



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

RDC Committee Meeting Minutes

July 21, 2020 10:00 a.m.

Committee Members in Attendance via Zoom

Marcus McBride
Cindy Kirk

Angela Strumeyer

Jessica Czuprynski

Staff in Attendance

Bruce Watson
Dawn Engel

Vicki Pugh
Christy Zukowski

Jamie Phelps

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 July 1, 2020. The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Mr. Watson who functioned as Acting Chair as a new Chair has not been appointed.

II. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

III. Approval of Minutes for May 19, 2020

Upon a motion made by Mr. McBride and seconded by Ms. Strumeyer, the Minutes of the May 19, 2020 meeting were approved without objection.

IV. Program Reports

a. Medical Support Services Report

Ms. Tucker was not in attendance. Mr. Watson noted that the medical support staff is not conducting the typical number of site visits at this time due to the pandemic. Over the last month the medical support staff have visited several Providers but are not providing services at the same level as before the pandemic. The medical support staff is available on request to conduct site visits, training, and screening services.

b. CCR&R Update

Mr. Watson noted that phone calls are picking up particularly in response to the First Responder Program. Ms. Pugh noted that vision and hearing screenings will be conducted at the College Trace Apartments as part of a mini outreach pilot. Screenings will be available to residents only and by appointment only. Bags containing books and masks will also be handed out. Mr. Watson noted that the end of year reports will be presented to the Executive Committee and the Board at their next meetings. Ms. Pugh indicated that the report will compare last year and current year data.



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

c. Program Support Summary

Ms. Engel indicated that although some site visits had been conducted recently, visits have been curtailed again due to COVID 19 exposure issues. An Assessment Schedule has been created and is set to begin in September however, due to considerations related to the pandemic, the assessments may not commence as scheduled. Note was made that very few other Coalitions are conducting site visits at this time. Mr. Watson suggested that the Coalition might survey Providers for their input on the matter and in addition, he requested that Ms. Engel obtain survey results from other Coalitions for comparison.

d. SR/VPK Status Report and Contract Activity Summary

Mr. Watson noted that enrollment numbers are up slightly and that 3656 children are enrolled as of this week. The increase in enrollments is due to several PS children in addition to the First Responder Program. The application deadline for the First Responder Program is the end of July and the Coalition anticipates receiving applications right up to the deadline.

The Wait List has grown to 250 children this week as the Coalition stopped pulling from the Wait List due to the COVID pandemic limiting space available. The Legislature has set aside fifty to sixty million dollars to be used to clear the Wait Lists statewide so the Coalition will receive a portion of the funding. There is a chance that the Coalition may pull 25 to 30 children from the Wait List however, that will most likely not occur until the First Responder application deadline has passed. Currently, there are 50 children and 27 PS children who are approved but have been unable to find care due to limited space available. Providers have indicated that space is limited due to a lack of teachers resulting in a shortage of staff throughout the county. Staffing shortages are being experienced statewide and is a significant factor here in Escambia County.

The Coalition had 75 VPK Providers last year but may not wind up with as many in the coming year. The School District is adding one more VPK Provider so their total number will be at 15 for the coming year. Registration numbers are low at this time, but numbers are expected to rebound to full capacity nine weeks into the school year. The School District does not anticipate offering VPK remote learning. Due to the age range of VPK children, many Coalitions do not support remote learning for VPK however, OEL is considering the matter at this time and further guidance may be forthcoming.

At this time, the number of Providers has remained static. Over the last two weeks the Coalition has been working to pay out around \$800,000 in CARES funding to Providers. Phase One funding is available to Providers who were open on April 30th. Phase Two funding is available to Providers who were closed on April 30th but who meet OEL's definition of high quality. Some Providers have received as much as \$20,000. In addition, about 36 non-contracted Providers may be eligible for funding. Two applications have been approved and another three are pending as of today. Under the high quality funding, there are about 27 more Providers who were closed on April 30 but may qualify. Mr. Watson noted that there are fewer strings attached to this funding than previous grants. Response has been good for Contracted Providers but not



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

as robust for the non-contracted Providers. Payments are expected to be disbursed starting the last week of July.

