

**Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County
Board Meeting Minutes
April 8, 2021 10:00 a.m.
Chair: Van Mansker**

Members in Attendance

Van Mansker	Roger Thompson	Mary Ann Bickerstaff
Craig Jones	Richard Wright	Shanna Robinson
Marcus McBride	Brian Wyer	Angela Strumeyer
Melody Meier	Judy Dickinson	Cindy Kirk
Shannon Nickinson	Mona Jackson	

Members Absent

Beate Bolton	Dr. Laura Edler	Drew Hardgrave
Steven Sanchez		

Public in Attendance

Tara Godbey (Warrant Averett) Fred Perkins (Prospective ELC Finance Director)

Staff in Attendance

Bruce Watson	Dawn Engel	Paula Rollins
Becki Rutchland	Vicki Pugh	

I. Welcome and Introduction

Notification of this meeting of the Board of Directors was posted to the Coalition Public Calendar Board on April 1, 2021 and sent to the Pensacola News Journal for publication on March 19, 2021. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Mansker.

II. Public Comments

- a. None

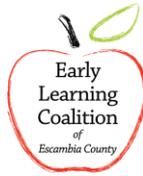
III. Chair Comments

- a. **Approval of Consent Agenda: Meeting Agenda, Minutes of the February 11, 2021 Board Meeting, and Financial Statements for December 2020 and January 2021.**

Upon a motion made by Mr. Thompson and seconded by Mr. Wright, approval of the Consent Agenda, consisting of the Meeting Agenda, Minutes of February 11, 2021 meeting, and Financial Statements for December 2020 and January 2021 were approved without objection.

IV. Executive Committee Report:

- a. **Annual A-133 Audit Fiscal Year 2019-2020, Warren-Averett Presentation**



Ms. Tara Godbey with Warren Averett, CPA and Advisors, presented the results of their annual A-133 audit for fiscal year 2019-2020. Ms. Godbey stated this was a “clean audit” as there were no findings or observations. She commended the Coalition for their excellent fiscal practices. Upon a motion made by the Executive Committee and seconded by Ms. Bickerstaff the annual A-133 audit for fiscal year 2019-2020 was approved without objection.

b. 2021-2022 Sliding Fee Schedule

The sliding fee scale for fiscal year 2021-2022 was presented. There were no changes in parent fees from the prior year. Upon a motion made by the Executive Committee and seconded by Ms. Strumeyer the Sliding Fee Scale for 2021-2022 was approved without objection.

c. CARES Funding - OEL Working on CARES Phase V and Beyond

The OEL is putting together guidance for a Phase V of funding similar to the funding provided in CARES Phases I to IV. Also, there is word that the CCDF is providing Florida approximately \$2.6 billion for child care support. This funding will have different criteria from previous grants. There will be requirements for quality improvements and possibly incentives to be paid directly to child care staff members.

d. OEL SR Provider Rate Increases

All the OEL calculated SR rate increases were made in the system effective January 1 and the contract amendments completed. The rates the OEL settled upon were not much different than what the Coalition requested for younger children. The Coalition is working on a new proposal for older care levels that were not increased.

e. Market Rates/Coalition Rates/Private Pay Rates Discussion

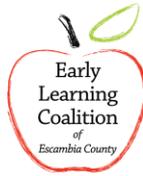
Florida chosen method for setting reimbursement rates is that Coalitions rates are not to exceed 75% of local market rate. How to increase rates and stay within 75% is problematic as the local rates are tied to the Coalition rates, and the Coalition rates are at or in several cases slightly above 75% now. The Coalitions are working to change the methodology for how to establish rates to one that is based on the “cost of quality” and not market rate. Several other states use this methodology.

f. State Minimum Wage Increase Impact on SR/VPK Program Funding

Minimum wage in Florida will be increasing for the next five year. This will impact both parents and providers in significant ways. Many parents may find themselves over income as compared to the Federal Poverty Levels. With the requirement for all employers to increase minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2026 there will have to be a commensurate increase in reimbursement rates, or our Providers will not be able to afford providing contracted services. The State is aware of this but is unwilling to begin discussions to address this issue.

