





## Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

### a. Medical Support Services Report

Ms. Tucker reported that the medical support staff are very happy to have returned to the Coalition after being recalled to work at DOH from March 18 to April 28. Mr. Watson noted to Providers that the medical support staff are available for site visits upon request and that training and screening services are available. Ms. Tucker announced that a new COVID19 testing site will be open from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on the Warrington Campus of Pensacola State College from May 21 to May 29. Testing will not be available over the weekend or on Memorial Day. She noted that anyone can be tested, and that photo ID is required.

### b. CCR&R Update

Ms. Pugh noted that CCRR calls declined in February probably due to the COVID19 crisis. In March, calls increased primarily due to transfer requests because of facility closures. The number of calls declined again in April as fewer people apparently were not seeking child care. So far in May, the number of calls has increased.

### c. Program Support Summary

Ms. Engel indicated that per State directive no on-site Tier 2 monitoring was conducted, however, all required Tier 1 monitoring has been completed. No site visits can be conducted until further guidance is received from the OEL. Compliance letters are still being issued in response to safety reports received from DCF. ASQs results cannot be validated because site visits are in suspended. Mr. Watson noted to Providers that, although monitoring has been suspended, if technical assistance is needed please contact Ms. Engel via phone or email. Provider Recognition Day was two weeks ago, and since then Mr. Watson has been delivering pizza lunch to a selected Provider each week. He noted that he is not involved in selecting the Provider and that Ms. Engel and her team conduct a selection process each week. So far, three centers have been selected, but the next Provider chosen will be a home.

### d. SR/VPK Status Report and Contract Activity Summary

Mr. Watson noted that the enrollment numbers are up due to the enrollment of over 300 children of first responders and health care workers (BG1 ESS). Over half of the new enrollments are new SR clients, but many were already in child care as private pay clients. The initial term of the program was 90 days, but currently there is no set end date. OEL will decide in June if the program will be extended. At the end of their referral period, clients will be evaluated and if qualified will be offered regular School Readiness services. Bonuses for serving BG1 ESS clients in April went out early in May. Some Providers chose not to take the bonus for April because they served less than the maximum number of BG1 ESS children they can receive the bonus for in a month. The OEL program allows the bonuses to be paid over three months for a maximum total payment of \$12,000.00. The number of children Providers can serve is being negatively impacted by restrictions imposed due to the COVID19 pandemic. Mr. Watson has spoken with officials in Tallahassee and asked for a review of restrictions imposed upon child care facilities, taking into careful consideration the physical layout of most facilities. Easing of the current restrictions would allow more children to be served and more parents to return to work.



## Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

The Wait List has grown to 100 children this week because the Coalition stopped pulling from the Wait List due to the COVID pandemic limiting space available. Over the next month or so, the Coalition may be able to pull a limited number of children from the Wait List.

VPK applications opened back in January and the Coalition is encouraging parents to apply soon so that they are more likely to secure their Provider of choice. Mr. Watson indicated that he is working to decouple parents associating VPK with just the School District and reiterated that, as independent private companies, Providers may be open or closed of their own accord independent of the School District.

The Coalition currently has 79 SR Providers. As of yesterday, three more SR Providers have closed in the wake of the COVID19 crisis and all, but 13 SR Providers are open. Mr. Watson noted that Escambia County has one of the highest percentage rates of open SR Providers in the state. The Coalition currently has 75 VPK Providers. Mr. Watson noted that in addition to working toward decoupling VPK program status from the School District, he encourages VPK Providers to consider holding two sessions daily in order to comply with the current COVID19 restrictions and still serve the same number of children. He also noted that if there are less than eleven children in the room, there is no need for an aide to be in the room. Monitoring and assessments are suspended right now and since all Providers are currently being paid for every child, there is no opportunity to commit fraud at this time.

