



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

Executive/Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
March 9, 2026, 9:00 a.m.

Members Present

Tammy Hicks (Interim Chair) Mona Jackson Craig Jones

Members Absent

None

Staff

Dawn Engel Nina Daniels Tom Porter
Melissa Jennings Al Henderson

Public

Gemma Torcivia

I. Welcome and Introductions

Notification of the Executive Finance Committee Meeting scheduled for March 9, 2026, was sent to the Pensacola News Journal, and posted to the Coalition Public Calendar Board on March 2, 2026. The meeting was called to order by Ms. Hicks.

II. Public Comments

None.

III. Consent Agenda

Upon a motion made by Mr. Jones and seconded by Ms. Jackson, the Consent Agenda, consisting of the Agenda and Minutes of January 22, 2026, was approved without objection.

IV. Coalition Status Reports

a. Financial Update

Through January, the Coalition spent \$10.7 million of the \$19.4 million SR grant, which is 55.5% of the grant. SR Admin was 1.75%, Non-Direct Services was 15.1% and Quality was 8.7%. VPK Services was \$2.6 million of \$4.8 million which is 53.9%. VPK Admin spending was 2.1%.

b. Enrollment/Wait List Status Report

There are 2,401 children enrolled in the School Readiness Program of which 69 are SRMAT and 16 are SR Plus. 952 are school-age children. There are 87 children on the Wait List.

There are 1,885 children approved for VPK for 2025/26 Program year. 1,436 children are currently enrolled.

c. Contracting and Fraud Summary Report



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There are 87 SR providers and 67 VPK providers.

V. Committee Recommendations

None.

VI. Old Business

a. Revised Employee Handbook

The handbook was brought to the Board for approval but the motion to approve was tabled. The Board wanted the handbook to have a legal review. Ms. Engel stated that DEL writes the policies that Coalitions follow and DEL also reviews the Coalition's Handbook. Ms. Engel also stated that in the time that she has been with the Coalition, a legal review has never been required. Mr. Henderson requested to hold off a little while longer, so he may have enough time to review the handbook.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Jones and seconded by Ms. Jackson, it was approved without objection to delay the approval of the handbook until Mr. Henderson has time to review the handbook.

VII. New Business

a. Updated Fee Waiver Policy

DEL requires an update to the Fee Waiver Policy for Co-Pays for Protective Services families. DEL has 3 Co-Pay options to choose from.

1. Implement the highest parent fee of 85%. Once documentation has been provided, adjust the parent fee accordingly.
2. Set a Common Co-Payment amount.
3. Set the Co-Payment to zero due to no documentation being provided.

The Coalition chose to implement the first option. The revision was made to the Fee Waiver Policy reflecting the Co-Payment change.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Jones and seconded by Ms. Jackson, the updated Fee Waiver Policy was approved without objection to take to the Board for ratification.

b. Executive Director 60 Day Review

Discussions pertaining to Mr. Henderson's 60 Day review were had. The letter for permanent employment needs to be given to Mr. Henderson, so his employee benefits can be started.

Ms. Jackson made the motion for the Chair to sign the letter offering permanent employment and to take it to the board. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. There were no objections to this motion.

c. Retention of Legal Counsel

Gemma Torcivia from TG Law PLLC was present to discuss services that TC Law could offer the Coalition. TG Law currently represents 8 Early Learning Coalitions in Florida.

Mr. Torcivia discussed the following services TC Law could offer:

1. They would be available to attend any meetings as needed.



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2. They would be available to communicate with the Board of Directors of the Coalition, the Executive Director of the Coalition and the Coalition staff regarding legal matters.
3. They can prepare and review all governance documents, contract agreements, policies, procedures, personnel matters and Coalition agenda items.
4. They can provide appropriate training for Coalition staff and Board of Directors as needed pertaining to legal issues, such as Sunshine Laws, etc.

The cost to the Coalition would be \$250/hr. for services rendered by attorneys of the Firm and \$98/hr. for services of paralegals of the firm.

The Agreement can be terminated after providing a 30-day written notice.

Upon a motion made by Ms. Jackson and seconded by Mr. Craig, it was approved without objection to sign the Engagement Letter with TC Law PLLC.

d. Retention of HR Legal Counsel

Mr. Henderson has been in contact with Krizner Group in regards to HR employment law retainer programs.

Mr. Henderson stated that Krizner Group can provide the following services:

1. Krizner group can provide annual HR and Compliance Audit.
2. Krizner Group provides comprehensive reporting.
3. Krizner Group has an Unlimited Employer Hotline where real-time access to legal advice for routine and emergency issues can be found.

Krizner Group has a proposed flat-fee rate of \$6800.00/yr. bill for two installments of \$3400.00 every six months.

Mr. Jones recommends a year of service with the Krizner Group. This recommendation was seconded by Ms. Jackson. The motion passed unanimously.

e. Bruce Watson's Retirement Celebration – Update

Discussions were had pertaining to Mr. Watson's retirement celebration. Ms. Engel quoted the text she received from Mr. Watson: "While I appreciate the offer, the time you had to do this has come and gone. I will not attend anything this long after my departure date."

f. Executive Director's Update

- During Mr. Henderson's first 30 days, he held "Listen and Learn" sessions with individual departments and their staff. In the next 30 days, Mr. Henderson plans to send staff an anonymous survey. The goal is to provide a platform where everyone's voice will be heard.
- The Coalition is looking for ways to get individuals interested in being on the ELC Board. A Facebook post was made to let the public know the Coalition is looking for more members.
- It's time again to recruit for the Provider Representative board position and the Faith-Based Provider Representative position. Ms. Engel has sent emails to the provider to recruit candidates.



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- The number of children pulled from the waiting list has increased. This will help reduce the amount of money that will be returned to the State. The Coalition is working on ways to utilize the funding before the deob must be done.
- Mr. Henderson is hosting a Panhandle Collaboration with neighboring Coalitions on March 24th.

VIII. Audits and Reviews - In Progress

- a. FY 2024-2025 A-133

The Coalition FY 2024-2025 A-133 audit is being conducted by CRI.

- b. 2024-2025 Financial Review

The Financial Review is ongoing.

- c. Desk Review

The Desk Review should begin around the middle of March.

IX. Adjourn: The Meeting was adjourned at 10:33 a.m.

Next Meeting: April 30, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. at the Early Learning Coalition Office, 1720 West Fairfield Dr., Suite 100/400, Pensacola, Florida 32501