



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

RDC Committee Meeting Minutes

January 21, 2020 10:00 a.m.

Members in Attendance

Cindy Kirk

Brenda Hardy

Debi Tucker

Members Called In

Edna Williams

Tammy Hicks

Paul Sherman

Staff

Bruce Watson

Vicki Pugh

Jamie Phelps

Dawn Engel

Christy Zukowski

Melissa Stankard

Public

Sharmaine Lilleston

Cat Outzen

I. Welcome, Call to Order, and Approval of Agenda

Notification of this meeting was posted to the Coalition Public Calendar Board and posted to the Coalition web site on December 27, 2019 and sent to the Pensacola New Journal on January 3, 2020. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Mr. Watson. Upon a motion made by Ms. Kirk and seconded by Ms. Tucker, the Agenda was accepted and approved without objection.

II. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

III. Approval of Minutes for November 19, 2019

Upon a motion made by Ms. Kirk and seconded by Ms. Tucker, the Minutes of the November 19, 2019 meeting were accepted and approved without objection.

IV. Program Reports

a. Medical Support Services Report

Ms. Tucker reported that the Medical Support team in November conducted 151 vision screenings with 20 referrals and 173 hearing screenings with 26 referrals, and in December conducted 177 vision screenings with 16 referrals and 197 hearing screenings with 13 referrals. There were 281 children served in November and 283 children served in December bringing the year to date total to 2,048 children served. There were 14 site visits in November and 16 in December bringing the year to date site visits conducted to 94. There was one Adult & Pediatric CPR class and One First Aid class conducted in November. There were nine Health Education Classes taught in December. Topics covered in the Health Education Classes included handwashing, dental hygiene, nutrition, and safety. Five Client Satisfaction Surveys were received in November and two in December all with positive comments. Ms. Tucker announced that Ms. Ella Brown has transitioned to OPS status and is now eligible for health insurance and other OPS benefits. Ms. Tucker further indicated that it is anticipated that Ms. Brown will



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

transition to a Career Service Position as soon as possible. Mr. Watson noted that the Coalition has received good feedback and thanked the medical support staff for their excellent service.

b. CCR&R Update

In the month of November there were 61 CCR&R interviews conducted with 54 new interviews and 7 repeat interviews. In December there were 76 CCR&R interviews conducted with 65 new interview and 11 repeat interviews. The total number of interviews conducted year to date is 496 with 415 new and 81 repeat interviews. Most parents are seeking care due to employment or job search issues.

The CCR&R lobby was decorated for Christmas with a handprint Christmas tree and an interactive window was available so children could write their names on Santa's List. Note was made that children continue to engage more with each other at the interactive table and that parents have inquired about where to purchase chairs, like the lobby chairs, for their homes. Window 1 remained set as a Dramatic play area with food as the theme which continues to be a hit with the children. Window 2, the Weekly Focus Board, featured letters, shapes, colors, and sight words. Window 3, with Community Resources and Activities, featured Community information regarding Thanksgiving and Christmas food banks. The theme for Window 4, the Teacher/Parent Board, remained the same as last month and displayed a chore list teaching responsibility to parents and to children. The Coalition has seen an increase in the number of parents enquiring about what educational services childcare programs can offer their child. The Coalition has also seen an increase in the number of parents using the family portal system through the Parent Resource Room. In addition, parents have been better prepared with the documents the need to upload. More parents are visiting the office or calling in response to receiving the Wait List reminder email at the 15-day mark after being pulled from the Wait List. Parents are also being proactive in obtaining listings when responding to Wait List letters.

c. Program Support Summary

Ms. Zukowski reported that Teaching Strategies Gold is in six programs at this time with eleven classrooms using the HATCH Pre-school Program with the iPad based interactive tools. The Coalition's Grow With Me initiative is scheduled to start next month with three or four programs expected to participate. Mr. Watson noted that monitoring of VPK programs has been relatively uneventful lately and that this may be attributed to Providers having a better understanding of their contractual requirements.

Other Program Support highlights include:

1. School Readiness Program Assessments are ongoing with 42 assessments conducted year to date. 13 assessments have been scheduled and 29 more are pending. The anticipated completion date is the end of April.
2. There were no outreach events in November and one outreach event in December.
3. 1,745 books were distributed in November and 1,900 books were distributed in December bringing the year-to-date total to 10,130.
4. The Coalition had no Media Units in the month of November and one in December.



