

Arkansas Early Childhood Commission
January 15, 2008
10:00 am
Minutes

Members Present: Debbie Malone, Janice Dancer, Debbie Mays, Jerry Hudlow, Suellen Ward, Barbara Gilkey, Dee Cox, Eleanor Coleman, Evelyn Bass and Missy Duke

Members Absent: Brian Faulkner, Jeff Maneth, Dick Nugent, Paul Human, Glenda Redding, Jody Edrington, Mary Scott and Bruce Cohen

I. Call to Order/reading of Mission Statement

The January 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 October 2007 meeting were reviewed. Jerry Hudlow moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Barbara Gilkey. The motion carried.

III. New Business

Recognition and plaques were presented in appreciation of services given by outgoing Commissioners; Karen Massey, Karen Marshall and Hallie Sanford. Outgoing Commissioners not present were Dorethea Davis and Dr. Joan Harper.

Newly appointed Commissioners in attendance were introduced: Eleanor Coleman, Missy Duke and Evelyn Bass. Two newly appointed Commissioners, Mary Scott and Glenda Redding were not able to attend the January meeting.

IV. Old Business

Two presentations were on the agenda.

**Northrop Grumman (NG)/Decision Support System
Willard Starlard**

Northrop Grumman (NG) is the Information/Technology entity currently working with the Division on several IT projects. A major project uses the Decision Support System (DSS) as a data driven system for analysis and reporting. DSS is a data warehouse that taps into other distinct programs such as KidCare (vouchers), CLEAN (Child Care Licensing) and the Special Nutrition program. DSS can take the data stored and develop cross program reporting which becomes useful in decision making. This system also

generates reports and “scorecards” reflecting the Divisional priorities and benchmark targets. Monthly and annual reporting will be expedited and ad-hoc reporting is available. By using scorecards, Division staff are able to set targeted benchmarks from our Belief Based Priorities and provide timely status reports.

A live on-line demonstration was presented.

TAPP (Traveling Arkansas Professional Pathways)

Jennifer Harris, Marketing Coordinator and Michelle Harvey, Registry Support, ASU/Childhood Services

The Arkansas Early Childhood Professional Development System has taken on a new name and a new look for the new year. Numerous changes and upgrades to the registry have already been implemented and many others are in process. These changes are based on the report from KeyStone Research AECPPDS Evaluation which was presented at the September meeting.

Building on Strengths of the TAPP Registry

- Development and implementation of a robust data system
- Online registry for practioners, trainers and training opportunities
- Continual growth in registered practioners, trainers and training opportunities
- Use of one page evaluation form as dual entry into registry membership at a basic level
- Registry access and membership continues to be free

Recent Quality Improvements to online registration

- Immediate recall of forgotten password
- Searches for training by competency area and course id number (for trainers)

Work in progress

- Determination of required data elements for collection
- New long form application for practioners seeking enrollment in registry beyond basic level
- Re-evaluation of trainer application
- Re-design of trainer transcript required information to include degrees and certificates
- Partnering with AR Department of Education for cross-sharing of information in the ADE professional registry

IV. Division Reports

A. Staff Introductions---New staff included:

- Dee Walker, moving from ABC Fiscal Coordinator to Program Support/Contract officer;
- Nancy Pearlstein, moving from Program Support Grant Coordinator to ABC Fiscal Coordinator;

- Justin Foster, new to the Division responsible for Website and Communications;
- Brittany Stuart, new to the Division as Secretary I in Family Support unit.

B. Director's Report

Tonya Russell introduced Steve Jones, Deputy Director of the Department of Human Services. Steve is a former State Representative and in his role as Deputy Director provides oversight to the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education.

Two grant opportunities are in process. An application to participate in SpecialQuest was submitted. SpecialQuest provides extensive support and technical assistance to states in the area of ensuring high quality professional development supporting inclusive care settings. This grant specifically addresses the needs of the birth to three populations. No funding is provided, but support services are extensive. Notification should be made in February. The second possible grant opportunity was issued by the National Governor's Association in cooperation with the Buffet Foundation. This grant supports a team from Arkansas attending a symposium at Harvard regarding early care and learning research and policy issues.

