligible parents and families.

Sheila Bailey, SNP, reported that two grants had been applied for. The grants would be for the Summer Feeding Program. One grant would assist in adding activities to the Summer Feeding sites and the other would assist in increasing the number of days meals are served. Only ten states were eligible to apply and only one state will be awarded per grant. A phone survey was conducted of all participants from last year asking about the interest in the grants. SNP is hoping to hear something by the end of May. Senator Lincoln sent a letter of support to include with the grant applications.

### **Martha Hiatt**

Martha Hiatt reported that she had submitted a letter of intent to apply for a grant to improve nutrition education and physical activity.

She also reported that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) selected six states to participate in a look at licensing standards and compare them across the states. Arkansas was one of the six selected.

She also reported that the Medical Home brochure was available online. All present were given a copy of the brochure.

## **CCDF**

### **President's Proposed Budget**

Ivory Daniels reported on the proposed budget. It was presented to Congress on February 1, 2010 and includes \$1.6 billion dollars for child care. \$800 million would be mandatory and the other \$800 million would be discretionary. If passed, Arkansas expects to get \$20 million for voucher children and quality services. There is a high interest and focus on strategies to increase the quality of care.

### **Reauthorization**

Mark Story reported that the children on ARRA would use regular CCDF funds for three months until the budget is released with the hopes that we get the \$20 million. However, it has been clearly messaged since the beginning to families that ARRA is one time funding.

### **ABC Renewal/Online Application**

Jamie Morrison reported that the renewal application process was occurring and would be open until April 30, 2010. The application is available online. It was stated that ABC had no new money.

### **ABC Summer Program**

Jamie Morrison reported that last year ABC had carry forward money to use for summer care. This year there is no extra money for summer care so ABC has teamed up with Family Support to cover those ABC children needing summer care. It was stated that an amendment would be made to the state plan to allow 85% of the SMI. A webx training for 9800 requirements was set up. Only about fifteen ABC providers do not have a current 9800 agreement.

## **VI. Information and Other Business**

There were no public comments.

A thank you was given to Ann Patterson and Deanna Howell for hosting the meeting.

## **VII. Adjourn**

Meeting was adjourned.