

Arkansas Early Childhood Commission

January 21, 2014

10:00 am

Minutes

Members present: Jackie Dedman, Shirley Pulliam, Dr. Kathy Pillow-Price, Ava Coleman, Jody Veit-Edrington, Dr. Haley Vo, Marsha Masters, Debbie Malone, Diane Green, Glenda Ezell, Amy Denton, Evelyn Bass, Rhonda Ahrent

Members absent: Dr. Chad Rodgers, Marilyn Chambers, Janice Dancer, Jill Fussell, Nicki Hammontree, Patricia Lucas, Dr. Tracy Tucker

I. Call to Order/Reading of Mission Statement

Jackie Dedman called the January 2014 meeting of the AECC to order at 10:10 a.m. A quorum of members was present. Jackie Dedman read the mission statement in its entirety.

Jackie opened the meeting with three meaningful quotes:

- Accept the fact that some days you are the pigeon, and sometimes you are the statue.
- Nobody cares that you can't dance, just get up and do it.
- Life is like a box of crayons, some are sharp, some are different colors, but we all have to live in the same box.

II. Approval of Minutes from 10/15/13 Meeting

Minutes from the October meeting were reviewed. Jackie Dedman asked for a motion to accept the minutes as written. A motion was made and seconded by Commissioners to accept the minutes as written. The motion carried.

III. Standing Committees

Jackie opened the floor for reports from the four standing committees. No reports were presented however, discussion was held concerning the representation make up for the Appeal Panel. Jackie Dedman asked for recommendations for persons out in the field to serve. She also shared that Commissioners cannot serve on this panel.

IV. Old Business

Race to The Top

Jackie shared that Arkansas was not awarded the Race to The Top Grant. The state was in the top ten applications; however, only 6 were awarded.

Better Beginnings/QRIS

Trena Bronson will send out a copy of the Better Beginnings Map to everyone via email when they are ready for distribution.

Micca Burris shared the current participation figures for the Better Beginnings Program (please refer to handout included). The most significant increase was in Family Child Care Homes' participation.

There are a total of 916 participants currently for a 10.5% increase over the last year. Family Child Care Homes showed a 36% increase.

The Division is currently working with the National Technical Assistance provider to build /revise upper levels for the plan and research what other top states are doing. The committee will come back together to share the information and move forward.

Licensing Rule Revision Update

Ratha Tracy shared information regarding the Licensing Rule Revision process. In July a summary of the proposed revisions was presented to the committee. The results of the focus groups conducted in August were presented to the committee in October.

Ratha provided information regarding the Financial Impact Study, explaining that for every revision proposed, there must be a list of 12 questions answered regarding statewide budgetary impact. Ratha and Kelli Hilburn, as a committee of two are currently dedicating 1-2 days per week to answer the questions for each revision proposed.

The target is to have everything ready to file late in March 2014, with May or June for Public Hearings.

Goals and Measurables Update

Paige Cox reported on the Goals and Measurables. A handout with the information was disseminated to all members of the commission.

Professional Development Steering Committee

Paige reported that the committee met on 12/16/2013. A list of recommendations for Professional Development Steering Committee candidates was reviewed and recommendations made to evaluate the list. On 1/15/2014 Paige and Arlene reviewed the list and are in the process of reviewing promulgated rules for committee make up. Chairs for sub committees will also need to be identified.

School Readiness Task Force

Dr. Tracy Tucker gave an update on the School Readiness Task Force. She shared that the committee will meet again before presenting to the commission. Additional comments have been received and should be addressed before the final presentation to the commission. Dr. Tucker requests that everyone review one final time and forward any recommendations for review before the final meeting.

Fatherhood Initiative

Jackie Dedman provided an update on the Fatherhood Initiative. Jackie disseminated “Interest Inquiry” forms to commission members for anyone who wants to serve on the statewide advisory committee.

Jackie has set a meeting date in February but has not received any forms back as of today. She requested that anyone interested please return the forms so that you can be included. We are the only state involved to this extent and it is a great opportunity.

AR Early Childhood Asset Map Update

UALR staff (Sunny Farmahan & Geoffrey Joseph) provided an update to the Asset Map Project. The website is up and running. Tutorial capability has been implemented. The UALR staff expressed a need to identify a single point of contact at the Division to work with before the launch and get the newest data uploaded to ensure the data is current.

Jackie Dedman asked what the timeframe for launch would be.

Sunny responded that the target timeframe would be most appropriate for launch before summer vacation (May-June).

Tonya Williams suggested that an opportune time for launch might be in conjunction with Children’s Week.

In conclusion, Sunny shared that a list of recommendations for names would be forwarded for review and consideration.

V. New Business

Health & Nutrition Updates/Procedures

Jackie Dedman stated that there was no update at this time from Dr. Lackey.

Child Care Fund Development Update

Ivory Daniels provided an update for the Child Care Development Fund. Mr. Daniels shared currently held 900 families with 1300 children waiting for assistance in paying for child care. Priority consideration is given to families who are designated as TEA, ESS, Foster Care, and protective services.

Mr. Daniels shared the prospective plans for financial incentives/higher rates for Better Beginnings participants with an anticipated roll out date of 07/01/14 and a “no co pay” initiative for families choosing a “quality” program, with a rollout date of 03/01/14.

President Obama’s Initiative

Jackie Dedman shared information about President Obama’s Initiative concerning collaboration and Early Head Start partnerships. Per information shared by Jackie, the initiative includes provisions to allow Early Head Start programs to partner with child care programs in an effort to increase quality and increase rates in child care programs commensurate with Head Start, and improve quality in child care centers to the level in Early Head Start programs.

