

**Recorded Minutes
of the
Arkansas Early Childhood Commission Meeting
October 18, 2005**

Commission Members Present:

Members Present: Jerry Hudlow, Karen Marshall, Debbie Malone, Brian Faulkner, Dr. Paul Human, LaCher Rockins, Barbara Gilkey, Dr. Joan Harper, Laura Spark, Hallie Sanford, Susan Underwood, Karen Massey, Bruce Cohen,

Members Absent: Dr. Kara Cooper, Debra Davis, Jody Veit-Edrington, Suellen Ward, Dr. Doretha Davis, Karen Beaton

The quarterly meeting of the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission was called to order by Tonya Russell, Director of the DCCECE due to Commission Chairperson Lee Vent's non re-appointment to the commission.

Tonya asked commission members if they preferred to elect a new chairperson today or appoint a nominating committee. It was moved by Karen Marshall and seconded by Susan Underwood that our policies be amended to include a vice-chairperson and secretary. The motion carried.

A nominating committee was appointed that included Dr. Jim Harper, Karen Marshall and Hallie Sanford who will meet via telephone and present a recommended slate of officers at the next meeting. Officers temporarily elected were Debbie Malone as chairperson; Karen Marshall as vice-chairperson and Barbara Gilkey as secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed by commission members. It was moved by Dr. Harper and seconded that minutes be approved. The motion carried.

New commission members introduced were Paul Human, Chairperson of School Superintendent's Association, Karen Marshall, legislative appointee and Brian Faulkner. Two vacancies still exist on the commission. Curtis Curry and David Griffin introduced their new staff members. Paul Lazenby was introduced as new Associate Director of DCCECE for ABC and public preschool.

In the director's report Tonya stated that reports are now in a new format to be more consistent with overall DHS reports. She further reported that the waiting list increased over the summer but had since decreased from approximately 2500 children to 750.

Barbara Gilkey shared information regarding health screenings for both homebased and center based programs that were provided by Arkansas Children's Hospital. To date, approximately 500 children have been seen. Martha Reeder provided commission members with a very comprehensive report on the Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative. DCCECE received notification of another year of funding and a report is due in March, 2006. She emphasized that Arkansas was 1 of 7 programs to participate in a national initiative. Six preschool programs in Arkansas were identified from a self-assessment as "promising practice programs." She informed the group that several of the work groups had combined since so much of their work overlapped and that a sub-committee of the early care and education group had been meeting to work out details related to the "Quality Rating Scales" tiered reimbursement program. A one day training was held in conjunction with AECA (Arkansas Early Childhood Association. Wanda Newell a staff member from the national office presented at the meeting. Our plan should be written by the end of December.

Several members wanted to know what funding sources were available to pay for programs resulting from AECCS. Tonya stated that CCDF funds would be looked at to possibly finance the QRS tiered program. She emphasized that there is a possibility of serving fewer children to serve them better. The staff is looking at creative ways to finance implementation of this project.

Kathy Stegall reported on Enhancement Improvement Grants for the period July through September. She stated that 29 van alarms had been approved. 45 requests were made, however, 16 were denied due to lack of updated immunizations. She reported that the CDA Advisory committee met and new guidelines were approved that should improve completion rates for those receiving grants. A few suggestions included a signed agreement by the applicant and Division, 90 days employment in a child care center, CCOT, ACPAO Director's training, Pre-employment Initiative and Family Child Care Training.

Concerns regarding salaries listed in the ABC Core Quality model were expressed by members of the commission. Tonya discussed research related to quality standards and ABC stating that good pay for quality staff is crucial for staff retention. Also, our states NIEERS status could be affected. Some stated that private, Head Start and other programs have lost staff because they transfer to schools for higher pay. Susan Underwood suggested that additional steps be included in the ABC Core Quality model and Dr. Joan Harper recommended that the salary issues be clarified to avoid confusion with future grant applications

To address some of these concerns, it was moved by Karen Massey and seconded by Barbara Gilkey that a committee be appointed from the commission to review the ABC RFP process. The motion carried.

It was noted that there may not be funds available to increase funding to programs in the next fiscal year. A policy was drafted so that HIPPPY and center-based services could be offered to families that have special circumstances. This must be documented. In addition, Ms. Massey articulated concerns about materials for Arkansas Children's Week and suggested that timely publications are important. She recommended that possibly one or two commission members should serve on the committee. It was noted that publications for the 2006 ACW should be ready by mid-November.

Departmental Reports:

Special Nutrition -No major changes. Training continues to occur on a regular basis.

Family Support -Working on a streamlined application process to decreased the amount of time and paperwork families are required to complete. Regarding Kid Care, workers are now able to enter data faster. 116 Hurricane Katrina evacuees continue to utilize services.

Licensing -Regulations will be mailed soon. New regulations will go into effect in January. Discussion was held about revisions in the background check process that would allow Licensing to release all background check information on all new employees to their employer.

Ted Lampe reported on disaster relief efforts in which he was involved with for DCCECE. Several training sessions will be provided to assist providers in helping children cope with disasters.

Commission members were requested to meet earlier at the next meeting scheduled for January 17, 2006 to review roles and responsibilities of AECC members.

Announcement:

The Economic Impact of Child Care report prepared by UALR will be ready for dissemination in November.

Meeting adjourned.

