

# Arkansas Early Childhood Commission (AECC) Meeting

October 19, 2021

## Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Deborah (Debbie) Mays (Chair), Mark Taylor, Jan Stafford, Kim Whitman Dr. Cheri Smith, Tiffany Sharp

Members Absent: Senator David Wallace; Representative Megan Godfrey; Ryan Clayborn; Sarah Langley

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### I. Call to Order

Deborah Mays called the AECC Commissioners Meeting to order October 19, 2021, at 10:13a.m.

Jan Stafford read the AECC's Mission Statement. Tonya Williams introduced Rep. Megan Godfrey. She serves in the House Committee on Education. Her term expires August of 2024.

### II. Approval of Minutes

Deborah Mays requested a motion for approval of the July 20, 2021 meeting minutes. Mark Taylor motioned to approve, Kim Whitman seconded the motion, none opposed.

### III. Old Business

- DCCECE Commission Report: Tonya Williams provided updates regarding the DCCECE's COVID-19 CRSSA funding:
  - About \$97 million/\$119 million received in December has been expended for maintenance, supplemental, deep cleaning and child care assistance for essential workers
  - We're working on implementation of ARPA funding.
  - For those who have programs, make sure you receive the email invite about Operational applications. Programs will set up user information in a portal to apply and submit the application. This is a required federal application.
  - There will be one more supplemental payment from CRSSA funds. It will be for the full month of September which will complete the supplemental payments.
  - There are over 12,000 families receiving essential workers child care assistance keyed through October 31 that are being extended with ARPA funds until April 30.
  - A meeting was held last week regarding developing a suggested salary schedule for child care and early childhood programs in AR. A follow-up meeting will be held November 3, 2021. The salary schedule will be suggested schedule, not a mandate.
- 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:
  - Federal proposal for Universal Pre-K: Looking at a mixed delivery system focused on equity and access to quality.
  - In January 2022, will serve as new NHSA on their national board from Region 6 and also for Arkansas.
  - Held a successful state conference with Cvent.
  - Fatherhood Mentoring Program: January 2022, will begin virtual sessions with Central High School. Beginning January 2022, plan to get back on schedule (October – April).
  - Dad's Reading on The Carpet will be touring throughout the state.

- Pre School Inclusion: Working on indicators for disability services to children across the state. Once it's completed, there will be a document to share with everyone.
- Homelessness in AR: Working with Jessica Hickman to include birth to 5 in the database, so they can receive Early Head Start services.
- Dolly Parton is coming to Arkansas in 2022. A PSA was just completed. A date has not been confirmed.
- Six Degrees to Racial Equity in Early Childhood: Five of the six have been completed. The Sixth Six Degree Summit will be in December and will be with legislators. All data is being analyzed to share with legislators.
- School Readiness Summit will occur on November 4, 2022.
- On September 27, 2022 there will be a summit on Opioid and Substance Misuse with regional states.
- Family Child Care Network Updates: Elizabeth Scudder provided updates regarding Arkansas's Family Child Care Network. The following points were highlighted during the meeting:
  - Met with advisory council last week.
  - Working diligently with AState partners and Child Care Aware to move programs to Level 2.
  - In last quarter, have helped 9 providers to become licensed.
  - New provider in Stone County is working to become licensed family home.
  - A lot of training is happening. Providers love in-home quality training via Zoom.
- ARPA Updates/Stabilization Grant: Tom Sheppard provided updates regarding American Rescue Plan Act Updates/Stabilization Grant. The following points were highlighted during the meeting:
  - Visited with all Child Care Aware last week. Did training on how to access the grant.
  - The Operational grant application has been open just over a week with approximately \$40 million set aside to fund operational payments.
  - As of yesterday morning, there were 690 registered users.
  - As of today, 265 have submitted their application and there are 400 working on applications.
  - About \$8 million in grants that have been submitted or is being worked on.
  - Going to Batesville this week to meet with Chamber of Commerce/Excel By Eight
  - Next round of grants will be the Quality Grant and a \$175 million will be opened up in November for grant payments.
  - Expansion Grant will open up in December.
  - Supply Building, which is a competitive grant, is scheduled to be released in the early part of 2022.
  - There is a 30-day approval process. Payments will be made to the account on file. The approval process for the Quality Grant will take a little longer because of having to work with Better Beginnings and Child Care Aware teams. Budgets submitted for grants must be confirmed that they will help get from Level 1 to Level 2. If a program that is receiving vouchers is not at Level 2 by June 30, 2022, their funding will cease.
  - Laura Webb: Providers are asked to make sure their address and bank account information is updated. This will prevent payment delays.
- TEACH Scholarship Program Update: Paul Lazenby provided updates regarding the AECA TEACH Scholarship Program. The following points were highlighted:
  - Of total recipients this last year, about a third of those are in infant/toddler classrooms.

- One family child care provider graduated with her associate degree this summer.
- Subsidy program will be a priority for TEACH going forward.
- About two thirds of recipients, who work in programs, who take vouchers.
- In 2020, average GPA was 3.4. The average age of students is 35.
- During pandemic Arkansas GPAs went up.
- Recipients completed an average of 13 hours. In 2019, 8 hours were completed.
- In addition to Associate of Applied Science, Technical Certificate was added which is a 30-hour program. The Certificate of Proficiency was also added.
- Expanded eligibility to include directors. Directors are now eligible to apply for TEACH scholarship.
- Two institutions added: ASU Beebe and ASU Newport.
- \$140 million in ARPA funding has been approved for TEACH.
- Currently hiring counseling staff to help with applications and outreach.
- Spring 2022 adding additional degrees, looking at first entrance into four year degrees. Birth To Kindergarten online at Harding University has been approved.
- Expansion Funding: Altering benefits to help both provider and recipient, increasing amount for release time from \$11/hr to \$12.50/hr starting Spring 2022. Travel stipend has increased from \$80 to \$110.
- Compensation: Plans to transition from bonus structure in TEACH to a permanent wage increase.

#### **IV. New Business**

- NEA Diaper Bank:
  - Tiffany Sharp: Allie Hall started a nonprofit that provides diapers to those in need.
  - They collect diapers of all sizes and brands.
  - They collect wipes as well.
  - They have some diaper drives coming up.

#### **V. Announcements/Action Items**

- None submitted

#### **VI. Adjournment**

Deborah Mays Adjourned the meeting at 11:10a.m.

#### **VII. Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held January 18, 2022. Location to be determined.