### **V. Old Business**

#### **a. Provider Board Representatives**

The Coalition solicited input for the two vacant Provider Representative positions: one Faith Based Provider and one Private Provider. There was only one applicant for the Faith Based Provider Representative position and that is Stephen Sanchez, Principal of Little Flower Catholic School. Mr. Watson noted that Mr. Sanchez comes from the VPK side and that there is precedent for a VPK Provider to serve. Ms. Hardy made a motion, seconded by Ms. Kirk, to recommend to the Executive Committee, appointment of Mr. Sanchez to fill the Faith Based Provider Representative position. The motion passed without objection. There were several applicants for the Private Provider Representative position. Ms. Shannon Robinson with The House of Prayers received the most votes. Ms. Strumeyer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Hardy, to recommend to the Executive Committee, appointment of Ms. Robinson to fill the Private Provider Representative position. The motion passed without objection.

#### **b. SRPA QPI/Grow With Me/LENA Update**

School Readiness Program Assessments (SRPAs) have been suspended at this time. The assessment thresholds have been raised for the upcoming fiscal year. Not all SRPAs required for 2019-2020 were completed. Scores for those Providers whose assessments have already been done will be reviewed. The Coalition will be in contact with Providers who are currently on a QIP, or whose scores will place them on a QIP in the coming year. Mr. Watson noted that



## Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

although the new contract threshold is 3.5 for the upcoming fiscal year, Providers who score 3.0 to 3.49 can be granted a waiver but will be required to have a QIP to contract with the Coalition. Grow With Me will still be in place next year, with LENA remaining one of the program elements, and Providers are encouraged to contact Ms. Engel in they are interested in getting into the program. Child assessments, and the Coalition support for Teaching Strategies Gold, will still be in place in the coming year, and SR Providers who conduct child assessments will be paid an additional 5% of their rate for each child assessed.

### c. Provider Rate Changes

The Coalition anticipates raising Provider rates for the upcoming fiscal year, particularly for infants and toddlers. However, the OEL approval of the rate changes may be delayed due to the COVID19 crisis. At this time, the Coalition does not anticipate approval of the proposed rate changes in time to become effective by July 1, 2020. There is a chance that the current SR contracts may be extended to the end of September with contracts for next year being initiated on October 1, 2020. VPK contracts will still coincide with the school year.

### d. Escambia Children's Trust Update

Efforts are ongoing to bring a Children's Services Council to Escambia County. If passed, at least ten million dollars in property tax revenue would be raised annually and used to help the children of Escambia County. One advantage of the new funding is that, unlike Federal and State funds which have limitations on their use, funding for a CSC may be used for broader purposes. The Coalition highly recommends supporting the effort by spreading the word and sending letters of support to the County Commissioners. Later this week, Mr. Watson will route an email to the Board and to all Providers soliciting their support for the Escambia Children's Trust fund. To facilitate the support process, a sample letter that may be signed and submitted to the County Commissioners will be attached to the email. Letters of endorsement are critical to the Escambia Children's Trust support effort and may be submitted by individuals or an organization.

### e. RDC Committee Chair/Co-Chair

The RDC Committee Chair position remains unfilled currently. Mr. Watson noted that both Providers and Board Members are eligible to fill the roles if interested.

### f. 2020 Legislative Actions

Mr. Watson reported that HB1013 has not yet been passed in the Legislature as focus has shifted to the COVID-19 crisis response. Although the legislation failed to pass this year, it will likely be reintroduced in the 2021 session after the COVID19 crisis has subsided.

### g. 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Early Learning Summit – ~~May 26, 2020~~ August 25, 2020

Due to the pandemic, the original date for the Summit has been changed to a potential date of August 25. The format will remain the same as originally proposed with morning and afternoon sessions airing the movie, "No Small Matter," followed by a speech by Ms. Rachel Gianini.



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

Consideration is being given to hosting the event via Zoom Webinar as opposed to a live, in person, presentation.

**VI. New Business**

a. COVID Impact on Operations

i. Provider payments

To ensure the child care industry survives the pandemic crisis, the Department of Education has mandated that all Providers will be paid for all children regardless of attendance or whether the Provider is open or closed. Payments to VPK Providers will cease at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. The Coalition strongly encourages Providers to pay their staff and to prepare for eventual reopening. Closed Providers are advised that it is likely that they will not be paid if they remain closed into July and August.

ii. Parent Fee Waivers

Waivers for Parent Co-Payments (Parent Fees) and Eligibility Redeterminations have been extended. Clients whose eligibility expires through July 15, regardless of employment status, will be extended 60 days. It is now possible for parents to qualify for services in a job search or working less than 20 hours status, however, new applicants will on the Wait List like everyone else.

