

**Arkansas Early Childhood Commission**  
**October 15, 2013**  
**10:00 am**  
**Minutes**

*Members Present:* Barbara Warren, Gene Gregory, Shirley Pulliam, Dr. Kathy Pillow-Price, Debbie Malone, Patricia Lucas, Diane Green, Amy Denton, Ava Coleman, Nicki Hammontree, Dr. Tracy Tucker, and Jackie Dedman

*Members Absent:* Evelyn Bass, Dr. Chad Rodgers, Jody Veit-Edrington, Dr. Haley Vo, Rhonda Ahrent, Janice Dancer, Dr. Glenda Ezell, Marsha Masters, Dr. Jill Fussell, and Marilyn Chambers

**I. Call to Order/Reading of Mission Statement**

Jackie Dedman called the October 2013 meeting of the AECC to order at 10:03 a.m. A quorum of members was present. Jackie Dedman read the mission statement in its entirety.

Jackie Dedman did an ice breaker with the group reminding colleagues that we have to rest periodically to energize the important work.

Jackie Dedman added a few items to the agenda and asked for a motion to accept the agenda with changes. Nicki Hammontree made a motion to accept the agenda changes. Debbie Malone and Barbara Warren seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**II. Approval of Minutes from 7/16/13 Meeting**

Minutes from the July meeting were reviewed. Jackie Dedman asked for a motion to accept the minutes. Gene Gregory made a motion to accept the minutes. Dr. Kathy Pillow-Price seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**III. Standing Committees**

- **Finance Committee**
- **Appeal Panel**
- **Nominating Committee**
- **Better Beginnings Appeal Selection**

Jackie opened the floor for the nominating committee to identify officers of the Nominating Committee for the upcoming year. Ava Coleman, Gene Gregory, Dr. Kathy Pillow-Price, and Nickie

Hammontree agreed to serve as members of this committee. Jackie will send the established committee the calls for the policy and procedures.

Jackie Dedman asked for updates from the remaining committees: Finance, Appeal Panel, and the Better Beginnings Appeal Selection. No updates were given by the commission members.

## **IV. Old Business**

### **Better Beginnings/QRIS**

Jennifer Williams presented on behalf of Micca Burris. Jennifer announced the launch of the new Better Beginnings website and introduced Jason Brown with the Communications Group for a demo of the new website.

Jason shared that the website was launched at the AECA Conference held on October 10, 2013, in Hot Springs. Almost 800 providers attended. A portfolio was handed out to conference participants when they filled out a survey for input on what is helpful and what could be improved on the website. Goal one was to create a resource that providers/parents would come back to more than once. The completed survey will improve the website's content. The website address is still the same (arbetterbeginnings.com). The site was developed with the user in mind. Level 1 providers are able to look at information that pertains solely to them. The website is more than just searching for child care. Developmental Milestones are on the website. The website is designed for mobile devices and is responsive to any screen size. Each page has a "find child care" logo and an e-buzz sign up. The Choosing Child Care Checklist can be found on every page as well. It was the most visited content on the old website. The new website allows the user to fill in the blanks of the checklist and can be emailed to oneself. The launched website is in phase 1. Phase 2 will include additional info. Beautiful pictures are incorporated to engage viewers. State minimum licensing ratios are included as well as national recommendations for ratios. The site will include a "contact us" as well. Items will be routed to the appropriate party to respond. Barbara Warren added that the new site is beautiful. She asked if the new website holds information so that individuals do not have to repopulate data. Jason reported that there is no portal to repopulate information but could be reviewed for addition in future releases.

Two handouts were discussed by Jennifer Williams. The first one was entitled Better Beginnings Report September 2013 and the

second was entitled Licensed Child Care Facilities County by County. Portfolios were given to all commissioners. The Better Beginnings report will be a standing report given at all commission meetings. Jackie Dedman asked if there were any questions. Debbie Malone stated that based on the information, homes appear to need support. Vickie Mathews state that recently the growth to homes in Better Beginnings is actually more than growth to centers based on percentages. Jackie expressed her appreciation for the portfolios on behalf of the commission.

