



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

RDC Committee Meeting Minutes

May 16, 2023, 10:00 a.m.

Committee Members in Attendance

Roger Thompson	Cindy Kirk	Melissa Sidoti
Paul Fetsko	Shanna Robinson	Brenda Hardy

Staff in Attendance

Bruce Watson	Dawn Engel	Nina Daniels
Ella Brown	Melissa Jennings	Darrell Merritt

Providers and Partners in Attendance

Denise Van Atta	Shaunna Bailey	Kathy Van Dyck
Misty Lambeth	Kailey DeVito	Amy Stamey
Dawn McVay	Dominique Baroco	Mercedes Branigan
Kim Edmonds	Victoria Jordan	Juanita Lindsey
Sherrell Thomas	Tonyia Nevins	Andrea Luecht

Public in Attendance

Carol Aghayan

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 May 8, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Mr. Roger Thompson, Committee Chair.

II. Public Comments

None

III. Approval of Agenda and Minutes for March 15, 2022

Upon a motion made by Ms. Kirk and seconded by Ms. Sidoti, the Agenda and the Minutes of the March 21, 2023, meeting were approved without objection.

IV. Community Partner Updates

- a. ARC Gateway
No representative was available to report.
- b. CareerSource ESCAROSA
No representative was available to report.
- c. DCF Regulation



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No representative was available to report.

d. Early Steps

No representative was available to report.

e. Escambia Children's Trust

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

Ms. Stamey stated that April was Child Abuse Prevention month, and it was an extremely busy month. They are now getting ready for the summer and the upcoming school year. May 24, 2023, they will have a No Child Abuse Training that will go from 7:30 – 8:30. For more information on this training, contact Gulf Coast Kids House at 850-595-5800.

h. Head Start

No representative was available to report.

i. Pensacola State College

Ms. Kirk stated online Child Development courses will be offered during Summer sessions B & D. PSC will be adding a new course, Health, Safety and Nutrition for Young Children. This course should be available starting in the Fall. PSC is still working on getting all courses available online.

j. Ready Kids!

No representative was available to report.

k. School District Education Career Academy

No representative was available to report.

l. School District VPK

Ms. Edmonds stated that they are currently enrolling for Summer and Fall VPK classes. Enrollment opened on April 3, 2023. There are currently 339 children enrolled for Fall classes and 10 children are enrolled for Summer School. There are open teacher and teacher assistant vacancies at this time.

V. Program Reports

a. Medical Support Services Report



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Ms. Brown stated that in April there were 158 vision screenings performed, and 11 referrals were made. 173 hearing screenings were performed, and 11 referrals were made. There were also 133 height/weight screenings performed. There were 36 children who fell into the obese/overweight category.

b. CCR&R Update

Ms. Jennings stated that CCR&R has extended calls to parents who are still on the Wait List to check on their status and to see if there are any services that the Coalition may be able to provide while they are on the Wait List. Due to this, the numbers of CCR&R services provided have gone up. The Coalition has implemented 2 more book nooks, one in Cantonment and one in Century. Over 2,000 books were distributed during the month of April. The United Way VITA program has wrapped up for this year.

c. Program Support Summary

Ms. Engel stated that there is a lot of training going on, particularly courses that meet ARPA incentive requirements. All initial School Readiness Program Assessments are done and all VPK Program Assessments have been completed. Annual VPK monitoring is complete and SR monitoring is wrapping up.

d. SR/VPK Status Report and Contract Activity Summary

There are 2,731 children enrolled in the School Readiness Program. Two weeks of children were pulled from the waitlist on April 18, 2023. There are 657 children on the Wait List. To date, there are 1,237 children approved for VPK for the 2023/2024 school year. There are 21 children approved for Summer VPK. More are expected to apply in the coming months, especially this summer. 922 children are currently enrolled in VPK. This number has dropped due to many VPK programs having already ended for this school year.

There are 86 School Readiness providers and 76 VPK providers. SR Contract Briefings for 2023/2024 start next week.

