

**Recorded Minutes  
of the  
Arkansas Early Childhood Commission Meeting  
January 16, 2007**

**Commission Members present:** Laura Sparks, Karen Massy, Hallie Sanford, Suellen Ward, Dr. Joan Harper, Dr. Richard Nugent, Dee Cox, Janice Dancer, Bruce Cohen, Dr. Dorethea Davis, Brian Faulkner, Karen Marshall, Barbara Gilkey, Jerry Hudlow, Jody Veit-Edrington and Debbie Malone

**Commission Members absent:** LaCher Rockins, Paul Human

Time: 10:00 A.M.

Location: Donaghey Plaza South, 700 Main Street, Conference Room A

**The Meeting was called to order:**

The January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007 meeting of the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission was called to order by Debbie Malone, Chair of the commission. A quorum was noted and the mission statement was read by the chair.

**Approval of minutes for October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2006:**

The minutes from the Commission meeting for October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2006 will stand as read with no corrections.

**Director's Report:**

Tonya Russell gave a legislative update. The Arkansas Department of Education was approved for a budget of 100 million dollars which includes a \$30 million dollar expansion.

A proposal in special language to reduce the administration for the ABC program will reduce from 2% to 1.5%. It is being discussed but has not been approved. Paul Lazenby stated that the admin money is spent on the Pre-K program and technology. He provided handouts with the breakdown of money spent for the ABC Administration costs. It will be difficult to operate with 1.5% and maintain a quality level Early Childhood program.

Language in a proposed bill regarding report of child maltreatment was shared with commissioners. Commissioners discussed how Early Childhood programs access training and recommendations that the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education review and work to improve this needed training area. Everyone needs to view the DHHS website on how to report a child maltreatment claim. We all need to learn what our role is in reporting an incident. Childcare providers are responsible for training their staff on reporting child maltreatment. Some training may be provided by a Licensing Specialist.

Everyone needs to know the chain of command for reporting an incident. Licensing only gets involved because the facility is licensed by the state.

Senators Percy Malone and Sue Madison currently have a child abuse task force meeting to address child abuse in Arkansas.

#### **New commission and staff members:**

The commission recognized two new members, Dee Cox and Dr. Richard Nugent. Jennifer Spriggs was also recognized as the new ABC Reporting Specialist Supervisor.

#### **Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education Units Updates:**

##### **Licensing Updates- Ratha Tracy**

Ratha provided handouts on Quality Approved Sites, Critical Licensing Compliance, Licensed and Registered Sites and Licensing Technology. Joint Application and Development (JAD) meeting are being held to develop the Quality Rating System. A security system software package is being installed on tablets and full implementation is scheduled for early spring 2007. Quality Approval staff and DCCECE administrators will be trained to use the tablet computers to aid with site evaluations and reviews.

Many applications were received for the Child Care Facility Review Panel. The selections have been made by the review committee and approval of the panel is requested from the commission.

Debbie Malone, Chair, motioned that the request for approval of the new Child Care Facility Review Panel members be confirmed and the motion was seconded by the commission. The review panel is confirmed.

##### **Special Nutrition Program-Curtis Curry**

Curtis Curry provided a handout showing the SNP monthly breakdown of meals and payments for the months of September, October and November 2006. Each month shows an increase in both categories except for the month of October which shows a decrease in both categories due to this was the application renewal month.

The Summer Food Service Program online application is available as of January 16<sup>th</sup>. A hard copy will be mailed out to providers already on the programs along with online application's instructions. The SNP support staff will key all the SFSP applications into the system to make sure the information is correct because we haven't had time to setup training for our providers. After the applications are keyed in, the providers will be able to go in and make updates /changes as needed.

We are gearing up for a major outreach campaign for the SFSP. We will be targeting faith based organizations in the state, mainly in the southern rural areas. Our goal is to increase the SFSP participation by 15%. Hopefully making these contacts will allow us to

provide more information about the SFSP by way of Town Hall Meetings or personal contact with community leaders.

Our National School Lunch Program online application will be available in March 2007. The Child Care and Adult Care Program online application will be available in July or August. Online claiming will not be available until the summer of 2008.

We will be meeting with Children Hospital to discuss the federal regulations and requirements for reimbursing hospitals for meals served to children. This could mean a lot more business and federal money for the SNP; which is completely federally funded. The more children we serve the more money we receive.

### **Finance Report-Sam Lamey**

Sam provided an update on finance and discussed utilization of the Beer Tax. Tonya reminded commissioners that 20% of the Beer Tax money is used for Low-Income Child Care and 80% is used to fund ABC Programs.

