



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

RDC Committee Meeting Minutes

November 19, 2019 10:00 a.m.

Members in Attendance

Mary Ann Winstead (Co-Chair)	Roger Thompson (Co-Chair)	Cindy Kirk
Hitomi Wright	Sharmaine Lillestan	Debi tucker
Brenda Hardy	Kim Krupa	Aisha Adkison

Members Called In

Andretta Malden	Jenny Reed	Kimberly Corner
Sheila Brown		

Staff

Bruce Watson	Vicki Pugh	Jamie Phelps
Christy Zukowski	Melissa Stankard	Melissa Jennings

Public

Leah Harrison

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 October 31, 2019 and sent to the Pensacola New Journal on October 28, 2019. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Ms. Winstead. Upon a motion made by Ms. Hardy and seconded by Ms. Kirk, the Agenda was accepted and approved without objection.

II. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

III. Approval of Minutes for September 26, 2019

Upon a motion made by Ms. Hardy and seconded by Ms. Wright, the Minutes of the September 26, 2019 meeting was accepted and approved without objection.

IV. Program Reports

a. Nursing Services Report

Ms. Tucker reported that the Coalition Medical Support team conducted 404 vision screenings with 17 referrals and 420 hearing screenings with 19 referrals in September. In October the team conducted 347 vision screenings with 23 referrals and 378 hearing screenings with 29 referrals. There were 546 children served in September and 618 children served in October bringing the year to date total to 1,288 children served. There were 23 site visits in September and 25 in October bringing the year to date site visits conducted to 56. Two CPR and First Aid classes were conducted in September. One Adult and Pediatric CPR class and one First Aid class were conducted in October. Two Client Satisfaction Surveys were received in both September and in October all with positive comments. Mr. Watson reiterated that there was a recent change in the



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

Coalition Medical Support team staff and that the new med tech, Ms. Ella Brown, is working out very well. He thanked the team for their contributions to the Coalition mission, praised Ms. Brown's contributions to the team, and encouraged DOH to transition Ms. Brown to regular staff from her current OPS position.

b. CCR&R Update

In the month of September there were 111 CCR&R interviews conducted with 87 new interviews and 24 repeat interviews. In October there were 106 CCR&R interviews conducted with 88 new interview and 18 repeat interviews. Total interviews conducted year to date are 359 with 296 new and 63 repeat interviews. Most parents seeking care is due to employment or job search issues. Most children in need of care are school age children. Ms. Stankard noted that there was a rise in infants earlier this summer, but the number has gone down since then. She further noted that parents coming off the waiting list are allowed thirty days to find care and that the Coalition provides support to parents who are seeking care for their children.

The CCR&R lobby was set with a Falling in Love with Learning theme for fall. The focus of the fall theme is Math and a Math wall was added for addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. A pumpkin pie craft was created and used as an example. Instructions on how to create the craft were included in bags along with books for the children visiting the office. Window 1 was set as a Dramatic play area with food as the theme. Play food items have been placed in the area for children to play with and the hope is that children will play together. Window 2, the Weekly Focus Board, features sight words, numbers, and letters. Window 3 features Community information regarding events and holiday giveaways, etc. The topic of Window 4, the Teacher/Parent Board, is Responsibility, and displays sample daily checklist and chore cards for children. Children's chore cards were also given to parents so they may use them at home. In addition, Interactive Sensory Boards have been placed in the lobby, in the ES's office, and in the Computer Room.

Ms. Jennings noted that the Coalition purchased a new rug and a new table and chairs which have been placed in the lobby. The rug has bright colors and has letters, numbers, and shapes. Coalition staff have seen a great improvement of interactive play since the new items have been added to the lobby. Staff members have observed more adults interacting with the children and more children interacting with each other. In addition to meeting the Coalition's goal of encouraging greater interaction, the atmosphere in the lobby has become much quieter and calmer.

c. Program Support Summary

Ms. Zukowski reported that child assessments have begun and that the Coalition is working with the Preschool Development Grant. A training on the use of new devices from HATCH will be held on December 7, 2019. Providers who are participating in Grow With Me have been invited and will be issued iPads loaded with the HATCH application for their three and four-year-old classrooms. Children will be encouraged to use the HATCH app for roughly fifteen minutes a session a couple of times a week. In addition, to providing interactive learning the app correlates



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

the child's behavior into observations the teachers can use to improve learning methods and goals. Additional training was also offered for infant, toddler, and two-year old teachers, as well as PreK. Training has been provided on how to do lesson plans and conduct observations. 285 children in the GRTR (Get Ready to Read) program have been screened year to date in 12 programs.