### **Goals and Measurables Update**

Paige Cox reported on the Goals and Measurables. A handout with the AECC/Goals and Measurables was given to all members of the commission. She discussed that the task force is continuing to work on missing information in the document such as timelines. Paige asked for recommendations. She mentioned adding a status column to the document. She also suggested that the document may need to be changed to align with the Race to the Top Grant. Paige noted that the draft will be emailed to commissioners.

### **Policies & Procedures**

The Operational Policies and Procedures were handed out to all commissioners by Jackie Dedman. She reminded all commissioners of the revised document with added changes. She stated no action is needed for the changes because they have already been approved.

### **School Readiness Task Force**

Dr. Tracy Tucker gave an update on the School Readiness Task Force. She attended the committee meeting held on September 16, 2013. The idea of the Kindergarten Readiness Indicators Checklist was explored as being a progression of children's learning. Tracy shared the draft recommendations at the School Readiness Transition Institute held on October 9, 2013. The SR Task Force is comfortable with the accomplished work and has asked for Jackie Dedman and Tonya Williams' approval. Jackie stated that the document will need to be reviewed for Special Education integration. After necessary changes have been included, the commissioners will vote.

### **AR Early Childhood Asset Map Update**

Mark Story introduced UALR staff to present the AR Early Childhood Asset Map. The map will be ready for the public within the next couple of weeks.

Dave Rasmussen? (Check spelling) spoke on the Project Goals, Outline of Site's Services, GIS Features via Google Map, and Map Search. Dave stated the goal was to create a online mapping system map based interface for licensed data sets (SNP, ABC, Child Care Centers, and Licensing). Two audiences will be served. Parents and professionals will be able to search by a number of ways including county, city, zip code, and school district. Strengthening Family Protective Factors are encompassed within the site. The Getting Ready for School Publications Data Sets will be hosted on the webpages. The website for ASSET Mapping is <http://argis.ualr.edu/aecamrg>. Jeffrey Joseph gave a brief overview of the website's features. Driving directions are available and one can filter search by distance or by selecting a county. A user guide with 2-3 minutes videos will be accessible. Mark Story stated that a link for the Asset Mapping will be sent out to all commission members for review. There was a general discussion about additional features and frequency of updates.

### **Licensing Rule Revisions**

Ratha Tracy gave a brief report on the suggestions of the new rule revisions. She gave thanks to the licensing supervisors who have worked on the revisions. Two focus groups we held on August 26, 2013 and August 30, 2013. Questions from the rules and intent came from the focus groups as well as several suggestions for the wording to incorporate. Ratha highlighted the following category revisions: criminal record checks; staff/child ratios; director's education; director's training approved by TAPP, Department of Education, or by the Department of Higher Education; professional development; building requirements for natural gas/propane; carbon monoxide detectors; layout and design of playgrounds (programs will have to define playground zones); general hazards for trampolines or ball pits (will be justified for therapeutic uses); staff health requirements (all staff who have direct contact with children shall receive annual flu immunizations); and a hand washing station for diapering area (existing structures licensed prior to 1/1/14 are exempt). Shirley Pulliam expressed her concern with the cost associated with immunizations. Staff in the Licensing Unit are researching financial impacts for the promulgation process. Five public statewide meeting will be held. Expected completion of promulgation will be sometime in 2014. A copy of the draft revisions will be sent to all commissioners by Ratha.

Debbie Malone asked for clarification of the Fire Department Fire Codes. David Griffin stated that as of January 2013, the new codes will not allow paneling after January 2018. State Fire Marshall Lindsey Williams has asked any homes who may have paneling in

areas where children use plus the primary exit to contact his staff to assess. Better Beginnings grants may be used for any financial cost incurred.

### **Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant**

Tonya Williams gave an update on the submission. The application must be in DC by 4:30 on Wednesday, October 16, 2013. Staff are finalizing the application. She expressed thanks for all the support and collaboration. She is confident with the application which is requesting \$37.5 million for improving the quality of early care and education programs especially publicly funded programs. The following areas are including in the application: alignment of the Early Learning Standards and Common Core into one document for birth-5; formative assessment for publicly funded programs that do not have one; parent engagement, working with Higher Ed for early childhood professionals to obtain a certification, credential or license in early childhood education or child development; distance learning/coaching project for professional development; and a new Kindergarten Entry Assessment to meet all essential domains to replace QUALS Early Learning Inventory which does not meet all domains. The Division had national support for writing, review and editing the application.

