

**Arkansas Early Childhood Commission**

**October 16, 2007**

**10:00 am**

**Minutes**

**Members Present:** Debbie Malone, Laura Sparks, Janice Dancer, Brian Faulkner, Debbie Mays, Jerry Hudlow, Suellen Ward, Barbara Gilkey, Karen Marshall, Bruce Cohen, Jerri Cummings (substitute for Dee Cox), Jody Edrington

**Members Absent:** Jeff Maneth, Dick Nugent, Joan Harper, Karen Massey, Paul Human; Dorethea Davis

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

The October meeting of the AECC was called to order by Debbie Malone, Chair. A quorum of members was noted. The mission statement of the Commission was read.

**II. Approval of minutes**

Minutes from the July 17, 2007 meeting were reviewed. Barbara Gilkey and Suellen Ward noted that they were not listed as being absent from the meeting. With this addition, Barbara Gilkey moved to approve the minutes, motion seconded and carried.

Briefing materials were provided to all Commissioners electronically. Bruce Cohen congratulated the Division and expressed his desire to continue receiving the materials electronically. Karen Marshall requested that the briefing materials be condensed or sent by hard copy due to problems with downloading the material. Tonya Russell assured the Commissioners that the Division will provide the AECC Briefing Materials in either format based on the members' preference.

**III. New Business**

There was no new business for consideration.

**IV. Old Business**

Three presentations were on the agenda.

**KeyStone Research Corporation**—Joyce Miller and Tania Bogatova shared the final summary results of the Arkansas Early Childhood Professional Development System Evaluation. This evaluation was initiated in July of 2005 and was completed September 30, 2007.

During the 27 month evaluation project, several research questions were addressed to study the impact the system has on early care providers and whether the impact translates to improved quality of care for children. Through out the process, actions were taken to assist in building an internal evaluation capacity within Arkansas to ensure continuous evaluation and improvement of the Professional Development system.

The Executive Summary included “good news, challenges and recommendations for improvement”. Data was collected in numerous methodologies, including on-site observations, interviews, focus groups, survey’s and process mapping with steering committee members. Each Commissioner received a disk including the full report and a copy of the Executive Summary. Recommendations will be closely reviewed and work plans developed with priorities set as the Division and the Early Childhood community work towards improvement of the system. As a more specific work plan is developed, updates will be provided to the Commission.

During the evaluation presentation several questions and challenges concerned the professional registry. It was suggested that the Registry office and staff be invited to make a brief presentation at the January AECC meeting. Tonya suggested that Northrop Grumman (NG) also be asked to present information on the Scorecards for benchmark reporting of our Divisional Belief Based Priorities.

### **First Connections-Division of Developmental Disabilities-Early Intervention Services**

Kenza Wesley shared information on First Connections a program within the Division of Developmental Disabilities. This program is often referred to as Part C or Early Intervention services for children ages birth to three years of age. The services provided are family centered for children ages birth to thirty-six months for children with developmental delays in one or more area and/or have medical diagnosis with high probability of a resulting developmental delay. Numerous services are provided to the child and their family to help children reach their potential. As children reach 36 months of age, transition plans are made and services are transferred to the Department of Education, Special Education Services.

### **Early Childhood Special Education Services/Arkansas Department of Education**

Sandra Reifeiss shared information on the EC/Special Education Services offered by the Department of Education. During the past year over 12,000 children ages 3-5 years received Special Ed Services. This program is an entitlement program and all eligible children and families must be offered these services. Through this program children receive services in the least restrictive environment. These supplemental services assist children in being

successful with general curriculum. Additionally, funds from the Arkansas Better Chance fund are supporting Behavioral Specialists in each of the 16 Educational Cooperatives. These Specialists are available for early childhood providers who may be having difficulties dealing with children with challenging behaviors.

#### **IV. Division Reports**

##### **A. Staff Introductions---**No introductions

##### **B. Director's Report**

Tonya Russell announced several staff changes; Tim Lampe has accepted a newly created position within the Director's Office. This position mirrors many of the functions he had addressed within the Division regarding tracking and establishing accountability for agency staff and providers.

