



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

RDC Committee Meeting Minutes

September 21, 2021 10:00 a.m.

Committee Members in Attendance

Roger Thompson (Chair)	Aisha Adkison	Deborah Goldberg
Cindy Kirk	Edna Williams	Mary Ann Bickerstaff
Jessica Czuprynski	Shanna Robinson	Brenda Hardy

Staff in Attendance

Bruce Watson	Paula Rollins	Dawn Engel
Nina Daniels	Fred Perkins	Vicki Pugh
Christy Zukowski	Melissa Jennings	

Providers and Partners in Attendance

Misty Lambeth	Rosa Sukal	Gwen Stabler
Stephanie Davis	Deborah Jackson	Hitomi Wright
Victoria Jordan	Lawanna Hamilton	

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

Notification of this meeting was posted to the Coalition Public Calendar Board and sent to the Pensacola New Journal on September 8, 2021. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Mr. Thompson, the Committee Chair.

II. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

III. Approval of Agenda and Minutes for July 20, 2021

Upon a motion made by Ms. Hardy and seconded by Ms. Kirk, the Agenda and the Minutes of the July 20, 2021, meeting were approved without objection.

IV. Program Reports

a. Medical Support Services Report

Ms. Pugh gave the report. She noted that some minor changes have been made to the report. There will no longer be a listing of programs to be screened as the pandemic affects the schedule. If a program has been closed for COVID, ELC staff waits at least 30 days before going to the site to do the screenings. July was a busy month as reflected in the report. There were no screenings in August due to the start of school although through a collaborative partnership with the Coalition's Inclusion/Behavior Specialist, a vision & hearing screening is performed when a referral is made to Child Find and other agencies. Ms. Pugh asked the Providers in attendance to consider what types of education can be given to families and children concerning the rising obesity rates indicated on the report.



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b. CCR&R Update

Ms. Jennings highlighted the number of interviews (calls) dropped as expected with the start of school in August although calls are up requesting community resources such as transportation. Increased requests for special needs after school care and classes for parents of special needs children are noted. She also noted that the Coalition will participate in upcoming outreach events at Parent University and Reimagine Cantonment. Free Little Libraries are expanding. The Coalition Facebook numbers are multiplying with over 645 shares on a recent posting about a Diaper Giveaway sponsored by the Junior League of Pensacola. Mr. Watson commented that although we do not Friend others on our Facebook site, our reach is expanding due to enhanced postings during the pandemic.

c. Program Support Summary

Ms. Engel affirmed that training opportunities will open back up with the move to a larger training room. She projects more evening and weekend training that will be face to face in the new calendar year. A couple of providers have dropped from the Child Assessment project due to staffing issues. She reminded the group of the new ASQ process in EFS Mod that shows in real time if a Provider is out of compliance with ASQ screening. Monitoring is slow due to COVID although nine on site monitoring's have been completed. Mr. Thompson asked if a provider is having staffing issues can the Coalition be flexible. Ms. Engel responded that we are aligned with DCF reports in CARES on ratio issues; therefore "it is business as usual". She asserts that the Program Integrity Unit (PIU) tries to complete as much of the monitoring as a desk review before the on-site visit. This minimizes the time the director needs to work with the monitor so they can get back into the classroom because staffing shortages at this time are requiring many directors to be in the classrooms teaching.

d. SR/VPK Status Report and Contract Activity Summary

SR enrollments were temporarily above 3,000, but they have since dropped. The trend continues of families applying then not following up. The waitlist is cleared each week. Approximately 29% of families are starting the enrollment process but are not completing it. Although this is 45% higher than last year at this time, it is still a concern. These numbers also do not include children who are in the childcare deserts - that is at least 50 children whose families have not found a childcare program. The lack of available space is because of staffing issues.

Over 100 children are enrolled in SR Match program. These are children that could not be served two years ago because their families earn more than 150% of the Federal Poverty Level. The grant from the Escambia County Commission that provides the required local match funding has been renewed for this year.

1532 children are enrolled in the VPK program. This may not include approximately 500 more children who will be enrolled from the School District as they did not start VPK until September 13, 2021. Enrollments are ahead of last year's VPK enrollments.

The Coalition has 80 School Readiness Providers and 66 VPK Providers.



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V. Old Business

a. Coalition Relocation

The landlord has changed the move date to the second or third week in November. As a reminder, the Coalition is moving to the Plaza Building on the south side of the Town and Country complex, facing Fairfield Drive. The Coalition will have the entire fourth floor with a bigger training and meeting room space and half of the ground floor which will serve the public in a more user-friendly way.

b. DEL CRRSA and ARPA Grants

There will be a CRRSA Phase VI, but it is still unknown how much the grants will be for. Mr. Watson is serving on a state workgroup concerning ARPA funding (\$2.5 billion to Florida). This funding is to address improving the quality of early learning program by increasing capacity and staff wages, improving retention and other factors that will help build a stronger industry. This funding initiative will be a good opportunity to bridge the gap between current minimum wage and the new state requirements. The committee will be advised of developments.

