

DECAL - Bright from the Start

Meeting Minutes

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**Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting
8/15/2013 9:00:00 AM**

Twin Tower - East Tower, 8th Floor, Oak Room
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. SE, Atlanta, GA
30334

Bobby D. Cagle, Commissioner

No Attendees

1. Call to Order

Chair Victor Morgan called the meeting to order. He welcomed board members, Department of Early Care and Learning staff, and guests. Janice Gallimore was welcomed via teleconference.

2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

- a. *Approve agenda for 8/15/13 meeting

Phil Davis moved to accept the day's agenda. Kathy Howell seconded. The agenda was unanimously accepted.

- b. *Approve minutes from 5/16/13 board meeting

Kathy Howell moved to approve the minutes of the May 16, 2013, meeting of the board. Susan Harper seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Board Inspiration

Kathy Howell delivered an inspiration recognizing the beginning of the school year by sharing a poem. A video in honor of the 20th anniversary of the Georgia Lottery for Education was shown.

4. Board Member Updates

Members of the board provided updates on their activities.

- Sherron Murphy reported on the excitement generated by the launch of Quality Rated in Gwinnett County.
- Many board members reported attending the Quality Rated event on July 16 at the Capitol honoring the first programs to be rated.
- Many board members reported attending the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Georgia Lottery in Athens attended by the Governor and Zell Miller. Kathy Howell stated she was one of the original Pre-K directors when the program started.
- Susan Harper commented on how prominent Georgia's Pre-K is in so many communities. Luann Purcell also expressed the pride she has in the program when she travels to national and international forums.

- Jerri Kropp reported sharing her board activities at a recent Georgia Association on Young Children (GAYC) meeting. She announced that the GAYC annual conference will take place October 11-12. She reported five of her students at Georgia Southern were recently hired as Pre-K teachers.
- Judy Neal reported attending a children's book signing that resulted in an offer by the author, Wes Sarginson, to donate a large number of books for the department's use. She was also able to share in her community on the dangers of leaving children in hot cars.

5. Bright from the Start Presentations

a. Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Bobby Cagle presented updates on his activities. (See slides.) He presented on the event at the Capitol honoring the first Quality Rated programs at which Governor Nathan Deal spoke, and on the event in Athens honoring the 20th anniversary of the Georgia Lottery for Education attended by the Governor and by Zell Miller. He reported on his planned visits across the state to meet with department field staff and receive their feedback; board members were invited to attend. The Commissioner stated he continues to hold webinars with stakeholder advisory groups, most recently with a faith-based provider advisory group.

The Commissioner reported the state has been selected to participate in the Frontiers of Innovation project initiated by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. Georgia is the second state selected to participate. Department staff and Georgia stakeholders recently met with Dr. Jack Shonkoff at the headquarters of the Blank Foundation to discuss Georgia's role. Georgia's participation has been made possible through initial funding provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

b. Finance, Nutrition, & Legislative Updates

Ray Higgins presented updates on the department's finances, nutrition programs, and legislation pertaining to the department. (See slides.) He reviewed fiscal year 2013 expenditures and explained the unexpended lottery funds for Georgia's Pre-K Program. Enforcement fines have doubled from the previous year. He gave an update on the state fiscal year 2014 amended budget and the fiscal year 2015 budget request. He reported increases in the number of sponsors, sites, and counties participating in the Summer Food Service Program in 2013.

Mr. Higgins stated the Budget and Finance Committee will review budget requests during committee meetings.

Mr. Higgins presented the department's proposed legislative ideas for 2014, including clean-up of previous legislation, creating the ability to issue targeted emergency restrictions, clarifying the department's ability to accept donations or gifts, and establishing the authority for tax intercept when funds are due to the state.

The emergency restrictions would give the department more flexibility working with providers to enter into a consent agreement without having to issue an emergency closure.

c. Program Alignment

Keith Bostick presented on the department's efforts at program alignment. (See slides.) The department is working to create synergy across the Child Care Services, Pre-K, Nutrition, and Quality Initiatives divisions to ensure that Georgia's children and families are on a pathway for enriched outcomes. Susan Harper asked if it is possible for a new child care facility to open as a Quality Rated program. Mr. Bostick responded the department should make sure Quality Rated information is included in licensing application materials, although they do need to be in operation for a year before they can be rated. The Commissioner reiterated the agency will add this information to the standardized application packet.

d. Child Care Services Update

Kristie Lewis presented updates on Child Care Services (CCS). (See slides.) She presented fiscal year end data for Child Care Services, including compliance and non-compliance status. A "not determined" compliance status has been introduced this year to include recently licensed programs and programs where attempted visits took place that could not be completed. She reviewed the department's next steps for non-compliant programs, with different courses of action for newly non-compliant programs and programs that have remained non-compliant for two or more years. She reported an increase in enforcement actions in fiscal year 2013.