This initiative would set aside funds to insure equity with the provision that child care programs also meet the same guidelines that Early Head Start does, which would be the Head Start Performance Standards. This would serve to reinforce the importance of child care partnerships and improve the quality of services for children regardless of their setting.

Strong Start Legislation/Invest Early

Geania Dickey represented the Invest Early Coalition and shared information outlining the “Strong Start” legislation. Geania shared that the legislation has been filed. Geania will send a 4 page description via email of the proposed legislation to Trena Bronson for dissemination to the commissioners.

During Geania's recent participation in a national summit information was provided regarding the fact that all federal programs have come together to "push" one thing (Strong Start Legislation).

There exists, a possibility that if Arkansas can serve all 4 year olds, funds from this initiative could aid in serving 3 year olds.

Geania also shared that a national "Tweet" campaign is being implemented encouraging Obama to address Early Childhood in the "State of the Union" address. The hash tag is "state of the union".

Geania asked permission to send the link for dissemination. Approval was granted.

Geania also shared information regarding work for funding for pre-k. She shared concerns that unless increases are granted for current services, providers will decide to "opt out" or program will have to decrease the number of children served to meet financial obligations.

Geania urged everyone to sign up to "Invest Early." Her email is Geaniadickey@aol.com.

Legislative Update

Tonya Williams provided an update regarding legislative and other current initiatives.

Budget – The budget was approved! The Division's participation today primarily involved a request for 2 positions which was approved. She was also asked to address the Pre-K budget and the lack for increase for multiple years.

President Obama's Budget – the budget for Head Start has been restored for approximately 1.25 billion dollars. \$500 million has been set aside for Early Head Start Child Care partnership initiatives. Details are still sketchy. Because the HS budget is likely federal to local, Tonya will be looking for opportunities to include state level involvement. The budget includes opportunities in the \$500 million to bring programs serving infants and toddlers up to Early Head Start standards.

CCDF – \$154 million approximately across all states will be restored. This may have the potential to assist with waiting lists.

Race To The Top – Although Arkansas did not receive funding from the last \$250 million Race to the Top/Early Learning Challenge application, we are in a really

good position to receive future funding depending on how this funding is utilized. We are waiting on details to be announced. In the meantime, Arkansas will move forward with plans as much as possible within current funding levels.

Tonya additionally shared that she has meetings scheduled with Kellogg Foundation and other resources to explore funding possibilities.

VI. Other Business

Imagination Library

Jackie Dedman presented information regarding current status of the Imagination Library in Arkansas. Currently, the program has increased participation from 38 counties to 42 counties. A statewide advisory committee has been established with a state representation meeting scheduled for 02/28/2014 to review procedures for moving forward. There are additional affiliates willing to participate in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library but no funding is available to support this effort at this time.

EHS/Head Start Program Update

Jackie Dedman provided information regarding current priority initiatives for the federal Head Start Program.

- Budget Restoration – 5.27% cut in funds will be restored to all EHS programs
- COLA
- Child Care Partnerships

They are currently getting ready for the state Head Start Conference, which will be held in Hot Springs. The dates are March 12-14, 2014.

Jackie also provided an update on Deanna's health. She is home from the hospital and recovering nicely. She is definitely missed at the office and Jackie is anxious for her to be able to return to work.

VII. Summaries and Announcement

AR GLRC

The EHS Head Start statewide "Read A Thon" will continue for 6 more weeks across the state. Awards will be given at the conference in March to the 3 programs who read the most books to children.

DCC One Day Conference (March 4, 2014)

Arlene Rose shared that a statewide meeting for DCCECE staff to emphasize the importance of meeting quality outcomes for children. There will be 5 different workshops concurrently and all staff will have the opportunity to attend all 5 sessions. The sessions are; Improving Data, Family Engagement, Infant/Toddler Care, Licensing Revisions, and Contractor Information. All presenters will be tying the six goals of the AECC into their presentation. Tonya extended an invitation to any Commission member who would like to attend.

At this meeting, the new DHS Deputy Director will also be introduced to staff.

Arlene Rose shared the focus of the Quarterly nominations for awards /special recognition. These are:

- How the employee brings joy to the workplace?
- Exceptional Customer Service
- Above and Beyond the Call of Duty
- Improving Quality in the Workplace

Announcements

Dr. Kathy Pillow-Price provided information regarding the reorganization efforts with Arkansas Children's Hospital. One such strategy is employment of a Vice President of Child Advocacy and Community Engagement.

There will also be a Child Health Summit June 05-06, 2014 at the Embassy Suites.

Ten staff from ACH will be attending the National Child Health Conference in Washington, DC.

Paige Cox announced that the application for nomination of the 2014 Outstanding Early Childhood Professional will be available on the Better Beginnings website and will be due on 03/03/2014.

Tonya Williams shared the following announcements:

- The first 7 Birth to Five Teaching Credentials have been awarded.
- Mark Story, DCCECE's Chief Financial Officer has accepted a position within Medicaid; but will still be assisting DCCECE until such time as the position can be filled.
- Arkansas had staff who participated in the national home visiting conference. Tonya participated by phone. Some participants expressed difficulties in partnering. Comments from various people regarding goals/outcomes were very "on target" with our own.

Jackie is getting married on June 15, 2014!!!!

VIII Next Meeting

April 15, 2014 at 10:00 a.m.

IX Request for Adjournment

Jackie Dedman asked for a motion to adjourn. Dr. Kathy Pillow Price made a motion to adjourn. Barbara Warren seconded the motion. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned.