

# Arkansas Early Childhood Commission (AECC) Meeting

July 20, 2021

## Meeting Minutes

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

Members Absent: Senator David Wallace, Representative LeAnn Burch

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### I. Call to Order

Deborah Mays called the AECC Commissioners Meeting to order July 20, 2021, at 10:05a.m.

Deborah Mays read the AECC's Mission Statement.

### II. Approval of Minutes

Deborah Mays requested a motion for approval of the January 19, 2021, and April 20, 2021, meeting minutes. Mark Taylor motioned to approve, Jan Stafford seconded the motion, none opposed.

### III. Old Business

- Nominating Committee: Kim Whitman and Dr. Cheri Smith volunteered to serve as the Nominating Committee to appoint the next AECC Chair for FY 2022.
- Finance Committee: Laura Webb (DCCECE CFO) explained the role of the Finance Committee and asked for two Commissioners to volunteer to serve on the committee for FY 2022. Jan Stafford and Mark Taylor volunteered.
- Chair Selection: The Nominating Committee met prior to the Commission Meeting and selected to nominate Deborah (Debbie) Mays to serve a second year as Chair of the AECC. Dr. Cheri Smith motioned to approve, Mark Taylor seconded, none opposed. Debbie Mays will serve as the Chair for FY 2022.
- DCCECE Commission Report: Tonya Williams provided updates regarding the DCCECE's COVID-19 CRSSA and American Rescue Plan Act funding efforts. The following points were highlighted during the meeting:
  - Several programs have reached out to DCCECE regarding the recent surge in COVID-19 cases. At this time, DCCECE has not received any information on the reinstatement of previous COVID-19 requirements for child care programs.
  - The 3rd Maintenance Payment will be processed in August and the 4<sup>th</sup> payment will be processed in October. These two payments will be the last Maintenance Payments.
  - Supplemental Payments will continue until the new Child Care Development Fund rates are instated in September.
  - DCCECE still has funding to cover Deep Cleaning if a facility has a staff member or student with a positive COVID-19 case.
  - As of July 19, 2021, DCCECE has spent half of the CRSSA Funding. DCCECE received legislative approval to spend the remaining CRSSA Funding.
  - DCCECE is finalizing the American Rescue Plan Act Proposal to submit to state legislators in September 2021. DCCECE will notify Commissioners, providers, and contracted partners once a proposal has been approved.

- **Action Item:** Tonya Williams will post the (child care coverage gaps across the State of Arkansas) maps on the DCCECE Website.
- DCCECE Asst. Director of Licensing, Ashelyn Abney, has resigned and her last day is July 23, 2021.
- **Action Item:** Tonya Williams will send the new proposed CCDF Rate Structure to Commissioners.
- Currently, 6 counties are not serving Essential Worker families.
- **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:
  - Arkansas did not receive any additional EHS-CCP funding.
  - Cheryl Angell, Systems Specialist with the Dallas Regional Office, introduced herself and gave an overview of the initiatives she supports.
  - The National Head Start System is gearing up for re-authorization. Head Start is looking to expand their reach across the country.
  - Head Start is reviewing and will be updating their eligibility standards (including the possibility of incorporating SNAP eligibility).
  - AHSSCO submitted the mid-year report.
  - AHSSCO received a quote from the Arkansas Research Center on conducting a Head Start Longitudinal Study.
  - The Arkansas Institute is upcoming in August 2021. The Head Start Board will be voting to decide if it will be virtual or in-person.
  - The Opioid/Substance Abuse and 6 Degrees to Racial Equity initiatives are going well.
  - **Action Item:** Jackie Govan will send out a meeting invite for an October 4th meeting to discuss racial equity.
  - **Action Item:** Jackie Govan will send out flyers for upcoming meetings and trainings.
  - The School Readiness Teams will be using “Unpacking the Pyramid Model: A practical guide for Preschool Teachers.” For the School Readiness Summit this year.
  - Head Start programs in Arkansas have all identified a homeless liaison to work with the school district’s McKinney Vento specialists.
- **Family Child Care Network Updates:** Elizabeth Scudder provided updates regarding Arkansas’s Family Child Care Network. The following points were highlighted during the meeting:
  - 14 Arkansans represented the state at the National Family Child Care Conference.
  - The National Accreditation Pilot project is halfway to completion.
  - Currently, they have 136 signed MOUs/members of the Family Child Care Network.
  - FCCN will be providing the Strengthening Families training in August and it is fully enrolled with a waitlist.
  - FCCN will be working with ASU to assist home providers in moving up in Better Beginnings levels.

#### IV. New Business

- **Project ARISE Updates:** Rachel Machen presented on the 2 Arkansas centered COVID studies conducted by SRI International and NCCP as part of the national child care research partnership grant program.
  - **Action Item:** Rachel Machen will send both Project ARISE studies to the Commissioners.

- TEACH Scholarship Program Update: Paul Lazenby provided updates regarding the AECA TEACH Scholarship Program. The following points were highlighted:
  - Program is gearing up to process fall charge approvals for tuition and fees
  - Maintained enrollment of 55 (with a waitlist)
  - Received two smaller grants from the Arkansas Community Foundation (\$50,000 and \$110,000)
  - Added a full-time administrative assistant (Misty Butler)
  - Looking to hire another TEACH counsellor in Fall 2021
- CCDF Salary Schedule: Tonya Williams requested volunteers to meet and review potential CCDF Salary Schedules for Arkansas. Meetings will be virtual. The following individuals volunteered:
  - Jamie Ward
  - Lori Bridges
  - Robin Slaton
  - Tiffany Sharp
  - Dr. Cheri Smith
  - Deborah Mays
  - Dina Ford
  - Paul Lazenby
  - Jackie Govan
  - Debbie Malone
  - Danita Pitts

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

- Head Start Regional Conference – August 3-5, 2021
- Early Head Start Partnership Quarterly Meeting – September 2021
- Head Start Homelessness Meeting – October 8, 2021
- School Readiness Summit – November 4, 2021
- Powerful Conversations with Fathers – February, June, and October 2022
- Opioid and Substance Abuse Meeting – September 27, 2021
- Public Comments were provided by three Early Childhood Education providers in Arkansas. See details below:
  - Robin Slaton: Ms. Slayton expressed her dissatisfaction with the 15% copay cap in the new CCDF State Plan. Additionally, Ms. Slayton expressed it was difficult to obtain and keep qualified staff.
  - Sonia Keith: Ms. Keith echoed the concerns stated by Ms. Slayton. Additionally, Ms. Ford suggested an alternative compliance process for facilities on the 15% copay cap.
  - Ryan Clayborn: Asked for and received clarification on the CCDF absentee day policy.
  - Dina Ford: Ms. Ford read a prepared statement. Ms. Ford echoed the concerns raised by Ms. Slayton on the 15% copay cap.
- **Action Item:** Tonya Williams will post the (child care coverage gaps across the State of Arkansas) maps on the DCCECE Website.
- **Action Item:** Tonya Williams will send the new proposed CCDF Rate Structure to Commissioners.
- **Action Item:** Jackie Govan will send out a meeting invite for and October 4th meeting to discuss racial equity.
- **Action Item:** Jackie Govan will send out flyers for upcoming meetings and trainings.

- **Action Item:** Rachel Machen will send both Project ARISE studies to the Commissioners.

## **VI. Adjournment**

Deborah Mays Adjourned the meeting at 11:50a.m.

## **VII. Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held October 19, 2021. Location to be determined.