Tonya stated that as of October 1, 2013, all newly licensed CCDF programs will have to meet Level 1 Better Beginning requirements to receive funding.

## **V. New Business**

- **Ad Hoc Committee for Professional Development (AECC & Other Partners)**
- **Advisory Committee/Task Force**
  - **Higher Education**
  - **Workforce Knowledge and Competencies**
  - **Career Lattice**
  - **TAPP Registry**

Jackie Dedman stated that the above five items are in the process of being revamped. Jackie asked for a Professional Development Task Force. Debbie Malone, Barbara Warren, and Nickie Hammontree will serve.

### **Health and Nutrition Updates**

Jackie Dedman stated that no updates were given on behalf of William Lackey.

### **Special Education for Preschool Children 3-5/Individuals with Disability Education Improvement Act (I.D.E.A)/Standard-based IEPs for Early Childhood**

Three separate handouts were supplied to the commissioners by Sandra Reifiess. Sandra gave the definition of Special Education. Special Education means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including: instruction conducted in the regular preschool, in the home, in hospitals and in other settings; and speech-language pathology services, or any other related services, such as physical therapy and occupational therapy. Specially-designed instruction is to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency. She stated that the IEP Team will include: parents of the child, a regular education teacher, one special education teacher, a representative of the public agency, an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, other individuals who have knowledge of the child, and the child with the disability. Children at age three are entitled to receive these services where they are located.

Sandra Reifiess addressed the Arkansas Early Childhood Education Framework for 3-4 Year Old Children alignment with the K-12 Academic Standards. She stressed the importance of connecting IEPs to the Early Childhood Benchmark Standards. An analysis is needed to determine the gap between the preschool expectations and the child's current skills/knowledge to develop an IEP. Children are able to transition into Kindergarten more smoothly with having had access to these services.

Barbara Warren expressed that she was a HIPPPY parent. She received services at her Coop for her autistic child who is now ten years old. Her personal testimony reflected what a tremendous job the early childhood education program, HIPPPY Parent Educator, PT/OT, have had on her son and for her family.

## **VI. Other Business**

### **Government Shutdown**

Tonya Williams discussed impact of the shutdown on DCCECE services and other federal early childhood programs. The Child Care Development Fund is ok because it is funded for a three year period. DCCECE has received approval from USDA to utilize 2013 funding in October and also received a transfer of funds that are projected to last for possibly ten days. DCCECE will provide a notice to providers once Mark has a fairly accurate projection of when the funds will be depleted.

## **VII. Summary/Announcements**

### **Library of Congress**

Jackie Dedman reported that Reach Out and Read was awarded the highest Literacy Award. On September 22, 2013, Reach Out and Read was awarded the Library of Congress: David M. Rubenstein \$150,000 Prize. Ann Mary Fitzgerald accepted the award. More than 185 applicants entered. Amy Denton added that Thursday Night (10/17/13), Reach Out and Read will be having an event. Trena Bronson will email all commissioners the details for the event.

### **AR GLRC**

Jackie Dedman stated that by 2020, all children will be able to read on grade level by the end of third grade.

### **Quarterly Special Recognition**

Jackie opened the floor for Commissioners to share special activities and things that they are celebrating. Jackie Dedman introduced Ave Coleman as the new parent representative for the commission. She is married, lives in Jacksonville and has three children. She is familiar with Head Start. Two of her children have attended Head Start. She is a believer in advocating for the involvement of parents.

Jackie Dedman announced that there is a new addition to the family of Nickie Hammontree. She is the proud grandmother of her now five month old granddaughter.

## **VII. Next Meeting**

January 21, 2014 at 10:00 a.m.

## **IX. Request for Adjournment**

Jackie Dedman made a motion to adjourn. Shirley Pulliam accepted and it was seconded by Diane Green at 12:30 p.m. Motion carried and the meeting was adjourned.