g. State Minimum Wage Increase Impact on Coalition Staff Pay/Budget

With the increase in minimum wage the Coalition needs to maintain the relative separation of staff wages and minimum wage. To do this the Executive Committee brings forward the motion



that starting this year the Coalition increase wages by \$1.00 per hour or 3% whichever is greater. These two levels ensure both the parity and a 3% Cola for those for whom 3% maybe more than \$1.00 per hour. Upon a motion made by the Executive Committee and seconded by Ms. Thompson increasing staff pay every year starting in 2021 through 2026 in October of each year by the greater of \$1.00 per hour or 3% was approved without objection.

V. Executive Director's Report:

a. SR/VPK Program Fiscal Year Benchmark Report, Utilization/Enrollment/Wait List, Status Report, and Contracting Summary State Report

1. Benchmark Report:

Through the end of February, the Coalition is roughly \$1.4 million below SR budget projections. There are several reasons why this has developed, but the primary reason is parents are not placing their children in care. The 600 children in the First Responder program have all either left care or been reclassified. The Children Served per month reflects that since redeterminations resumed in August more children have left the program than came into the program. This was partially offset, and somewhat masked, by enrollments in the First Responder program, but now that the program has ended the number of children enrolled has continued to fall. Although there is no hard data, the fact that the State and Federal unemployment benefit programs are making it more profitable for parents to not work than to work could be why fewer parents need subsidized child care. Note the spending category percentages remain within State limits, but the Admin percentage, at 4.36%, is the highest it has ever been. VPK Admin is currently over 4% but it is expected to decrease in the last few months of the year.

2. Enrollment/Wait List Status Report:

There are 2,898 children enrolled in the School Readiness program of which 1,111 are school-age children. There are 101 children enrolled in the SR Match Program. For the past three months all the children on the Wait List are pulled each week. VPK enrollments are 1,291.

3. Contracting and Fraud Summary Report:

There are 83 SR Providers, and 65 VPK Providers. There were no new fraud cases to report.

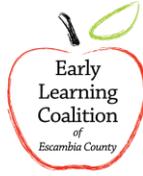
VI. Old Business:

a. COVID Impact on Operations

1. First Responder and Health Care Worker Child Care Program

The program ended on March 31, 2021. Some children reverted to the School Readiness program while others did not meet purpose of care and had their services terminated.

2. Provider Absences and Closures



Providers are authorized for payment for more than 10 days of absences per child when the child's classroom or the facility were closed due to COVID.

b. Escambia Children's Trust Update

The Trust has begun having Council meetings and efforts are progressing to meet the deadline to submit the paperwork required to initiate adding the milage rate to property taxes this year.

c. Coalition Relocation Update

The Coalition is also in discussion with the landlord to relocate to newly renovated offices in the Plaza Tower at the south end of the Town and Country complex. These offices are more in line with the business needs of the Coalition. Lease terms and renovations are being negotiated.

VII. New Business:

a. Insurance Claim Update

To date there have been no payments on our claim. The hold up is the

b. Audits and Reviews for 2021

1. OEL Accountability Review, Jan-Mar 2021

The Accountability Review is in progress. The Coalition has responded to the Courtesy Review and is waiting for the response from the OEL.

2. OEL Financial Review, Feb-Apr 2021

The Financial Review is in progress. The Coalition has out briefed with the OEL and their contracted review team and is waiting for the initial response from the OEL.

c. Legislative Update

The legislative sessions is in process. Proposed bills may result in significant changes in the School Readiness and VPK programs and in Coalition governance. The VPK program may be required to start doing program assessments similar to those that are required in the SR program. Coalition may be required to satisfaction surveys with their providers and parents. None of the bills impacting early learning have been passed.

VIII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, June 10, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. at the Early Learning Coalition Office at 3300 N. Pace Boulevard, Suite 210, Pensacola, FL 32505

Minutes approved by:

 Marcus McBride, Board Secretary

 Date