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

5. Facebook likes increased from 1,038 in October to 1,039 in November and remained at 1,039 in December.

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

There are currently 3,255 children enrolled in the SR Program of which 71 children are in the new category of SR Match with families that are over 150% of FPL but under 85% SMI. The additional funding pays for half of the associated costs and the other half is paid from local funding. Unfortunately, the Coalition needs to serve about 3,500 children in order to fully execute funding. The Coalition has sent notices to local employers informing them of the new SR Match Program but enrollments remain lower than desired. The new funding would allow the Coalition to serve about 120 additional children but currently placing the additional children would be difficult because most facilities are not operating at full capacity due to challenges recruiting, hiring, and retaining qualified staff.

There are currently 82 SR Providers. Two Providers quit this year and one Provider was added. However, although there are fewer Providers overall, they are serving more SR children than in past years. At this time there are at least six vacant former childcare facilities available in the area. No contracts have been involuntarily terminated to date and there were no new cases of fraud to report. The Coalition lost one VPK Provider recently but the overall quantity of VPK Providers is more than sufficient.

V. Old Business

- a. SRPA and 2020-2021 Contract Requirements

Ms. Pugh reported that by the current wording of Rule 6M-4.740 and 741 nine Providers would be on a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) next year. If the new Rule passes, then there would be eleven Providers on a QIP, and nine Providers below the Contracting Minimum Threshold (CMT) and they would have to have a second observation to determine if they could contract next year or not. Note was made that a QIP is a support tool to assist Providers and as such a QIP should not be construed as negative or disciplinary in nature. The draft of the change to the Rule 6M-4.741 proposed by the Office of Early Learning will make Providers who scored between 3.0 and 3.5 ineligible to contract in the upcoming fiscal year. These Providers will never have been afforded the opportunity to be on a QIP. Last year, if Providers scored between 2.5 and 3.0 they were placed on a QIP, and the Coalition had three Providers in this category. The proposed changes would make 3.5 the CMT in Fiscal Year 2020-2021 and 4.0 the year after. Under the proposed Rule change, the Coalition would stand to lose one-third of the Providers this year and one-quarter of the Providers the year after. The Coalition, along with one other county, expressed serious concern to the OEL regarding the impact of the proposed changes and as a result, the proposed Rule was temporarily pulled. Mr. Watson pointed out that if the proposed Rule changes are implemented, the State may open itself to potential litigation from Providers who were deemed ineligible under the new Rule but who were never afforded the opportunity for a QIP. Most likely, the requirement to meet the new proposed standards will be



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

spread out over a two or three year period in order to give Providers the opportunity to participate in a QIP.

b. SRPA QPI/Grow With Me/LENA Update

Mr. Watson noted that Grow With Me comes with LENA and that the Coalition is still doing LENA. He further noted that in the coming year the Coalition may or may not reengage with the Studer Group on LENA.

c. Escambia Children's Trust Update

The effort to establish a Children's Services Council in Escambia County continues. If established, there would be an average \$40 increase in property taxes per household. All of the funding is required to be spent on program involving children birth to 18. It is estimated that 10 to 15 million dollars a year would be raised to be used in Escambia County. There are eight CSCs in Florida and funds have been used successfully in a variety of ways, to include teen programs to address issues such as reducing recidivism and teen pregnancies. All CSCs also fund early learning programs. There effort to get this referendum placed on the November ballot has begun. Initial polling indicates that over 60% of respondents are in favor of the Council and a political action committee called the Escambia Children's Trust has been formed and they are in the process of soliciting donations. Achieve Escambia has taken the lead in the effort.

VI. New Business

a. 2020-2021 Curriculum Requirements and Scholarships

SR Providers will receive email notification as well as hard copy notices in their attendance day package regarding the State's new curriculum requirements. Providers will be required to have a curriculum from the state approved list in order to contract with the Coalition in 2020/2021. The Board approved the RDC proposal to scholarship 50% of the cost to Providers of obtaining one new curriculum. The Coalition will require Providers to submit receipts and proof of delivery in order to receive the scholarship. There is a chance that the Coalition may lose two or three Providers due to the new requirements. Mr. Watson suggested that concerns Providers may have regarding the new curriculum requirements be expressed directly to OEL as well as to their respective State Legislators.

b. RDC Committee Chair/Co-Chair

The Coalition has had two Board members who have served as RDC Co-Chairs over the last two years. One is retiring in March and the other will roll off the Board in June 2020. Therefore, the Coalition will need at least one person to step into the role. While it is preferable for a Board Member to fulfill the role, a Provider Rep would also be eligible to serve.

