

Arkansas Early Childhood Commission Meeting
July 21, 2020
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Deborah Mays (Chair), Ryan Clayborn, Staci Croom-Raley, Mark Taylor, Tiffany Sharp, Kim Whitman, Dr. Cheri Smith, Representative LeAnne Burch, Jan Stafford

Members Absent: Sarah Langley, Senator Will Bond

I. Call to Order

Deborah Mays called the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission (AECC) Meeting to order on July 21, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. Deborah Mays read the mission statement. All guests attending the meeting introduced themselves in the Zoom chat.

II. Approval of Minutes

Deborah Mays asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the January 21, 2020 meeting. A motion was made by Kim Whitman and seconded by Stacy Croom-Raley. The motion carried.

III. Old Business

1. Nominating Committee Selection: Deborah Mays requested two Commissioners volunteer for the Chair Nominating Committee. Kim Whitman and Tiffany Sharp volunteered. They exchanged phone numbers to discuss the chair candidate selection.
2. Finance Committee Selection: Deborah Mays requested two Commissioners volunteer for the Finance Committee. The purpose of this committee is to review and approve guaranteed loan requests submitted to the DCCECE. Jan Stafford and Dr. Cheri Smith volunteered.
3. Chair Selection: Kim Whitman motioned to nominate Deborah Mays as the Chairperson; Tiffany Sharp seconded the motion. All in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.
4. AECC Goals and Strategic Plan: The updated AECC Goals and Strategic Plan document was sent via email. The updated document included the suggested changes that were proposed during the January 2020 meeting. A full discussion on updating the AECC Goals and Strategic Plan will be held during the October 2020 meeting. Deborah Mays asked for clarification regarding pg. 4 of the document under the goal of reaching unregulated care providers. It was noted by Tonya Williams the primary strategy will be to provide resources and an open line of communication to unregulated providers and family homes. Tonya Williams stated, should a Commissioner or DCCECE employee become aware of an unregulated provider that is operating outside of the law or under questionable circumstances, then DCCECE needs to be notified and action taken.
Action Item: Tonya Williams will follow up with Deborah Mays on concerns regarding unregulated providers in the Northwest Arkansas region.

IV. New Business

1. Welcome: Tonya Williams welcomed and introduced the following new commission members. Mark Taylor, Superintendent (Hector School District); Jan Stafford, Teacher's Pet in North Little Rock; Tiffany Sharp, Parent/Provider (Brookland, AR); Dr. Cheri Smith, Council of the Deans.
2. DCCECE COVID-19 Report: Many DCCECE licensed programs have remained open during the COVID 19 pandemic except programs associated with school districts. Presently, 1614 programs are currently open and providing services. The following points were highlighted during the meeting:
 - The DCCECE is conducting bi-weekly provider calls, that started at the end of March. Per the suggestion of Representative/Commissioner LeAnne Burch some calls have been recorded and placed on the DCCECE website.
 - DCCECE is working with the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) regarding communicable diseases including COVID-19. This is a normal process for any type of communicable disease in a licensed facility. New requirements have been put into place to protect providers and children. Some of the requirements include: pre-screening children and staff, limiting the number of people inside of the facility, limiting the number of children and staff in one room together, and outdoor pickup/drop off.
 - Since March 2020 through present 78 children in licensed child care facilities have been diagnosed positive for COVID-19 and 80 staff members. Numbers have increased in June and July 2020. The spread is even among the 5 regions.
 - DCCECE received 41 million additional dollars specific to COVID-19 from the Child Care Development Fund. This includes: child care assistance for essential workers (1372 families approved, 1900 applications received); cleaning and maintenance funds to purchase cleaning supplies and PPE; supplementing subsidy payments to pay a higher rate (scheduled through August and will be re-evaluated at that time); and deep cleaning/sanitation funds if there is a positive case in a licensed child care facility.
3. HSSCO/AHSA Updates: Jackie Govan stated that the Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO) and Arkansas Head Start Association (AHSA) are updating their strategic plans in 2020. The following updates were presented during the meeting:
 - Arkansas Head Start Association (AHSA) is in the process of revamping it's 5-year grant. Information has been received from 96% of facilities. Once this update is complete Jackie Govan will share it with the commission.
 - The Head Start Office has been doing research on classroom safety. Head Start was approved through CARES Act Funding to purchase air purifying systems for their classrooms. The product is approved by FEMA.
 - Head Start has put guidelines and plans into place should a facility have an outbreak.
 - The Arkansas Head Start Association Conference has been moved to the week of April 6, 2021.
 - The School Readiness Summit is still scheduled on November 20, 2020, but subject to change if needed.
 - Jackie Govan is working to get funding for "Stepping Up for Racial Equity in Arkansas," a program that looks at implicit bias and microaggressions in the classroom as well as

policies and procedures.

