

**Arkansas Early Childhood Commission**  
**July 21, 2009**  
**10:00 am**  
**Minutes**

Members Present: Barbara Gilkey, Janice Dancer, Jeff Maneth, Debbie Mays, Nickie Hammontree, Amy Denton, Jody Edrington, Evelyn Bass, Bruce Cohen, Cindy Hogue (for Dee Cox), Richard Nugent and Debbie Malone.

Members Absent: SueEllen Ward, Eleanor Coleman, Marilyn Chambers and Missy Duke

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

The July 2009 meeting of the AECC was called to order at 10:00 am by Barbara Gilkey, Chair. A quorum of members was present. Barbara asked Jody Edrington to read the Mission Statement.

**II. Approval of minutes**

Minutes from the April 2009 meeting were reviewed. Richard Nugent made a motion to accept the minutes. Nickie Hammontree and Debbie Malone seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**III. New Business**

- Ann Patterson discussed the new Head Start State-Based T&TA Team. Pam Jenkins was introduced as the Program Manager. Pam introduced Jan Cox as the Content Specialist and Donna Alliston as the I/T Specialist. The team will be offering cluster trainings that are free and open to all early childhood professionals.
- Tonya Russell talked about the expansion of the Commission to encompass the Early Learning Council (ELC). This expansion allows our state to apply for State Advisory Council Grant Funds under the ARRA and support development of local programs. It is building on projects already in place. August 7, 2009 is the next meeting of the ELC.
- The NAEYC State Leadership Day was held in June. There were ten representatives from our state that attended including Tonya Russell, Barbara Gilkey, Ann Patterson and Donna Alliston. There

were several roundtable discussions on various topics such as the importance of data, mentoring/coaching and innovative ideas. Minutes from the leadership day will be provided at the next Commission meeting.

- Ratha Tracy presented the "draft" QRIS appeal review process. Permission was requested to move forward with the draft. Five members from the Commission were requested to be on the appeal panel and review disputes. The five volunteers to serve on the appeal panel are Nickie Hammontree, Evelyn Bass, Debbie Malone, Debbie Mays, and Janice Dancer. Many states do not have an appeal process for their QRIS program; however, OCC has said that it is needed. Training and technical assistance will be offered and will hopefully reduce the number of appeals. A motion was made by Nickie Hammontree to move forward and seconded by Bruce Cohen. Motion carried.

#### **IV. Old Business**

##### **Follow-Up from Commission Retreat**

Everyone received a copy of the minutes from the April retreat. There were five goals that were developed during the retreat. Richard Nugent asked that local partnerships be added to the last goal. Tonya changed the goal to read "Strengthen and expand local and state partnerships with other agencies and organizations for connected action." Richard Nugent made a motion to accept the new wording and Jody Edrington seconded the motion.

Baseline data will be collected on the goal to increase infant and toddler care. With the data, measurements will be developed. It was noted that a portion of stimulus money will be used for infant and toddler care with a focus on those utilizing voucher dollars. All of the R&R's will have an infant/toddler specialist to lead the stimulus project.

It was noted that the Commissioners would like to continue a yearly retreat.

## **V. Division Reports**

### **A. Staff Introductions**

No new staff was introduced.

### **B. Division Update**

Tonya talked about the DHS culture survey that DCCECE employees answered. One of the main concerns was the recognition of employees. Paula Watson has been the lead on this endeavor. In June 2009, several Division employees were recognized at a reception. Tonya recognized Brenda Brown (SNP - now retired), Nancy Morris (Family Support), Ray Jones (Compliance) and Ivory Daniels (Family Support). Ratha Tracy recognized Candace Gonzales and Ainslee Brown (both from licensing).

Tonya reported that Paul Lazenby's vacated position has not been filled. Tenesha Barnes is now working directly with Ivory Daniels and Shannon Selby is her new assistant.

Tonya reported that Emergency Preparedness had been added to the licensing standards and that a report from Save the Children had been issued. The report can be viewed at [www.savethechildren.com](http://www.savethechildren.com) and has a comparison of the states.

Tonya, Ivory Daniels and a family support supervisor will be attending the State Administrators conference next week.