Ms. Lewis presented department efforts to address transportation safety. She requested that the Programs and Rules Committee consider authorizing the department to proceed with revising transportation rules during the committee meeting.

In response to an inquiry from Dawnn Henderson, the Commissioner stated the department is working toward posting adverse actions online in order to be transparent to parents. He explained there is a lag time in provider consciousness, but that the agency hopes to see the need for adverse actions to decrease over time in response to increased enforcement activity.

Tammy Lenkeit inquired what resources the department makes available to providers to help them move to compliance. Ms. Lewis responded the department works individually with providers and posts resources online to aid programs. The department is pursuing a quick response time from the technical assistance unit to address compliance issues that arise. She stated enforcement should start with technical assistance. The Commissioner added that if providers do nothing else, they must maintain supervision of the child, and where that is lost, the Commissioner and Keith Bostick meet directly with providers to seek to understand the circumstances and to warn them of potential consequences.

e. Break

f. Quality Initiatives Update

Carol Hartman presented an overview of the Child Care and Development Fund. (CCDF) (See slides.) These funds are released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, and DECAL is the lead state agency for CCDF in Georgia. She reviewed the CCDF state plan for 2014-2015. She reported Georgia meets, is implementing, or is planning to implement many proposed CCDF rules, but there are concerns with potential cost increases attached to some of the rules. The Commissioner commented that the agency has requested flexibility in implementing these rules to minimize the impact on providers and on program funding. Ms. Hartman presented a snapshot of Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) subsidies for the month of April. She also presented the current status of Quality Rated programs. She announced a partnership with IBM to place Young Explorer computer centers in nonprofit Quality Rated programs. Ms. Harper inquired whether the "Other" category of providers in Quality Rated represents Pre-K programs operated by local boards of education. The Commissioner stated eventually public Pre-K programs will be able to participate. Susan Adams added that many private child care providers that participate in Georgia's Pre-K are also participating in Quality Rated.

g. Pre-K Update

Susan Adams introduced the department's Standards Coordinator, Laura Evans. Ms. Evans presented an update on the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS). (See slides.) She reported the GELDS have been completely finalized and are ready for implementation. The department has been overwhelmed with the response to GELDS trainings that have been offered. All programs will be receiving GELDS promotional material and a resource book. She presented the print resources being introduced to programs. A variety of resources specific to different child age groups target parents and teachers. She also presented on informational webinars available on the GELDS website. She led the board in an activity demonstrating how teachers would use the GELDS. Ms. Adams pointed out all standards and activities teachers need to use the GELDS are available on the website.

h. Head Start Update

The Commissioner introduced Head Start State Collaboration Director Janice Haker. Ms. Haker presented updates on Head Start and the Head Start Collaboration Office. (See slides.) She reported the Collaboration Office was initiated in Georgia 17 years ago and is funded through the federal Office of

Head Start. She commented that Georgia's having a stand alone state agency for overseeing early care programs facilitates Head Start collaboration with the state. She presented on current funding for Head Start, including the effects of federal sequestration and reviewed other initiatives pursued by the office. She reported 29 out of 31 Head Start programs have signed data sharing agreements with the department.

i. State Advisory Council Update

Bentley Ponder presented updates on the Georgia State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care. (See slides.) He presented the history and objectives of the State Advisory Council and reviewed the status of the Council's multiple projects in the areas of improving program quality, empowering parents, and unifying and coordinating data. Mr. Davis inquired about the degree of interagency coordination involved in the Cross Agency Child Data System. Mr. Detweiler responded this activity particularly involves the agency passing its data to GA AWARDS for data cleansing and integrating with data from other state agencies.

j. Media Activity Update

Reg Griffin presented updates on media activity related to the agency. (See slides.) A video montage was shown of multiple television news clips from across the state covering the public release of Quality Rated star ratings in July. He reported on media placements from May through July. Of 106 placements, 97 were positive, and only one story was negative in tone. In addition to Quality Rated ratings, top stories included the start of the Pre-K school year, the Summer Food Service Program, GELDS, and unlicensed providers on Craigslist. Mr. Griffin reported on new media initiatives, including satellite and Skype interviews with the Commissioner and the special media event in the Capitol with the Governor and First Lady. He presented on the agency's social media activities through Facebook and Twitter. A video segment from WSB Channel 2 on unlicensed day care centers advertising on Craigslist was shown. A video segment from FOX 31 (Albany) on the use of standards in early learning programs was also shown. Mr. Griffin also reported that "The Georgia Gang" recently named Commissioner Bobby Cagle and the 84,000 new Pre-K students as its "Winners of the Week."

