

Board of Early Care and Learning
Meeting Summary
August 26, 2021

Attendees

Board Members:

Jen Bennecke, Debra Brock (Vice Chair), Phil Davis (Chair), Susan Harper, Kathy Howell, Kristin Morrissey, Luann Purcell, Cristina Washell

DECAL Staff:

Commissioner Amy Jacobs, Rian Ringsrud, Susan Adams, Bentley Ponder, Jill O'Meara, Elisabetta Kasfir, Shawnell Johnson, Pam Stevens, Ira Sudman, Dennis Brice, Reg Griffin, Quandra Collins, Clayton Adams, Carrie Ashbee, Clayton Bassett, Lari Lyn Beyer, Tamika Boone, Jim Butler, Faith Duncan, Rebecca Ellis, Shayna Funke, Kristin Goetz, Randy Hudgins, Donna Johnson, Melinda Knowles, Rachale LaVoie, Laura Lucas, Susan Maude, Christi Moore, Miranda Murphy, Sara Myers, Rob O'Callaghan, Rhonda Parker, Martine Powe, Laura Reid, Anne Rein, Michael Rodgers, April Rogers, Edward Rowell, Angela Shelton, Jackie Shivers, Marcie Singletary, Taxishe Smith, Hannah Smith, Margrett Stephens, Robin Stevens, Michelle Talley, Laura Wagner, Mark Waits, Vicki Watts, Erin Watson, Jill West, Liz Young

Other Guests:

Molly Aziz, Daphne Babrow, Ivan Bennette, Mindy Binderman, Melissa Cole, Erin Greenberg, Charles Lane, Edelina Lane, Chelsea Morris, Joe Perreault, Maggie Reeves, Bernard Reynolds, Ann Rosenthal, Brigitte Willis, Jessica Woltjen

At 9:03 a.m. Mr. Davis called the meeting to order.

The Board unanimously approved the meeting agenda and the minutes from the May 20, 2021, meeting.

DECAL leaders provided updates about their areas of responsibility.

- Commissioner Amy Jacobs informed the Board that DECAL's plans to open the Atlanta office five days a week and resume site visits to child care providers have been put on hold temporarily because of the spike in COVID-19 cases associated with the Delta variant. DECAL's office is open Tuesdays and Thursdays. The Commissioner gave an update on the federal stimulus funds DECAL has received, totaling almost \$2 billion. The \$144 million from the CARES act was fully liquidated as of April 2021, \$122 million for STABLE payments to licensed child care providers, \$19 million to fund CAPS emergency payment policies, and \$3 million to support the CAPS Essential Services Workforce priority group. Of the \$403 million DECAL received from CRRSA, to date \$17 million has gone to the CAPS ACCESS program, \$37 million to POWER payments directly to early learning professionals, \$43 million to STABLE payments, and \$5 million to programs serving school age children. The total of STABLE payments made to providers from the CARES act and CRRSA is \$165 million. DECAL is now developing a plan for distributing the \$1.57 billion from the American Rescue Plan Act. It will include a stakeholder engagement plan. The Commissioner also announced the DECAL Scholars of the Year for 2021–2022, Ms. Edelina Lane, a family child care provider who is studying at Point University and Ms. Quinecia Styles Smith, a Lead Teacher at Parker Chase Preschool North, who is studying at West Georgia Technical College.
- Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration Rian Ringsrud reported that the agency finished the fourth quarter and SFY 2021 on track with the budget. About \$3 million from the state lottery funds allocated to Georgia's Pre-K remained unspent because of lower-than-expected enrollment and will be returned to the state treasury. Mr. Ringsrud presented the proposed \$912.5 million amended budget for SFY 2022 and the proposed budget for SFY 2023 (same amount) which the Board must approve.
- Deputy Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K and Instructional Supports Susan Adams reported on the completion of the Summer Transition program and the beginning of the Georgia's Pre-K school year. Georgia's Pre-K is funded for 84,000 slots. The program received an additional \$3.9 million to cover

workforce development increases, a change to the public-school teachers' retirement system and non-instructional operating costs. Classes are being taught in-person with mitigation strategies in place for COVID-19 outbreaks. Pre-K Week is October 4–8 and will be celebrated virtually. Ms. Adams also shared highlights from a public outreach campaign about the SEEDS program operated by the Inclusion and Behavior Support team.

- Deputy Commissioner for Quality Innovations and Partnerships Bentley Ponder and Community Partnerships and Projects Manager Jill O'Meara announced the eight recipients of the \$75,000 Community Transformation grants funded by the Preschool Development Grant – Birth through Five (PDG B–5). Mr. Ponder reported that the Quality Rated team is on track to rate more than 1,400 providers through the TARO virtual options in 2021 and reach the CAPS/QR goal by December 31. Fewer than 1% of children with CAPS scholarships are at providers that are not on track to become Quality Rated by the deadline. Mr. Ponder also explained the restructuring of the DECAL Early Head Start Partnership (DEHSP) now underway. The restructuring brings more oversight of Early Head Start comprehensive services in-house and reduces administrative overhead, freeing up funds that can be used to expand comprehensive services. DECAL's external EHS partner, Quality Care for Children, which has been the administrative hub of the partnership, will continue to manage the seven Family Child Care Learning Homes funded by the grant and provide bilingual support to Child Care Learning Centers as needed. Interviews with families and a cost modeling analysis by Third Sector Intelligence support the restructuring.
- Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs Elisabetta Kasfir informed the Board that the SOLVE program stopped accepting applications from new families on June 30. The program cost about \$11 million and awarded 5,631 scholarships for school aged children to receive supervision at child care centers because their schools followed a remote learning model. The ACCESS program, which pays the tuition-related fees and co-payments for CAPS families, saves families about \$1.5 million per week. It will run through October 2, 2022. Ms. Kasfir and CAPS Program Administration Director for Operations Shawnell Johnson made presentations about the implementation of the CAPS virtual lobby and the Customer Response Unit. The CRU has been in operation about three weeks. In that time, the percentage of calls answered by a CAPS representative has increased 14% in spite of a 20% increase in overall call volume associate with the beginning of the school year.
- Deputy Commission for Child Care Services Pam Stevens made a presentation about the current landscape of child care businesses. Attendance at Child Care Learning Centers (CCLC) increased about 12% in the fourth quarter of FY2021 compared to the fourth quarter of FY2020, but it is still down 27% compared to the fourth quarter of FY2019. Family Child Care Learning Homes (FCCLH) have experienced a 12% drop in attendance since 2019. Staff at centers increased 16% over 2020. Ms. Stevens also gave an update about the professional development opportunities incorporated into the SHARE grants for school age programs. A two-hour, Tier 1 training was required for all applicants. Tier 2, a series of five webinars, is open to all grantees. Up to 100 grantees will be offered small group virtual coaching, and, within that group, 25 will receive an external quality assessment.

Following the division reports, a public comment period was held. No comments were received.

Mr. Davis invited discussion of DECAL's proposed budget requests for SFY 2022 (amended) and SFY 2023. There was no discussion, and the Board approved the budget requests unanimously.

Mr. Davis presented the proposed Board meeting dates for 2022: February 17, May 19, August 25, and November 17. The Board approved the 2022 meeting dates unanimously.

At 10:43 a.m. Mr. Davis announced the date for the next Board meeting, November 18, 2021, and adjourned.