

# Arkansas Early Childhood Commission (AECC) Meeting

April 15, 2025

## Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Deborah (Debbie) Mays, Tyra Greenwood, Rep. Denise Garner, Dr. Shelli Henehan, Dr. Jason Williams, Haley Sisson, Lorrie McClure, Cathie Riggins (proxy for Senator English)

Members Absent: Senator Greg Leding

---

### I. Call to Order

Tonya Williams called the AECC Commissioner's Meeting to order on April 15, 2025, at 10:08 a.m. Tonya Williams read the AECC's mission statement. Tonya Williams welcomed the following new Commissioners to the AR Early Childhood Commission: Lorrie McClure, Haley Sisson and Dr. Jason Williams and opened the floor for introductions.

- II. **Approval of Minutes** - A motion was made by Debbie Mays to approve the October 15, 2024 meeting minutes. Rep. Denise Garner seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting minutes were approved.

### III. Old Business

- HSSCO/AHSA Updates: Jackie Govan provided the following information regarding Head Start:
  - Approx. 9,000 children are served in the state of Arkansas from birth to 5
  - 19 programs go through designation renewal
  - 2 programs have closed
  - The new administration has closed 5 of the 10 programs
  - According to USA Today, so far, in the president's budget there are zero funds for head start.
  - Imagination Library: A homecoming is planned for June.
  - Arkansas Fatherhood Initiative is scheduled for May 13, 2025. Rep. Jeremy Woolridge will share pros and cons of being a great father.
  - Celebrating 60 years of Head Start - The conference will be held June 22-24, 2025.
  - School Readiness Summit is scheduled for November 3, 2025.
  - The Trump administration has appointed a new Deputy Assistant Secretary at the Office of Early Childhood Development. Her name is Dr. Laurie Todd-Smith.

### IV. New Business

• GOFCC Arkansas Project Update: Debbie Mays and Elizabeth Schudder provided the following updates:

- Early Childhood Solutions is a consulting firm that opened in July 2022 to bridge a gap in family home child care.
- Focus on licensure, quality via Better Beginnings and business and sustainability
- Strategies to Strengthen Family Child Care
- Why Invest in Family Child Care Homes?
- How Are We Doing the Work?
- Where Are We Now?
- What Support Is Offered?

- Building a Professional Resource Library
- Infrastructure Development
- Communication
- Overcoming Barriers
- Collaboration
- What's Next?

- Be Well Care Well: Jamie Ward provided the following updates:

- Program is a 12 month program
- Program has coaches
- Team is located throughout the state. The program has 10-12 sites.
- Focus on all 8 dimensions of wellness
- Key Components: Well-being Coach, Well-being Committee and Well-being Activities Guide
- Participating States: South Carolina, Arkansas and New Hampshire
- Impact in Arkansas: 258 Centers and Homes, 20,360 Children, 3,117 Participants
- 81% of participants observed positive changes in coworkers
- 97% of participants experienced improved health and well-being

- OEC Annual Report: Due to remaining meeting time, this report will be emailed to the commissioners.

ACTION: Schedule training meeting about bylaws and to update bylaws for commissioners. Tonya will speak with Stacy Smith.

- Create Nomination Committee: TBD

- Elect New AECC Chairperson: Debbie Mays motioned for Tyra Greenwood to be AECC Chairperson.

She agreed. Haley Sisson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

- Approval of Appeal Panel Applications: Dr. Williams made a motion to approve the applications. Haley Sisson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

## **V. Summary/Announcements/Public Comments**

- None

## **VI. Next Meeting**

- Due to ADE Summit, the next meeting will be held on July 22, 2025 at 2 Capitol Mall, Room 531.

## **VII. Adjournment**

Tonya Williams ended the meeting at 11:50 a.m.