

**Minutes of the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission
April 19, 2005**

Members Present: Lee Vent, Chairperson; Bruce Cohen; Debra Davis; Jody Veit-Edrington; Barbara Gilkey; Dr. Joan Harper; Jerry Hudlow; Debbie Malone; Karen Massey; LaCher Rockins; Hallie Sanford, Lee Simpson; Laura Sparks; Susan Underwood; Suellen Ward

Members Absent: Karen Beaton; Dr. Doretha Davis

At 10:00 a.m., Lee Vent called the meeting to order and read the Commission Mission Statement. Without objection, Karen Massey offered a motion that the minutes from the previous meeting be adopted.

Division Director Tonya Russell announced that Tom Sheppard, Family Support Administrator, had accepted a position with the Employment Security Division. Dwain Griffin will be serving as interim administrator until a permanent replacement is hired.

New staff introductions were made:
Jamie Morrison, ABC Program Specialist
Kimberly Nelson, Program Development Receptionist
Kelli Hilburn, Child Care Licensing Supervisor
Debra Mantione, Child Care Licensing Specialist

Licensing Supervisor Linda Davis has retired after many years of service.

Tonya Russell delivered the Director's Report, introducing the Strengthening Families Initiative grant which was just awarded to the Division. In addition, the General Assembly appropriated an additional \$20 million for the ABC program in 2005-2006. The 3% excise tax on beer was also extended an additional two years. This brings the total ABC funding to \$71 million.

On July 1, the Department of Health will be merging into DHS as a division. The new department will be the Department of Health and Human Services.

Act 1979 passed by the 2005 General Assembly will require alarm devices to be installed on all vehicles transporting children licensed by DHS. There will be cost involved to implement this legislation. Enhancement funding can be used as a funding source for providers.

Deniece Honeycutt, Associate Division Director, announced that the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), in association with Rutgers University, has been selected to conduct the longitudinal study for the ABC programs.

Kathy Stegall and Hallie Sanford discussed the Arkansas Outstanding Early Childhood Professional nominations and selection process. Ms. Stegall told the Commission that the contract to evaluate the Early Childhood Professional Development System had been awarded to Keystone University Research Corporation. The Strengthening Families initiative is a joint venture between DCCECE and the Division of Children and Family Services. The initiative will have a kick-off presentation at AETN in Conway on May 24.

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Curtis Curry, Special Nutrition Administrator discussed the results of the Management Evaluation conducted by the USDA. No recommendations were made as a result of this evaluation. The Special Nutrition field staff will be rotating through different areas of the state in two-year increments to become familiar with all providers.

Assistant Director Tim Lampe announced that the Family Support Unit will have two new Information Technology systems coming on line. The KidCare system will replace the existing mainframe program in keeping all application data relating to the voucher program. This system should be operational July 1. In addition, the Child Care Billing System is also being updated.

The Child Care Resource and Referral organizations have conducted this year's Market Rate Survey. The promulgation process for the new DHS-9800 will be completed in the next few weeks. The 2005-2007 CCDF State Plan is in the process of being drafted.

Child Care Licensing Administrator David Griffin discussed the changes being made to the Licensing Rules and Regulations to reflect compliance with Act 1979. Barbara Gilkey made a motion to adopt the recommendations made by Licensing for rule changes. Jody Edrington gave a second. Without objection, the motion passed.

Chief Fiscal Officer Sam Lamey announced that he was working on an expenditure summary report for the Division.

Tim Lampe told the Commission that representatives of the Child Care Bureau will be in town May 10-11 to further review our process for handling erroneous payments. Actual child care cases will be reviewed for client error.

Northrup Grumman is continuing to develop a method to allow a Decision Support System to compile and organize data from our existing systems. An updated system is being investigated for use by the Special Nutrition program.

Chairperson Lee Vent asked the Commission to remember the outstanding contributions of Dr. Fay Boozman to the State Health Department.

The meeting was then adjourned.