### **C. Report Updates**

#### **Information Technology/Integrity**

Mike Saxby reported that eight providers are under adverse action and are going through hearings now. Six additional providers have appealed to circuit court and he is waiting on final action.

The glitch in the telephone billing that allowed providers to bill for more than seven absentee days has been fixed. All providers that billed more than seven absentee days have been contacted and have repayment agreements in place.

Mike reported two new scenarios. In one, a child care provider committed Food Stamp fraud which removes them from any voucher funding and the other, the client and provider both committed fraud.

#### **Arkansas Better Chance**

Jamie Morrison reported that a list of the ABC programs has been approved by the State Board. There is \$113 million appropriated for this year an increase from

the \$111 million last year. The increase was implemented as a cost of living raise.

Four high need areas have added a classroom and they are in Brinkley, Marvel, Rogers and Springdale. Four programs have stopped offering ABC for various reasons.

#### **Licensing/Quality Accreditation**

David Griffin reported that the appeal committee for licensing hearings had dwindled to two people. He asked for two volunteers to be on the committee. Nickie Hammontree and Evelyn Bass volunteered for this committee. David has several applications that will be sorted and sent to the committee shortly.

David reported that a licensing standard revision is in process and this is the first major one in several years. Commissioners would be sent a draft of the revisions prior to the public hearing. A full discussion of the revisions will be discussed in the October meeting.

Licensing is taking over the monitoring of foster homes, formerly housed in the Division of Children and Family Services. There will be sixteen staff and Kathy McKay will administer the unit. They will be monitoring foster homes, adoption agencies, residential centers, etc. The unit will formally move in January 2010. The Commission will have the same oversight over this unit as with the other units.

#### **Early Childhood Health**

Martha Hiatt reported that the AECCS grant had been funded in the amount of \$105,000. This amount is down from the \$140,000 requested but with hopes that the funding will be fully restored. The mission of AECCS is very similar to the ELC with five areas of focus.

Martha also reported that the Early Childhood Health Initiative is growing. The emphasis is on nutrition and physical activity. The FitKids program has grown from five sites to forty sites with help from the Department of Health. It was noted that a Child Care Health and I/T specialist will be located in all of the R&R's.

Martha talked about the partnership with Natural Wonders. A handbook was given to each attendee. Tonya Russell and Martha Hiatt are members of the organization. The emphasis is on injury prevention, nutrition/physical activity, school health, and infant mortality.

### **Special Nutrition**

Curtis Curry reported that SNP now has an online application process, billing form and staff are able to do online reviews. SNP is almost 95% paperless. The website for SNP is becoming nationally known and has been presented at conferences in the south region.

Curtis reported that 108 organizations have been approved for the Summer Feeding Program with a total of 348 sites serving food to children.

There are a couple of pilot programs ongoing. One of the programs is for a year round Summer Feeding that would be in operation during school breaks such as winter break and spring break. The other pilot program is allowing the After School snack program to also serve dinner in addition to or replacement of a snack. Both pilot programs are having much success.

### **Family Support**

Ivory Daniels reported that the Family Support Unit had received \$19 million in stimulus money for direct child care services. This money must be spent by 12/31/10. As of now, 3400+ kids are being served with the ability to serve 3000 more. The clients are receiving six month authorizations and everything is pending availability of funds. Bruce Cohen inquired about the ability of child care providers to absorb the large number of children and it was noted that they could.

The procedure manual is being revised and a few changes have been made. Clients can receive a 30 day waiver to seek employment with an extension of an additional 15 days if needed. Clients are also receiving 30 days of childcare while the information is being obtained. The child support requirement has been waived for client and the SSI is now only counted for the casehead not the child.

### **Program Support**

Tonya Russell (Kathy Stegall was absent) reported that several quality projects are being put into place with the stimulus money. Most of the quality projects are for expanding and building on the projects already in place. There are two RFP's being advertised. One is for a school age pilot program and the other is a communications RFP.

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

There were no public comments.

Tonya Russell reported that we would have follow up at the next meeting on the following topics:

- Minutes from the NAEYC Leadership Day
- Application status from the ELC
- Baseline data for infant/toddler care
- Licensing revisions and results from the public hearing
- Information on the AECCS grant

The next AECC meeting is scheduled for October 20, 2009.

**VII. Adjourn**

Meeting was adjourned.