### **AECCS/QRS/Strengthening Families- Martha Reeder and Paul Lazenby**

Martha Reeder reported that the QRS group met in July 2006. They discussed the type of tools and information criteria for each level. The providers will have a choice. The Toolkits will come with instructions and a checklist. We want everything to be clear. The framework is there and Northrop and Grumman are helping with the process. We want the system to be compatible with other databases. Everyone's input is welcome. Note are being kept concerning additions and deletions for the systems. A group of providers will be selected to get a strategy on how to get the information out to everyone statewide. Different teams will conduct public forums on implementing the QRS in there area. We have received information from other states on their QRS.

Online training will be provided for QRS. Seven training sessions, free of charge will be held with assistance from the CO-OP Extensions and their Educational software.

Barbara Gilkey will be meeting with the Parent Education Group on February 26<sup>th</sup>. If you would like to attend the meeting contact Barbara or Martha Reeder.

### **Compliance/Market Rate Survey/Sliding Fee Scale-Tim Lampe**

The vouchers sliding fee scale was changed, effective January 1st, 2007. The state Median income was adjusted from 60% to 85% allowing more families and children to be serviced. Cap Rates were adjusted July 1, 2006 and November 1, 2006 to provide an increase to providers who accept vouchers.

Some problems detected in the online billing process in November and December may have been due to the daylight saving time change in October. All providers were paid after the problem was detected. If improper payments were made it was our error. We do not want to punish the providers. We have to identify and fix the problem so it won't reoccur.

The QRS and Kid Care Enhancements are two of the biggest projects we have at this time. Developing a new system takes years. You have to work out all the kinks and it's a slow process that must be completed. At their completion, they both will be a dependable quality system.

### **Family Support-Ivory Daniels**

A committee has been formed to revise the Family Support Unit policy manual. Karen Marshall inquired about providers being involved in that process. The committee will release a draft of the proposed revisions. The DCCECE will host public meeting as part of the promulgation process.

De-obligation is an issue of concern for most providers. The clients as well as the providers need to be aware of the dates cases are closed or will be closed. Ivory Daniels said that he doesn't know if that will be one of the policy revisions. The unit is working with the technology contractors to look at how de-obligation can be shared with providers.

The Kid Care system automatically de-obligates clients if their status changes and their caseworker may not be aware of this. An alert may be added to the Kid Care database to let us know when a client is about to be de-obligated, in advance.

Recertification will be addressed in the policy revisions. Providers need to know as soon as possible if their clients are eligible for voucher participation.

The Committee for the 9800 contracts met January 9<sup>th</sup>. Proposed changes will be submitted today.

The Process Flow Mapping Application for the Family Support Unit will be January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>.

### **Arkansas Better Chance- Jamie Morrison/Paul Lazenby**

Some Commission members received a DVD containing information on the ABC program. The staff is conducting reviews and at this time has a 59% pass rate. Public hearings have been scheduled for the upcoming weeks.

The ABC program cannot at this time track the attendance of children and may request the attendance records from sites if circumstances arises that would call for such an action. We do not have access to the public school system database, but that would be a very good tool to have access to.

A monthly payment system is a possibility. Dates are being scheduled for budget training.

RFP is trying to get a draft done to present. The providers will not review it, but volunteers are needed to read the draft.

### **Program Support-Kathy Stegall**

Arkansas Children's Week is April 22<sup>nd</sup> -28<sup>th</sup>. Nominations for the Arkansas Children's Week Outstanding Early Childhood Professionals of 2007 are being accepted; contact Kathey Stegall for nomination's forms and instructions. Barbara Gilkey, Hallie Sanford and Janice Dancer will serve on the selection committee. Resources for Arkansas children Week are at the printer.

We have an increased number of quality sites. Refer to the Arkansas 2006 Map data handout. The map shows the state of Arkansas quality sites participation with a breakdown by counties.

A statewide survey will be conducted concerning the overall impact of Enhancement Grants.

### **Open Discussions:**

Discussion at promulgation of rules and regulations.

Karen Massy stated we don't have a strategic plan for our commissioners.

Tonya agreed with Karen and suggested we take care of that matter by October. We also need financial statements.

Debbie Malone, Chair, asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Karen Marshall and seconded by Jody Veit- Edrington.

**The Meeting was adjourned at 12:15pm.**

**The Meal was catered by Jason Deli- Box Lunch**

**Hostess/ Administrative Assistant for Tonya Russell- Tenesha Barnes**

**Minutes were recorded by Administrative Assistant- Beverly Snell**

