

Arkansas Early Childhood Commission Meeting
January 19, 2021 am
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Deborah Mays (Chair), Ryan Clayborn, Tiffany Sharp, Kim Whitman, Dr. Cheri Smith

Members Absent: Staci Croom-Raley, Mark Taylor, Sarah Langley, Senator Will Bond, Representative LeAnne Burch, Jan Stafford

I. Call to Order

Deborah Mays called the AECC Commissioners' Meeting to order on January 19, at 10:00 a.m. Kim Whitman read the AECC's mission statement.

II. Approval of Minutes

Quorum not met at the January 19, 2021 meeting. Motion to approve meeting minutes from October 20, 2020 will be held at the April 20, 2021 meeting.

III. Old Business

1. DCCECE COVID-19 Report: Tonya Williams provided updates regarding the DCCECE's COVID-19 CARES Act funding efforts. The following points were highlighted during the meeting:
 - Tonya congratulated the DCCECE staff for the work completed during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - DCCECE disseminated 41 million dollars in CARES Act Funding in addition to the traditional federal child care block grant funding.
 - Early Childhood Education professionals are in group 1b for COVID-19 vaccine distribution. This category opened on January 18, 2020. Tonya reminded all meeting attendees that the lead agency for vaccine information and distribution is the Arkansas Department of Health. If an early childhood provider has extreme difficulty obtaining a vaccine or vaccine information, notify DCCECE for assistance.
 - **Action Item:** Tonya Williams will share the Arkansas Department of Health COVID-19 Vaccine distribution link with meeting attendees. This action item was completed during the zoom meeting. A follow up email with information will also be sent to commissioners.
 - 849 Children and 1320 Staff Members have tested positive in Early Childhood Education settings since March 2020, with case numbers rising faster over the past two months.
 - Payment claims to providers for December 2020 supplemental payment will be completed this week. Payments to providers for January 1-15, 2021 were issued to providers for all Essential Worker cases currently authorized. When additional federal funds have been received, payment claims to providers will be keyed for January 16-31, 2021 for all currently authorized Essential Worker

cases.

- DCCECE will potentially receive an estimated \$118-\$120 million in funding with this economic stimulus relief package (approximately 3x more than what was received in May 2020).
 - Maintenance payments will be paid, with the new federal relief package funding, to all providers quarterly. The federal partners have suggested, but not mandated, that these funds be used for salary purposes.
 - Tonya provided an update on the CCDF new plan. The plan is still in pre-print.
 - **Action Item:** Tonya will share pre-print with commissioners when available.
2. HSSCO/AHSA Updates: Jackie Govan provided updates on Head Start State Collaboration Office and Arkansas Head Start Association. The following updates were highlighted during the meeting:
- The Head Start State Collaboration Office has been working towards the 5-year renewal. A report is due at the end of this month. 3 new reportable categories have been added: homelessness, COVID, and racial equity.
 - Dr. Bergeron has transitioned out and a new appointment has yet to be made. The Head Start Office has introduced a new position, Family Engagement Specialist, filled by William Scott. Additionally, Head Start has a new TA partnership with positions filled by Cheryl Angel, Amy Ferguson, Tamara Brickley and Tonya May.
 - Head Start programs have been struggling during the pandemic, as all early care and education programs. Programs have had to close entirely or close classrooms due to COVID exposure. Several centers are engaging in mixed virtual/in person or entirely virtual schedules. Due to this set up and COVID a lot of children are falling behind due to lack of consistency; the Head Start State Collaboration Office is looking at initiatives to assist programs.
 - Jackie Govan is working with Paige Cox to analyze what DCCECE contractors are doing regarding racial equity. Currently, Curricula Concepts will be providing professional development on racial equity. Project LAUNCH has funded racial equity brochures to be printed through the Head Start State Collaboration Office. They are in the process of disseminating the brochure order form and brochures across the state. They are still trying to get the “Stepping Up to Racial Equity” program funded. There will be a series of webinars in 2021 with the first being in February and the second in April. The webinars will focus on families and target teachers, administrators, and legislators.
 - Head Start Dates to Remember:
 - School Readiness Summit (Virtual), 03/05/2021
 - Substance Use Summit (Virtual), 04/06/2021
 - Arkansas Head Start Association Conference (Face to Face), 04/6-9/2021 (will likely change to Fall 2021)
 - Arkansas Imagination Library will likely hit 100% of counties served in Arkansas soon. Once Arkansas hits 100%, there will be an opportunity to host Dolly Parton in our state. The Arkansas Imagination Library will

aim to host Dolly Parton sometime in 2022.

3. Better Beginnings Levels 4-6 Update: Dawn Jeffrey provided updates on the new higher levels of Better Beginnings levels 4, 5, and 6. The following points were highlighted during the meeting:

- DCCECE had planned to be farther along, but COVID delayed the progress.
- DCCECE is moving ahead but have simplified the guidelines to make it as easy on providers as possible.
- Action Item: Dawn will send out the latest level Better Beginnings Levels 4-6 Draft

IV. New Business

No New Business

V. Announcements/Action Items

- May is Children's Mental Health Month
- Shine a light on Children's Mental Health in your community
- Action Item: Tonya Williams will share the Arkansas Department of Health COVID-19 Vaccine distribution link with meeting attendees. This action item was competed during the zoom meeting. A follow up email with information will also be sent to commissioners.
- Action Item: Tonya will share pre-print with commissioners
- Action Item: Dawn will send out the latest level Better Beginnings Levels 4-6 Draft

VI. Adjournment

Deborah Mays adjourned the meeting at 10:42 a.m.

VII. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held April 20, 2021. Location to be determined.