

**Recorded Minutes
of the
Arkansas Early Childhood Commission Meeting
April 18, 2006**

Commissioner Member:

Members present:

Debbie Malone, Chair; Susan Underwood, Karen Marshall, Jerry Hudlow, Karen Massey, Barbara Gilkey, Suellen Ward, Joan Harper, Paul Human, Brian Faulkner, Bruce Cohen, Debra Davis, Doretha Davis, Jody Veit- Edrington, LaCher Rockins

Members Absent: Laura Sparks, Hallie Sanford

I. Call to Order

The April 2006, meeting of the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission was called to order by Debbie Malone, Chair of the Commission. A quorum was noted.

II. Approval of Minutes, January 17, 2006

Motion made by Karen Massey to approve minutes as received with the following changes: add Jody Veit-Edrington to those in attendance and add Dr. Harper to the Finance Committee for ABC programs. Motion seconded by Barbara Gilkey and carried.

III. Director's Report

Tonya Russell reported that the Divisional monthly reports are on file and available for review. She hi-lighted several items on the Division web site and suggested that Commissioner's and early care providers review the section on Quality Rating Systems (QRS).

Ms. Russell also shared information on the following:

- The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) has issued a report on the State of Preschool and Arkansas is the only state scoring 10 out of 10 on quality indicators for the second year.
- A new report "Miles to Go" was recently issued by the Southern Education Foundation. This report can be accessed on line at: ww.Southerneducation.org and addresses the continued need for increased funding for preK programs in Arkansas.
- The Family Support unit is reviewing their application for service with intent to streamline the process for applying for child care subsidy assistance.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is being reviewed with the Department of Higher Education to support a new program in numerous community colleges called Career Pathways. This program provides tuition

and other support services to TANF clients and the Division will be assisting with child care funding through the Child Care Development Fund.

- The Division in collaboration with the Arkansas Children's Trust Fund applied for and has been awarded a grant of \$75,000 to support the work of the Strengthening Families Initiative. The grant will be managed by the Children's Trust Fund.
- The Child Care Bureau continues to work on accountability issues and will again visit in Arkansas to meet with staff in our compliance unit as the Bureau develops guidelines for use in the CCDF program.
- Joyce Dees representing the Governor's Office was recognized.

IV. New Business

A. AECC Committees--The following AECC committees were reconfirmed or appointed:

Finance (Guarantee Loan)

Jerry Hudlow, Hallie Sanford, Barbara Gilkey

Nominating

Dr. Jo Ann Harper, Hallie Sanford, Karen Massey

Appeal Panel

Jerry Hudlow, Karen Massey, Barbara Gilkey, Debbie Malone

Program

Bruce Cohen, Brian Faulkner, Joan Harper, Susan Underwood, Karen Massey, Jody Edrington, Karen Marshall

B. Recognition of Past AECC Members

Lee Simpson, former AECC member was recognized for his service to the Commission and presented a plaque. Lee recently relocated from Jonesboro and is now on staff at Bridgeway Hospital in NLR.

V. Informational Items

A. Program Development/PreK

Program Support

Arkansas Children's Week was celebrated April 2-8, 2006. A kick off event was held at the Clinton Library and 5 persons were recognized as Outstanding Early Childhood Professional of 2006. The selections were made by a committee of the Commission. Those recognized were: Deborah McAfee,

Vilonia; Vernice Baldwin, Fayetteville; Amy Pinkston, Melbourne; Shirley Post, Hope and Simona Maria Bynum, Batesville.

Arkansas Better Chance

Paul Lazenby reported that the ABC Rules and Regulation changes for 2006-2007 have been approved by the State Board of Education and the next step is Legislative approval. Major changes address in teacher qualification and specification in procedures regarding special education services. The revision provides a balance of accountability and local control/decision making. There is no expectation of new funding for expansion for the 06-07 program year.

Maps were provided that depict current ABC program and numbers of children served along with the projected need to ensure service to all eligible children.

A copy of the ABC 06-07 Renewal Application/Budget Instructions was provided to members. Two new ABC staff members were introduced, Tasha Tidwell, Financial Specialist and Deborah Blackburn, ABC Coordinator for North East AR.