There are a couple of fraud cases undergoing investigation.

VI. Old Business

a. DEL CRRSA Workforce Initiative

The local CRRSA workforce recruitment and retention initiatives are complete. The last part of CRRSA the Coalition was mandated to pay VPK providers who were closed for COVID for those days that they were closed in excess of five days, from two years ago. DEL did the calculations, and the Coalition validated and corrected their work. These payments should be made next week.

b. ARPA Grants



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Around \$1 million will roll over to next year, of which most is a continuation of local workforce initiatives. There will be \$315 million in ARPA Discretionary funds that will become available in July. DEL needs the Coalitions to come up with ways to obligate all this funding between July and September of this year. There will be an ARPA Round 2 final payment in which very little will be required from the Provider. The Providers will receive an email asking to please acknowledge ARPA Round 2 Final Payments. The Providers will be asked if there have been any changes since receiving the Round 2 First Payment. Once the question is answered the final payment will be made. These payments must be completed by June 30, 2023.

c. Program Assessment Scheduling and Contract Activity Summary

All initial School Readiness Program Assessments are done and all VPK Program Assessments have been completed. Annual VPK monitoring is complete and SR monitoring is wrapping up. The Operations Department has an Inclusion/Behavior Specialist retiring on May 18, 2023.

d. Ideas to Improve Child Care Employment Levels

The Resource Development Committee discussed what can be done to assist providers in identifying, hiring, and retaining staff to work in their early learning and care facilities. Although much has been done to financially support providers and help them pay incentives for retention and recruitment, the childcare industry here is suffering from a lack of people willing to work. The Coalition is seeking ideas for how to assist providers in finding more staff. Efforts are being made to improve education opportunities and raise the level of professionalism amongst early learning teachers.

e. Escambia Children's Trust Help Me Grow ITB

The Coalition has elected not to submit a proposal for this program. The Coalition will be willing to work with whichever company ends up being awarded this contract.

VII. New Business

a. Legislative Recap

A Legislative Session Recap is provided and the first item on the list is very positive for SR. There will be a \$100 million increase to SR recurring base funding, for a total of \$889 million. \$77 million was allocated to DEL to be dispersed to the Coalitions. A \$2.6 million increase was added to Help Me Grow statewide. There is a \$20 million increase to VPK funding, which equates to a \$148 increase to VPK BSA per student per year. \$750,000 has been set aside for a Cost of Care Study. There is \$315 million in ARPA discretionary funding for Coalitions and Providers to address local initiatives to meet unique community needs.

b. New Staff

The Coalition has one Inclusion Specialist that will be retiring in two days. The Coalition will be looking for a replacement in the coming days. A new Assessment & Training Specialist has been hired to fill the current open position and the Coalition has increased the number of



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Assessment and Training Specialists by one. One of the new Assessment & Training Specialists has the credentials to be a CDA observer, which now gives the Coalition two CDA observers.

c. Review Hearing

The Review Hearing Committee will be meeting May 25, 2023, at 10:00 am at the request of a Provider whose SR and VPK contracts have been terminated. The Provider persisted in having little to no accountability for who is attending on a day-to-day basis. This Provider has claimed and has been paid for children who no longer attend their program. This lack of accountability is considered a form of fraud by the State. The Provider's contract will be terminated as of June 10, 2023.

d. Provider Representatives to the Coalition Board

Every three years the Coalition solicits a change in the two statutorily required Provider Representatives to the Coalition Board. The Providers make nominations and in turn vote for who they want to represent them. There were very few Providers who participated in the voting process. Ms. Shacondra Primm was selected as the Private Sector Provider Representative and Ms. Tammy Hicks was selected as the Faith-Based Provider Representative. The two selectees will be nominated to the EXCOM for submission to the Board for appointment. The Board will make the final approval for the appointments at the June 8, 2023, meeting.

Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 11:32 a.m.

Next Meeting: July 18, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. at the Early Learning Coalition Office, 1720 West Fairfield Dr. Suite 100/400, Pensacola, Florida 32501