V. Old Business

a. SRPA/ QPI/Grow With Me/LENA Update 2020-2021

Currently, the Coalition has 22 Providers that are on a QIP in addition to 22 other Providers that are pending assessment. 12 Providers will be doing Grow With Me/LENA. Notification letters have been sent and the Coaching staff is in the process of creating coaching plans.

b. Provider Rate Changes

The rate change proposal has been submitted to OEL but has not yet been approved. Mr. Watson noted that the proposed rates are the most significant increase in the last eight years. Under the proposal, the infants and toddlers rates would increase to \$35. The Coalition hopes that the higher rates will allow Providers to pay their staff more and that the higher rate of pay will encourage staff retainment.

c. Escambia Children's Trust Update

The Board of County Commissioners approved the Escambia Children's Trust referendum to be placed on the November ballot. The Coalition encourages staff and Providers to promote the Trust with family, friends, and other contacts. If passed, the Trust would generate about ten to fifteen million dollars in funding that the County can use to benefit the children of Escambia County. Trust funds would be unfettered by State and Federal restrictions. Mr. Watson noted that other counties in the state have had great success especially with programs for older children and teens.

d. RDC Committee Chair

The RDC Committee Chair position remains vacant at this time and still needs to be filled.

e. 8th Annual Early Learning Summit

Due to the pandemic, and in all likelihood, the 8th Annual Early Learning Summit will be hosted via Zoom Webinar as opposed to a live, in person, seminar. The anticipated date of the summit is likely to be in late August or the first few weeks of September. During the webinar the movie, "No Small Matter," will be aired. Ms. Pugh noted that other Coalitions have screened the movie to targeted audiences such as teacher's unions and pediatricians.

VI. New Business

a. CARES Program

Mr. Watson noted that about \$700,000 dollars in CARES funding is anticipated to be disbursed to contracted Providers in the coming weeks. He noted that the response rate for non-contracted Providers is expected to be much lower than the response rate for contracted Providers.



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

b. Other COVID Issues

i. Provider payments for all enrollments

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 were originally scheduled to end on July 31, but have been extended and will now end on August 31.

ii. Parent Fee Waivers

Waivers for Parent Co-Payments (Parent Fees) and Eligibility Redeterminations have been extended and the Coalition will cover the fees.

iii. SRPA, Monitoring, ASQ, TSG Waivers

At this time, SRPA, Monitoring, ASQ, and TSG requirements have all been waived and site visits are not being conducted. The Coalition has notified Providers that the Ages and Stages Questionnaires need to be completed starting August 1. Providers are also welcome to do TSG if they want the additional 5% rate incentive.

iv. 2020-2021 Contracts

So far, the Coalition has signed about 15 to 20 VPK contracts for the upcoming fiscal year. SR and VPK Contract Briefings will be conducted via virtual means later today and SR only will be conducted on Thursday. The Coalition may move forward for SR contracts for those Providers who had an SRPA last year. Providers who do not have an SRPA for last year will be required to complete the process before a 2020-2021 contract can be signed. The Coalition and Providers face challenges with this process due to the ongoing pandemic crisis and related constraints.

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.

vi. First Responder and Health Care Worker Child Care (Enrollments end July 31)

New enrollments for the First Responder program end on July 31. Care for those who enroll during the month of July will end in October. Once care under the program ends, program eligibility evaluations will be performed and services for interested parents who are eligible will be recategorized accordingly.

vi. Provider COVID-19 Mini-Grants and Learning Stipends (Ended June 30)

This agenda item was not discussed.



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

c. Department of Health Medical Support Services Contract

The DOH Medical Support Services Contract for this fiscal year has changed. Via mutual agreement with the DOH, the Coalition has revised the contract to only provide a nurse, and not a medical support technician. The Coalition decided to make the medical support technician a staff position. Mr. Watson noted that the staffing change would not cause much of a difference to the Coalition budget. The Coalition also reached a milestone last week when the DOH gave approval for the Medical Support Services nurses to be a point of contact to answer COVID19-related questions Providers may have.

d. Provider Support for Virtual or Remote School Age Learning

Since no Providers were in attendance at the meeting, an in depth discussion of this agenda item was not held. The Coalition recently received guidance from the School District regarding the differences between Traditional, versus Remote, versus Virtual learning methods. Of the three methods, Remote classes would pose the greatest challenges and may not be entirely feasible for all Providers.

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

No representative was available to report.

d. DCF Regulation

There were no DCF updates to report but Ms. Strumeyer asked about call volume at the Coalition for questions related to the Pandemic. Mr. Watson indicated that the Coalition is working with one Provider staff member who retested positive after recovering from her first positive test. Current CDC guidance indicates that workers may return to work ten days post illness however, the DOH guidance would not allow her to return to work based upon the positive results from the retest. Ms. Strumeyer indicated that DCF will hold a Provider meeting via webinar on August 11. During the meeting, the new rule for Providers in Circuit One will be discussed. Sessions will be held at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. and invitations will be routed next week. At this time, Providers are greatly appreciating contact with, support from, and open lines of communication with the DCF. At this time, DCF is only conducting site visits for renewals and for complaints. Unfortunately, some Providers have not been forthcoming regarding the health of their staff members. In one case, after thirty minutes of working with the Provider's staff member, the staff member divulged to the DCF Counselor that they were not feeling well that day and that they intended to get tested.



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

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 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.

e. 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