6. Lunch & Committee Meetings

Victor Morgan dismissed board committees for their meetings. Committee meetings were held in separate rooms over lunch. All committee meetings are open to the public.

7. Public Hearing, 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

At 1 p.m. a rulemaking public hearing was held before the board. Department attorney Christie Bearden presided as public hearing officer. Ms. Bearden explained the public hearing process and opened the hearing for public comment. A summary of comments follows.

1. Pamela Robinson, Tree Branches Learning Academy, Smyrna, GA, commented that in today's society many families have a large number of children; she asked the board to consider this when proposing a lower cap on the number of related children allowed in family child care settings.
 2. Unique Clay, Unique's Early Learning Center, Mableton, GA, commented she is running into conflict in her community because of the proposed rule to limit the number of related children in family child care. She has already had to turn away families for even part-time care. Assistants are not paid much already, and their children receiving care is an important benefit to their employment.
 3. Tammy Kindall, family child care provider in Canton, Ga., stated she relies on her assistant to cover for her during doctor's appointments. Her assistant has children, and it is important to her to be able to receive care for them in the home.
 4. Kristina Patterson, Parents' Precious Gifts, Scottdale, GA, reiterated previous comments. She has assumed that her children would be able to receive care in her family child care setting. There are times when she needs flexibility with the needs of her school-age children. She asked the board to consider this effect of the proposed rule. In today's economy in particular, she asked the board to consider rewording the proposed rule so children will be safe but providers can still live.
 5. Unique Clay added that she has made every effort to participate in quality initiatives of the department. Many providers stay compliant, are accredited, and are going through the Quality Rated process. Children are safe in these environments. Please remember this when considering the proposed rules.
- Ms. Bearden closed the public hearing.

8. Board Action on Rule Changes

Chair Victor Morgan deferred to Commissioner Cagle to make a statement before asking the board to take action on the proposed rule changes. The Commissioner thanked the family providers for taking the time to attend. He explained the department's action in seeking the change in the family day care law was pursued with careful attention to family child care research and best practices, and the law passed both houses of the Georgia legislature with near unanimity. He stated there have been nine deaths in child care facilities in Georgia since 2007, seven of which in family day care homes. He commented the department seeks to do what is best for child safety and also values family providers and seeks their ongoing engagement with the department. He explained the legislature has already passed the law, and all that is left for the board to do is enact the department's regulations to align with Georgia law. It is these regulations that are up for board approval. The Commissioner offered to remain after the board meeting to talk further with the family providers. The Programs and Rules Committee recommended approving rule revisions. The board voted, and rule revisions were unanimously approved.

9. Committee Reports

a. Budget & Finance

Carlene Talton reported for the Budget and Finance Committee. The committee reviewed the fiscal year 2014 amended budget and the 2015 budget request. The fiscal year 2015 budget request is the same as the 2014 budget.

The committee recommended approving the budget request. Phil Davis

motioned to approve. The board voted, and the budget request was unanimously approved.

b. Programs & Rules Committee

Sherron Murphy reported for the Programs Committee. The committee discussed the Pre-K program, early intervention for special needs children, and the department's request to move forward with drafting revisions to transportation rules.

The committee recommended the board authorize the department to begin the transportation rule revision process. The board voted, and authorization was unanimously approved.

c. Ethics

Susan Harper reported for the Ethics Committee. Board members were previously requested to review recommended changes to Sections 1 and 2 of the board bylaws.

The committee recommended the board adopt the proposed bylaw changes. The board voted, and bylaw changes were unanimously approved.

Ms. Harper reported the committee discussed additional recommendations and changes in Sections 3 and 4 of the board bylaws for the board to consider for approval at the November board meeting. Recommendations mostly consist of cleanup for consistency. The committee also recommended that, upon completion of the bylaws review, the Ethics Committee be disbanded as a standing committee and meet as an ad hoc committee as needed.

Victor Morgan proposed that the board accept the Ethics Committee recommendations for review. The board voted, and the proposal was unanimously accepted.

Victor Morgan presented proposed board meeting dates in 2014. Sherron Murphy motioned to accept the proposed board meeting dates; Dawn Henderson seconded. The dates for 2014 were unanimously accepted.

10. Adjournment

The next meeting of the board will take place November 21, 2013. Chair Victor Morgan adjourned the meeting at 2:06 p.m.