Education Week has published a report Quality Counts that addresses issues related to a wide range of education opportunities in the states. Arkansas has been ranked at 100% for Early Childhood Education, Economy and Workforce issues.

As of January 2008, the Child Care Development funds available for child care vouchers for this fiscal are almost fully committed. We are trying to maintain current eligible families. There is an ever growing waiting list due to a lack of funds. Federal funding has not increased over the past 4 years and plans are being developed to review the priorities for services.

C. Family Support-Ivory Daniels

A proposed Child Care Voucher Priority for services listing was provided to the Commission with a request for their input as decisions are made to limit eligibility. Additional limits on eligibility for child care voucher services will be necessary.

D. Compliance-Mike Saxby

The compliance unit has most recently focused primarily on voucher and SNP issues, but is now including ABC compliance reviews. Due to a small staff within the Compliance unit, staff from the DHS Audit unit assist as on-site visits is limited. Using a wide range of resources available within the Department has made the Compliance Unit more efficient without the addition of staff.

E. Finance—Sam Lamey

Sam restated concerns regarding the CCDF/Voucher program. The greatest concern is related to low-income families as those receiving TEA and ESS remain top priorities. Changes will be necessary and could include establishing a time limitation for services.

F. Special Nutrition—Curtis Curry

Staff is working to begin the Summer Feeding Program and currently is processing applications. The SNP application is on line and operational. Testing is being completed for on-line billing which should go live in March.

G. Early Childhood Health—Martha Hiatt

Health initiatives continue through work on ABCD (Assuring Better Childhood Development) to implement a developmental screening throughout the state in pediatrician offices. The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) will be working with the Division and an Arkansas team to consider policy initiatives related to children birth to three years. Coordinated School Health projects are becoming involved with early care programs to ensure continuity of services.

H. Arkansas Better Chance-Jamie Morrison

The final round of ABC grant applications has been completed. A small number of new classrooms (approx. 30) will be funded in 2008-2009. Budget training for ABC programs begins in March. Debbie Mays asked that sessions for budget training for family childcare ABC programs be scheduled separately from those for center based programs.

I. Program Support-Kathy Stegall

Arkansas Children's Week plans are underway. The ACW Toolkit has been mailed and put on the web site. Family PlayDays are being sponsored in 10 communities. Bookmarks, I'm not just playing, I'm Learning brochures and Church Bulletin Inserts are available for providers to order. Head Start State Collaboration Project is sponsoring two workshops presented by Al Stewart during ACW. Nominations for Outstanding Early Childhood Professionals are being solicited. The Division requested that a committee of the Commission be appointed to serve as reviewers of the nominations and to make recommendations for those to be honored. The following volunteered to serve as reviewers: Suellen Ward, Missy Duke and Debbie May.

A joint project between the Childcare Resource and Referral agencies and the Division may result in town meetings throughout the state to provide an opportunity for providers to receive current information on division programs. Further information will be provided as these plans are finalized.

J. Licensing-David Griffin

A review and proposed revision of the childcare licensing standards is beginning. This will be a clean-up and will not involve a full scale revision. Comments and suggestions for change from all Commissioners are requested. Changes are necessary to address several pieces of legislation passed last session. The Clean Air Act allows no smoking in family child care programs even in hours children are not in care and the Emergency Preparedness Act will require programs to establish a process for notifying parents of emergency shelters that would be used in emergency situations.

VII. Information and Other Business

Public comment was received from Karen Marshall who asked for additional clarification regarding authorizations for children during Christmas breaks if parents are students. She was told that a written request should be sent to the family support worker to confirm need for this authorization. Karen also requested that ABC providers continue to be involved as changes are made in the ABC program.

Debbie Mays shared her desire to have additional information on how members of the Commission could utilize their role as a commissioner as advocates for the programs. She asked that advocacy training and information on their roles be provided at the next commission meeting.

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

VIII. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Janice Dancer and seconded by Barbara Gilkey.