Other Program Support highlights include:

1. School Readiness Program Assessments are ongoing with 24 assessments conducted year to date.
2. There were three outreach events in September and two in October.
3. 1,940 books were distributed in September and 1,540 books were distributed in October bringing the year-to-date total to 6,485.
4. The Coalition had one Media Unit in the month of September and none in October.
5. Facebook likes increased from 1,034 in September to 1,038 in October.

V. Old Business

a. SR/VPK Status Report and Contract Summary

The Coalition has been unable to sustain SR enrollments over 3,300 which means that slot expenditures each month lag spending goals. In order to spend all funding, enrollments need to increase by about 300 children. However, even if the children were to be enrolled, Providers may not be able to serve an additional 300 children as most Providers are operating at about 75% capacity due to lack of staff. Currently, Providers collectively are only using two thirds of their licensed capacity. The parents of 94 children applied for services this week, but the trend continues that only around 50% of applicants complete the process and enroll their children. Approximately 20% of applicants fail to reply to the various notifications the Coalition sends them, and 25% start the process but never complete it. Mr. Watson stressed that applicants are more than welcome to visit the Coalition office and apply in person if they are disinclined to complete the process online. Since the online application process was implemented, the Coalition has seen a reduction in total SR enrollments of 200-300 children. There was a similar reduction in VPK enrollments four years ago when that programs application process went online.

There are 85 SR Providers and no contracts have been terminated this year. Three new SR Providers are coming onboard in December and a Contract Orientation is being held on November 20, 2019. One new VPK Provider was added this year and VPK capacity far exceeds the number of children. There were no new cases of Fraud to report.

b. SRPA QIP/Grow With Me/LENA Update

Ms. Pugh reported that there are four programs that currently are on a QIP for low SRPA score. Three Programs are on target for completing their improvement plan. One Program chose not to do anything the first half of the year and is now struggling to catch up. The first half of the contract year Providers were expected to take the MMCI course. The second half they must



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

participate in Grow With Me and LENA. Infant/Toddler and Preschool Grow With Me sessions will be offered and Providers not a QIP are encouraged to attend sessions to be held in December. Note was made that attendance is voluntary unless the Provider is on a QIP.

VI. New Business

a. Town Hall Meeting Recap

Mr. Watson conducted two Town Hall Meetings at the end of October and noted that the first session was better attended than the second session. Three subjects were discussed: SRPA, State Mandated Curriculum and SR Match Program.

1. SRPA

For this contract year 20 SRPA's have been conducted. Of the assessments conducted, 13 are of concern. The OEL is in the process of promulgating a new Rule regarding SRPA. If the new Contract Minimum Threshold (CMT) is approved as drafted, eight of the Providers already assessed would be ineligible to contract with the Coalition and five would be at risk and placed on a QIP. To be eligible to continue to contract some of the Providers would have to request a second assessment and achieve a score above the CMT. Statewide data indicated that 75% of Providers scored above 4.0 and 25% scored below 4.0. In conclusion, OEL determined current CMT of 2.5, and QIP cutoff of 3.5, are too low. OEL has proposed for the 2020/2021 contract year, the new CMT will be 3.5, and the QIP cutoff will be 4.0, and for 2021/2022 the CMT will be 4.0 and there will be no QIP cutoff. Last year 57% of Escambia Providers scored between 3 and 4 and another 10% scored below that which means that two thirds of Providers will not meet the proposed minimum standards. Looking ahead, if the proposed minimum standards are approved, Escambia County could lose 20 to 30 Providers which would cause a serious negative impact to capacity. Exemptions can be granted, but only for three years.

2. State Mandated Curriculum

The State has revised the standards for birth to five and conducted a review of commercial curriculum to determine if they meet the new standards. As a result, a new list of approved curricula has been issued and the old editions are no longer acceptable. This is the second time in five years that the State has revised curriculum requirements. All but two of the SR Providers use Creative Curriculum. The second and fifth editions of Creative no longer meet State standards but the third and sixth editions do. In order to remain eligible to contract with the Coalition, Providers will be required to purchase new curriculum before they can contract for 2020/2021. Due to relatively short notice to Providers and considering the cost Providers will incur to purchase the new curriculum, Mr. Watson proposed that the RDC consider forwarding a recommendation to the Executive Committee that the Coalition provide a scholarship to Providers of 50% of the costs. Collectively, the estimated cost to Providers is \$235,000 so the Coalition would pay roughly \$117,000 to help offset the expense of one curriculum per facility per Provider. Providers will be required to submit proof of payment and delivery in order to be reimbursed after they purchase the new curriculum. Upon a motion made by Mr. Thompson and seconded by Ms. Kirk, the proposal to forward a recommendation to the Executive Committee to



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

support a 50% Scholarship to offset Provider cost to purchase the new curriculum was passed without objection.

