

**Recorded Minutes
of the
Arkansas Early Childhood Commission Meeting
April 17, 2007**

Commission Members present: Karen Massy, Hallie Sanford, 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, Debbie Malone, and Paul Human

Commission Members absent: Laura Sparks, Suellen Ward,

Time: 10:01 A.M.

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

The Meeting was Called to Order:

The April 17th, 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 person.

Approval of Minutes for January 16, 2007 Meeting:

Karen Marshall made a motion to accept the minutes from the Commission meeting for January 16, 2007 will stand as read and Barbara Gilkey seconded the motion with no corrections.

Director's Report:

Tonya Russell (Director, DCC/ECE) recognized Joyce Dees and Frank Scott from the Governor's Office. She also announced some executive changes from the Department's Director's Office. Ray Scott, Deputy Director is leaving the department. Steve Jones is replacing Ray Scott. Janie Huddleston will be taking the Department divisions that Ray had oversight of, and Steve Jones will be covering the divisions Janie had. Steve Jones is from eastern Arkansas and a former legislator.

Tonya gave a brief legislative update on the recent session. Act 1029 was the appropriation bill for the \$111 million to fund Pre-K for all three and four year old children at or below federal poverty that were not participating in Head Start. And Act 462 was a change date for kindergarten entry. Act 816, is an Early Childhood Preparedness Act.

Bruce Cohen asked "if Act 462 was a bill and was DCCECE directly involved in it's development? Tonya replied no." Dr. Harper asked a question about monies for preschool facilities. Ms. Russell asked to get research information and get back to Commissioners.

AECCS/QRS/Strengthening Families Initiatives: Martha Reeder/Paul Lazenby

Paul Lazenby (QRS) gave a power point presentation on Quality Rating System draft on the Early Childhood QRS. The proposal has five levels that are researched based as well as linking to our current subsidy program. Martha Reeder added that the ORS expands what we have in place with the Environment Rating Scales. The goal on the logic model for the Early Care and Education Group is that young children will have access to quality child care programs. Paul stated a meeting will be held with the QRS Subgroup on Friday, April 20, 2007 and then meet with Early Care and Education Group in mid May. Paul also stated they are looking to have public forums and the Commissioners will be kept informed.

Family Support Unit Update: Ivory Daniels

Ivory Daniels reported that three documents in Family Support Unit are being updated. The child care assistance application, the Child Care System Participant Agreement (DHS 9800), and the Family Support Unit Policy Manual. A Public Hearing was held on April 6, 2007 for the child care assistance application and the DHS 9800 agreement and the hearing information was published in the newspaper and posted on the website. A noted change on the DHS 9800 agreement is now it's an open ended agreement. Karen Marshall asked "if the providers can be notified if there is a change in the client case? Tim Lampe stated that the new release to KidCare will send any change made to client's case to the affected provider. Additional discussion of provider rates occurred. Tim Lampe stated if a provider desires a change in their rates, then the provider must complete the Rate Change Form and send it to the Family Support Unit for follow-on action.

Ivory was asked was his Public Hearing was well attended and he stated no one attended. The hearing information was run in the newspaper for the mandatory three day period and was posted on the Division web site. Karen Marshall stated that she did not receive any information or see the notice in the newspaper. Debbie Malone asked that a committee be formed to work on communication process to include Tim Lampe, Brain Faulkner, and Karen Marshall.

New Commission and Staff Members:

Doug Williams (Licensing Supervisor) introduced Peggy Poole a new licensing specialist in White County. He also introduced Ainslee Brown and Tammy Delaney, licensing specialist in the South Arkansas area.

Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education Units Updates:

Compliance Unit/Market Rate Survey/Sliding Fee Scale Updates: Tim Lampe

Tim Lampe gave a briefing on the projection of childcare voucher services for the remaining months of SFY 2007. He gave number of families and children served along with the number of providers that are actively participating in the program. In 2007 we are serving more children and families than last year. The System has paid out about \$40 million and could end at \$52 million for SFY 2007. Also contributing to the increased dollars are two Cap County Rate Adjustments made on July 1, 2006 and November 1,

2006. Also, the Sliding Fee Scale's State Median Income (SMI) was adjusted from 60% to 85% causing more families and children to be eligible for the Child Care Assistance Program.