- The Fatherhood Initiative Mentorship program and “Dads Reading on the Carpet” events have been placed on hold during COVID-19.
- “The Letter People” will be premiering on YouTube with content for children and families to promote connection and literacy.

Action Item: Jackie Govan will send out the information on the air purifying system to Sara Norwood.

Action Item: Jackie Govan will provide the flyer when “The Letter People” is scheduled to premiere.

4. TEACH Update: Paul Lazenby presented on the FY 2020 report provided to commissioners.

The following items were presented during the meeting:

- TEACH has grown from 16 to 50 recipients
- Based on the current TEACH budget, 55 applicants can be funded.
- TEACH is on track for an over 90% obligation rate of funding.
- Two institutions are offering online programs (NWACC and UAFS)
- During the Spring Semester TEACH recipients completed 108 total credit hours with an average GPA of 3.36.
- All regions of the state had at least 1 TEACH recipient.
- TEACH had at least one recipient enrolled at six out of the seven partnering institutions.
- Better Beginnings Level 1 and Level 3 child care providers are participating at a higher rate than other levels in the TEACH program.
- TEACH expects the Better Beginnings Level 1 programs to grow and work towards a higher level to align with Child Care Development Fund standards.
- Three family child care homes are participating in TEACH, 46% of recipients work with preschool aged children, and 42% work with infants and toddlers.
- TEACH provided recipients additional funds to help with internet and technology needs when institutions converted to online learning due to COVID-19.
- The national TEACH organization waived the work requirement of 30 hours if an employee was furloughed or laid off. This flexibility will continue into the fall only requiring recipients to work 20 hours per week instead of 30.
- TEACH offered additional incentives to recipients during the summer to encourage continued education.

5. Family Child Care Network: Elizabeth Scudder presented an update on the Family Child Care Network. Arkansas has worked for 2 years to establish a Family Child Care Network and as of 2020 this initiative has come to fruition. The following items were presented as a part of their presentation:

- Elizabeth Scudder has been named the advisor for the Family Child Care Network.
- This is the pilot year for the network. Goals set for year (3): increase the number of licensed and registered family homes; improve the overall quality; and increase the number of infants and toddlers served.
- The Family Child Care Network will be creating a database of Family Child Care information and the DCCECE will assist in gathering and submitted data.

- The Family Child Care Network will focus on strategies to build relationships with unregulated providers to assist in gathering resources, implementing best practices, or becoming registered if the need arises.
- Staci Croom-Raley noted that HIPPY has a Home-Based Care Curriculum and is looking for pilot programs.

Action Item: Staci Croom-Raley will partner with Elizabeth Scudder and the Family Child Care Network on the HIPPY Home-Based Care Curriculum Pilot project.

V. Announcements/Action Items

- **Action Item:** Tonya Williams will follow up with Deborah Mays on concerns regarding unregulated providers in the Northwest Arkansas region.
- **Action Item:** Jackie Govan will send out the information on the air purifying system to Sara Norwood.
- **Action Item:** Jackie Govan will send out flyer when “The Letter People” is scheduled to premiere.
- **Action Item:** Staci Croom-Raley will partner with Elizabeth Scudder and the Family Child Care Network on the HIPPY Home-Based Care Curriculum Pilot project.
- **Announcement:** Arkansas Early Childhood Association Virtual Conference in October 2020
- **Announcement:** DCCECE Provider Call on July 28, 2020 (Every two weeks- Tuesday at 10am)
- **Announcement:** Family Childcare Network Call on July 28, 2020
- **Announcement:** Payroll Protection Program (PPP) extended. For all questions relating to PPP or Communities Unlimited contact Jamie Ward.

VI. Adjournment

Deborah Mays asked for a motion to adjourn. Kim Whitman made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Jan Stafford. The motion carried, and the meeting adjourned at 11:11 a.m.

VII. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held October 20, 2020. The location is to be determined.