Paul Lazenby has moved into the Assistant Director's position replacing Tim Lampe. Paul will be responsible for all Information/Technology projects and the Compliance and Family Support units. There will be some reorganization across the Division and these decisions are fluid and may be adjusted to ensure high quality services to the field.

The Associate Director's position is being posted for applications and Commissioner's were invited to be involved in the interview process.

Debbie May expressed great appreciation for the work that Paul has done for the ABC programs.

Tonya reported she will be attending a PreK Now conference in New Orleans and that the Governor is participating in a PreK Now conference call later today. PreK Now is focusing their efforts on expanding Universal PreK services throughout the nation.

The Division is involved in development of a Universal Application screener; the screener will include numerous Department of Human Services programs.

##### **C. Finance Report**

Sam Lamey, CFO reported that \$7.5M in TANF funds have been transferred to the Division. These funds will be used for Family Support/Voucher subsidy with 6% of the transfer being used for Quality Initiatives.

Karen Marshall questioned current priorities set for services under the CCDF program. She stated her understanding is that a mandate is in place to first serve families/children receiving TEA and ESS with low-income working families being lower on the priority list. Concerns have arisen that participants in the Career Pathways programs are receiving services before

other eligible priority clients. Tonya Russell agreed to meet with Higher Education to clarify this issue.

#### **D. Early Childhood Health Initiatives**

Martha Hiatt discussed some issues related to TB skin tests for staff within early care programs. In conversations with Health Department officials and a review of current literature, an annual TB skin test is warranted due to the high risk nature of the population being served. This issue had been discussed previously and several health units had been given mixed signals. Debbie Malone shared that in working with the Sebastian County Health Unit communication has greatly improved.

#### **E. Licensing**

David Griffin reported that the AR Department of Labor has begun their boiler inspections and reviews of licensed child care programs. Notification was sent to all providers through the AR Early Childhood Letter.

A survey of all licensed providers has been completed, a summary report will be provided at the January 2008 meeting.

David reflected after attending the Association for Regulatory Administration that standards of care in Arkansas are far superior to many other states as he discovered that California monitors child care programs once every five years.

#### **F. Special Nutrition**

Curtis Curry was involved in a training session for providers and Commissioners were referred to the written report from Special Nutrition programs.

#### **G. Arkansas Better Chance**

Paul Lazenby reported that round 4 of soliciting for program participants has been completed. The outstanding issues are being resolved and recommendations will go to the State Board of Education. He further reported that the ABC Grant Agreement includes a specific clause that allows the Division to deal quickly with sites that are in non-compliance status.

Karen Marshall asked that in planning for required staff development sessions next year, consideration be given to holding a statewide event so that all staff would attend at the same time, relieving programs of having to schedule substitutes so often. She referred to a previous statewide meeting of ABC program and felt that might be a better concept than numerous separate sessions. Staff agreed to consider the concept.

#### **H. Program Support**

Kathy Stegall reported that due to flat lined funding, the allowance for CPR scholarships remains at two scholarships per program for the remainder of this

fiscal year. Commissioners were provided with the 2007 Getting Ready for School Data booklet. Additionally, the 2007 Annual Report on the Arkansas Guarantee Loan Program was included in the Commission briefing materials. This annual report was presented to the Legislative Council at their October meeting. Information on the Arkansas Out of School Network is included in the briefing material.

### **I. Family Support**

Ivory Daniels stated that the revised Family Support Policy is in place and the Child Care Development Fund State Plan has been approved. The new policy allows for voucher payments during college and school breaks (such as Christmas and Spring breaks) but not during summer break. A new application is being used in Family Support that is streamlined and includes all necessary information to determine eligibility.

Three new staff in the Family Support unit was introduced: Brandi Aldriedge, Kathy Rushing and Jenell Lowe.

### **J. Compliance Unit**

No report, information from Compliance Unit was provided in the briefing material.

## **VII. Information and Other Business**

No public comments were received.

Tonya Russell reported that Karen Massey has resigned from the Early Childhood Commission as she has accepted a position on the newly formed Behavioral Health Commission dealing with the System of Care issues.

The next meeting of the AECC will be January 15, 2008.

Motion to adjourn made by Barbara Gilkey and seconded by Karen Marshall.