Finally, the Division spent about \$4 million last year for expanded day/summer voucher services for ABC Children. And the Work Pays Program, initiated by the Department of Workforce Services and the TEA Board, is adding another \$3 million per year for child care voucher services.

Health Update: Martha Hiett

Martha gave a brief update on the Early Childhood Health Initiative and WIC Grant. The Division of Health held a public hearing on March 22, 2007 in regards to the Statewide Immunization Registry.

The Division of Medical Services applied to the National Academy for State Health Policy to participate in the ABCD Screening Academy. The initiative would provide technical assistance on improving early identification of young children with developmental problem. Arkansas is one of first states to participate in this initiative.

Finance Report Update: Sam Lamey

Sam provided an update on financial matters and discussed budget projections for SFY 2008. A question was asked about flat funding. Tonya stated that federal dollars had been "level" for several years and in some cases decreased from previous years.

Licensing Update: Ratha Tracy

Julie Munsell, Information Officer for DHHS, received a FOIA request to make public all facility license compliance and complaint information. The information is available on the KARK Channel 4 or Division web sites.

Special Nutrition Program Update: Curtis Curry

Curtis Curry stated the applications for Summer Food Service Program were mailed out in February 2007. The unit also did mass mail recruitment to faith-based organizations and school districts in Arkansas. A total of 203 applications were sent to faith-based organizations, school districts, non-profit organizations, and to city/local governments. As of today, 57 applications were sent back for SNP follow-on action. The SNP Unit is anticipating to receive 125 to 130 applications, which will allow them to serve more children nutritious meals during the summer months.

Historically, the overall SNP Program spends about \$34 million, for SFY 2007 it appears it will be \$36.5 million.

Arkansas Better Chance Program Update: Paul Lazenby/Jamie Morrison

Jamie stated ABC had received over 300 applications for the Calendar Year 2007-2008 period. The ABC Program will send out eligibility notification to programs around the end of June 2007. Recommendations will be made to the State Board of Education in June 2007. Debbie Malone asked Tonya for someone from Special Education to come

and present information to the Commission. Tonya indicated that she would request for the July or October 2007 Commission meetings.

Program Support: Kathy Stegall

Regarding the Outstanding Early Childhood Professionals Nominees, Kathy passed out the recommendations based on the scoring that was done for the 2007 awards. Kathy asked for the approval of the Commission based on the decision of the committee. The following are the recommendations: Sharon Coburn from Tyronza Elementary School; Christina Meister in Springdale ABC School Teacher; Mindy Shaw a Faculty Member at the University of Arkansas Community College in Batesville; Lori Payne a CDA Instructor at Mid-South Community College, and Dean Pratt with the Lavaca Preschool Program. Kathy asked for approval from the Commission for those people to receive honors this year.

Karen Massey made the motion to accept the nominations and Karen Marshall seconded it. The motion was passed.

The nominees will be invited to attend the July 17, 2007 meeting.

Open Discussions:

Karen Marshall asked Debbie Malone if the commission could change the format of the meeting to allow more public comments on issues presented to the Commissioners. Jody Veit-Edrington suggested public comments be allowed to express concerns at the beginning of each Commission Meeting. Bruce Cohen also suggested the public sign in to comment on a particular issue. Tonya will review all the comments and make a recommendation at the next Commissioner Meeting

Public Comments:

Beth Felton expressed the issue of not being able to speak until the end of the meeting. Beth suggested that maybe after each presenter has spoken the public could be allotted time to comment.

Brain Faulkner suggested a “afternoon meeting” following the next Commission Meeting in July 2007 to discuss better ways to communicate to the public and to discuss the Environmental Rating Scales. The July meeting will be organized to take this into account

Debbie Malone, Chair, asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Joan Harper and seconded by Jody Veit- Edrington.