c. Provider Board Representatives

2020 marks the three-year cycle for the Coalition's two Provider Board Representatives to roll off the Board. Mr. Watson noted that the current Representatives have not expressed interest in continuing to serve and that nomination materials will be distributed to Providers in their attendance day packages the first week of February. Nomination information will also be

80



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

emailed to Providers. The Coalition must fill the two Provider Representatives because they are statutory and at least one Representative is required to a member of every Review Hearing Committee.

d. 2020 Legislative Actions

Mr. Watson noted that the proposed changes for 2020 are almost as extensive as the changes that were implemented in 2013. However, there is a chance that House Bill 1013 may die because a funding was not included in the budget. In consideration of the current state of VPK readiness rates, one of the major proposed changes would move OEL more completely under the Department of Education. OEL would become the Division of Early Learning operating under more oversight from DOE, in a manner like how the DOE VPK Office operated in the past. The other huge change would be implementing in the VPK Program CLASS assessments. The bill proposes a Committee be formed to establish standards for an ABC rating system like the current elementary school rating system. If implemented, the assessments would result in increased workload to the Coalition and the Coalition would need to hire one or two additional staff members to handle the new process. Additional funding would be needed in order to hire additional staff and remain within the 4% admin cap in the VPK Program. One other proposed change of note would be an annual SR Estimating Conference, similar to the Annual VPK Estimating Conference. State rates for the SR Program would be established and each County would be plus or minus the State Rate. As currently worded, Coalitions would not be granted the latitude to negotiate the rate at a local level. Over the next month, Coalitions statewide will be working toward efforts to retain the authority to adjust rates according to local needs. The Coalition should have time to adjust local rates pending the outcome of the proposed legislative actions.

e. 8th Annual Early Learning Summit – Tentatively May 26, 2020

The Coalition has tentatively reserved the date of May 26, 2020 for the 8th Annual Early Learning Summit. The summit this year will be different than in years past and will consist of a morning session and an afternoon session. Screenings of the film, “No Small Matter” will be shown at both sessions. Early Learning advocate, Rachel Giannini, will speak at both sessions as well. The Summit sessions are planned to last roughly 90 minutes and the Coalition will appeal to a broader pool of attendees than in past years. Attendees are welcome to come to both sessions if they would like and in-service hours will be available to Providers who attend.

VII. Community Partner Updates

a. Achieve Escambia

No representative was available to report.

b. ARC Gateway

No representative was available to report.

c. DCF Outreach



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

No representative was available to report.

d. DCF Regulation

No representative was available to report.

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

No representative was available to report.

f. ECARE

No representative was available to report.

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 announced that the only update PSC has to report is the upcoming Trauma Informed Care training sessions which will begin this Friday. Mr. Watson highly encouraged publicizing the training in order to maximize Provider awareness.

j. School District Education Career Academy

No representative was available to report.

k. School District VPK

No representative was available to report.

l. Western Panhandle Early Steps

Ms. Outzen reported that their biggest change is that the Program will be using the ASQ Social Emotional tool twice yearly. In addition, she reported that referrals were low last year due to a breakdown in the referral flow from the NICU. She indicated that the flow problem has been identified and corrected and that referral numbers are expected to rise accordingly. Dr. Vargas, a Board Certified Developmental Pediatrician, is now with Sacred Heart Medical Group and is providing service to children under the age of six. Dr. Vargas is one of only two Pediatricians in the area who are able to provide Medicaid with an ASD diagnosis. Ms. Outzen noted that if the Coalition's Inclusion Specialist needs to make a referral to Dr. Vargas it would be best to email Ms. Outzen as opposed to calling her as she has several offices. Parents are encouraged to contact Ms. Outzen's office for assistance as she indicated that the referral process can be difficult to navigate depending on the insurance coverage. Providers in attendance reported that Early Steps representatives are in the habit of arriving unannounced and without badges identifying their title or affiliation with Early Steps. Since this could pose a potential security issue for the facilities, the Providers requested that visitors should be prepared to present



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

identification badges. Mr. Watson offered to have the Coalition assist with facilitating and coordinating the visits. He further noted that most facilities are reluctant to have strangers enter the facility. Ms. Outzen indicated that she would follow up regarding issuing credentials to identify the visitors.

VIII. Other Business

a. Ms. Hardy mentioned to Mr. Watson that overtime pay can be a concern for Providers who pay their staff members to attend training sessions. Mr. Watson indicated that the Coalition will route an on-line poll to gather Provider input regarding this concern.

IX. Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 10:56 a.m.

Next Meeting: March 17, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. at the Early Learning Coalition Office, 3300 North Pace Boulevard, Suite 210, Pensacola, Florida 32505