3. SR Match Program

The new SR Match Program was also discussed during the recent Town Hall Meetings. Mr. Watson announced that the State has completely revamped the Match Funder Program. A copy of the Sliding Fee Scale color coded to identify families eligible for the Match Program was included in the meeting materials. Due to Legislative changes to the Match Funding requirements, Coalitions may now use local funding to provide SR services to families who fall in the 150% FPL to 85% SMI range. The white portion of the chart shows the traditional SR program qualification range. The green portion of the chart shows income the incomes for applicants that may be served with the new funding authorization. The red portion of the chart indicates incomes that exceed limitations and are ineligible for any SR services. When families submit their initial application online, the system provides a notice that applicants may be eligible for local funding if they are ineligible for the traditional SR program. The notice directs applicants to contact their local Coalition to enquire about eligibility for local funding. The Coalition was allocated \$168,934 in State Match Funding. Therefore, the first \$168,934 of local donations expended will be matched. The County grant alone exceeds this amount. The combination of State match, County grant and United Way grant exceeds \$477,000. This is the amount that will be dedicated to serve children whose parents are deemed eligible to receive services using SR Match funding. In total this funding will allow the Coalition to provide services for a year to about 120 to 150 children. Additional children may be served by reclassifying and rotating families in and out of the program. The Coalition called all applicants who were just over 150% and previously deemed ineligible for services to let them know that they are now eligible for services under the new funding. 50 children are already enrolled. Flyers announcing the new funding guidelines were distributed in both English and Spanish.

b. EFS Modernization Transition Refresher Training

For the past month's Provider reimbursement claims, the Coalition kicked back electronic reimbursement submissions that did not match the paper copies that were submitted. Providers have been asked to review their records and revise them so that the two submissions match. The Coalition will make adjustments as part of their reconciliation for the first three months of the year. Based upon the rate of errors in Provider attendance submissions, the Coalition will offer refresher training on using EFS MOD on December 2 and 3. During the training, Providers will be trained by entering attendance for November for their own program.

c. Local Provider Rates and State Market Rates

Bi-annual publication of State Market Rates that were scheduled for publication in 2019 still have not been published. Related to this, discussions are in process at both the OEL and the Legislature regarding increasing Provider rates. Further updates will be forthcoming once the State has put out more information regarding their plans. It is possible that some sort of rate changes may become effective before the end of this fiscal year. Because of ongoing issues with EFS/MOD, any State mandated rate changes will create problems for Coalitions.



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

d. Board and Committee Meeting Schedule 2020

Meetings in 2020 will continue to be held at 10:00 a.m. the third Tuesday of each odd numbered month.

e. DCF Trauma Informed Care Training

DCF has two new Trauma Informed Care courses available online. One course is introductory and shorter in length. The other session is more in depth, geared toward Directors, and is more of a college level course. Practitioners can use the introductory course toward their in-service hours. DCF is partnering with Pensacola State College for the courses. The longer course has five three-hour sessions and involves a heavy load of homework. To date statewide attendance and completion rates have been low.

f. Escambia Children's Trust Update

Progress continues to be made toward promoting establishment of a Children's Services Council in Escambia County and getting the issue on the ballot in 2020. A Call to Action notice has been circulated and donations are being solicited. Mr. and Mrs. Julian MacQueen generously donated a \$10,000-dollar matching gift to the Escambia Children's Trust Campaign to further efforts at exploring establishment of a Children's Services Council. Raw results from a poll of registered voters that was conducted recently indicates a 60% approval rate.