Dr. Human asked about the possibility of new ABC funding in the 2007 legislative session. Ms. Russell reported growing support from both advocacy groups and legislators.

Karen Marshall asked that advance notice be given to all ABC programs regarding proposed changes in rules and regulations to ensure time for input from private child care programs and to allow them to make necessary budgetary adjustments in preparation for these changes. Agency staff provided assurance that some flexibility would be available regarding matching requirements as the cap on administrative costs is implemented.

A mandatory training for all ABC classroom teachers will be held in Little Rock this summer (several dates are available) to ensure consistency in application of the ECERS indicators. The training will focus solely on the Environment Rating Scale indicators to ensure clear understanding of program expectations.

Professional Development

Donna Alliston provided updated information on the AECPS Evaluation being conducted by Keystone Research. To build capacity within the state for continuous evaluation, training for evaluators is scheduled for the Arnett Caregiver Interaction Scale (July 10-14) and for the Program Administration Scale (September 12-14). Both are nationally validated program evaluation scales that will be used in addition to the ECERS tools in evaluating the professional development system in Arkansas.

Questions were posed and discussion followed about the credentials and qualifications of evaluators and trainers within the Professional Development System. Staff agreed to provide a summary report at the next AECC meeting to identify the training projects, trainers and evaluators, credentials and requirements to serve as a trainer/evaluator, location and target training area for each trainer/evaluator.

Early Childhood Systems Planning

Martha Reeder reported on the current status of Quality Rating System (QRS) development. Updated information is on the Division web site.

A Strengthening Families grant awarded to the AR Children's Trust Fund will support the QRS development by establishing on-line instruction for Child Care Directors in implementing the Strengthening Families model.

B. Special Nutrition Update

Curtis Curry reported a special emphasis on the Summer Feeding program and increasing participation. A Town Meeting was held in Crossett with over 40 in attendance. Representatives from both the Regional USDA and Arkansas USDA offices attended. Lake Village and Magnolia may be sites for additional Town Hall meetings. Advertisements have been printed in HOLA Arkansas in an attempt to reach the Latino community.

The SNP unit is working on an on-line application process for the National School Lunch program, Summer Feeding program and the CACFP program.

An application for federal support for nutrition and physical activity training for family child care homes with an emphasis on the Delta area counties is being prepared.

C. Family Support Unit

Ivory Daniels reported that the Family Support Application for service is being streamlined. The revision will be reviewed in July. Changes in eligibility for students and a 12 month eligibility timeframe are being considered. Jamala Wade has joined the Family Support Unit as a Quality Control Supervisor.

D. Licensing Unit

David Griffin introduced staff to new to the licensing unit, Kathy Rushing has accepted the position of Licensing Specialist in NW AR, Kathy has been with the ABC and Family Support units and brings a wealth of knowledge of Division programs. Kim Chapman is the Licensing Supervisor for NW AR, she has been a licensing specialists for the past 4 years. Tina Smith has joined central office as a Document Examiner.

Cindy Pyle, Licensing Supervisor provided an overview of tablets being used by CCLS in the field. The tablet system allows staff to enter licensing information directly into the tablet so that data collection is done concurrently with the field visits for licensure. Testing has been completed in Pulaski County with each specialist completing 40 visits. The statewide roll-out will be completed by regions.

E. Finance

Tonya Russell reported that the Department/Division has submitted a Request for Resource and Reallocation (RRR) for legislative review for additional authority to expend funds based on increases in ABC funding for administrative costs, increases in cost of Criminal Records Checks and additional funds available to the SNP unit.

F. Compliance

Tim Lampe reported that the duplicate payments from July of 2005 have resulted in 8 providers being placed in exclusionary status and 14 providers nearing completion of a repayment agreement.

Divisional information technology efforts are focused on SNP for development of a web based application, on line claims processing and use of tablets by SNP staff for site visits.

Market rate surveys are in process of completion by April 30. The five local Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies are making individual contacts with all child care providers. Recommendations for voucher rates for July 1, 2006 will be reviewed in May to be implemented in July.

A report on voucher waiting lists by county will be provided to the Commission at each meeting.

VI. No other business was discussed.

VII. The next meeting is scheduled for July 18, 2006. Meeting adjourned.