iii. SRPA, Monitoring, ASQ, TSG Waivers

SRPA, Monitoring, ASQ, and TSG requirements have all been waived.

iv. Contract Extensions

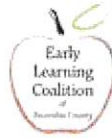
Pending guidance from the DOE, contracts are likely to be extended until September 30, 2020. Further information will be forthcoming as the approval process moves forward. In June or July, the Coalition anticipates initiating new VPK contracts for the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Watson reported that most staff remain in telework status at this time and that workflow has been maintained. Some staff, particularly Eligibility Specialists, may remain in permanent telework status.

v. 2020-2021 Curriculum Requirements and Scholarships

Providers are still required to purchase new curriculum to be eligible to contract with the Coalition in the upcoming fiscal year. Due to the contract extensions and pending further guidance from OEL, Providers may have until August to purchase the new curriculum provided the contract extension runs through September 30 as anticipated. The Coalition continues to provide a scholarship for Providers for half the cost of the new curriculum.

b. First Responder and Health Care Worker Child Care

The First Responder program started on April 1, 2020 and recipients get 90 days of care starting from the date they enrolled. The current application deadline for the First Responder program is June 30. Care for those who enroll during the month of June will end in September. Once care



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

end program eligibility evaluations will be performed and services for interested parents who are eligible will be recategorized accordingly.

c. Provider COVID-19 Mini-Grants and Learning Stipends - This topic was not addressed.

d. Department of Health Medical Support Services Contract

The DOH Medical Support Services Contract for the upcoming fiscal year remains the same as the contract for 2019-2020, except for the budget. Mr. Watson will negotiate the budget with the DOH. The contract budget will be finalized prior to presentation to the Board for approval in June. Ms. Kirk made a motion, seconded by Ms. Hardy, to recommend to the Executive Committee acceptance of the Department of Health Medical Support Services Contract for fiscal year 2020-2021. The motion passed without objection.

VII. **Community Partner Updates**

a. Achieve Escambia

Ms. Krupa announced that the Escambia Children's Trust is seeking support letters. The goal is to have 120 letters submitted prior to the County Commissioners meeting on June 16, 2020. As of today, 81 letters have been received. Providers and interested individuals are highly encouraged to show support for the Trust by submitting letters which may come from either organizations or individuals. The Children's Trust is on the School Board Agenda for the May 19 meeting. The Coalition Board has already approved official Coalition support of the Children's Trust as well as a monetary donation. Mr. Watson noted that yesterday, notice was sent to the parents of all four-year-olds and VPK students regarding the Waterford learning opportunity that Achieve Escambia is promoting.

b. ARC Gateway

No representative was available to report.

c. DCF Outreach

No representative was available to report.

d. DCF Regulation

Ms. Strumeyer introduced herself and announced that she has replaced Roger Thompson who retired. Ms. Strumeyer is available for assistance and encouraged Providers to reach out to her.

e. Department of Health 5-2-1-0

Ms. Pace indicated that COVID19 resources are available via the Florida Department of health web site at: <https://floridahealthcovid19.gov/> She also mentioned that further information is available via the Escambia County Health Department site at: <http://escambia.floridahealth.gov/>

f. ECARE

No representative was available to report.



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

g. Florida Association for Infant Mental Health (FAIMH)  
No representative was available to report.

h. Gulf Coast Kids House  
No representative was available to report.

i. Pensacola State College  
Ms Kirk reported that the College is on standby awaiting further guidance on the status of classes for fall 2020. Although the campus is partially reopened, most faculty and staff are still teleworking at this time. Ms. Kirk also reported that plans to offer Trauma Informed Care Training are moving forward.

j. School District Education Career Academy  
No representative was available to report.

k. School District VPK  
VPK registration has begun and the School District is planning to be open for VPK this fall.

l. Western Panhandle Early Steps  
No representative was available to report.

**VIII. Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 10:57 a.m.**

Next Meeting: July 21, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. via virtual means from the Early Learning Coalition Office, 3300 North Pace Boulevard, Suite 210, Pensacola, Florida 32505