VII. Community Partner Updates

a. Achieve Escambia

Ms. Krupa provided the RDC with copies of Achieve Escambia's Community Report Card. She noted that there are several pages that are relevant to the Early Learning Coalition including Enroll Escambia efforts to enroll eligible children in Head Start, School Readiness, and VPK. About 100 prospective enrollees were contacted and few dozen enrolled for services during the recent campaign which focused heavily on Title 1 eligible families. Planning is moving forward for next year's campaign and a more holistic approach will be implemented. The biggest topic is the Children's Services Council (CSC) initiative. Ms. Krupa noted that Mr. and Mrs. Julian MacQueen donated \$10,000 dollars toward a poll to follow up on the results of a recent survey conducted by the Pensacola Young Professionals (PYP). In the PYP survey 75 to 80% of those polled supported a \$40.00 per year property tax increase to fund a Children's Services Council. Initial data from the new poll shows roughly a 59% approval rate. Prevention messages appear to be working better than activity messages, and child abuse and neglect are really polling high. In general, keeping children, safe, drug free, and protecting them from child abuse is polling high. In every County Commission District, approvals are at least 55%. Additional funding will be required in order to get the initiative on the ballot and even more funding will be needed if there is significant opposition to the CSC. For the initiative to be placed on the ballot, three out of five County Commissioners would need to be in support. Final poll results may be presented to the Commissioners so they may see how voters responded in each of the districts. If the referendum is approved, roughly \$10,500,000 would be generated annually. Mr. Watson noted



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

that St. Lucie almost doubles their funding by using the local money for matching grants. He further noted that St. Lucie cut their teen pregnancy rate in half during the first five years of their CSC. Recidivism rates were also significantly reduced with a corresponding reduction in team crime. Some of St. Lucie's CSC funding went to their Early Learning Coalition to put more children into care. Mr. Watson proposed that if Escambia County approves a CSC, funding would be used to serve families who are outside the scope of SR, such as families who do not have both parents working. Another possible proposal would be to fund Providers who demonstrate high levels of proficiency and agree to pay their Practitioners \$10 to \$11 an hour. The name of the Children's Services Council will be whatever the community decides. It may or may not include the phrase Children's Services Council. One proposal is the Escambia Children's Trust. Leon County is another county that is considering putting a CSC initiative on the ballot next year.

b. ARC Gateway

No representative was available to report.

c. DCF Outreach

No representative was available to report.

d. DCF Regulation

Mr. Thompson reiterated that the DCF update was covered in the discussion of the DCF Trauma Informed Care (TIC) training.

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

No representative was available to report.

f. Florida Association for Infant Mental Health (FAIMH)

No representative was available to report.

g. Gulf Coast Kids House

No representative was available to report.

h. Pensacola State College

Ms. Kirk announced that PSC has held meetings to discuss conducting TIC classes at the Pensacola campus. Ms. Kirk and an Adjunct Professor in the department will be conducting the courses which will be offered as Continuing Education as opposed to Workforce Development. There is a possibility that training may be in place and available as early as January 2020 but final approval is still pending at this time. Mr. Watson indicated that Coalition will most likely offer to offset some of the cost of the course for our Providers. Mr. Thompson noted that TIC courses count towards professional development and not just CEUs. Mr. Watson noted that other Coalitions are considering using TIC Certification to identify and promote public awareness of facilities whose Director holds TIC Certification. The cost of the courses may



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

range from \$300 to \$450 dollars. The Coalition hopes that Directors who complete TIC Directors training will encourage their Practitioners to complete the shorter course.

Ms. Kirk thanked Ms. Pugh for networking and speaking during the campus tour during which a Build A Brain demonstration was conducted. Mr. Watson noted that over the last five to ten years, the Coalition has implemented a number of innovative initiatives to improve quality, some of which were unique to Escambia County, and although there are a some outstanding Providers, unfortunately there has not been a significant rise in overall Provider performance.

i. School District Education Career Academy

Ms. Adkison reported that at the Education Career Pathway Advisory Meeting held on November 13, 2019, students from the Career Academies conducted Tune In - Talk More - Take Turns presentations. Students created and presented promotional materials such as brochures and short Public Service Announcements and one group presented particularly powerful statistical information. The students brought a different perspective to viewing the statistics. Some students indicated that they could relate to *being* the child that educators need to Tune In To. Ms. Adkison extended thanks to Ms. Joyce Griffin and added that she is wonderful and teachers love her. Ms. Adkison also praised the Coalition for their support and scholarships. She indicated that she will be creating a one-page brochure outlining the steps of the scholarship process. Upon successful completion of the program, a ceremony will be held and completion certificates will be issued. Tracking course completion and employment through college graduation will allow for better tracking of successes and challenges.

j. School District VPK

No representative was available to report.

k. Western Panhandle Early Steps

No representative was available to report.

l. ECARE

Mr. Watson introduced Ms. Leah Harrison the new Executive Director of ECARE, Every Child A Reader in Escambia. She was invited as a prospective Resource Development Committee partner. Ms. Harrison indicated that ECARE is working toward getting all their children matched. At this time, about 20 children still need to be matched. Mr. Watson thanked Ms. Harrison for attending and extended the invitation for her to join the RDC.

VIII. Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 11:31 a.m.

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