VI. New Business

a. DEL Disaster Relief Grants for Teachers/Directors 21/22

All funds have been paid out with no complaints. 700 checks have been returned to DEL although ELC Escambia has not been notified that we have had any checks returned. Mr. Watson will contact directors if that occurs.

b. 2021 Legislative Actions – DEL Reorganization, VPK Assessments

On July 1, 2021 the Office of Early Learning was reorganized under DOE from an “Office” to a “Division”, Division of Early Learning (DEL). Shortly afterwards, there was a change in Executive Director’s. Mr. Matt Mears was appointed as the Chancellor of Early Learning. This included a title change from Director of Early Learning. While Chancellor Mears is new to early learning, he is not new to DOE as he moved from the Inspector General office in the DOE. Mr. Watson is to meet with the new Chancellor via Zoom in late September and face to face in October.

VFPK Program Assessments are coming for the 22-23 school year, although speculation is that requirement may move to the 23-24 school year as the tool has not been chosen and there is no funding allocated by the legislature yet. Additionally, new child assessments may also be implemented as pre and post assessments for VPK Program performance. Further speculation is that the STAR assessment may be used for this purpose.

c. Vehicle Alarm Requirement and Response Standards

Because DEL elected to provide funding for purchasing the vehicle alarms, the Coalition will exercise the authority provided by this committee and the Board to use quality funding to



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underwrite this requirement. Providers who have indicated per their SR contract that they transport children should expect to receive an application in the next 2-3 weeks. DCF has approved four (4) alarm manufacturers. The Coalition has agreed to reimburse Providers for the cost of one alarm system on each vehicle the Provider uses to transport SR children. He estimates approximately half of contracted Provider's transport children. This grant is for SR Providers only.

d. DCF COVID Reporting and Response Standards

Mr. Watson displayed the DCF August email that is currently actionable and implemented. He reminded the committee that although the Health & Safety standards required two (2) or more children to be ill to constitute a communicable disease outbreak, the COVID standards are more stringent and require only one (1) child to compose a communicable disease outbreak. Failure to report and follow DOH guidelines is a CLASS 2 violation. In addition, he reminded the committee that the Coalition requires notification as a prerequisite to having their reimbursement request approved for a facility or classroom closure. VPK has additional paperwork for closure payment requirements that the Coalition staff can assist with if necessary.

The DEL provided the Coalition with additional funding to pay VPK providers for closure days in excess to the five allowed per school year by Statute and Rule. 19 VPK providers received additional funding for days closed above and beyond the five-day mark due to COVID.

VII. Community Partner Updates

a. Achieve Escambia

No representative was available to report.

b. ARC Gateway

Ms. Bickerstaff reported that referrals are in high volume for special needs children as reported in the CCRR update. Telehealth is a viable option with her agency although many families are overwhelmed with the technology needs.

c. CareerSource ESCAROSA

No representative available to report

d. DCF Regulation

No representative available to report

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

No representative available to report

f. DCF Regulation

Ms. Strumeyer stated the Regulation office is resuming site visits. They have a new data system in operation, CARES II. Providers are reminded to update their employee rosters and check the



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clearing house as well. On inspection Providers are reminded to ensure their fall zones are at least 6 feet. COVID has not resulted in change to DCF guidance, but there has been an increase in reported cases.

g. Department of Health 5-2-1-0
No representative was available to report.

h. Florida Association for Infant Mental Health (FAIMH)
Ms. Goldberg announced a new chair for FAIMH. Amy Fuqua of the Early Childhood Court who will co-chair with her Okaloosa County counterpart.

October 18 – 22, 2021 is Celebrate Babies Week which draws attending to the needs of small infants. She suggested that the Coalition do a shout out about providers who serve in these classrooms. Mr. Watson confirmed the Coalition will post any flyers that FAIMH may develop to the FB page and leverage those postings with comments.

Ms. Goldberg announced a pilot project for an endorsement of a Family Specialist credential. Mr. Watson suggested that FAIMH at the state level present the endorsement to DEL for ARPA funding. This endorsement differs from the Infant toddler CDA offered at Pensacola State with measuring competencies in family work, children and communities. It is a 30 -clock hour course through the Lastinger Center at University of Florida, an endorsement committee vets the candidates. She referred to the FAIMH website for more information.

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

j. Pensacola State College
Ms. Kirk reposted that there will be a Trauma Informed Care training in November to which TEACH scholarships can pay. She and Ms. Adkinson are discussing a Professional Development Day for the senior child care academy students. There is a new department head, Dr. Martha ? as Susan Morgan has retired.

Ms. Kirk reiterated that enrollment at the college overall is steady with the expectation that Spring semester will have 90% of the classes face to face. She asked that providers consider allowing PSC students time in the classroom to observe as part of their practicum coursework. She also reminded the committee that there is ample funding for scholarship to include child care, housing, gas, books, etc.

k. Ready Kids
No representative was available to report.

l. School District Education Career Academy



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Ms. Adkison gave the contact information for ReadyKids! The new name for ECARE. She thanked the Coalition for the continued support for the four childcare academies. The Coalition provided funding for 23 CDAs in the 20-21 school year. She also requested that programs allow students into classrooms for practical work experience as part of their CDA credential process. The Child Care Academies continue to work with the IB program in the Million Word Gap initiative.

m. School District VPK

Ms. Czuprynski reported there were no updates but encouraged childcare providers in their work.

n. Studer Community Institute

No representative was available to report.

o. Western Panhandle Early Steps

No representative was available to report. Ms. Bickerstaff announced a new representative, Christy Nichols with Ms. Nichols contact info. The Coalition will follow up.

VIII. Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

Next Meeting: November 16, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. at the Early Learning Coalition Office, 3300 North Pace Boulevard, Suite 210, Pensacola, Florida 32505